Strategies to Support Equitable Learning Environments for Administrators

(Please see the introductory topic brief for all school staff)

What Works	STRATEGIES AND PRACTICES THAT ADMINISTRATORS CAN ENACT
Share vision and expectations for equity	Establish a clear, schoolwide (and ideally districtwide) vision for equitable learning and development. Begin by revisiting your school's vision, mission and core values and revise as needed to reflect your commitment to equity. Where possible, co-construct your vision for equity with diverse stakeholders in your school community. Communicate any changes with all stakeholders along with an understanding of how it will drive everyone's work in their respective roles. Hold all stakeholders accountable for doing the work needed to realize this schoolwide vision. Click here for a leadership guide on equity.
Incorporate equity as part of strategic and comprehensive school plan(s)	-Develop an equity leadership team or task force to lead and monitor school strategic efforts to address issues and concerns, or improve aspects of the school building and learning environment. Critically reflect on your school's equity plan and hold staff accountable for their part in the work (click here for more a webinar on creating a blueprint for action). Coordinate closely, or consider merging, with school improvement teams, Schoolwide Positive Behavior and Intervention teams, Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) teams, etc. -Collect data that help to amplify diverse voices in your school community in ways that are culturally relevant and empowering. For instance, rather than relying solely on survey data, consider alternative modes of data collection that some may find easier to use or would feel more comfortable engaging in, like focus groups. Elicit feedback from students and community members about best ways of collecting data. When possible, systematically disaggregate and analyze data for potential disparities. Engage staff and community members in responsible data analysis and literacy to avoid harmful use of data. -Use data to create a plan with goals, actions, and benchmarks for success, then implement the plan while carefully monitoring for unintended consequences, such as students of color feeling isolated or targeted instead of supported. Review how different resources (financial or otherwise) are allocated and be mindful of who is implementing each step. Finally, re-evaluate your plan to consider what could be done better and adjust as needed. Click here for an example of a district equity strategy plan.
Revise code of conduct and disciplinary practices	Examine school and district policies, practices, and structures for potential bias (click here for an example), and examine disciplinary data to check for disproportionate punishment of students from certain identity groups. Policies and codes of conduct may be written in ways that are intended to promote fair treatment of all students, but it is up to school staff to ensure they are being applied in ways that are fair and just. Be intentional in helping to eliminate prejudices that lead to more disciplinary practices for certain students. Embrace and promote the use of restorative practices that are more empathetic and student-centered rather than punitive practices like suspensions. Apply existing state and federal anti-discrimination laws, as needed.
Establish equity-focused participatory action-research initiatives	Provide opportunities for students to explore current and critical research and best practices related to creating equitable and anti-racist learning environments. Students will gain knowledge all while feeling empowered to become change agents who can make a difference in their community.
Provide additional support for learning	Provide and support schoolwide structures and interventions to help under-achieving students accelerate into more rigorous curricula and courses (i.e., honors and advanced placement) as well as in career and technical education programs. Support school teachers and staff in revising or developing new curricula that are culturally-sustaining and engaging to motivate and empower student learning and growth.
Provide trauma and mental health supports	Intergenerational trauma is part of the experience of many of students and staff of color and those from other identity groups. For students specifically, trauma can negatively affect educational achievement and result in disruptive behaviors. It is important to provide resources and supports that promote emotional well-being and mental health to students and staff in the school community. It is also important that your school be "trauma-sensitive."

What Works	STRATEGIES AND PRACTICES THAT ADMINISTRATORS CAN ENACT
Engage in equity-informed hiring and promotion practices	Establish policies and provide resources to support the hiring and professional development of staff of color and those from other traditionally underrepresented groups. Refrain from placing added responsibilities and burdens on staff based on identity or membership in a particular group (i.e., asking staff of color to "deal" with students of color or to teach others about racism) as this can lead to burn out and lower staff retention rates. Ensure that *all* staff are seen and treated as valuable members of the community. Support staff who have the mindsets and skills to build equitable and effective learning environments.
Affirm, support, and empower staff	Create a professional setting where staff members feel their unique qualities and experiences are embraced and accepted (i.e., in the ways they dress and wear their hair). Ensure staff from traditionally underrepresented groups are given leadership roles and the space to safely approach administration with concerns. This requires that administration be deliberate in building strong relationships with staff. For teachers specifically, autonomy in the classroom is important. Teachers should be given discretion in how they teach their classes and the content they cover provided all students are held to a high standard for mastery.
Provide professional development on equity-related topics	Provide professional development and training opportunities to assess baseline understanding and mindset related to educational equity and implicit bias to all staff, including support staff, bus drivers, paraprofessionals, maintenance staff, district personnel, etc. Provide additional, ongoing support and training on topics related to structural inequality and restorative justice. Be mindful of students' and their families' feelings and experiences with school personnel (i.e., School Resource Officers, teachers, disciplinarians, etc.) and ensure that school personnel are trained to be culturally responsible and are following best practices so that students and families feel safe and are treated fairly.
Engage families and community in efforts and share resources	Co-design and organize community-building activities that foster mutual trust, understanding, and appreciation of different cultures. Share information and resources with families and community partners in support of student learning and development. Provide opportunities to engage families in courageous conversations and elicit their support and feedback in developing the conditions for equity and excellence. For instance, engage families of color in dialogue and the creation of strategies and allow them to be partners in school planning and decision-making processes. This work requires appropriate care and cultural competency. Consider additional coaching and consultation with outside experts and organizations.

Note: This brief is for informational purposes only. The information, practices and resources linked may not represent the opinions, claims, or recommendations of the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) or Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey