

Establishing District Equity Committees for Senate Bill 732

Section 1: Getting Started



Section 1: Getting Started & Identifying Existing Work

This section supports the start-up phase of planning for your DEC – how to create conditions for success, what to consider in your process, where to look within your district for pre-existing work, and variables you may need to consider as you think about the membership, structure, and purpose of your DEC.

VERY IMPORTANT: For ease of use - this document will use the following symbols to track distinctions between **requirements** in rule or statute and **recommendations** enshrined in statute or rule.

- **Requirement:** What is required of districts to implement as part of SB 732 and adopted into OAR Chapter 581, Division 22.
- **Recommendation:** What is outlined in statute or rule as a recommended function that districts can choose for the DEC to implement, but is not required.

Where left un-noted, what is offered is guidance from ODE on implementation.

Requirement

- Districts with an average daily membership of 10,000 or less are required to first convene a District Equity Committee by September 15, 2025.² [OAR 581-022-2307](#) states that a DEC “shall be selected by the school district board and school district superintendent and must be composed of parents, employees, students and community members from the school district.” In addition, “the school district superintendent is responsible for coordinating the member nomination process and proposing finalists to the school district board.”

Responsibility for tending to the start-up and development of a District Equity Committee begins with the district superintendent.

Launching a DEC will, in many cases, mean identifying existing work and teams in your district that can seamlessly tie in, overlap, or be moved to work with your DEC. As you begin the process, ODE recommends that you:

1. Form/delegate a team or staff to help coordinate the DEC membership nomination process.
2. Start to identify existing groups, teams, and work that could be involved in the development or functionality of your DEC.
3. Begin communicating the SB 732 criteria and your plan/process to your school board and community.

² Districts with an average daily membership of 10,000 or more were required to first convene a District Equity Committee by September 15, 2022.

Step One: Form a team or delegate staff to help coordinate the DEC membership nomination process

While the superintendent has accountability and authority by law to coordinate the membership nomination process for the DEC, ODE recognizes the myriad of responsibilities on superintendents' plates as well as the importance of bringing key staff in at the ground level to help strategize and implement SB 732.

For small and rural schools where capacity is smaller, superintendents can invite instructional assistants, custodial staff, nutrition staff, or counselors onto the team. Perhaps a principal or teacher leader with strong stewardship and capacity can lead the effort in conjunction with superintendent consultation. Other groups that may have members with the capacity to take on this work include, but are not limited to: Education Service Districts (ESDs), Community Based Organizations (CBOs), Culturally-Specific Organizations (CSOs), and other organizations that regularly partner with school districts to assist students with meeting state and local standards and/or prepare them for post-high school transitions. ESDs can also be key partners to help districts strategize and develop the District Equity Committee.

What's noted for smaller districts and schools is just as valuable for medium and larger schools and districts. In addition, medium and larger districts might engage assistant superintendents, equity/literacy TOSAs, senior advisors, directors of services (equity, inclusion, diversity; multilingual services; special education), district community and partnership coordinators, family engagement specialists, academic language specialists, or district emerging bilingual specialists. This is an opportunity to already think about diversifying the team that can help on-ramp and coordinate the membership nomination process for the DEC. A diversity of roles and backgrounds involved in this initial planning window will lend itself to a more inclusive and equitable DEC down the road.

The goal of coordinating the membership nomination process is to provide opportunities - a kind of clarion call for community members' voices - in order to engage those that have or might currently be marginalized. School leaders can ask key interested parties, students, and community leaders to nominate people who represent the community and school; this would be followed up with an invitation to participate. Deeply-rooted community members with context of the local landscape are paramount in providing the District Equity Committee with strategies to connect and identify unintentional educational equity impacts and remove barriers to student success.

Use of Equity Lens and Tools

An equity lens is a tool that helps center core values and commitments when working towards shared goals. It includes a series of questions that help leaders intentionally account for the end impact of their decisions. The use of an equity lens is a valuable tool in identifying local needs and how DEC's can best reflect communities served, including the voices of those who have historically been excluded.

