

District 102 Equity Policy

It is every student's right to see themselves, their history, and their culture reflected through their educational experience.

Purpose

We envision a district where achievement is no longer predictable by identity such as race, age, sex, body type, gender expression, gender identity, skin-color, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, language, culture, sexual orientation, nation of origin/citizenship, religion/spirituality, and disability. We recognize that institutional barriers and racism, cultural biases, and sociological constructs of race and power play a role within the District in student learning and achievement. We acknowledge that while our instructional tiers are intended to support and challenge all students to reach their full potential, that our Black students are disproportionately overrepresented in the Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) and underrepresented in the Talent Development (TD) programs, demonstrating that there is work to do in order to achieve institutional parity and equity. By outlining our commitment to inclusivity and equity, we hope to foster our rich and diverse district community and ensure each and every student has access to the best educational opportunities to reach their full potential.

The District enacts this policy to create a framework that holds every student, everyday, without exception, to high and rigorous expectations while identifying and providing adequate support and the scaffolding required for all students to achieve their full potential. To uncover inequities and assess our current practices, District 102 developed the Committee for Equitable Minority Achievement (CEMA), employed data analysis, and conducted surveys as well as an equity audit among the District's stakeholders. Through these methods we acknowledge that there are breakdowns in our support for students from culturally and racially diverse backgrounds and a deep need to renew a commitment to support these students for the betterment of the District as a whole as we pursue excellence.

Core Beliefs and Guiding Principles

In order to ensure understanding and consensus among stakeholders it is critically important to define the terms pertaining to our mission and vision.

- **Bias** can be defined as a strong inclination of the mind or a preconceived opinion about something or someone. A bias may be favorable or unfavorable: bias in favor of or against an idea.
- **Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy** is an approach to teaching that aims to help students develop a positive cultural identity while teaching core curriculum with the goal of preparing students to live in an increasingly diverse, global world by supporting multilingualism and multiculturalism in practice and perspective for students and teachers.

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- **Culturally Responsive Pedagogy** is a student-centered approach to teaching in which the students' unique cultural strengths are identified and nurtured to promote student achievement and a sense of well-being about the student's cultural place in the world
- **Discrimination** is defined as prejudicial or otherwise unjust treatment of individuals or groups of people based on race, age, sex, body type, gender expression, gender identity, skin-color, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, language, culture, sexual orientation, nation of origin/citizenship, religion/spirituality, disability, or any other trait they may possess.
- **Diversity** is defined as the recognition, appreciation, and celebration of our differences.
- **Equality** is defined as having the same, or equal, social status, quality, measure, esteem or value. We believe that all members of the District community are entitled to equality in the way they are treated and held in esteem by one another.
- **Equity** is defined as the absence of avoidable or remediable differences among groups of people achieved by providing all with resources and opportunities that fit their circumstances.
- **Implicit bias** refers to *unconscious* attitudes, reactions, stereotypes, and categories that affect behavior and understanding.
- **Inclusivity** is defined as embracing, honoring and celebrating the wide array of differences among us including, but not limited to, race, age, sex, body type, gender expression, gender identity, color, socioeconomic class, ethnicity, language, culture, sexual orientation, nation of origin/citizenship, religion/spirituality, and disability.
- **Intercultural skills** are those required to communicate, or share information, with people from other cultures and social groups.

LaGrange District 102's Strategic Plan outlines our core beliefs, supports and guides our efforts to promote an equitable and inclusive learning environment that celebrates the voices, experiences and cultures of each and every student in our classrooms. The District is guided by the belief that it is critical to acknowledge our diversity and capitalize on our differences in order to foster students' intercultural skills. This will strengthen and enrich the overall learning experience for all children. *See the District's Strategic Plan for the Core Beliefs statement.*

The District has identified guiding principles listed here that ensure our practices align with those core beliefs outlined above. Fundamentally, the District's decisions are vetted through careful processes that are:

