

Aurora Public Schools DEI Framework

Introduction

The Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Framework at Aurora Public Schools (APS) is designed to guide our district's efforts in creating an inclusive and equity-driven school district for all students, staff, and families. This framework was designed to respond to the Board Limitation 1: Diversity, Equity and Inclusion and in alignment with Limitation Progress Measure 1.1: Systems and Structures for DEI Decision Making, stating that APS will create an equity focused decision making framework that will be used to inform recommendations made by the Superintendent to the Board related to major decisions as outlined in Policy BEDB. This framework is adapted from the Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE) Racial Equity Framework and the Liberatory Design Framework from The National Equity Project. These frameworks have been intentionally reimagined to meet the specific needs of our educational community.

Core Components of the DEI Framework

1. Visualize

Aligning our values and mission with our shared commitment to eradicating inequities. In this phase, we:

- Align DEI into our values, mission, and vision.
- Engage in discussions about our current state, future goals, and gaps in DEI practices.
- Involve staff at all levels to understand the APS community and define future aspirations.
- Align on the reality that achieving equity goals requires [ongoing commitment and resources](#).
- Communicate the organizational purpose of integrating DEI and connect individual roles to this purpose.



2. Normalize

Co-creating a shared understanding of how we want to integrate DEI. This stage involves:

- Developing a shared language to analyze causes and systems of inequities.
- Understanding underlying drivers of inequities and the systems maintaining them.
- Demonstrating leadership commitment to institutionalizing DEI.
- Drive and experience a culture shift towards DEI integration.

1. Garibay, C., & Mayas, R. (n.d.). [Racial Equity Checklist](#). Center for Advancement of Informal Science Education (CAISE).
 2. Clackamas Community College. (n.d.). [Interim Equitable Decision-Making Framework](#).
 3. National Equity Project. (n.d.). Liberatory design. Retrieved August 2, 2024, from <https://www.nationalequityproject.org/frameworks/liberatory-design>
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- Articulate what educational equity looks like within each department's and school community's work.
- Analyze data to better understand root causes and inequitable trends.

3. Organize

Coalition building to drive change at all levels of the district. During this phase, we:

- Commit to DEI integration in everyday work at all organizational levels.
- Identify and address root causes of inequities.
- Build a robust administrative, financial, and policy-driven infrastructure for DEI.
- Disrupt the status quo and build capacity for new rules, values, and practices.
- Begin with scalable, sustainable, and replicable small-scale models and pilots.

4. Operationalize

Refining and using a systematic approach to sustain change. In this stage, we:

- Leverage data to drive progress and actively pursue continuous improvement.
- Implement accountability structures that integrate DEI at individual, cultural, and systemic levels.
- Transform targeted interventions into large-scale initiatives.
- Consistently apply equity tools to enhance our capacity for equitable practices.
- Cultivate a learning culture while embedding equity into broader strategic plans.

Key Principles

1. **Self-Reflection:** We engage in intentional self-reflection on identity, power, privilege, and marginalization.
2. **Community Engagement:** We ensure our work is driven by the APS community, recognizing unique needs, stories, and experiences that make our community.
3. **Complexity:** We acknowledge that complex problems require complex solutions and we develop leadership approaches accordingly.
4. **Strategic Interventions:** We implement targeted interventions that address unique experiences of particular groups while moving towards universal goals.

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Stakeholder Engagement

This [Stakeholder Engagement Framework](#) outlines the process through which stakeholders are engaged to provide input on a topic or to design a solution for a problem or an opportunity. The APS Stakeholder Engagement Framework is grounded in four pillars: **Community Building; Transparency; Elevating Community Voice; Data-driven decision-making**. These four pillars surfaced as the key elements in ensuring that the community has a meaningful opportunity to voice their input and impact the major decisions that the Superintendent takes as defined by the Board Policy BEDB, and to ensure that the data gathering and decision-making process is transparent and well-communicated to stakeholders closely impacted by the decision. The icons of the four pillars are embedded throughout the framework. The APS Stakeholder framework is organized in eight sections that build on one another and includes fillable sections and templates to ensure that the framework is user-friendly.

