



Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in Our Schools

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Why Now?

“We have also come to this hallowed spot to remind America of the fierce urgency of now. This is no time to engage in the luxury of cooling off or to take the tranquilizing drug of gradualism. Now is the time to rise from the dark and desolate valley of segregation to the sunlit path of racial justice. Now is the time to open the doors of opportunity to all of God's children. Now is the time to lift our nation from the quicksands of racial injustice to the solid rock of brotherhood (and sisterhood).”

Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.
“I Have a Dream” Speech

Why Now?

- Kentucky's schools should be safe havens where **all students and staff** – regardless of their race, color, religion, gender, sexual orientation, gender expression or identity, national origin, or ability – feel safe, respected and welcomed.
- KDE wants to support and assist all school entities in their diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) efforts.
- KDE wants to lead the charge for DEI and establish a culture that does not accept any type of achievement gaps.



Part I: KDE's Commitment to Diversity, Equity & Inclusion

- KDE has identified four priorities in its Strategic Plan: **Equity, Achievement, Collaboration** and **Integrity**.
- [In July, the Kentucky Board of Education affirmed its commitment to racial equity and racial justice in all schools in a resolution stating, in part:](#)
 - Educational leaders must embrace diversity, assure equity and shape the future of all of Kentucky's children
 - Every student in the Commonwealth deserves equitable access to excellent educators who have unique experiences and perspectives, quality preparation and are committed to the success of all learners
 - Educators, schools and districts must commit to listening to those seeking to be heard and to ensure young people of color feel valued and safe in school and the community.

Part II: Where Are We Now?

- Acknowledgement that our teachers, principals, support staff and superintendents are facing some of the **most difficult challenges** in the history of education – heightened bipartisan politics, racial tension and uncertainty of new educational policies in Washington, D.C.
- How do we take care of the **social and emotional needs of our students, staff and administrators** during this time?

Where Are We Now?

- Ensuring we are utilizing the resources of professional staff (counselors, psychologists and social workers) as well as community partners
- Building true comprehensive school counseling programs that are preventive vs. reactive. Most of our school mental health practitioners should be in tier 1 vs. tiers 2 and 3.
- Working with the Department for Behavioral Health, Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities to educate schools on interconnected systems frameworks and asset mapping
- Acknowledging that **diversity, equity, inclusion** and **social emotional learning** are all drivers within our curriculum – they should go hand in hand with teaching and learning.
- Building awareness that societal issues that impact our communities also impact our schools. Our success in addressing these issues is directly related to our ability to **collaborate** and **work together as a community**.

Part III: KDE's On-going Equity-related Initiatives

- ***Kentucky Academic Standards Implementation***
 - Ensure equitable access to grade-level appropriate learning for all students.
- **Council of Chief State School Officers' High-Quality Instructional Resources Professional Learning Project**
 - Equip and empower local schools in evaluating, selecting and providing access to high-quality instructional resources to support all students with engaging, relevant, standards-aligned grade-level assignments.
- **Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) Cross-Agency KDE Project**
 - Establish guidance on a MTSS framework to help schools and districts provide equitable services, instruction, intervention practices and resources designed to meet the needs of the whole child (**academic, behavioral, social and emotional learning**).
- **Equitable Practices/Policy Scan**
 - Seek feedback from local superintendents, principals, district staff, instructional staff, students, parents, school board members and community members on equitable practices already in place in school districts, such as an equity and inclusion action plan. **We will continue to seek input to further this difficult work.**
- **Funding for the Kentucky Academy for Equity in Teaching**
 - The proposed program will be dedicated not only to the recruitment of minority teachers, but also the retention of minority educators to the profession.

Part III: KDE's On-going Equity-related Initiatives (cont.)

- Speaking to district and school leaders about addressing disproportionality in special education and ensuring access to high-rigor courses like Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, Cambridge International and dual credit for all students
- Speaking to district and school leaders about common obstacles that prevent this access (e.g. lack of access to Algebra 1 in 8th grade, outdated policies, over reliance on test scores, inadequate parent/caregiver input and most importantly, improving preschool education)
- Engaging in its own continuous improvement through professional learning opportunities with national experts, such as Dr. Roger Cleveland
- Investigating how to marshal and reallocate KDE's assets and expertise to ensure every child in the Commonwealth has the resources, teachers, interventions and support they need to be successful in school and life

Part III: KDE's On-going Equity-related Initiatives (cont.)

