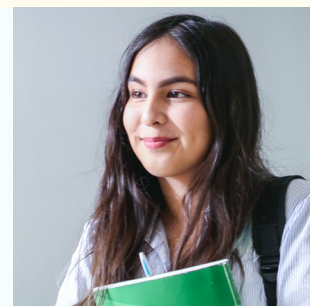
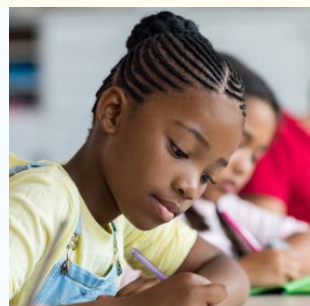


RESOURCE GUIDE TO DEVELOPING A SCHOOL EQUITY PLAN:

*A Template to Operationalize
Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in
Michigan's K-12 Education System*



In September of 2020, the Michigan Civil Rights Commission released a comprehensive report, ***Education Equity in Michigan***, describing inequities in Michigan's K-12 education system and detailing recommendations to make educational equity a priority in Michigan schools. MCRC recommended that the Michigan Department of Civil Rights expand its existing **Council for Government and Education on Equity and Inclusion**, a body established to engage in statewide dialogue on creating and sustaining diverse, equitable, and inclusive opportunities for people in Michigan, to include representatives of the Michigan Department of Education. The Council serves as the entity responsible for actualizing the report's recommendations for action.

Beginning in January 2021, the Council met with the purpose of reviewing the report's recommendations, including the development of a statewide educational equity plan to enhance policies, accountability and opportunities for all Michigan K-12 schools, students and educators. Over a seven-month period, the Council created the ***Resource Guide to Developing a School Equity Plan***.

The Michigan Civil Rights Commission and the Michigan Department of Civil Rights sincerely thank the Council for their commitment to making this resource guide a priority. We extend a special thank you to **Alfredo Hernandez, MDCR Director of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion**, for his leadership throughout the development of this guide. We also acknowledge the outstanding work of **Theodora Vorias, MDCR DEI Intern and 2021 University of Michigan graduate**, who spent countless hours researching and co-writing the guide.

As with other materials in the MDCR Tool Kit, this ***Resource Guide to Developing a School Equity Plan*** is offered as a descriptive document that can be adapted to meet the needs of the user. It is our hope that this template provides a means to achieve equitable outcomes for students across the board and provides an avenue for using an equity lens to review policies, practices, and procedures within Michigan's K-12 education system.

Stacie Clayton, Chair
Michigan Civil Rights Commission

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SECTION 1 - INTRODUCTION

“Effective School Equity Plans are designed to achieve equitable outcomes for students across the board and provide an avenue for using an equity lens to review all policies, practices, and procedures within school systems.”

- Education Equity in Michigan, Michigan Civil Rights Commission

Why is There a Need for a School Equity Plan?

In September 2020, the Michigan Civil Rights Commission issued the [Education Equity in Michigan Report](#) based on the findings from a series of statewide education hearings held from May 2018 to March 2019. The Commission heard insightful testimony from community members, students, school administrators, subject matter experts, and advocacy groups. The speakers presented key issues that are contributing to disparities and inequities in Michigan’s K-12 education system, such as inadequate textbooks, racial and economic bias, and deteriorating learning spaces. Subsequently, the Commission developed a wide-ranging education report aimed at assessing how past and current policies have resulted in the problems Michigan schools are facing.

A significant finding in the report concluded that a comprehensive school equity plan can enhance policies, accountability and opportunities to achieve equitable outcomes for students across the board. The report also found other key issues impacting the varying levels of achievement, success, and opportunities among Michigan students. They include:

- Lack of access to early childhood education
- Varying degrees of parental involvement
- Funding based on declining enrollment that leaves schools grossly underfunded
- Food insecurity among students and their families
- Lack of specialized instruction, after school, and summer programs
- Lack of qualified and experienced minority teachers

With the support of the Michigan Department of Civil Rights' Council for Government and Education on Equity and Inclusion, this template aims to provide principals, superintendents, and educators with the guidance necessary to increase equity in schools and works to ensure institutional and structural barriers to success are dismantled.

