

Leverett Elementary School Anti-Racism Commitment

The Leverett Elementary School Committee and the Union #28 Leadership Team reject all forms of racism as destructive to the school's mission, values, vision and goals. Leverett Elementary is committed to the following principles:

1. Establishing and sustaining a school community that shares the collective responsibility to prevent actions that perpetuate racism and its harmful outcomes.
2. Cultivating the unique strengths, talents and interests of every student to end the predictive value of social and cultural factors, such as race, class, and gender, on student success.
3. Respecting and championing the diversity and life experiences of all community members to support the school mission, values, vision and goals. Acknowledging that racism is often compounded by other forms of discrimination, including, but not limited to sexism, homophobia, classism, ableism, transphobia and xenophobia.

Purpose

Personal and institutional racism have historically existed and continue to exist in Leverett Elementary school and across our country. Nationwide there are significant disparities between racial groups in student academic performance, achievement, and participation in academic programs. These include disparities in graduation rates, gifted-and-talented identification, course participation, special education identification, standardized test scores, and suspension rates. Combating racism in our schools is a legal and moral imperative.

These equity gaps exist because of inequitable access to opportunities that have significant intergenerational effects and perpetuate economic, social, and educational inequity. However, racial inequities, compounded by segregation within schools, were created over time and can be eliminated.

Similarly, personal prejudice is learned and can be unlearned. Educators play a vital role in reducing racism and inequity by recognizing the manifestations of racism, creating racially integrated learning and working environments, and dismantling educational systems that directly or indirectly perpetuate racism and privilege through teaching, policy, and practice.

Racial bias can be unconscious or unintentional. This is why anti-racist policies and commitments are so important in eradicating racism within our school.

When we rely on good intentions alone we allow the opportunity for bias and prejudice to operate without oversight.

The purpose of this policy is to eliminate all forms of racism from the culture of the school in conjunction with related school policies.

Anti-racism Policy Regulations

These regulations are designed to dismantle the individual, institutional, and structural racism that exists in the school. The School Committee directs the following action:

Policy Communication

1. The school shall post a public statement against racism in a location visible to students, staff, and visitors entering the school as well as on the school website. The public statement shall read: "Leverett Elementary School is committed to creating an equitable school culture that cultivates the unique gifts, talents, and interests of every child. We reject all forms of racism as destructive to our mission, vision, values, and goals. We commit to abolishing racism in our community and invite all families, staff and school visitors to join us in this effort."
2. The School Council shall operate utilizing an anti-racism framework. Building a racially diverse school council will be prioritized. The council will be charged with promoting equity and diversity and to serve as leaders and spokespersons of anti-racism within the school.
3. The Anti-Racism Commitment and Policies will help guide the School Improvement Plan. The School Council will be charged with assessing the School Improvement Plan and interrogating their process for bias that centers white students' interests over students of color.
4. The Principal and School Council will invite students to provide input and feedback on school accountability in regards to the anti-racism commitment. Prioritizing students of color's perspective so as to intentionally yield power to students to narrativize their own experience of how racism occurs in the school.
5. This policy shall be included in student handbooks provided to students and families.
6. This policy shall be translated into other languages (as needed) and be made available for families.

Leadership and Administration

The School Administration (Leadership team including the Principal and the Superintendent, and School Committee) shall address systemic racism as follows:

1. Develop and conduct a systemic Equity Needs Assessment for the school to identify processes and practices that cause or contribute to inequitable outcomes. The Assessment shall also include an inventory of what equity-related data is currently collected by the district. Following the assessment, strategies will be developed and implemented to address the identified issues.
2. To address disparities in access to school resources:
 - a. Assessing staff recommendations and referrals for special education services
 - b. Prioritizing the academic needs of students of color and adjusting curriculums accordingly

2. The school shall implement alternative discipline processes, such as restorative justice, to reduce racial disparities in discipline and suspension.
 - a. To ensure consistency in student discipline, the school shall collect and, at least annually, report data on all disciplinary actions. The data shall include the student's race/ethnicity, gender, socio-economic status, special education, and English Language Learner status, as well as a written explanation of the behavior leading to discipline and the specific corrective action taken.
 - b. When school administrators determine a student has committed a racist act, the student will be provided the opportunity to learn about the impact of their actions on others through such practices as restorative justice, mediation, role play or other explicit policies or training resources.

Curriculum and Instruction

1. Curriculum and instructional materials for all grades shall reflect cultural and racial diversity, and include a range of perspectives and experiences, particularly those of historically underrepresented groups of color. Curriculums will specifically, recognize and honor Black and Indigenous Peoples histories and contributions.
2. All curriculum materials shall be examined for racial bias by the district's Director of Learning Design with input from the School Council. Where materials reflect racial bias, teachers utilizing the materials will acknowledge the bias and communicate it to students and parents.
3. The school shall implement an anti-racist curriculum and provide educational resources for students at every grade level.
4. Academic enrichment programs (including field trips, special school speakers, etc) shall prioritize the history and contributions of people of color.