APS Philosophy in Stakeholder Engagement

APS believes that stakeholders should have a meaningful opportunity to engage and elevate their voice and influence major decisions. APS also believes that stakeholder input and decision-making processes need to be transparent and that decisions need to be based on data. Providing a meaningful opportunity for stakeholders to engage and influence decisions will foster community-building across the district. This aligns with APS values, especially with the value of Relationships with Strong Communication and Transparency and the value of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion. As such, the Stakeholder Framework must both be an integral part of the DEI Framework should be engaged when utilizing the DEI Decision Making Protocol.



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Decision-Making Protocol

As part of our DEI Framework, APS has developed a decision-making protocol to ensure that major decisions yield community-driven, sustainable, and equitable outcomes for all students and families.

Why a Decision-Making Protocol?

The guiding principles that must be front and center in our DEI decision making framework are as follows:

1. Commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion through action and outcomes
2. Prioritizing the liberation of marginalized communities
3. Humility in what we know and in what we don't know
4. Commitment to continuous learning

Theory of Action

If APS utilizes this DEI decision-making framework for major decisions, then we will ensure these decisions yield community-driven, sustainable, and equitable outcomes for students.

Theory of Change

Our **values** inform our **beliefs**, which drive our **behaviors and decisions**. The theory informs the following pattern:

1. We see a problem;
2. We engage with the problem;
3. We act to solve the problem;
4. We track our impact;
5. We improve our strategies.

By consistently applying this framework and decision-making protocol, Aurora Public Schools aims to create a more equitable and inclusive educational environment that benefits all students and reflects the values of our community.

RAPID Decision Making Protocol

Because this concerns major decisions as defined by policy BEDB, the Decider will always be the Superintendent; other positions in the protocol will change depending on circumstances of the decision at hand.

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APS DEI Decision Making Protocol

Start here: What is the policy, program, or decision under review?

Question	Reflection
Purpose 1. How does this decision align with APS's mission, values, and strategic plan? 2. Who or what is being centered in this process or decision, and what is the clear, defined reason and need for making it?	
Power and Privilege 1. What negative impacts does the current situation have on marginalized communities in APS? 2. How have we reflected on how our own power and privilege might affect this decision? 3. What are the power dynamics involved in this decision-making process, and how have they been addressed to ensure all voices are heard and concerns are adequately addressed?	
Policy and Statute 1. Is there legislation at the state and/or federal level that may impact our decision? 2. What policies support the current state? What policies support moving toward the ideal state? 3. What policies hinder moving toward the ideal state? Does this policy need to be addressed and/or modified? 4. Does policy need to be created to support the decision?	

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Consulted and Informed 1. Who are the key stakeholders in this decision, particularly those from racial, cultural, ethnic groups and other marginalized identities experiencing disparities related to this policy, program, or decision? Are they adequately represented in the decision-making process? 2. How have we engaged the stakeholder engagement framework in making this decision, and who should be additionally consulted or engaged? How are we ensuring we reach those who have been or might be left out of the process? 3. Has adequate time been given to meaningfully incorporate all voices in this decision, especially those from traditionally underrepresented groups?	
Input (Consider Stakeholder Engagement Framework) 1. What data was used to make the decision? Data should be both qualitative and quantitative. 2. How is our data specifically measuring impacts on marginalized groups most impacted by this decision? (i.e. through disaggregating data to explore impact) 3. What additional considerations must we take into account when making this decision?	
Third Ways 1. Are we defaulting to what we've typically done or to who we know, and how have we challenged these tendencies in our decision-making process? 2. Have we considered if this decision is being rushed, and is there a better time for this decision? Please describe the rationale.	

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Outcome - What is the desired outcome for this decision? - For staff - For students - For families	
Impact (Short and Long Term; Sustained) - What is the desired impact of this decision, and how will it affect different student groups, employee groups, departments, and the broader APS Community? Who will benefit, and who might be burdened? - How have we ensured diverse representation in the decision-making process, particularly of those most impacted, and how are we avoiding overburdening these communities in carrying the decision forward? - How have we considered accessibility (digital and physical) and incorporated lessons learned from similar past decisions? - What are the immediate, short-term (1 year), medium-term (3 years), and long-term impacts of this decision on our communities and resources?	
Continuous Improvement - What is our plan to revisit this decision to ensure equitable outcomes? - What circumstances might change down the road that would render the decision ineffective or detrimental in the future? - How will we measure effectiveness? - How will data/feedback be collected equitably and inclusively? Both qualitative and quantitative.	

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