- KDE is also committed to ...
 - Providing sample language that schools/districts can adapt and use
 - Creating surveys/scan for district/school employees, students and families about equitable practices in each school that are working or needed; pull out questions from existing surveys (ex: Panorama Impact Survey - educating all student indicator) to show growth in equity over time; choose mandatory survey; use advisory/steering committee to create suggested items to add; create equity action plan exemplars
 - Encouraging equity to be embedded in each school district's strategic plan
 - Facilitating professional development opportunities for districts to share what is working and to share ideas to create better outcomes for what may not be working
 - Pointing to innovative research that will further our work in the Commonwealth
 - Providing access to high-quality, standards aligned instructional resources to ensure equitable access to learning (Council of Chief State School Officers)

Part IV: More Courageous Conversations

- There is a lack of understanding among stakeholders of what **equity, equality** and **inclusivity** mean in our schools.
- How do we have **courageous conversations**, create **common ground to create support** for all students **and broaden the definition** of diversity?
- How do we ensure that **students see themselves** in the curriculum?

Equity: Respecting each student's culture and providing each student the resources he or she needs to be successful. **A call for equity does not implicitly suggest racism.**

Equality: Treating every student in the same manner, irrespective of differences and assuming all of us have bootstraps.

Inclusivity: All stakeholders have a voice in the educational process; critical pedagogy

A meritocracy suggests that all students, “Just pull up your bootstraps.”



Opportunity
~~THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP~~

Black and traditionally marginalized students often didn't get a pair of boots ...

Race-Based Stress and Trauma

- Conversations about **racial trauma** and **implicit bias** are needed across Kentucky regardless of the racial makeup in our schools, districts or communities, because such events impact us all and we must address their emotional and traumatic consequences.
- In June, [“Guidance on How Districts Can Facilitate Conversations About Race- based Stress and Trauma,”](#) was prepared by the Kentucky Department of Education’s cross-agency Trauma and Resilience Team, in partnership with colleagues from the Kentucky Department for Behavioral Health, Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities.

Part V: Creation of an Equity Tool Kit

- KDE's racial toolkit will provide districts and schools with resources like:
 - Support on how to utilize a multi-tiered system of support that connects to equity
 - Equity data assessments and equity scorecards
 - Guidance on how districts and schools can facilitate courageous conversations about race
 - Guidance about the connection between social and emotional learning and conversations about race
 - Resources that help educators choose inclusive curricula
 - Resources that help ensure new policies do not oppress or discriminate against traditionally marginalized students
 - Unconscious bias training: a research-informed series of cultural competency and equity trainings modules

It's Up to Us

- It's up to us to examine our privilege and implicit biases.
- By doing so, educators can reflect on where they are and decide where they want to go.
- Just a few words of caution. This will take ...



Part VI: Statewide Equity and Inclusion Scan

- When you look at your building(s), what are some existing equitable practices, with an emphasis in racial equity, inclusion and diversity?
- What do you have that already is in place?
- Does your district have an Equity and Inclusion Action Plan or is equity included in your district's strategic plan?

Google Form: KDE Equity & Inclusion Scan



In order to know how we can help, we need your feedback.



What systems do you currently have in place?



How can we best support you in creating a more inclusive learning environment for all students?



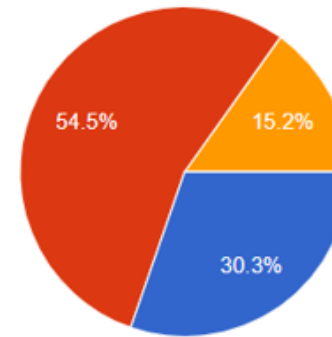
Our goal: Share and discuss results from this Google Form with you during my presentation at the Kentucky Association of School Superintendents conference on Dec. 8.

Equity and Inclusion Scan

- In a question about whether your school or district currently has an Equity and Inclusion Plan, 54.5% of respondents said no.
- In another question asking whether equity is included in your district's strategic plan, 33.3% of respondents said no.
- More than 51% of respondents said equity is included in their district's strategic plan.

Do you currently have an Equity and Inclusion Action Plan?

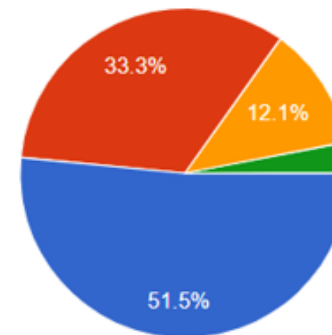
33 responses



- Yes, my district has an Equity and Inclusion Action Plan
- No, my district does not have an Equity and Inclusion Action Plan
- I don't know if my district has an Equity and Inclusion Action Plan

Is Equity included in your district's strategic plan?

33 responses



- Yes, equity is included in my district's strategic plan
- No, equity is not included in my district's strategic plan
- I don't know if my district has an Equity and Inclusion Action Plan
- I don't know if my district does has an Equity and Inclusion Action Plan

What Do Our Stakeholders Say They Want/Need?

- Most of our students are White and need exposure to more diversity and assistance with unintentional biases.
- Show us models of best practices, include more than race or ethnicity.
- Provide us with guidance and resources, real resources, to help us to make an equitable and rigorous learning environment a reality for our students.
- Continue to take feedback on this issue and hold meetings with teachers, staff and families.

*It's up to all of us to
advance equity and
racial justice in our
nation's schools.*

