

MEMORANDUM

TO: President Pamela Fitzgerald
JPS Board of Education
FR: Derek Dobies, Trustee
Shalanda Hunt, Vice President
RE: Proposed Equity Policy
DA: October 15, 2024

Our district recognizes the vital importance of confronting implicit biases, navigating discomfort, and engaging in challenging conversations to foster more inclusive schools for all students. We are dedicated to enacting tangible, positive changes in our educational system, combating racism, bias, and discrimination in any form. It is our duty to instill a culture that embraces and celebrates the richness of racial and cultural diversity. Collaboration with students, their families, educators, and the community will be instrumental in achieving this vision.

In October of last year, Jackson Public Schools hired the district's first Director of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Curriculum. Filling this position demonstrates the long held commitment by the Board to further promote the ideals of diversity, equity and inclusion for the students, staff and families we serve. Among the many duties includes providing professional development training for educators to ensure that curriculum aligns with the equitable lens of the district.

While the Director of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Curriculum will work to strategically implement changes that align with the district's goals and objectives, I believe it is important for the Board to create a policy that guides that work and envisions our future efforts to build a more equitable and inclusive educational institution. Through policymaking we can better ensure the success of staff efforts by clear and transparent communication of our expectations.

Equity policies are growing more common in Michigan school systems as more and more districts advance important work in this space. Amongst the JPS Board of Education, there has been much conversation over the last year about how we can advance our interests in seeing meaningful progress around matters of equity, while giving the administration the discretion to carry out that work in everyday decision making. I believe the following policy strikes the right balance in that regard, communicates the Board's values, and better fosters an inclusive supportive educational environment.

The following policy has been edited and supported by our Superintendent, our Director of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Curriculum, and reviewed by our policy committee. It has also been reviewed and edited by JPS legal counsel. It is the result of years of community conversations, months of feedback from staff and administrators, and editing from district leadership. Please contact me if you have any questions, and I appreciate your consideration of this policy proposal.

Board Policy 124 - Equity Policy

The Jackson Public Schools Board of Education recognizes and celebrates the diversity of our student population, and, thus, we commit to ensuring all students receive an inclusive and equitable educational experience. The Board of Education will remove barriers for students by providing access, opportunities, and resources. Furthermore, the board will create and monitor the implementation of policies that will ensure equitable outcomes in the following areas, including, but not limited to, budget, curriculum, professional learning, and extracurricular activities.

In order to achieve these goals, the superintendent shall implement the following:

1. The District shall review practices, procedures, and programs to ensure they are unbiased and nondiscriminatory. The District shall use all available data, disaggregated by race, ethnicity, language, ability, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, socioeconomic background, and mobility, to inform all district decision-making.
2. The District shall consistently solicit student, family, and staff input to foster an inclusive, accepting, and belonging environment, integrating their voices and participation into decision-making processes.
3. The District shall establish a process to allocate resources and prioritize initiatives that promote equity, encourage the hiring of qualified instructional staff, ensure equitable availability to staff, and provide access to world-class facilities and support services.
4. The District shall adopt and review a budget annually that distributes finances equitably across the district.
5. The District shall review its purchasing practices to eliminate barriers to participation and ensure that businesses owned by traditionally underrepresented persons are equitably included.
6. The District shall select and implement culturally-responsive instructional materials, while addressing or eliminating culturally-biased curriculum and assessments, to ensure equitable outcomes.
7. The District shall provide professional development opportunities and support for personnel at all levels to integrate culturally responsive practices and ensure staff participation in diversity, equity, and inclusion training.
8. The superintendent shall provide the Board with a periodic report, no shorter than annually, detailing progress on the items listed in this policy, in addition to related goals and metrics established by the Board of Education.