Training and Performance Assessment

1. All school staff shall be trained in this anti-racism policy.
2. All school staff shall be trained about racism and about how racism produces inequitable practices and outcomes.
3. All teachers and administrators shall be trained in anti-racism , social justice models in education and restorative justice.
4. Anti-racist and social justice teaching practices shall be incorporated into all performance assessments, including the teacher appraisal system and the administrator performance appraisal.

Policy Enforcement

1. Staff shall collect, review, and provide an annual report to the School Committee on data regarding racial disparities in areas including, but not limited to, student achievement, enrollment, suspension/discipline, graduation rates, gifted-and-talented identification, and special education referrals. The report shall also include evidence of growth in each area

outlined by the anti-racism policy (i.e., communication, leadership and administration, curriculum and instruction). The written reports shall also be made available to the public and to the School Council.

2. The Superintendent and Principal shall be responsible for implementation and evaluation of the Anti-Racism Commitment. Adequate financial and resources and designated personnel shall be prioritized by the School Committee to support the maintenance and perpetuation of these initiatives.
3. The school leadership shall ensure there are various, including anonymous, means for students and staff to report racism and other forms of discrimination.

Definitions - adapted from the Government Alliance on Race and Equity

at www.racialequityalliance.org

Anti-racism: the practice of identifying, challenging, and changing the values, structures, and behaviors that perpetuate systemic racism.

Individual racism: pre-judgment, bias, or discrimination by an individual based on race. Individual racism includes both privately held beliefs, conscious and unconscious, and external behaviors and actions towards others.

Institutional Racism : occurs within institutions and organizations, such as schools, that adopt and maintain policies, practices, and procedures that often unintentionally produce inequitable outcomes for people of color and advantages for white people.

Structural (or systemic) racism : encompasses the history and current reality of institutional racism across all institutions and society. It refers to the history, culture, ideology, and interactions of institutions and policies that perpetuate a system of inequity that is detrimental to communities of color.

This text was adapted from the Albemarle County Public Schools Policy on Antiracism, Albemarle, VA

<https://www.k12albemarle.org/acps/division/anti-racism-policy/Pages/policy.aspx>

Sources:

Important overview to help approach this commitment

<https://www.tolerance.org/magazine/antiracist-work-in-schools-are-you-in-it-for-the-long-haul>

<http://www.edchange.org/publications/Avoiding-Racial-Equity-Detours-Gorski.pdf>

Great Quotes from the Gorski article:

1. Pacing for Privilege Detour

"The hard truth is, racial equity cannot be achieved with an obsessive commitment to "meeting people where they are" when "where they are" is fraught with racial bias and privilege. Students, families, and educators experiencing racism cannot afford to wait for us to saunter toward a more serious racial equity vision. They cannot afford to wait, in particular, for all white educators to ease into racial equity commitments at a pace of our choosing while they suffer the consequences of our casualness." pg. 2

1. Poverty of Culture Detour

"The result is that we too often attribute educational disparities to students' cultures. We cannot allow racism-infused misperceptions of their cultures to justify our failure to create racially just schools. Often, we interpret racial disparities in which students are suspended or expelled, for example, not as the result of racial bias, as research shows it primarily to be (Rudd, 2014), but as a cultural defect in communities of color." pg. 58

1. Deficit Ideology Detour:

"I find the growing interest in mindfulness and trauma-informed practices compelling. But too often, these practices are adopted as though they are racial equity initiatives. In some cases, we offer students of color coping mechanisms rather than correcting in-school conditions—like inequitable policy or racially tinged tracking practices—that exacerbate racism's traumas. Our best strategy for minimizing the impact of racism is to eliminate racism. Trauma informed practices as implemented in most schools don't do that" pg. 59

"Equity initiatives should focus on eliminating conditions that marginalize students—never on fixing students of color. If we cannot describe how our efforts are eliminating those conditions, it's time for an equity overhaul." pg. 59

1. Celebrating Diversity Detour

"In my experience, many "celebrating diversity" initiatives are crafted to help white students learn about diversity—not racism, but diversity—in ways that will be most comfortable for them. In some cases, students of color are used essentially as props for the gentle diversity education of white students through activities like Diverse Friends Day. This allows white people to opt out of considering racial justice while deriving social and cultural benefits from diversity awareness. It creates the illusion of diversity appreciation while entrenching inequity." pg. 59

Equity Literacy Principles:

1. Direct Confrontation: Assessing Practices and Policies in the school that are racist
2. Redistribution: How do certain policies and practices benefit white students over students of color

3. Prioritization: Prioritize the interests of students of color “Remember that, in inequitable contexts, equality— attending equally to everybody’s interests—reproduces inequity. “ pg. 60
4. Equity Ideology: Understanding the ideology over specific strategies “ Professional development opportunities related to equity should emphasize the ideological work required to more deeply understand the dynamics of racism in society and schools. Then we can draw on those deeper understandings to build our practical approach for eliminating racism.” pg. 61
5. #fixinjusticenotkids: “Effective equity efforts focus not on fixing students of color, but on eliminating racist conditions.” pg. 61