

Letter of Information

Proposed Duluth Public Schools Education Equity Framework

Acknowledgement:

It is vitally important that we recognize the work done by countless individuals, groups, and organizations of the Duluth Public Schools and our community that has allowed us to reach this point in our efforts to provide an equitable education for all. Through all of their experience, passion, sacrifice, knowledge, and wisdom, we are able to continue the work that was started by many before us. It is our goal to honor that work with our efforts presented here to continue to move the Duluth Public Schools towards a more just and equitable education institution. In the spirit of equity, we acknowledge all of you still here and all of those no longer with us.

The Superintendent asked the Coordinator of the Office of Education Equity to assist in developing an Education Equity Framework for the Duluth Public Schools. We began this process with resources for a definition of equity and various key questions for considering equity in the decision-making process from previous work already done with the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE). Stakeholder input was vital to the process of developing a framework for our district. During this input gathering process, members of the Health in All Policies (HiAP) group expressed interest in collaborating on this important work. The results of this collaboration and work are what are presented here for your consideration.

The Definition of Equity, Ten Minnesota Commitments to Equity, and the Tool for Equity Accountability (TEA) Form are the components of the Education Equity Framework that we recommend the Duluth School Board adopt through a Resolution of Commitment. We also recognized the importance of Implementation Measures and Accountability Measures in order for the Education Equity Framework to have the desired impact on our district as we strive to provide an equitable education for all students. For this reason, we also gathered input on these two areas and developed multiple recommendations for your consideration.

We have included the “Ten Minnesota Commitments to Equity” recently adopted by MDE as guiding principles for the School Board and staff to use throughout the implementation process, and we recommend these ten commitments be made a formal part of the Resolution of Commitment for our district. We recognize that the School Board may decide to adopt some or all of the recommended measures as part of the Resolution of Commitment or indicate that the Superintendent’s Office is responsible for the development of such Implementation and Accountability Measures. We present all of this information here as resources for your consideration and determination.

We used various methods of gathering input on the components of the Framework: listening sessions with individuals and community organizations, three Think Kids input sessions, community conversations, and created an online version to receive input from staff and folks that were not able to attend the neighborhood input sessions. In our efforts to ensure getting as much input as possible, we collaborated with the HiAP group in gathering input on the components of the framework and on the drafting of the overall Framework proposed here. OEE and HiAP have met with numerous stakeholders who face the disparities identified in the Framework.

Through this process, we identified key themes and developed recommendations for implementation and accountability measures. We also gathered information by sharing the proposed definition of equity and the proposed TEA (Tool for Equity Accountability) Form. We then asked a series of questions:

- 1) How clear is the language? Would you change anything?
- 2) Who should use this (TEA Form)? (i.e. administrators, school board, principals, teachers, etc.)
- 3) How often should it be used? When should it be used?

From the input gathered, we identified *Focus Areas* on where to begin applying the proposed Education Equity Framework in our district. Below is a list of proposed *Focus Areas* to consider in the implementation process:

- Inclusive Multicultural Curriculum
- Budget Allocations
- Course Offerings
- Transportation Offerings & Scheduling
- Class-size Reduction
- Professional Development Training
- District Policies and Transparency
- Suspensions & Expulsions Reduction

We thank you for the challenging opportunity to be a part of this important work in our school district, and it is our hope that our efforts and the information provided here helps move us forward in our efforts to reach our goals of providing high quality education for all students.

Recommendations to the School Board and Administration for the adoption a Resolution of Commitment

Recommended components of the Resolution of Commitment:

Education Equity Definition: *Education equity is the condition of justice, fairness, inclusion, and cultural responsiveness in our systems of education so that all students have access to the opportunities to learn and develop to their fullest potentials. The pursuit of education equity recognizes the historical conditions and barriers that have prevented opportunity and success in learning for students based on their races, ethnicities, incomes, and other social conditions. Eliminating those structural and institutional barriers to educational opportunity requires systemic change that allows for distribution of resources, information, and other support depending on the student's situation to ensure an equitable outcome. (Adapted from the Minnesota Department of Education and Voices for Racial Justice)*

Ten Minnesota Commitments to Equity (MDE)

1. **Prioritize closing the gaps:** Set and communicate the vision and targets for closing gaps.
2. **Start from within:** Focus on your leadership team first.
3. **Measure what matters:** Make data visible, use research and talk regularly about them.
4. **Go local:** Engage and develop leaders on every level.
5. **Follow the money:** Reallocate resources to students who need them most.
6. **Start early:** Invest in students early on - learn trouble spots and establish prevention strategies.
7. **Engage more deeply:** Monitor equitable implementation of standards. Know your classrooms. Tend your community partnerships.
8. **Value people:** Focus on teachers and leaders. Hire the best people for your most vulnerable students.
9. **Improve conditions for learning:** Focus on school culture, climate and social-emotional development. Connect teaching to the experiences, knowledge and needs of students.
10. **Give students options:** Empower students with high-quality options to support every student's success.