The Commission stands behind the notion that education is not only a civil right, but also the key foundation for preparing Michigan students for successful integration into the workforce and to be informed and productive citizens.

What are the Major Equity Gaps Among Michigan Students and Schools?

The 1977 Elliot-Larsen Civil Rights Act (ELCRA) states in Article 1, Section 102 that:

“The opportunity to obtain employment, housing, and other real estate, and the full and equal utilization of public accommodations, public service, and educational facilities without discrimination because of religion, race, color, national origin, age, sex, height, weight, familial status, or marital status as prohibited by this act, is recognized and declared to be a civil right.”

However, as the Commission recognized throughout its educational hearings, the independent nature of Michigan's education system has contributed to equity gaps among students and schools. Most importantly, the Commission's report provides evidence that *Michigan's current education system is not providing all students with an equal opportunity to effectively succeed in life*, since the disparities in educational outcomes and student success, known also as [equity gaps](#), are deeply rooted in differences based on race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, gender, sexual orientation, national origin and primary language, and physical and mental abilities.

Major equity gaps in Michigan, as identified in the Commission's report, include teacher diversity, culturally inclusive curriculum, student achievement due to lack of adequate funding and specialized instruction, absenteeism, varying levels of parental involvement, food insecurity, and quality of educational supplies and qualified teachers.



SECTION 2 - CREATING AN EQUITY PLAN

Although the design, needs, and implementation strategies will vary based on a school's geographic location, demographics of the school and its surrounding communities, socioeconomic factors, and more, some integral parts to creating an equity plan that is rooted in racially conscious and culturally competent steps include:

- Vision and mission
- Goals and outcomes
- Terms and definitions
- Organizational structure

This equity template uses the findings from the Commission's report, as well as equity plans created by schools and districts across the state of Michigan and the country. Instrumental to an effective equity plan is implementing an [equity lens](#) to ensure that equity is at the forefront of all decision-making processes for designing and executing the vision, mission, goals, and desired outcomes of the plan.

While developing an equity plan, it is crucial that the stakeholders are identified at the beginning of the development process and are engaged at every step. Engaging stakeholders through the development of an equity plan ensures that there is a shared understanding of the communities being served, including their identities, cultures, and experiences.

[Targeted Universalism](#) is an approach developed by Dr. John Powell at the Haas Institute for a Fair and Inclusive Society that provides a framework for minimizing resistance and undesired outcomes while maximizing opportunities to achieve our goals. Through a targeted universalism framework, an equity plan can create shared universal goals for all members of a school community and establish short- and long-term targeted solutions that support the different groups within the community in achieving those goals.

Vision and Mission

Creating an explicit commitment to equity in schools is integral to developing a strong vision and mission. Developing a strong vision and mission can help create a shared understanding among educators and stakeholders of how to design and implement their equity plan. Making a public commitment to equity in education without an equity plan often falls short of producing tangible results. Because of that, aligning the vision and mission of an equity plan with goals is necessary for reaching measurable outcomes.

Vision and Mission in Action: Chicago Public Schools

[The CPS Equity Framework](#) (Chicago Public Schools) provides a framework for developing an equity plan and can help schools as they begin to create a vision and mission statement. The Framework identifies three key questions schools should ask themselves as they begin to build an equity plan:

1. Why do differences in achievement, educational experiences, and outcomes persist for some student groups?
2. What can each of us do to advance equity in CPS?
3. How can we increase transparency and engagement, resulting in better, sustainable outcomes and productive relationships?

To answer those questions, CPS advises to first identify the stakeholders and then engage them in the conversation and creation of the vision and mission statement. CPS identifies the key stakeholders as the students, parents, educators, external partners, and community members. This list can serve as a foundation for schools to identify stakeholders in their own communities. Additionally, the CPS Equity Framework strengthened its vision and mission by first recognizing the why, what, and how of their equity plan. Doing so through an equity lens can ensure that the vision and mission identify students' needs and outline clear targets for their equity plan.

The CPS Equity Framework includes an “Action Roadmap” that schools can use to guide them through the process of reconstructing practices to implement high impact solutions and eliminate inequities.