- Student and family-centered;
- Growth-mindset oriented and encompassing;
- Inclusive of all voices;
- Equitable to all stakeholders;
- Thoroughly tested and considered along with current research;
- In line with current practices of Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

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Goals

In an attempt to identify the District's areas of need in regards to improving equitable education, CEMA subcommittees were established to examine 5 aspects of the district's operations: (1) Family and Community Engagement, (2) Policy, (3) Professional Development, (4) Recruitment and Retention, (5) Tiered Instruction and Talent Development. In order to ensure all stake-holders and diverse groups are considered in each step of the District's endeavors, that our resources are allocated in the way that will fairly address all student needs, and that we outline commitments to equitable practices in each of these specific goal areas aligned with the district's Strategic Plan:

Student Development

Goal: We commit to closing existing achievement gaps by developing instructional models based on student interests and needs. In order to achieve this goal we commit to maintaining high expectations for student achievement and quality instruction that are clearly conveyed to students and families and are free of discrimination.

The District strives to ensure all students regardless of racial identity or skin color, receive a diverse, relevant, rigorous and integrated curriculum based on recognized standards that provide the skills necessary to thrive in elementary school, secondary school, and beyond. The District recognizes the necessity for clear, consistent communication with families and staff regarding the existence of instructional tier programs, their entry and exit criteria, and student progress and participation. There is also a need to ensure that our instruction models provide customized learning tools and opportunities for each student to achieve and grow to the best of their ability. By committing to these practices, the District will ensure equitable access to these educational supports for all children.

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Culture and Relationship

Goal: We commit to engage families and the community by eliminating barriers to access, in particular those related to culture, socioeconomic status, and language. We commit to identifying equitable practices that will improve engagement with all families and diverse community stakeholders.

The District recognizes the critical need to develop strong ties between the school and local communities, the need to ensure a positive, safe, and inclusive learning environment for all students, and the need to create a mindset of continuous improvement throughout the District.

Exemplary Employees

Goal: We commit to supporting staff retention and ensuring job satisfaction for a diverse and inclusive workforce. In order to tackle the need to broaden the diversity of our staff the district must take an active role in the community for promoting our values of diversity and inclusivity. This includes, but is not limited to coaching, mentoring, and providing leadership opportunities as applicable.

The District recognizes that it is critical for all students to see themselves reflected in the role models around them. We also recognize our responsibility to ensure the highest quality instruction possible at all levels and subject areas. Thus, the District accepts the responsibility to develop best practices to support the hiring of a diverse, effective and competent staff. Recruitment strategies will be required to address problems such as limited geographical and internal diversity.

Goal: We commit to facilitating open, candid, and challenging discussions among faculty and staff to promote a deeper understanding and create space for improvement.

We acknowledge that a lack of foundational understanding of equity, inclusivity, and diversity has resulted in uncertainty around teacher and community buy-in. We accept our responsibility to provide ongoing professional development in the areas of bias and culturally responsive teaching, and to include adequate time for feedback and self- reflection.

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Process and Financials

Goal: We commit to an equitable budgetary process.

The District can achieve this by prioritizing the necessary resources to pursue the goals outlined within this policy. By ensuring that allocations for funding these resources are subject to rigorous standards of inclusivity we can ensure that students receive complete, diverse, and culturally responsive and culturally sustaining education.

Our Commitment

This document outlines the District's commitment to achieve equitable access to education for all, guided by the goals outlined herein and to keep equitable considerations at the forefront of any action the District may take in the future. It is a promise to all stakeholders that the District will provide the necessary resources and practices to achieve equity for all of our students, families, and staff. The District commits to developing a plan for implementation of this policy document to include:

- A committee comprised of teachers and administrators to identify strategies and objectives for implementation;
- Benchmarks for accountability to measure achievement of these goals;
- Aggressive timelines to ensure the urgent and lasting adoption of equitable and inclusive practices;
- Clear and equitable communication to all stakeholders regarding the pursuit of these goals