

Establishing and Sustaining District Equity Committees

ODE Guidance

January 2026



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Historical Context and Evolution of this Guidance

Historical Context

From Former State Board Chair Guadalupe Martinez-Zapata

June 21, 2023

Two years ago, the State Board of Education began to develop the idea of supporting a law that could support a meaningful avenue for every school district to benefit from the strengths and leadership within its community. The requirements and recommendations in this guidance come from years of learning. They are the fruit of decisions made by the Oregon Legislature to codify an expectation for how school districts are governed in relationship with their community and how the community can lead and offer counsel and insights to school districts.

I'm so pleased with how this guidance has been brought to life as it marks what is required and what is encouraged in ways that are both practical and intentional.

I'm honored to give voice to the importance of this effort and the way it can continue our statewide journey towards realizing the promise of an excellent education for each and every child in relationship to connected, engaged, and whole communities.

Con respeto,



Guadalupe Martinez-Zapata

Chair

Oregon State Board of Education

Purpose of 2026 Guidance Updates

This updated version maintains the original intent while encouraging practical and meaningful practices. It honors feedback and new insights gained through implementation as this work unfolds across Oregon. This guidance continues to serve our statewide journey in meeting the requirements of establishing District Equity Committees toward realizing the promise of an excellent education for each and every student in relationship with connected, engaged, and whole communities.

Introduction: Legislative Background and Overview

In 2021, the Oregon Legislature passed **Senate Bill 732** ([ORS 329.711](#)), amending Oregon Revised Statutes 328.542 and 329.095. The laws require each school district to establish what in statute is described as an “educational equity advisory committee” and this guidance will be referred to as a District Equity Committee (DEC). All districts were required to first convene a District Equity Committee by September 15, 2025. Districts with an average daily membership of 10,000 or more were required to first convene a District Equity Committee by September 15, 2022.

District Equity Committees are meant to help school leaders identify what helps or hinders the success of students who Oregon’s educational systems have historically excluded, impacted, marginalized, or underserved. DECs are a powerful mechanism to engage community voices and advance equity in Oregon’s school districts.

Senate Bill 732 sets minimum requirements for District Equity Committees. The bill directed the State Board of Education to adopt complementary rules, which have been set forth in Oregon Administrative Rule (OAR) [581-022-2307](#).

On June 20, 2025 [House Bill 2453](#) was signed into law by Governor Tina Kotek, amending [ORS 329.711](#). House Bill 2453 makes changes to how District Equity Committees operate, including making them **advisory to the superintendent only**, not the school board. The superintendent now selects committee members, and board approval of committee membership is no longer required. Furthermore, District Equity Committees are no longer subject to Public Meetings Law. This addresses a concern heard frequently from school leaders about committee member safety and the ability to discuss sensitive topics while maintaining community members’ confidentiality. Temporary rule changes were adopted in September 2025 to align [OAR 581-022-2307](#) with the updated statute, and permanent rules were adopted March 2026 to replace these temporary rules.

This guidance document brings together updated requirements in law and administrative rules, and the Oregon Department of Education’s guidance on implementation for District Equity Committees.

Explaining the Term “District Equity Committee”

While the term “Educational Equity Advisory Committee” is used in the ORS and OAR, for the purposes of this guidance, ODE uses the term “District Equity Committee” (or DEC) as a substitute term. This is done with the understanding that the work presented in this guidance is important by any name.

DEC is an efficient, shorthand acronym and helps to avoid confusion that might occur in trying to distinguish between the state level Educator Advancement Council (EAC) and this body of work. Therefore, the term District Equity Committee fulfills the function as written in statute and rule. Your district may choose to use “District Equity Committee” or you may find that another name will make more sense for your particular community and context. This guidance will help you develop that understanding.