Vision and Mission in Action: Seattle Public Schools

The following vision and mission statements from [Seattle Public Schools Department of Racial Equity Advancement](#) can serve as an example for schools as they begin to develop their equity plans:

- **Vision:** Educational excellence through racial equity in every school. Our department leads the district's collaborative work in the areas of racial equity policy and practice and culturally responsive professional development. Seattle Public Schools is committed to the academic excellence and personal success of every student in every classroom, every day. Central to this commitment is ensuring education and racial equity.
- **Mission:** The mission of the Department of Racial Equity Advancement is to maximize culturally responsive instruction and leadership to transform educational opportunities, access and outcomes for every student, in every classroom, every day.

Goals and Outcomes

Central to making measurable progress towards your mission is defining clear and attainable goals and outcomes. This part of an equity plan is necessary for aligning intent with desired impact. Independently of our good intentions, unintended consequences can negatively impact people. To mitigate the unintended consequences that occur when our good intentions unintentionally lead to significant mistakes, an equity plan must be established that focuses on the impact of decisions and actions.

Goals and Outcomes in Action: Atlanta Public Schools

The [Equity Plan](#) created by the Atlanta Public Schools provides an excellent resource schools can use as they begin to create their own equity plans.

The Atlanta Public School's plan includes an identification of the major equity gaps their schools are facing, a data profile for each equity gap, and a comprehensive description of the intervention activities and strategies to address each equity gap, along with a plan to monitor the implementation of every intervention strategy, where funding will come from for each strategy, and what personnel will be responsible for ensuring the interventions are implemented.

Setting measurable goals and outcomes can ensure good intentions result in positive change, as seen in the Atlanta Public Schools' Equity Plan below:

- **Equity Gap Identified in Atlanta Public Schools:** Student Achievement
- **Equity Intervention Selected to Address that Equity Gap:** Provide targeted teacher development on content, pedagogy, and student supports and interventions
 - **Intervention 1:** Coherent instructional systems
 - **Activities/Strategies:** Implement curriculum which includes units of study, with formative assessments in alignment to Social Emotional Learning competencies.
 - **Data to be collected to monitor the implementation of activities/strategies:** Monitoring of benchmark data
 - **Funding source:** General Funds
 - **Personnel responsible for implementation:** Associate Superintendents, Assistant Superintendent of Teaching and Learning, Principals
 - **Timeline:** Weekly
 - **Intervention 2:** Effective leadership
 - **Activities/Strategies:** Develop the capacity of Associate Superintendents through coaching and professional learning.
 - **Data to be collected to monitor the implementation of activities/strategies:** Data-driven LKES and EPAT evaluations

- **Funding Source:** General Funds, Title II
- **Personnel responsible for implementation:** Deputy Superintendent
- **Timeline:** Monthly
- o **Intervention 3:** Family and community engagement
 - **Activities/Strategies:** Implement Family Engagement Choice programs including teacher home visits.
 - **Data to be collected to monitor the implementation of activities/strategies:** Use of funds and survey results of choice option, sign-in sheets
 - **Funding Source:** General Funds, Title I
 - **Personnel responsible for implementation:** Director of Family Engagement, Title I Family Engagement Coordinator
 - **Timeline:** Annually

Goals and Outcomes in Action: Okemos Public Schools

Okemos Public Schools also developed an [Equity Plan](#) that has served as a great resource for their school district. As in the example found below, their strategic plan provides venues for designing comprehensive equity plans that are focused on identifying critical areas of focus, establishing goals, and providing strategies to reach those goals.

Strategic Goals and Strategies

A. Authentic Selves and Relationships

Goal: Create a school environment where students, parents/guardians/families and staff recognize and appreciate the diverse attributes and identities of one another by honoring self-expression and individuality.

Strategies:

- a. Actively engage students, parents/guardians/families and staff in opportunities to examine their conscious and unconscious bias.

B. Cultural Competency

Goal: Increase cultural competency of students to decrease conscious and unconscious bias and its intended/unintended outcomes of discrimination.

Strategy:

- a. Actively engage in learning activities to foster self-awareness of different perspectives, conscious and unconscious bias, cultural blindness, inherent privileges, etc.