An equity lens is most useful when it accurately represents the aims of local leadership. Within ODE's guidance, *Aligning for Student Success*, Appendix E: [Equity Lens and Tools](#) offers a foundation for districts that can be expanded through reflection and intentional community engagement.

Step Two: Start to identify existing groups, teams, and work that could be involved in the development or functionality of your DEC

Although every District Equity Committee will share certain similarities, that does not mean they should all be the same. Districts will need to work closely with their local communities in determining how best to engage in this work. For some, this may feel like an entirely new venture. For others, it may feel familiar and can be built upon similar bodies of work and existing community relationships. District equity groups and similar student, parent, or community advisory committees may be good candidates for adaptation into a District Equity Committee. Districts should closely consider the functions of their current groups, and the adjustments that might be necessary to perform the duties of a District Equity Committee. Districts should work closely with such groups to gather feedback and consider impact. A DEC that advises both the school board and superintendent and may be subject to public meeting requirements. Below are examples and types of groups to consider adapting or asking to help support the creation of the DEC:

- Site Committees
- Parent-Teacher or Family Organizations
- Existing equity and/or constituency groups
- SIA Advisory or other Community Advisory Groups

Organizing Your Thinking

Some districts have robust strategies and structures in place to support the ongoing needs of their focal student groups³ and school communities in equitable and culturally-sustaining ways. ODE has developed a simple [Mapping Existing Equity Efforts](#) worksheet that may provide districts a starting point for evaluating the equity work already in progress with consideration for next steps.

A Thought Experiment: Sketching what it might look like to adapt and link with existing efforts

You've already created important groups of students, parents, educators, thought leaders and community partners who gather in a variety of ways and formats. This is based on the promise of realizing an excellent education for each and every child in relationship to connected, engaged, and whole communities.

Think about how the following questions might help you connect your existing efforts with the functions and aims of the District Equity Committee:

- What are the district equity groups, student, parent, or community advisory committees that are honoring diversity, amplifying voices in your community, examining historical educational impacts on focal groups, and delivering outcomes for student-centered learning?
- What persons/organizations are concerned about student advocacy and voice, shared experience and connections with teachers, and community involvement in the reimagining of how school systems affect students positively?
- From a small school/district perspective, are there community members, educators, culturally-based organizations, student advocacy groups within the region willing to create a consortium of members to advance a District Equity Committee?

³ The [Aligning for Student Success Integrated Guidance](#) outlines the following as focal student groups: students experiencing poverty, students of color, students with disabilities, students who are emerging bilinguals, students experiencing homelessness, students experiencing foster care, LGBTQ2SIA+ students, students recently-arrived, migrant students, and students with experience of incarceration or detention.

Suggested approaches for implementation of the District Equity Committee

Oregon's districts are at different points of implementation when it comes to District Equity Committees. We have outlined two different implementation approaches that districts might use as a resource to set their own implementation plans. A combination of both approaches may also be very helpful.

Approach A - Detailed implementation timeline

This approach to implementation uses the backward mapping strategy to identify key processes and procedures in order to fully enact District Equity Committees by September 15, 2025.

1: Getting Ready (leading up to Feb 2024)

- Form or delegate a team/staff to help coordinate the DEC membership nomination process
- Start to identify existing groups, teams, and work that could be involved in the development or functionality of your DEC

2: Understand and Prepare (February - June 2024)

- "SB 732: District Equity Committee" to be added as an ongoing agenda item in local school board meetings.
- Superintendent discusses SB 732 and its components with their school board.
- Superintendent reviews SB 732 guidance with board members.
- Superintendent and board develop an implementation plan.

3: Assess and Plan (July - August 2024)

- Superintendents and designated planning teams design the application and candidate selection process.
- Develop an understanding of the desired composition of the DEC in order to match demographics and needs of students and the broader school community. Design outreach to meet desired membership.

4: Engage (September 2024 - February 2025)

- Find potential members to serve on the DEC through Community Engagement events.
- Post information about the DEC on the district website.

5: Committee Member Application Period (March-July 2025)

- Continue to seek applicants via intentional outreach and utilizing ESD partners.
- Superintendent reviews applications and finalizes DEC appointee recommendations.

