

Orange County Schools acknowledges persistent racial intolerance, inequities and academic disparities in our district. The Board establishes this policy in an effort to eliminate racial intolerance, other forms of intolerance, inequities of opportunity, and academic disparities in our district. We see our schools as centers for culturally diverse learning where all students are educated to their fullest potential and as centers of our community around which we come together in support of the education of all students. Equity is critical to the success of our schools, our students, and our community.

A. Definition of Equity

The concept of educational equity goes beyond formal equality to fostering a barrier-free environment where all students, regardless of their race, class, or other personal characteristics, have the opportunity to benefit equally in order to succeed and thrive.

An emphasis on equity calls on every adult to treat every student as capable of success and recognizes the uniqueness and strengths of each student allowing for differences in time, attention, instruction, and support to ensure that all students can succeed academically and participate responsibly in our community.

Equity is an interruption of systems, structures, policies, and practices which privilege some students while discriminating against other students. Strategies that promote equity are intended to ensure fairness by the following:

1. Countering biased behaviors that cause harm to specific groups.
2. Countering unfair policies, programs, and practices that consistently result in negative outcomes for groups who are disadvantaged by these actions.
3. Negotiating, re-allocating, and sometimes re-imagining resources, opportunities, and supports when equal distribution of these things (one size fits all) results in inequitable outcomes that do not adequately meet specific needs and interests of all groups of students.

B. Mission

Orange County Schools will disrupt all forms of discrimination in our school community by:

1. Challenging intolerant behavior that jeopardizes the safety, well being, or learning of others;
2. Accepting that equity of educational opportunity requires that proactive steps be taken to address implicit biases and institutional barriers to equity;
3. Recognizing that biases and barriers can result in inequitable opportunities for groups of students based on their real or perceived personal characteristics such as race, color, ethnicity, national origin, religion, disability, sex, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, gender expression, age, or socioeconomic status;

4. Removing biases and barriers that contribute to achievement gaps which are unacceptable in a system that strives for equitable educational opportunities for all students. Historically and currently, in Orange County Schools, such biases and barriers disproportionately affect students of color.

The Orange County Schools Board of Education is committed to actively and continuously eliminating disparities in educational opportunities in all its schools, creating and supporting an environment of equal, equitable, unbiased and culturally responsive learning in a fair and safe system.

C. BOARD COMMITMENT

1. Orange County Schools shall take active measures to provide an inclusive and emotionally supportive environment, free from discrimination.
2. All schools in our school system shall take active measures to provide every student with equal access to high quality and culturally relevant instruction, curriculum, support, facilities and other educational resources.
3. The Board hereby sets forth a series of expectations with regard to equity in our school communities. The Orange County Schools will take active measures to:
 - a. Develop and promote a culture of high expectations for all students;
 - b. Identify and eliminate inequities in access to opportunities;
 - c. Continuously raise the level of achievement for all students while eliminating academic disparities;
 - d. Ensure that personal characteristics (real or perceived) will not predict any individual's educational outcomes;
 - e. Recognize and aggressively address opportunity gaps;
 - f. Actively recruit, support, and retain a diverse workforce;
 - g. Actively train and support all administrators, teachers, and staff in implementing this policy including creating culturally affirming and relevant classrooms and schools;
 - h. Engage with staff, students, parents/guardians, and the entire community to build and sustain a culture emblematic of the ideals of this Equity Policy;
 - i. Equitably allocate resources to accomplish these goals.
4. In keeping with this policy, the Orange County Schools shall review and revise existing policies, programs, professional development, and procedures to reflect applicable laws and the district's Definition of Equity.
5. The Board and administration shall actively model its commitment to equity to align all new processes and procedures to applicable law and the district's Definition of Equity, including but not limited to:

- a. Reports
 - b. Presentations
 - c. Decision making at every level
 - d. The Board as a body will attend racial equity training within one year of the establishment of this policy and within one year of the election of any new Board member. Board members will commit to attending subsequent equity trainings of their choosing offered at the local, state, and national level.
6. The Board shall demonstrate its commitment to equity by directing the Superintendent to develop an Equity Plan to implement this policy. The Equity Plan will be reviewed annually and performance metrics will be used to measure progress. The plan will include a communication plan.
7. The Equity Task Force shall continue to be in place for the purpose of advising the Board and the Superintendent with regard to matters of equity in Orange County Schools. The Equity Task Force shall be comprised of a broad group of racially diverse stakeholders including but not limited to students, parents, administrators, and community members. The Board shall hold an annual meeting with the Equity Task Force.