C. Instruction/Curriculum/Assessment

Goal: Ensure instruction, curriculum and assessment practices are inclusive of diverse perspectives, cultures, and our global world.

Strategy:

- a. Create and promote opportunities to include perspectives that are not represented in textbooks and state approved standards
 - i. Include literature (text, international film, media, current events, etc.) that is reflective of diverse authors, backgrounds, and perspectives in all of our classrooms.
 - ii. Create safe, brave, and inclusive environments for perspectives to be shared.

Terms and Definitions

To best implement an equity plan, all stakeholders must share a common language. Minimizing misunderstandings through a shared language will help promote meaningful dialogue around equity and inclusion. Though a glossary may not be exhaustive, its main goal is to provide a basic framework that encourages meaningful dialogue.

Terms and Definitions in Action: Okemos Public Schools

The glossary below was adapted from Okemos Public Schools Equity Plan and includes only an abbreviated version.

1. **Authentic self** - level of identity that is the real, true, genuine substance of who a person is; who the person is at their absolute core; the part of an individual that is not defined by external sources, pressures and/or “expectations”; knowing one’s authentic self is an on-going process of self-reflection, exploration, challenge, new insights, and personal and professional growth.
2. **Biological sex** - the physical sex characteristics you are born with and develop, including genitalia, body shape, voice pitch, body hair, hormones, chromosomes etc.
3. **Bias** - the unfavorable judgment or evaluation of one group and its members relative to another; expressed directly/explicitly:
 - a. **Conscious** - person is aware of his/her evaluation or judgment and believes it is true or accurate.
 - b. **Unconscious** - person does not perceive or endorse the evaluation or judgment; person is not aware of the consequences of unfavorable judgment, but unconsciously perpetuates that thinking. Person is not aware of societal influences on his/her judgment or evaluation and internalizes social stereotypes in their thinking.
4. **Cultural competency** - a set of values, behaviors, attitudes, and practices within a system, organization, program or among individuals and which enables them to work effectively cross-culturally. An ability to reflect

on experiences with diverse cultures to demonstrate knowledge and sensitivity. An ability or willingness to purposefully engage with others and create an environment for productive and respectful relations with others.

5. **Culturally inclusive** - being or creating an environment that acknowledges, respects, values, and embraces diverse cultures. The perspectives and contributions of each individual, including their diversity are embraced and valued. In an inclusive environment, people of all cultural orientations can: freely express who they are, their own opinions and points of view; fully participate in teaching, learning, work and social activities; feel safe from conscious or unconscious mistreatment, harassment or unfair criticism.
6. **Culturally responsive teaching** - using diverse cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives for teaching. It is based on the assumption that when academic knowledge and skills are situated within the lived experiences and frames of reference of students, they are more personally meaningful, have higher interest appeal and are learned more easily and thoroughly.

Organizational Structure

Putting systems in place that are designed to equip a school and organization with the tools necessary to design and implement an equity plan are key to successfully fulfilling the plan's mission. Creating an internal infrastructure can help keep schools accountable for making measurable progress toward meeting their goals.

An organization should take several basic steps in their process of embedding and operationalizing equity¹. These steps include:

1. **Designating a DEI person** – Director of Equity – to oversee and expand equity initiatives.
2. **Establishing an internal core team made up of representatives from all sectors of the organizations.**
3. **Engaging the internal core team in continuous learning consciousness and cultural competency.**
4. **Developing the organization capacity to think systematically in efforts to mitigate biases and unintended outcomes.**
5. **Creating resources, tools, and strategies to advance equity internally and externally.**

¹Steps originate from MDCR's internal racial equity and cultural competency initiative to operationalize equity, MDCR's racial equity toolkit, GARE racial equity toolkit, and state agency collaboration with equity and inclusion officers and the Chief Equity and Inclusion Officer in the Executive Cabinet.

Organizational Structure in Action: Guilford County Schools

Guilford County Schools in North Carolina created [The Office for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion](#) in 2006 to find solutions to the challenges minority students in their district were facing. They now serve as the primary resource for their district to operate in alignment with their vision and mission. Through an educational equity lens, the office:

- Offers professional learning and development with coordinated courses and coaching that are centered around equity in education.
- Facilitates resource development, performs policy review, evaluates district processes to ensure equity is thoroughly incorporated.
 - This includes incorporation of equity through student assessments, curriculum facilitations, and communications among staff and teachers.