6: Local Approval (August 2025)

- School board appoints members of the District Equity Committee at the recommendation of the superintendent.
- The new DEC meets with the superintendent to collaborate on creating a shared understanding of the role of the DEC and supports needed.

7: Ongoing Implementation (September 15, 2025 and beyond)

- First Meeting of the District Equity Committee is set and the work begins.

Approach B - Make use of organic opportunities to build momentum over time

This approach to implementation seeks to more organically develop the design and plans for the DEC. Because the DEC offers flexibility for what it looks and feels like, seeking multiple viewpoints and design inputs can support a DEC that is uniquely situated and tailored to your district's and community's needs. While the largest districts in Oregon began implementing SB 732 in September 2022, many smaller and mid-size districts have time to foster teaching and learning opportunities around shared understanding of how best to implement District Equity Committees. What follows are some of the innovative and creative approaches that the larger districts have used and that could be of support to districts who are still in the beginning stages of this work:

- Utilizing sporting events, community engagement activities, and school-based activities as a platform to have preliminary informal conversations with community members, parents, students, and staff with the intention to provide shared understanding of District Equity Committees and start to identify individuals interested in serving on the DEC.
- Gathering a small cadre of interested parties as a means to listen and learn about the implementation of District Equity Committees. This cadre can serve as a voice to teach other groups and support in recruitment of potential District Equity Committee members.
- Encouraging school boards to learn about the implementation of District Equity Committees during board meetings and to help generate shared intentionality behind implementation.
- Dialogue around implementation of the DEC between administrators and students; administrators and staff; staff and students; and administrators and students.
- Attend community based organization meetings and/or civic organizational meetings to both provide information about the DEC and to potentially garner interest in serving on the DEC.
- Create a design/implementation committee to begin to structure the operationalizing of the DEC.

Small and Rural Accommodation (School districts with less than 1650 ADMw): For small and rural districts, implementation of DECs may emerge in partnership with local ESDs or other small/rural schools where geography, distance, and population size is a potential barrier. As districts in these rural and remote areas wish to develop a DEC utilizing a regional approach in partnership with their ESDs, districts may apply for the accommodation and gain approval by:

1. Developing an initial plan with the ESD partner or additional partnering districts and outlining the architecture of how the DEC will be implemented along with how requirements set forth in [OAR 581-022-2307](#) will be met⁴.
2. Submitting the initial plan by emailing responses to the questions below to ODE.EII@ode.oregon.gov:
 - i. Who is partnering? List relevant entities
 - ii. Who will be the primary point-of-contact for this partnership?
 - iii. How is this benefiting students, families, and communities? Describe how the assets and experiences of students and families who have been historically marginalized by our education systems will be able to inform and strengthen the DEC proposed?

⁴ This accommodation does not create new requirements, it provides ODE a way to see how the actual work being proposed would meet the requirements of existing laws and rules.

- iv. What is the geographic range the partnership would cover?
 - v. Please share how this partnership makes sense from a community sensibility?
 - vi. Any information that is ready that describes any agreements on how the requirements of SB 732 will be made across the partnership districts (i.e. liaisons to budget committee, member nominations, appointments, optional annual report, etc.)
3. ODE will review the initial plan and provide feedback if needed; ODE will make a determination on the accommodation and partner with districts to ensure implementation is both supported and successful. Additional documentation may be needed to formalize the plan.

Step Three: Begin communicating DEC criteria and your plan to your school board

While the appointments to the DEC will move through the school board, ODE encourages superintendents to explain the functions and vision the district has for the DEC to the school board ahead of time, before you seek their approval and formal engagement in the process.

This could come through an item in a work session or as part of retreat planning and engagement at the start of the 2023-24 school year. Another approach to begin communicating SB 732 implementation is through any strategic planning that is happening in the district.

One encouragement to superintendents is to add “SB 732: District Equity Committee” as a recurring agenda item to keep the board apprised of the ongoing work to implement District Equity Committees. This not only provides transparency, but also demonstrates the prioritization, as a district, to implement DEC with care.