

## Washtenaw Intermediate School District

### Educational Equity Policy

The Washtenaw Intermediate School District (WISD) Board of Education is committed to the continuous improvement of achievement for every student in Washtenaw County and to putting students first. We will hold ourselves accountable for the ways in which we are able to address the challenges of underperformance for groups of students who have been traditionally marginalized and denied access and opportunity.

The purpose of the WISD educational equity policy is to make explicit the ways in which the organization will address the challenges of systemic educational, racial, and other inequities that negatively impact the opportunity for children within our service area. As an educational service agency, the WISD is in a unique position to leverage resources, advocate for policy changes, and take action in ways that disrupt and dismantle systems that constrain the opportunities for students of color, students in poverty, and students with disabilities. It is precisely because we stand as an intermediary between the local districts and the Michigan Department of Education as well as a bridge between our local districts and other community-based and governmental partners, that the WISD is positioned to champion efforts to ensure educational equity in Washtenaw County.

In order to realize this commitment, it is the expectation of the board of education that all decisions related to resource allocation and policy development are viewed through an educational equity lens. To that end, the board adopts the following guiding questions based on the Government Alliance on Race and Equity racial equity toolkit to be used by all those in decision-making roles within the organization. The guiding questions are as follows:

- 1) What is the policy/decision under consideration? What are the desired results and outcomes?
- 2) What is the data and what does it tell us?
- 3) How have stakeholders, partners, and communities been engaged? Are there opportunities to expand engagement?
- 4) Who will benefit or be burdened? What are strategies for advancing racial equity or mitigating unintended consequences?
- 5) What is the implementation plan?
- 6) How will you ensure accountability, communicate and evaluate results?

The definitions of critical terms below will be used to ensure clarity around board expectations and decisions.

- **Equity**—ensuring each student has the supports needed to succeed in school and achieve their potential.
- **Equality**—providing each student the same level of resources and support, regardless of need.

- **Adequacy**—providing sufficient resources to allow each student to achieve state standards
- **Racial equity**— ensuring that each student has the structural support and access to resources, to ensure that their racial identity is no longer predictive of how they fare. We seek to embody questions of racial justice and social reform to address root causes of such inequities (policies, practices, attitudes and cultural messages) not just their manifestation.
- **Intersectionality**—recognizing that each individual has many different, *inextricably linked*, identities (gender, race, ethnicity, socio-economic status, etc.) we seek to ensure systems of support that acknowledge every individual’s right to self-determination and access regardless of any particular identity.
- **Cultural proficiency**— respectful understanding and cultural knowledge that is essential to teach and interact with students and colleagues from diverse backgrounds. It emphasizes on continuing self-assessment of one’s own values, beliefs and biases grounded in cultural humility, and a vigilance towards issues of power and difference.
- **Cultural responsiveness**— recognizing individual cultural backgrounds as pedagogic strengths and leveraging these cultural references and understanding to impart knowledge and empower students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically.
- **Achievement gap**—recognizing the significant and persistent disparity in academic performance or educational attainment between different groups of students, especially between groups with disparate social identities (socioeconomic status, race/ethnicity, and gender), and addressing it pro-actively and positively through thoughtful holistic reform.
- **Opportunity gap**—refers to the unequal or inequitable distribution of resources and opportunities, especially if factors such as race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, English proficiency, community wealth etc. influence access to resources and affect the educational aspirations, achievement, and attainment for certain groups of students.
- **Racial predictability**— refers to patterns of student academic achievement that can be traced to their race, ethnicity and other intersectional identities.
- **Disproportionality**-- refers to a group’s representation in a particular category that exceeds statistical expectations for that group, especially when it might signal a structural inequity or bias. It might manifest itself in an over-representation of a sub-category (race or class) among students who are high-performers or can be indicative of exclusionary discipline affecting one sub-category of students more than the others.
- **Social justice** -- is full participation in society and the balancing of benefits and burdens so that everyone has a sufficiency of well-being. Its attributes include equity in the distribution of resources, power, and access as well as in systems, structures, institutions, policies, and processes to promote and protect full human development.
- **Systemic/Structural inequities**—refers to a condition where one category of people is given an unequal status in relation to other categories of people within a society and suffer from institutionalized discrimination or injustice. Structural inequities produce unequal results for that category of people even in the absence of biased individuals.
- **Systems**— In this context, one can define societal systems as a complex arrangement of elements, including individuals and their beliefs, as they relate to a whole society. An individual school, therefore, is a system of students, teachers, administrative staff, resources, parents etc., that forms a part of the larger district-level school system that is influenced by the various actors and forces in play at the regional level.