Organizational Structure in Action: Portland Public Schools

Portland Public Schools in Oregon created several departments focused on improving their efforts in diversity, equity, and inclusion, including:

[Department of Community Engagement](#)

- **Core functions:**
 - Maximize the racial identity development of graduates.
 - Prepare students to lead a more socially just world by partnering effectively with school leaders, families, community organizations, faith-based institutions, business, and civic leaders as key collaborators.

[Department of Dual Language](#)

- **Core function:**
 - Close the opportunity gap for historically underserved students by providing multiple pathways and entry points for students to become bilingual and biliterate with a variety of programs offered to support the diversity of levels of proficiency in the partner languages.

[Department of Language Access Services](#)

- **Core function:**
 - Provide meaningful language access to linguistically and culturally diverse parents and guardians by offering translated printed and digital materials, qualified language interpreters, and support effective communication between the district and its multilingual communities.

[Department of Migrant Education](#)

- **Core function:**
 - Ensure that all migrant students reach challenging academic standards and graduate with a high school diploma that prepares students for further learning and productive employment.

Department of Racial Equity and Social Justice

- **Core function:**

- Evolve PPS Equity and Social Justice practices to a comprehensive, defined framework with a clear system-wide equity and social justice actions and measurable results that lead to improved outcomes for all students.

Department of Student Success and Health

- **Core function:**

- Provide student interventions and supports, staff development, resources and technical assistance for schools, families, students, and community partners to support academic success and social emotional well-being for every child.

Portland Public Schools provides a foundational framework for how schools can operationalize diversity, equity, and inclusion throughout their decision-making processes and support services. Using an equity lens establishes a structure to ensure schools are making measurable progress towards their vision, mission, and goals.

SECTION 3 - ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR DEVELOPING AN EQUITY PLAN²



Evaluating and Improving Curriculum

- [Teaching Hard History - Southern Poverty Law Center](#)
- [Teaching the Movement: The State Standards We Deserve](#)
- [Gathering oral histories of the community - Edcouch-Elsa School District](#)
- [Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Education Framework - New York State](#)

Developing Racial Consciousness and Cultural Competency

- [Revamping Curriculum to Focus on DEI - Scarsdale Schools](#)
- [Focusing on Curriculum that is Representative of the Student Body- Portland Public Schools](#)
- [Stages of Multicultural Curriculum Transformation - Critical Multicultural Pavilion](#)
- [How Students Can Meet Their Peers All Over the World](#)
- [Implicit Bias Module Series - Kirwan Institute](#)
- [Managing Unconscious Bias](#)
- [Courageous Conversations](#)
- [Harvard Project Implicit Bias](#)
- [Cultural Intelligence](#)

²Resources were also used to develop this Resource Guide

Equity Audits and Equity Lenses

- [District Equity Audit - Framingham Public Schools](#)
- [Equity Audit - Portland, Maine Schools](#)
- [Using an Equity Lens](#)
- [Racial Equity Toolkit - GARE](#)
- [Racial Equity Toolkit - MDCR](#)

Implementing an Asset Based Model in Schools

- [Why Leaders Need to Promote an Asset Orientation in Our Schools](#)
- [3 Steps to Developing an Asset-Based Approach to Teaching](#)
- [Asset-Based Pedagogies](#)

Improving Educator Competency and Understanding

- [Autonomy in Carrying Out Equity Plans](#)
- [Lunch and Learns](#)
- [Intercultural Development Inventory](#)
- [The Impact of Exclusion: Intent vs. Impact](#)
- [Mitigating Unconscious Bias in the Classroom](#)
- [K-12 School Districts Work to Improve Inclusion Through Teacher Training](#)

Establishing New Policies

- [Targeted Universalism: Policy and Practice](#)
- [Planning for Equity](#)
- [9 Ways to Promote Equity in Our Schools](#)
- [Guiding Principles for Equity in Education](#)
- [Core Equity Values](#)
- [Equity in Early Education: The Principle](#)
- [Indicators of Educational Equity](#)

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