

Northshore School District

BOARD POLICY

No. 0001

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PHILOSOPHY

Racial and Educational Justice

The Northshore School District is committed to creating a safe, caring, and inclusive environment within our district community so that all students, families and staff feel welcomed, valued and supported. We recognize and advocate for the racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, gender, mental health, disability/ability, age, sexual orientation, and religious diversity in our district.

For the purposes of this document, diversity means to embrace and respect rich backgrounds and identities, recognize and value individual and group differences as well as lived experiences, and nurture environments that cultivate curiosity and acceptance. These identities include but are not limited to race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, gender, mental health, disability/ability, age, sexual orientation, gender expression and gender identity and religion.

To fully realize our mission to educate each student, it is imperative we recognize the systemic and institutional forms of oppression barriers that contribute to unjust educational outcomes within our school system. We continue to (re)build justice-driven structures as we strive for educational justice for each student. For the purposes of this document, a focus on educational justice means (1) redefining success and achievement so the brilliance of each student is recognized (2) adapting district and school level policy and practice (3) expanding culturally responsive pedagogical supports for educators (4) shaping inclusive climate (5) eliminating disproportionality among student groups represented across academic programs, (6) building partnerships with families and communities, (7) ensuring that each student receives equitable supports and opportunities to best meet their needs and (8) leveraging student voice and working with students as a throughline to inform justice-driven change.

Core Beliefs

Our core beliefs are founded on the philosophies inherent in the 4 Pillars of our Strategic Plan:

1. Equitable Access to Personalized and Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning
2. Safe Climate and Strong Relationships with Families and Community
3. Results-focused Professional Learning and Supports for Staff
4. Data-informed, Needs-based Resource Allocation

We believe it is a fundamental right of each student to have an equitable educational experience within Northshore School District programs and services. The responsibility for ensuring student success is held by school board directors, district staff, administrators, educators, communities, students and our families. We are focused on cultivating a justice-driven educational climate,

closing opportunity gaps and creating learning communities that provide inclusive and enriching experiences for all Northshore students.

We believe equitable access to schools, classrooms, programs, resources, and services provided by the district requires acknowledgment of the impact of systemic and institutional oppressions as well as diverse learning needs. This means differentiating resource allocation, within budgetary limitations, to meet the needs of our students.

We believe the education of each student requires a respect and appreciation for their race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, gender, mental health, disability/ability, age, sexual orientation, and religion. We ensure each student is provided with rigorous culturally relevant curriculum delivered with culturally responsive practices in a learning environment free of barriers to success.

We believe it is the district's responsibility to evaluate and change policies and practices resulting in oppressive educational impacts. All students, staff, families, and community members have a vested interest and should work together to change and disrupt oppressive systems.

We believe the employees of the district should reflect the diversity of the community it serves. This is critical to implementing successful policy and practices that create a justice-driven educational environment and build windows and mirrors. It is essential that all children are provided with role models from diverse backgrounds representing different roles within our schools and the district. Employees are active participants in fostering culturally inclusive environments where diverse perspectives and experiences are welcomed, valued, and included.

We believe implementing culturally responsive practices requires that staff work together to increase their individual and collective capacity to effectively teach a diverse student population. It is imperative that we provide professional development to teaching staff specifically designed to strengthen employees' knowledge and skills for expanding their justice-driven leadership and pedagogical approaches.

Goals

In order to achieve educational justice for *each* student in the Northshore School District, we will focus on:

1. **Equitable Access and Outcomes** - Ensure that all students have equitable "barrier-free" access to rigorous content, high leverage teaching practices and dynamic resources to support high academic, social, emotional and behavioral growth.
2. **Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment** - Provide staff with professional development and resources to achieve high quality teaching and learning, using culturally responsive practices; and relevant curriculum, teaching and assessment practices, in addition to providing differentiated pathways to academic success.
3. **Hiring and Staffing Practices** - Recruit, hire, support and retain diverse and culturally competent administrators, teachers, certificated support personnel and classified staff through

broad outreach, inclusive hiring practices and culturally responsive retention strategies that support and value diversity in its staff. Ensure that recruiting, screening, and interview teams are trained and culturally competent to seek out diverse perspectives, experiences, and backgrounds that enrich the makeup of our staff and provide students with inspiring role models.

