

Establishing District Equity Committees for Senate Bill 732

Section 2: Purpose and Duties of a District Equity Committee



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Section 2: Purpose and Duties of a District Equity Committee

A DEC can inform and advise their school board and superintendent on a number of topics, including the experiences of historically-underserved student groups, the educational equity impacts of policy decisions, and the larger district-wide climate. DECs are responsible for highlighting school-specific situations that impact underrepresented students, and considering whether such situations are unique or systemic. DECs are meant to supplement and support local leadership in understanding how their decisions have affected students, and what they can do to make positive impacts.

SB 732 outlines core requirements for a DEC as well as additional recommended, but not required, functions that a DEC can play in the district.

Requirements

Section 4 of [OAR 581-022-2307](#) articulates that the duties of a DEC [*educational equity advisory committee*] shall include:

- Advising the school district board and the school district superintendent about the educational equity impacts of policy decisions; and
- Informing the school district board and school district superintendent of the larger district-wide climate and the experiences of underserved student groups, and advising the board and superintendent on how best to support. This includes:
 - Informing the school district board and school district superintendent when a situation arises in a school of the school district that *negatively* impacts underrepresented students, and advising the board and superintendent on how best to handle that situation.
 - Informing the school district board and school district superintendent when a situation arises in a school of the school district that *positively* impacts underrepresented students, and advising the board and superintendent on how best to replicate within the district.
 - Considering whether such situations are unique to the school or indicative of a district-wide trend, and advising on how best to handle that trend.
- The school district board, in consultation with the District Equity Committee, must select at least one member of the District Equity Committee to serve on the school district budget committee. A budget committee is not required to include a member of the District Equity Committee of the school district until a vacancy on the budget committee occurs by a member who is not also a member of the school district board.

Additional Recommendations

Section 5 of [OAR 581-022-2307](#) outlines additional functions and roles that a District Equity Committee may fulfill. Listed below are those recommendations paired with guidance, suggestions and best practices for consideration.

SB 732 Recommendations:

- **A District Equity Committee [*educational equity advisory committee*] may consider topics that the DEC deems critical to its ability to represent and elevate educational equity impacts to student experiences in the district.**
- **A District Equity Committee may consider topics submitted by the school district board or school district superintendent.**
 - **It is recommended that school boards add a standing agenda item to discuss potential issues they would like the DEC to consider and provide feedback on. The DEC liaison would report back to the board on recommendations from the DEC.**

Considerations:

District Equity Committees are intended to support a wide range of equity-related issues, topics and dynamics. They should be seen as a core ally and resource for your district to help address concrete issues. As you create your DEC, consider what topics/issues are alive in your district.

These could include:

- Reviewing disaggregated student data and the district needs assessment as an input into long-term strategic planning (aligns with ODE's [Integrated Guidance](#)).
- Consulting on equitable hiring practices^{5 6}
- Providing feedback and input on federal-program implementation (which often requires community engagement) - including but not limited to:
 - Migrant Education
 - Multilingual and/or Emergent Bilingual Learning
 - Federal school improvement efforts in high-poverty schools
 - Improved [Tribal Consultation](#)
 - Reviewing disproportionate disciplinary actions
- Improving partnerships with local and regional business partners and community-based organizations
- Focusing on student engagement, school culture, student safety, student mental health, and addressing the root causes of chronic absenteeism
- Student safety & belonging; inclusive communication practices
- Youth mental health; patterns of participation (or not) for focal groups
- Supporting improved community engagement efforts year-over-year

⁵ Fricano, C., Kim-Gervey, C., Lien, L., Gregory, R. (2021). "Just Not Ready for a Female." Coalition of Oregon School Administrators, Oregon Commission for Women, Oregon Department of Education, Oregon Office of the Governor. https://www.oregon.gov/oac/Documents1/Just_Not_Ready_for_a_Female_FINAL.pdf

⁶ [Oregon's Educator Equity Report \(2022\)](#)

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- Informing teacher & staff training and professional development by sharing short-, mid-, and long-term goals
- Curriculum adoption: As the schools and district create curriculum adoption committees, consider inviting the DEC members to participate in the process and provide feedback
- Discussing and informing district budget priorities
- Review of board policy and administrative regulations
- Reviews of student and staff handbooks
- Review, reflection, and recommendations on local district policy. Race Forward's [Equity Policies Toolkit for School Boards](#) offers useful resources, tools, and case studies.