Small and Rural Accommodation (School districts with less than 1650 ADM)

For small and rural districts, implementation of DEC’s may emerge in partnership with local ESDs or other small/rural schools where geography, distance, and population size are a potential barrier. ODE has developed the document [District Equity Committees \(SB 732\) in Regional Partnership](#) to provide more guidance on how District Equity Committee requirements apply to regional configurations.

Each school district is still responsible for individually completing the Division 22 Assurances of Compliance process and for communicating with ODE which other entities they are partnered with to form a Regional District Equity Committee.

Section 1: Purpose and Duties of a District Equity Committee

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

- **Requirement:** What is required of districts to implement as part of SB 732 and HB 2453 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.

Purpose

District Equity Committees can inform and advise their 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. DEC's are responsible for highlighting school-specific situations that impact underrepresented students and considering whether such situations are unique or systemic. DEC's 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.

[ORS 329.711](#) outlines core requirements for a DEC as well as additional recommended, but not required, functions that a DEC can play in the district.

Required Duties

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

- Advising the school district superintendent about the educational equity impacts of policy decisions; and
- Informing the school district superintendent of the larger district-wide climate and the experiences of underserved student groups and advising the superintendent on how best to support. Examples include but are not limited to:

- Informing the school district superintendent when a situation arises in a school of the school district that *negatively* impacts underrepresented students and advising the superintendent on how best to handle that situation.
- Informing the school district superintendent when a situation arises in a school of the school district that *positively* impacts underrepresented students and advising the 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.

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.

Recommendations:

- **In addition to the duties outlined in section (4), 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.**
 - **Consider topics submitted by the school district board or school district superintendent.**

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 districts to help address concrete issues. Consider what topics/issues are alive in your district.

These could include:

- Strengthened Tribal Consultation efforts for affected school districts
- Policies:
 - 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.
- Practices & Operations:
 - Consulting on equitable hiring practices

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- Inclusive communication practices to nurture student safety & belonging
- Curriculum adoption: As the schools and district create curriculum adoption committees, consider inviting the DEC members to participate in the process and provide feedback
- Reviewing disaggregated student data and the district needs assessment as an input into long-term strategic planning.
- Professional Learning & Capacity Building
 - Elevating areas for support to inform regional professional learning plans for educators and administrators
- Community Engagement & Partnerships
 - 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
 - Reviewing disproportionate disciplinary actions
 - Supporting improved community engagement efforts year-over-year
 - Improving partnerships with local and regional business partners, Indian community-based organizations, and community-based organizations
- Student Support, Learning and Well-Being
 - Focusing on student engagement, school culture, student safety, student mental health, and addressing the root causes of chronic absenteeism
 - Youth mental health; patterns of participation (or nonparticipation) for focal groups
 - Reviewing student voice data from Oregon's [Student Educational Equity Development \(SEED\) Survey](#) (see callout box below).

Data Spotlight: SEED Survey

The Student Educational Equity Development (SEED) Survey is given annually to Oregon students in grades 3 through 11. Students are asked about their access to learning resources, sense of belonging, opportunities to learn, and self-efficacy beliefs in English Language Arts, Math, and Science. Students also describe their access to Tribal History/Shared History, a well-rounded education, extracurricular engagement, career-connected learning, and post-graduation planning.

- [SEED Domains and Example Items](#) describes the questions students are asked in the survey.
- Publicly available data files are posted on the [SEED Survey webpage](#).
- DEC members might find the [District Domain Score data files](#) and the [ESD Domain Score data files](#) useful, as the results can be disaggregated by the following student focal groups: American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian, Black/African American, Hispanic/Latino/a/x, Multiracial, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, White, English Learner, Students with Disabilities, Experiencing Poverty, Experiencing Homelessness, In Migrant Education, and Recent Arrival. [Understanding Domain Scores](#) and [Data Use Guidance](#) are two ODE resources that can be used to assist with data analysis.