4. Professional Learning & Growth - Create a plan for and facilitate the development of staff capacity and competency to utilize culturally responsive and relevant curriculum, teaching and assessment practices, and discipline methods. This shall include providing staff with consistent and ongoing opportunities to understand the impact of institutional forms of oppression, systemic barriers, and implicit bias. All staff will develop the skills, knowledge and capacity to respond to diverse student needs and backgrounds in culturally appropriate and effective ways. Staff will grow and foster an understanding of pervasive student disparities that have perpetuated injustice in service of increasing individual and collective cultural competency and humility over time.

5. Community and Family Engagement - Cultivate strong partnerships between school and home, between the district and the community agencies and organizations, and across schools to grow in perspective. Work proactively by expanding equitable partnerships to elicit a high degree of collaboration with students and their families. Ensure diverse community representation in task forces, committees, and events, at the school and district level.

6. Distribution of Resources - Articulate a plan for, and implement data-informed, needs-based distribution of resources, supports, facilities and opportunities by differentiating resource allocations based on identified needs of a specified individual or group.

7. Institutional Structures - Review and change inequitable policies and practices that perpetuate unjust educational systems. Change structures leading to the over-representation of certain groups of students in areas such as assessment, special education, and discipline, and under-representation in programs such as HiCap, Satellite Programs, Challenge and International Baccalaureate and Advanced Placement classes.

Responsibility and Accountability

The responsibility for student success is broadly shared by district staff, administrators, instructors, communities and families. The district's strategic plan is a central racial and educational justice plan as we will not reach our goals without ensuring all students are prepared for college, career and life. The board will hold the superintendent, and central and school leadership staff, accountable for making measurable progress in meeting the goals.

1. The Board of Directors shall use the values stated in this policy as a lens when conducting its business and in exercising its responsibilities within the Northshore School District.

2. The Board of Directors and superintendent shall establish specific goals to implement this policy as permitted by law.

3. The Board of Directors shall participate in culturally relevant professional development to deepen their understanding of educational justice and develop a lens to hold the district accountable for equity and inclusion work.

4. **The superintendent** shall establish in accordance with this policy such plans and procedures as may be necessary and appropriate to accomplish its purpose and intent. Plans and procedures established shall include clear accountability for actions and oversight, and shall include metrics for evaluation. Such action plans shall identify specific staff leads on all key work, and include clear procedures for district schools and staff.

5. **The Executive Director of Racial and Educational Justice** shall, at least annually, report to the Board of Directors and the community regarding district performance goals on racial and educational justice contained in the Strategic Plan and on the goals outlined in this policy. Collaboratively work across departments on an annual public report that includes progress toward racial and educational justice. The report will also highlight discrepancies between the targets set and actual performance and, when applicable, disaggregated data providing information on how funding is differentiated based on student need, or how programs or services are being implemented to ensure every student is included.

6. **District staff** shall, within the parameters of their various duties and responsibilities, comply with and execute such plans as are designed to address the values and directions included in this policy. District staff is further responsible to make such suggestions to the appropriate authority to improve the ability of the district to make progress toward racial and educational justice.

7. **Families and the Community** shall be considered partners and agents of change with the district in its effort to work towards racial and educational justice. The board and leadership will be intentional about building partnerships with our diverse community in meaningful ways.

8. **Students** shall have the agency in making decisions about their educational experiences. Staff will actively create avenues for student choice, voice, and leadership.

9. **Northshore School District Board of Directors, superintendent and employees** will work with students and families to identify and address institutional barriers.

Racial and educational justice policy terms & phrases defined as they relate to the Northshore School District experience

Barrier - Anything that creates disparities or obstructs justice, progress and access.

Sex Assigned at Birth - refers to a person's internal and external anatomy, chromosomes, and hormones.

Cultural Competence - Cultural competence is an active, developmental, ongoing process and is continuously practiced. The development of cultural competence includes:

1. Becoming aware of one's assumptions about human behavior, values, biases, preconceived notions, and personal limitations.
2. Attempting to understand the worldviews of diverse ideologies and communities.

3. Developing and practicing appropriate, relevant, and sensitive strategies and skills in working with culturally diverse students, families, communities and colleagues.

4. Advocating on behalf of the needs of students, families, community and colleagues. Taking action in the workplace, community and society to create a culture of inclusion and justice.