SB 732 Recommendation:

- **A District Equity Committee *may* select a single member to serve as an advisor to the school district board, for the purpose of providing updates and acting as a liaison between the District Equity Committee and the school district board and school district superintendent.**

Considerations:

It is advantageous to each school district to create conditions whereby each DEC operates with a designated liaison. The DEC liaison, superintendent, and school board working together provides coordination between the three entities ensuring that the DEC's updates and recommendations are heard. In addition, district goals and priorities are centered when all three entities come together for the good of students. When there is a potential change in leadership and/or school board members, this collaborative structure provides a foundation for continued positive movement and cohesion of both the DEC's ongoing work along with district goals. Note: A meeting between one elected board member, a superintendent, and a non-elected DEC liaison (even if the local legal committee determines a DEC to be a public body) meeting together does not create a public meeting body.

SB 732 Recommendation:

- **A District Equity Committee may prepare an annual report that:**
 - **May include, but is not limited to the following information:**
 - **The successes and challenges the school district has experienced in meeting the educational equity needs of students in the school district; and**
 - **Recommendations the committee made to the school district board and school district superintendent, and the actions that were taken in response to those recommendations;**
 - **Is made available by being:**
 - **Distributed to the parents of the students of the school district;**
 - **Posted on the school district's website;**
 - **Presented to the school district board in an open meeting with adequate opportunity for public comment; and**
 - **Sent to the State Board of Education.**
 - **The Oregon Department of Education shall review all submitted reports and annually prepare a summary for the State Board of Education. Members of the State Board of Education shall have access to all submitted reports.**

Considerations:

The DEC’s success will be supported by greater working knowledge of how it contributes to positive district climate, culture and operations. Although the production of an annual report is not required, the intent behind that possibility is for the district to have a consistent way to keep families, communities, and state leaders updated on the key information that the District Equity Committee has worked and deliberated on.

Sharing DEC Work with the Community

Whether or not you decide to produce an annual report, consider how you can create consistent and transparent communication pathways with the community. Small districts with limited capacity could consider: informal town halls, regular presentations at the school board or in the district, tagging onto any district/school newsletters, and/or asking their ESD for support. It is highly recommended that there be some mechanism(s) for communicating this kind of information to the public. An annual report is one way that the DEC can share its findings and work, and it should be seen as an aid to equity work, allowing district staff, families, and communities to better understand key equity challenges and opportunities within the district.

At the end of the day, the work of the DEC is meant to support healing and equity work in your district and communities, and that work will be aided with more transparency and communication with students, families and communities.

Financial Stewardship and Budgeting Requirement

The District Equity Committee is also intended to help center equity in district budgeting and fiscal processes.

Section 3 of [OAR 581-022-2307](#) states that:

- **The school district board, in consultation with the District Equity Committee [*education equity advisory committee*], must select at least one member of the District Equity Committee to serve on the school district budget committee. A budget committee is not required to include a member of the District Equity Committee of the school district until a vacancy on the budget committee occurs by a member who is not also a member of the school district board.**

The DEC budget committee member can offer deeper alignment between a school district’s equity lens and its operational, budget, and financial processes. The participation of a DEC member in the budget committee provides an opportunity to increase understanding of emerging or ongoing fiscal-and-community priorities and to strengthen voices that have not been included in district financial decision-making processes. Ensuring that district budgets reflect the district’s equity priorities will offer greater alignment and accountability to students, families and communities.

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Examples of ways that the DEC can support the budget committee could include the DEC budget committee member working with the entire DEC to:

- Review budgets, documents, and processes to ensure alignment with district equity goals and priorities.
- Consider the braiding and blending of funding streams to target key strategic equity areas and focal groups.
- Offer feedback to the superintendent regarding district planning and investments for all strategies and activities, including multi-year planning for target focal groups.
- Look at a district's Integrated Planning and Budgeting Template for the ODE Integrated Guidance and provide feedback.
- [Section 3 of the Aligning for Student Success guidance on Financial Stewardship](#) could offer a starting point for the DEC budget committee member to understand how their district's budgeting processes are tied to educational equity.