Example: Reviewing Exclusionary Discipline Policies and Data

One way a DEC could focus its efforts to advise on the educational equity impacts of policy decisions is on exclusionary discipline practices. DEC members could choose to review the district's adopted policies for discipline, discipline-related language in its student handbook or code of conduct, and disciplinary incidents data (publicly available on [ODE's website](#)). In some cases DEC members could review disaggregated data where student counts exceed suppression rules.

In response to their review and data analysis, the DEC could advise the superintendent in developing recommendations for professional development to improve culturally responsive teaching and classroom management practices.

Recommendation:

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

Considerations:

In some contexts, it may be advantageous for a DEC to operate with a designated liaison. The DEC liaison and superintendent can work together to provide coordination, ensuring that the DEC's updates and recommendations are heard. In the case of potential change in district leadership, this collaborative structure can provide a foundation for continuity.

Recommendation:

- **A District Equity Committee may prepare an annual report that:**
 - **Includes, 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 superintendent, and the actions that were taken in response to those recommendations;**
 - **Is shared with the school board:**
 - **By the superintendent, and if requested by the school district board, as a presentation by the committee or committee representative at a school district board meeting.**
 - **Is made available by being:**
 - **Distributed to the parents of the students at the school district;**
 - **Posted on the school district’s website; 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 it 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 on. Beyond opting into an annual report, consider right-sized strategies for consistent, transparent, and inclusive communication pathways with the community.

Depending on the local context, it may be appropriate to share the role of the District Equity Committee on a district or ESD webpage. A simple landing page providing an overview of the District Equity Committee can help students, families, and the community easily navigate key information about the DEC’s work. As DECs determine the best ways to communicate the committee’s purpose, consider what information might be the most appropriate and relevant to share with the community while maintaining the confidentiality of DEC members and discussions. Some potential information to include:

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- What is a District Equity Committee?
- How did the DEC form?
- How does the committee work uphold the equity stance and commitments of the district/region to serve all students and families?
- What are the commitments for being on this committee?
- What is the member nomination and selection process? Who should apply, and why?
- How are topics identified and prioritized? Is there a way for the community to provide topics for the DEC to consider?
- Contact information for a designated staff member who can respond to questions about the DEC.

Consider how this landing page may serve as a helpful point in navigating community members to other related resources:

- The page could host the DEC's Annual Report (should they opt into producing one)
- A link to the required district webpage with the designated Civil Rights Coordinator contact information and notice of nondiscrimination
- A link to the district complaint process and Division 22 Assurance Report

Consider where to host this site and site maintenance:

- Where on the district or ESD website is the most accessible place to find this page?
- Who is designated to maintain this page, and when would maintenance be anticipated? (i.e. uploading a new Annual Report each spring)?

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.

Annual Report Process

ODE will compile and prepare a summary of all annual reports submitted. DEC's should submit annual reports to ODE by emailing them to ODE.EI@ode.oregon.gov, with subject line: *[District/Consortium Name]: District Equity Committee Annual Report*. The State Board of Education will receive both a summary of the annual reports ODE receives and access to each submitted report.

Sharing DEC Work with the Community: Promising Practices

Small ESD highlight: A small, rural ESD shares the work of the regional District Equity Committee through multiple communication channels to ensure transparency and community engagement. Updates and key takeaways are shared with district superintendents and school leaders for inclusion in local communications such as newsletters and board reports. The ESD also highlights committee initiatives and progress through public updates, presentations, and the optional annual report. These strategies promote awareness of the committee’s work while maintaining confidentiality.

Large district highlight: Recommendations from the District Equity Committee are shared with district leadership and aligned to the topics discussed during committee meetings. District-level committees may also request targeted input from the DEC on specific policies and practices. When relevant topics are also discussed by the Student Advisory Committee to the Superintendent, the DEC’s recommendations are shared with that group as well and vice-versa. School leaders receive these recommendations to support implementation and alignment across the district.