Culturally Responsive Practices - Culturally responsive practices support the achievement of all students by providing effective teaching and learning in a “culturally supported, learner-centered context, whereby the strengths students bring to school are identified, nurtured, and utilized to promote student achievement.” Richards, Brown, & Forde, 2006

Culturally Relevant Curriculum - Culturally relevant curriculum is the relevancy of the curriculum to students' lived experiences. This includes, but is not limited to diverse authors, speakers, story examples in text, and/or names of students in textbooks.

Disaggregated Data - Results from taking a closer look into smaller pockets of system-wide data to uncover patterns and trends that may be true for a group of students, but not for all students across the system.

Discrimination - Unjust treatment of individuals and communities on the basis of age, sex, marital status, sexual orientation including gender expression or identity, race, creed, religion, color, national origin, honorably discharged veteran or military status, or the presence of any sensory, mental, or physical disability or the use of a trained dog guide or service animal by a person with a disability

Diversity - to have the presence of rich backgrounds and identities, recognize and value individual and group differences, and nurture an environment that nurtures curiosity and acceptance. These include but are not limited to race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, gender, mental health, disability, age, sexual orientation and religion.

Equity in Education - To educate each student in a way that ensures every student's brilliance is seen and honored. The focus is on eliminating significant gaps in outcomes throughout the district, while increasing educational and extracurricular opportunities for students. Whereas equality tends to focus primarily on similarity of input, equity purposefully focuses on how those inputs impact outcomes.

Educational Justice - A justice-driven education is focused on ensuring that institutional forms of oppression are dismantled and that each student is seen, heard, valued, and affirmed for who they are and the knowledge they bear. A just education supports students in recognizing the agency they hold in decision making to achieve their personal, community, and educational goals.

Ethnicity - Diasporic groups that maintain characteristics such as shared ancestral histories, geographical base, language, customs, culture, etc.

Gender Expression - The ways in which a person expresses their gender.

Gender Identity - Refers to a deeply felt internal sense of one's being on the gender spectrum regardless of their gender assigned at birth.

Gender Non-conforming - Describes a person whose gender expression differs from stereotypical expectations about how they should look or act based on the gender they were assigned at birth. People who identify outside of binary gender categories or identify as gender neutral are examples of gender non-conforming.

Inequity - Lack of fairness, justice or intention in policies, practices and outcomes that have a negative impact on opportunities and access for an individual or community.

Implicit Bias - Discriminatory and prejudicial attitudes and stereotypes that affect our understanding of, actions towards, and decisions about groups and individuals in a subconscious way.

Institutional Bias - A tendency for the procedures and practices of particular institutions to operate in ways that result in certain communities- being advantaged or favored and others being disadvantaged or devalued.

Institutional Racism - A form of racism expressed in the practice of social and political institutions, as distinct from racism by individuals or informal social groups. It is reflected in disparities regarding criminal justice, employment, housing, health care, political power and education, creating different outcomes for different racial groups.

Opportunity Gap - Is created when institutionalized structures, systems and practices result in barriers to educational access, success and limitations in outcomes for minoritized and historically excluded groups of students. These disparities are often perpetuated by factors related to race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, gender, mental health, disability/ability, age, sexual orientation and religion.

Race - A socially constructed categorization distinguishing people based on physical characteristics (e.g., skin color, body shape/size, facial features, hair texture). People of one race can vary in terms of ethnicity and culture. Race is a sociopolitical construct, one that is created and reinforced by social and institutional norms and practices, as well as individual attitudes and behaviors. Race becomes institutionalized in a way that has profound social consequences on the members of different groups. Race is socially imposed and hierarchical. (adapted from *Reading for Diversity & Social Justice* 2nd Edition.)

Social Justice - Intentional effort to ensure that the "distribution of resources is equitable and all members are physically and psychologically safe and secure.... Fostering a society in which individuals are both self-determining (able to develop to their full capacities) and interdependent (capable of interacting democratically with others) [adapted from Lee Ann Bell, 1997].

Transgender - A general term often used to describe a person whose gender identity or expression, or both, are different from those traditionally associated with their gender assigned at birth.

Transitioning - Refers to the process in which a person goes from living and identifying as one gender to living and identifying as another.

Cross References:

Board Policy 2115 Equal Education Opportunity

Board Policy 2133 Diversity-Multicultural Education

Board Policy 3210 Non-Discrimination

Board Policy 3211 Gender Inclusive Schools

Legal References:

RCW28A.642

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