



WOODBIDGE SCHOOL DISTRICT

40 Beecher Road – South
Woodbridge, Connecticut 06525

Jonathan S. Budd, Ph.D. – Superintendent
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MEMORANDUM

TO: Woodbridge Board of Education Policy Committee

FROM: Jonathan S. Budd, Ph.D., Superintendent

DATE: June 10, 2022

RE: June 14 Special Meeting:
Proposed New Policy 0523, "Equity and Diversity"

Please find attached proposed new Policy 0523, "Equity and Diversity," which has been drafted by members of the Community & Diversity Committee based on model language from the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education (CABE).

Mission-Goals-Objectives

Equity and Diversity

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to establish a framework for educational equity for all students to ensure the elimination of bias, including institutionalized racism and cultural bias, as factors affecting student achievement and learning experiences, and to promote teaching and learning and work environments that welcome, respect, and value strength in diversity.

Equity in education is about inclusiveness and social justice and not to be used interchangeably with the principles of equality. The principle of educational equity goes beyond formal equality where students are treated the same. Instead, educational equity fosters a barrier-free environment in which all students have the opportunity to benefit equally. Equity is achieved when there is sufficient evidence that each child has a high-quality educational experience, and outcomes and successes are not predicated by a student's subgroup.

Definitions

For the purposes of this policy the following terms shall have these meanings:

- A. "Educational equity" means raising the achievement of all students while (1) narrowing the gaps between the lowest and highest performing students, and (2) eliminating the racial or cultural predictability and disproportionality of which student groups occupy the highest and lowest achievement categories including rates of graduation.
- B. "Diversity" includes characteristics of persons including, but not limited to, race, color, culture, language, creed or religion, national origin, ancestry, sex, sexual orientation, gender expression or identity, mental and physical ability, age, marital status, family structure, citizenship status, economic status, Veteran's status, and any other protected class in conformance with federal, state, and local laws.
- C. "Institutional discrimination" means the collective failure of a public or private organization, implicitly or explicitly, to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their background, identify or ability (see Item B above) which can be seen or detected in practices, processes, systems, attitudes and behavior. It looks beyond individual acts of prejudice to the systemic biases that may be built into institutions. These systemic biases discriminate against and disadvantage people through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness, or stereotyping while maintaining the privilege of others.
- D. "District staff" includes all faculty and staff, consultants, and contractors of the Woodbridge School District.

Policy

The inclusion of all students and families supports District goals to increase student engagement and academic performance.

Each child and member of the learning community deserves a respectful and affirming learning environment in which their background, identity, and ability is valued and contributes to successful academic outcomes. The responsibility for student success is shared by the Board of Education, District staff, students, families and the community. The Woodbridge School District is committed to identifying, addressing, and correcting practices and policies that perpetuate disparities, racist and oppressive practices, and institutional discrimination in all forms in order to provide all of its students with the opportunity to succeed. Learning and work environments are enriched and improved by the contributions, perspectives, and very presence of diverse participants.

The Woodbridge School District is committed to the success of every student in our school and to our mission and vision statements. Persistent achievement and opportunity gaps are unacceptable if we are to meet the goals of these statements and our moral obligations to our students, their families, and our community as a whole. These gaps are contrary to our belief that all children can learn and succeed. Adult actions must not contribute to the perpetuation of inequities that create barriers to student success. Furthermore, adult actions must concentrate on the elimination of gaps, particularly those that

are predicated on a student's background, identity, and ability, and on the assurance of educational equity between students.

The Board is committed to hiring the most qualified employees who will bring their unique talents and skills into the school system. The District shall employ staffing processes and systems that capture demographics of candidates, supporting and promoting diversity in its staff through recruitment, employment, training and retention of highly qualified employees that reflect the diversity of our students and community. It is important that all students see themselves as part of the education system. As such, the District is committed to increasing the recruitment and retention of highly qualified diverse staff.

The District shall offer opportunities for all staff to improve culturally responsive and inclusive instructional practices, curriculum, and assessments in order to increase our individual and collective capacity to effectively teach our student population. Practices, procedures, and programs that result in over or under representation of any group of students, compared to peers, shall be subject to close review to assure that such results are due to legitimate educational, social, or emotional needs. Practices that do not meet this close review shall be modified or eliminated. Teachers, administrators, and District staff shall collaborate to establish and implement researched based culturally responsive and inclusive instructional practices, curriculum, and assessments.

The District shall offer opportunities for all staff to improve their ability to serve a diverse student body and community. The District staff shall work together to increase their individual and collective capacity to effectively teach a diverse student population and serve diverse families and communities. The District shall provide professional development to staff specifically designed to strengthen employees' knowledge and skills for eliminating opportunity and achievement gaps between groups of students. The District shall seek and establish partnerships that are reviewed annually with outside agencies, organizations, and persons who have demonstrated specific expertise to assist the District in meeting its equitable education and business goals, including, but not limited to: (1) government agencies, (2) non-profit organizations, (3) businesses, and (4) other community groups that support educational equity, cultural competencies, and inclusivity.

The District is committed to promoting and providing equitable distribution of resources, opportunities, facilities, and supports, even when this means differentiating resource allocations on the basis of student needs. Resource allocation shall support the definition of educational equity adopted in this policy while complying with state and federal funding mandates.

The District shall promote the diversification of its vendor and supplier corps in accordance with law and District policy. The Board, Superintendent, and staff commit to using an equity verification protocol to ensure all future policies have a significant impact on the equitable advancement of learning and resource allocation for the success of every child. This commitment also includes conducting assessments on policies that are periodically reviewed and updated through the policy development process.

Responsibility

- A. The Board shall consider the values stated in this policy in conducting its business and in exercising its responsibilities to the people of this community.
- B. The Superintendent shall establish in accordance with this policy such plans and procedures as may be necessary and appropriate to accomplish its purpose and intent. Plans and procedures established shall include clear accountability for actions and oversight.
- C. The Superintendent shall annually report to the Board and the community regarding District performance goals on academic achievement and progress toward meeting these goals and closing the achievement gap.
- D. Families are partners with the District in a collaborative effort to address achievement and opportunity gaps.
- E. Students are partners in their academic achievement. School attendance and engagement are essential to reduce achievement and opportunity gaps that exist.
- G. The Board, Superintendent and employees will work with students and families to identify barriers to achievement and opportunities for academic success.

Legal Reference: Connecticut General Statutes

Connecticut General Statutes § 10-15c

Connecticut General Statutes § 10-153

Connecticut General Statutes § 17a-101

Connecticut General Statutes § 46a-60

Connecticut State Board of Education “Position Statement on Culturally Responsive Education” adopted May 4, 2011

Title VII, Civil Rights Act, 42 U.S.C. 2000e, et seq.

29 CFR 1604.11, EEOC Guidelines on Sex Discrimination

Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972, 20 U.S.C. 1681 et seq.

34 CFR § 106.8(b), OCR Guidelines for Title IX

Definitions, OCR Guidelines on Sexual Harassment, Fed. Reg. Vol. 62, #49, 29 CFR § 1606.8 (a) 62 Fed Reg. 12033 (March 13, 1997) and 66 Fed. Reg. 5512 (January 19, 2001)

Section 8525, ESEA as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act

Meritor Savings Bank. FSB v. Vinson, 477 U.S. 57 (1986)

Faragher v. City of Boca Raton, No. 97-282 (U.S. Supreme Court, June 26, 1998)

Gebbs v. Lago Vista Indiana School District, No. 99-1866, (U.S. Supreme Court, June 26, 1998)

Davis v. Monroe County Board of Education, No. 97-843, (U.S. Supreme Court, May 24, 1999)

The Vietnam Era Veterans’ Readjustment Act of 1974, as amended, 38 U.S.C § 4212

Title II of the General Information Nondiscrimination Act of 2008

The Americans with Disabilities Act as amended by the ADA Amendments Act of 2008

Public Law 111-256

Meacham v. Knolls Atomic Power Laboratory, 128 S.Ct. 2395, 76 U.S.L.W. 4488 (2008)

Federal Express Corporation v. Holowecki, 128 S.Ct. 1147, 76 U.S.L.W. 4110 (2008)

Kentucky Retirement Systems v. EEOC, 128 S.Ct. 2361, 76 U.S.L.W. 4503 (2008)

Sprint/United Management Co. v. Mendelsohn, 128 S.Ct. 1140, 76 U.S.L.W. 4107 (2008)

Policy Adopted:

WOODBRIIDGE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Woodbridge, Connecticut