Financial Stewardship and Budgeting Requirement

The District Equity Committee is also intended to help center equity in district budgeting and fiscal processes. [ORS 328.542](#) states “...a school district must include at least one member of the educational equity advisory committee of the school district on the budget committee.” It also stipulates “...a budget committee is not required to include a member of the educational equity advisory 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.” Further, [ORS 328.542\(2\)\(b\)](#) adds an exception when no equity committee member is willing or able to serve.

DEC members who also serve on the district’s budget committee 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.

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.
- [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.

Assuring the responsibilities of ORS 329.711 are met (Division 22)

Oregon Administrative Rules, Chapter 581 under Division 22 ([OAR 581-022-2307](#)) make District Equity Committees a Division 22 requirement. Annually, school districts are expected to complete assurances of compliance with the minimum requirements of [ORS 329.711](#) just as they do with all requirements under Division 22. Signed assurances are submitted to the Oregon Department of Education.

The assurance process is constructed to be a supportive model for districts. Should a district not be in compliance with the DEC rules, the assurance process provides districts opportunities to seek Technical Assistance in support of implementation. If districts know they are not in compliance, they may take a proactive approach and inform ODE. After which, they could begin the corrective-action process. If the district continues to be out of compliance following corrective action, ODE may withhold State School Funds as a final measure of accountability. Again, this process is designed to come alongside districts in the implementation of DEC's and is not constructed to be punitive in nature. For more information on Division 22, please review the [Division 22 Standards For Public Elementary and Secondary Schools](#) and the [Division 22 Standards webpage](#).

Section 2: Membership and Participation

A District Equity Committee represents a partnership between local communities and local district leaders. It is an opportunity for individuals who have been excluded, impacted, marginalized, or underserved by educational systems to provide regular and consistent feedback to district leadership.

Parents, students, district employees, and community members who represent underrepresented student groups are the core of a District Equity Committee. The focus of the DEC should be rooted in local community voice and need, and it is important that these spaces remain safe and protected for members to review and reflect on their experiences within the district and then provide meaningful feedback to their superintendent. DECs themselves should work with school leaders on how best they can be supported, how to deliver feedback, and what additional work is necessary to fully elevate student experience.

Requirements

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

- A District Equity Committee [*Educational Equity Advisory Committee*] shall be selected by the school district superintendent and must be composed of parents, employees, students and community members from the school district.**
- The school district superintendent is responsible for coordinating the member nomination process and appointing members, ensuring that membership is primarily representative of underserved student groups.**
- For the purpose of selecting members, the school district superintendent:**
 - Must solicit names of possible members from the community**
 - May not deny members based on language;**
 - May not deny members based on immigration status;**
 - May not deny members based on protected class, including age, disability, national origin, race, color, marital status, religion, sex, sexual orientation, or gender identity;**
 - May not appoint a voting member of the school board or themselves to an educational equity advisory committee; and**
 - Must ensure that the composition of an educational equity advisory committee elevates underrepresented parent, employee, student, and community member voices.**
- The school district superintendent, in consultation with the educational equity advisory committee, shall fill vacancies on the committee in the same manner as original appointments.**

- **The school district board, in consultation with the superintendent, must select at least one member of the District Equity Committee to serve on the school district budget committee (once a vacancy occurs). ORS 328.542(2)(b) adds the exception when no equity committee member is willing or able to serve.**

Membership Selection Process

In accordance with HB 2453, membership selection is the responsibility of the superintendent and does not need board approval.

As part of their responsibility to select committee members, superintendents must determine how they will solicit member nominations from the community. Community input can help identify a wider pool of candidates who are ready, willing, and open to engaging meaningfully with each other in support of the aims set forth in statute. The **superintendent must ensure that membership is primarily representative of underserved student groups** and should include others' perspectives and voices in the membership solicitation and selection process. During this process, it is recommended to anchor in this guidance and to apply the district's equity lens and/or decision tool.

