
Appendix B – Oregon’s Education Equity Lens

Purpose of Oregon’s Education Equity Lens

The purpose of this equity lens¹ is to clearly articulate the shared goals we have for our state and the intentional investments we will make to reach our goal of an equitable educational system.

This equity lens helps educators and decision-makers recognize institutional and systemic barriers and discriminatory practices that have limited student success in the Oregon education system. The equity lens emphasizes underserved students, such as out of school youth, English Language Learners, and students of color with a particular focus on racial equity.

The focus of this equity lens is on race and ethnicity. This is based on an understanding that when we focus on racial disparities as a lens to consider investments for each and every student and community, we can and will generate opportunity and improvement in every area of educational practice and performance. Centering racial equity is rooted in the historical context of Oregon and is the path through which we can heal while targeting areas of action, intervention and investment.

The questions offered below can and should be adapted to ask questions regarding each of the [focal groups named in the Student Success Act](#) as being farthest away from opportunity and deserving our collective attention.

The passage of the Student Success Act directly calls upon educators and leaders across the state to act together, with a shared sense of purpose and possibility.

¹ This equity lens was first generated by the Oregon Education Investment Board in 2011 and then was adopted by the Oregon Department of Education and the State Board of Education. It is lightly adapted here to provide an equity lens that SIA applicants can apply in their planning and decision-making processes. SIA applicants can utilize a different equity lens which they are asked to provide and describe how they’ve utilized it within the SIA application.

Questions to Support Ongoing Equity Work

The following questions should be used to examine investments and priorities:

1. Who are the racial/ethnic and underserved groups affected? What is the potential impact of the resource allocation and strategic investment to these groups?
2. Does the decision being made ignore or worsen existing disparities or produce other unintended consequences? What is the impact on eliminating the opportunity gap?
3. How does the investment or resource allocation advance student mental or behavioral health and well-being and/or increase academic achievement and address gaps in opportunity?
4. What are the barriers to more equitable outcomes? (e.g. mandated, political, emotional, financial, programmatic or managerial)
5. How have you intentionally involved stakeholders who are also members of the communities affected by the strategic investment or resource allocation? How do you validate your assessment in (1), (2) and (3)?
6. How will you modify or enhance your strategies to ensure each learner and communities' individual and cultural needs are met?
7. How are you collecting data on race, ethnicity and native language?
8. What is your commitment to professional learning for equity? What resources are you allocating for training in culturally responsive and sustaining instruction?

Beliefs

We believe that everyone has the ability to learn and that we have an ethical and moral responsibility to ensure an education system providing optimal learning environments that lead students to be prepared for their individual futures.

We believe that speaking a language other than English is an asset and that our education system must celebrate and enhance this ability alongside appropriate and culturally responsive support for English as a second language.

We believe students receiving special education services are an integral part of our educational responsibility and we must welcome the opportunity to be inclusive, make appropriate accommodations and celebrate their assets. We must directly address the over-representation of children of color in special education and the under-representation in “talented and gifted.”

We believe that the students who have previously been described as “at risk,” “underperforming,” “under-represented” or minority actually represent Oregon’s best opportunity to improve overall educational outcomes. We have many counties in rural and urban communities that already have populations of color that make up the majority. Our ability to meet the needs of this increasingly diverse population is a critical strategy for us to successfully reach our collective goals.

We believe that intentional and proven practices must be implemented to return out of school youth to the appropriate educational setting. We recognize that this will require us to challenge and change our current educational setting to be more culturally responsive, safe and attending to the significant number of elementary, middle and high school students who are currently out of school. We must make our schools places where every learner feels welcomed and a sense of belonging.

We believe that ending disparities and gaps in achievement begin in the delivery of quality early learning programs and through family and community engagement and support. This is not simply an expansion of services -- it is a recognition that we need to provide services in a way that best meets the needs of our most diverse segment of the population, 0-5 year olds and their families.

We believe that resource allocation demonstrates our priorities and values and that we demonstrate our commitment to rural communities, communities of color, English language learners and out of school youth in the ways we allocate resources and make educational investments.

We believe that communities, families, teachers and community-based organizations have unique and important solutions to improving outcomes for our students and educational systems. Our work

will only be successful if we are able to truly partner with the community, engage with respect, authentically listen -- and have the courage to share decision making, control and resources.

We believe every learner should have access to information about a broad array of career/job opportunities and apprenticeships that will show them multiple paths to employment yielding family-wage incomes, without diminishing the responsibility to ensure that each learner is prepared with the requisite skills to make choices for their future.

We believe that our community colleges and university systems have a critical role in serving our diverse populations, rural communities, English language learners and students with disabilities. Our institutions of higher education, and the P-20 system, will truly offer the best educational experience when their campus faculty, staff and students reflect this state, its growing diversity and the ability for all of these populations to be educationally successful and ultimately employed.

We believe the rich history and culture of learners is a source of pride and an asset to embrace and celebrate.

And, we believe in the importance of supporting great teaching. Research is clear that “teachers are among the most powerful influences in (student) learning.”² An equitable education system requires providing teachers with the tools and support to meet the needs of each student.

² Hattie, J. (2009), Visible learning: A synthesis of over 800 meta-analyses relating to student achievement. P. 238.