(Adapted from the Council for Chief State School Officers and the Florida Department of Education.)

TEA Form (Tool for Equity Accountability) - this form is located on page 4 of this document

Recommendations to the School Board and Administration on Implementation and Accountability Measures

Recommended Implementation Measures:

Year 1 & 2 - School Board Members, District Administrators, and Principals implement the Framework on 3-6 Focus Areas of Decision-Making (*these Focus Areas need to be determined - see list in Letter of Information)

Year 3 & 4 - District Administrators and Principals train their staff, including CIT (Continuous Improvement Team), to understand and utilize the Framework in their decision making. Also consider adding additional Focus Areas.

Year 5 & 6 and Beyond - Continue to train additional staff to understand and utilize the Framework within their positions with the goal of a district-wide understanding of the definition and the tools

**Ensure training for any newly hired Employee in any position required to use the Framework*

The TEA Form should be utilized early-on in the decision-making process; revised, if needed, prior to the final decision; and then reviewed again later as results of the decision are being assessed.

An Equity Review Team should be developed that includes diverse representation from the following groups: district administration, principals, high school students, parents/caregivers, and community members. The Equity Review Team should meet quarterly to review the use of TEA Forms and monitor overall implementation efforts of the Education Equity Framework.

Training Opportunities should be provided for all who are required to implement the Education Equity Framework. Training topics include:

- Understanding Implicit Bias
- Equity as a Concept
- Racism and the Construct of Race
- Cultural Responsiveness
- Practice Utilizing the TEA Form
- Broadening Understanding of Oneself and Others

Recommended Accountability Measures:

Monitoring Groups:

Equity Review Team - an Equity Review Team should be developed that includes diverse representation from the following groups: district administration (someone with decision-making authority), principals, high school students, parents/caregivers, and community members. The Equity Review Team should meet quarterly to review the use of TEA Forms and monitor implementation efforts.

The Equity Review Team should be responsible for assessing the overall implementation of the Education Equity Framework on an annual or biannual (every two years) basis.

The Equity Review Team should be systematically involved in any new Policy Development and conduct a review of current policies, starting with any policies related directly to the identified *Focus Areas* of Decision-Making.

**The Equity Review Team should receive the same training as those required to implement the Framework and use the TEA Form.*

****Additional Option for Monitoring:** Each school site identifies an Equity Coordinator and TEA Team for their site that reports to their CIT (Continuous Improvement Team). This could be a separate position or an additional workload option for current staff.

Monitoring Usage:

The Equity Review Team should meet quarterly to review the use of TEA Forms and monitor implementation efforts. A feedback form should be created for the Equity Review Team to be able to give feedback on submitted TEA Forms.

Anyone should be able to access and view the submitted TEA Forms to see how equity was examined in the decision-making process for the identified *Focus Areas*.

**The overall monitoring process should be reviewed annually for effectiveness and capacity.*

TEA Form Collection / Storage:

Electronic TEA Forms should be created using a “GoogleForm,” or other web-based format, that is posted via a weblink for staff to access. The Equity Review Team members should get an email notification upon each submission of a TEA Form.

The submitted TEA Forms should be available for the district, school sites, staff, and the public to access.

Reporting Results to Stakeholders:

The district should include a report on the implementation of the Education Equity Framework and the usage of the TEA Form on an annual basis as part of the World’s Best WorkForce Annual Report.

**Additional options for reporting:

- Semester or Quarterly reports to the School Board
- A specific public presentation on the Education Equity Framework implementation and usage of the TEA Form on a semesterly or annual basis (separate from WBWF Annual Report)

CITs (Continuous Improvement Team) should make the TEA Form a part of the CNA (Comprehensive Needs Analysis) Process, and CITs should report on usage of the TEA Form for their specific building plans.