

# **DRAFT Equity Policy 2021** (Revised w/ Board Member Comments 11/10/21)

## **Purpose**

The policy is to ensure that ALL students are provided opportunities to receive the skills, knowledge, and understanding to succeed according to their individual abilities in higher education, careers, life readiness, and the community. Sarasota County School District employees and partners operate from and are accountable to the equity standards set forth in this policy consistent with all applicable U.S. Constitutional rights, civil rights, federal and state privacy laws, rules, and regulations.

This policy promotes diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging within the school district community with respect to race, color, national or ethnic origin, language, culture, gender, sex, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, religious and spiritual beliefs, age (except as authorized by law), political beliefs, marital status, handicapping condition(s), social and family background, or physical and learning abilities.

## **Definitions**

- a. *Educational equity* – An educational system that ensures that all students have access to the opportunities, resources and educational rigor they need throughout their educational career to maximize academic success and social emotional well-being. The educational system views each student's individual characteristics as valuable. These characteristics include but are not limited to ability (cognitive, social emotional and physical), ethnicity, family structure, gender identity and expression, language, race, religion, sexual orientation, and socioeconomics.
- b. *Equity lens* – A process for analyzing or diagnosing the impact of the design and implementation of policies as it relates to underperforming student groups, to identify and eliminate barriers.
- c. *Culturally responsive instructional practices* – involve recognizing and incorporating the assets and strengths all students bring into the classroom, and ensuring that learning experiences, from curriculum through assessment, are relevant to all students.
- d. *Belonging* – The feeling of security, support, and validation for all people when there is a sense of acceptance, inclusion, identity and fair treatment within an environment (i.e., school, classroom, or work).
- e. *Dignity* - The right of a person to be valued, honored, and respected for their own sake, and to be treated ethically.

## **Desired Outcomes**

Sarasota County Schools is committed to ensuring equal and equitable opportunity and access to our classrooms, programs, services, and resources.

## **Professional Learning**

- a. The District will ensure that professional learning and educator resources include a focus on creating inclusive learning environments in which all students and families have a sense of belonging by honoring the dignity of each person.
- b. The District will provide opportunities for all Sarasota County School District personnel to complete professional development and learning experiences that build personal, professional, and organizational capacity to understand the impact of educational equity and inequity within our district.
- c. The District will provide evidence-based professional learning with a focus on understanding and teaching diverse populations using an equity lens. Administrators and teachers will collaborate to develop and implement culturally responsive instructional practices that are effective for students of all backgrounds and abilities.

## **District-Wide Student Support**

- d. The District will continue to have high expectations for all students and strive to close the achievement gap by accelerating the learning of the lower performing students through its commitment to allocating and aligning resources, interventions, and programs to student needs as indicated within the strategies and metrics of Goals 1 and 2 of the Strategic Plan.
- e. The District will provide leadership that is committed to identifying and working to bring resolutions to disparities and disproportionalities in practices to positively impact the academic and social emotional success of all students and staff.
- f. The District will select and develop instructional materials that are historically accurate and represent the experiences of the diverse school community in accordance with FS1003. 42.
- g. The District will ensure that the students and families have access to the information necessary for them to successfully navigate the school system, including access to information about resources, opportunities, and policies in appropriate languages and trainings for students and families.

## **Data**

- h. The District, through the analysis of FLDOE Educational Equity Update Report, and systemwide disaggregated district data, will identify and address systemic deficiencies that create gaps in academic achievement, as well as any disproportionality in student discipline and placement in special education programs, and disparities in access to gifted and accelerated coursework including AICE, IB, and AP programs. Results will be communicated in a transparent and accessible manner to all stakeholders, and a plan will be developed to mitigate and specifically address inequities.
- i. The District will continuously examine its practices, policies and procedures to understand the impact on existing outcome disparities and develop solutions so that every student and staff member is able to thrive.

## **Recruitment, Retention, and Hiring**

- j. The District will continuously reevaluate recruitment procedures, update job descriptions, and strive to recruit and retain highly qualified administrators, teachers, and support staff who reflect the racially and culturally diverse community of Sarasota County Schools, as mandated by the FLDOE Educational Equity Update Report, and as defined in the strategies and metrics of Goal 3 within the Strategic Plan.

## **Community Partners**

- k. The District will encourage and develop collaborative partnerships with families, students, and communities to continuously examine issues related to inequity in our schools and district.
- l. The District will provide ongoing and open communication to keep all stakeholders informed of the District's strategic plan and progress toward embedding equity and cultural competence in educational practices.

## **Equity Committee**

- m. The District's Equity Committee will work collaboratively with the Director of Innovation and Equity to address concerns with respect to equity, diversity and inclusion issues within the school district. The Equity Committee will represent school community concerns related to equal and equitable educational opportunities and serve as liaison between parents/students/community members and the school district relative to equity issues/concerns. The Equity Committee is comprised of parents, students, representatives of community organizations, retired educators, and staff. Members of the Equity Committee represent the diverse school population and will serve a maximum three-year term, alternating the start of term limits to maintain historical integrity of the Equity Committee.
- n. The Equity Policy will be annually reviewed, updated, and approved as needed in the Spring with implementation July 1 of the subsequent school year.

**SCS possible policy # and area:**

Chapter 2 School Board Governance and Operating  
Policy Number 2.73

F.S. 1000.05 Florida Educational Equity Act  
Title IX of the Educational Amendment Act  
Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964  
Title III of the NO Child Left Behind Act of 2001