Potential committee members may be identified through intentional outreach, an application or nomination process, or a combination. Designing this process should consider how existing equity work can be restructured to meet the requirements of the DEC, as well as the ideal size of the group. The following sections include suggestions and guidance for locating potential District Equity Committee candidates, avoiding tokenization, as well as determining roles and ideal group size.

Outreach to Members of Local Tribal Communities

American Indian and Alaska Native students, regardless of whether they are enrolled in a federally recognized tribe, are included in the definitions of Underserved and Underrepresented students as set forth in [OAR 581-022-2307](#). As such, American Indian, Alaska Native and tribal communities are important groups to seek representation from when convening your DEC. This outreach or engagement is critically distinct from a formal Tribal Consultation process (as required by federal ESSA law).

As stated in ODE's Tribal Consultation Toolkit, "Any LEA or Educational Service District who has knowledge of the tribal affiliations of their AI/ AN students, should consider engaging in meaningful outreach and conversations on a regular basis to those tribes, while also

respecting and understanding the capacity of tribes to respond to all requests to partner, as they are all maintaining their own sovereign governments. This is NOT considered Tribal Consultation, but tribal communication.”

Finding Members through Community Engagement

A recommended practice for finding members begins with authentic community engagement. Developing a strategy of engagement and outreach to specific underserved and underrepresented communities within the district can begin by completing the [District Equity Committee Implementation Self-Assessment Tool](#). The Asset Mapping process documents existing community connections and resources, such as key staff, affinity groups, tribal partners, local leaders, community-based organizations, Indian community-based organizations, and culturally specific organizations. As the impacts of the District Equity Committee’s recommendations will ultimately land on students, consider student involvement early on in this process. Solicit student feedback on trusted staff, parents, and community members to include in the School & Community Partners Asset Map. To support outreach efforts, return to this Asset Map for a list of contacts. To truly broaden support and outreach to underrepresented voices, return to community engagement regularly to expand connections with insights from focal group populations.

Outreach

Outreach and messaging about the development of the District Equity Committee can be an excellent opportunity to find potential members and also to raise community awareness about how to get involved to support the DEC beyond membership. Consider accessibility along with the languages spoken and practiced within the district during outreach.

Outreach will likely vary depending on the method of selecting applicants, ranging from intentional and selective outreach to a broad search. During a broad search for interested applicants, multiple methods of communication and outreach are encouraged. For small and rural regions, connecting with the Education Service District as a hub to foster partnerships is encouraged. Consider what is shared in messaging about the role of the DEC member, the Member Terms of Service (if applicable), time capacity required, and skill sets sought, along with a basic outline of the application & selection process.

Further outreach to raise general community awareness is recommended to provide an opportunity to introduce the DEC, and to invite in student, family, and affinity group involvement.

Collaborative Members Selection: Promising Practice examples

1. In a regional partnership of small districts, superintendents were encouraged to collaborate with their district leadership teams to identify potential members with strong connections to the broader community. They were also invited to seek recommendations from other community networks and partner organizations with whom they regularly engage. This approach ensures that recruitment and selection are shared, inclusive, and informed by multiple perspectives rather than resting with a single individual.
2. A large school district worked with their Communications Department to promote and share information about the application process. The selection process was conducted by a review team that evaluated applications using a standardized rubric and selected candidates based on scores and available positions. The Superintendent's Office worked in partnership with other district teams (Teaching and Learning, Equity and Inclusion) throughout the recruitment and selection process, as well as during the school year to provide ongoing support to the District Equity Committee.

Skill Sets & Lived Experiences

Think back to the duties of a District Equity Committee outlined in [Section 1](#). Ideally, members who hold this responsibility of advising and informing the superintendent on issues affecting underrepresented students will have direct knowledge of the dynamics and nuances of the district. Members should be able to provide guidance on these issues by bringing valuable insights from lived experiences, advocacy work, career history, and community involvement. Members who possess contextual knowledge of public education locally and statewide, and who represent the various needs and demographics of your district community will likely have valuable perspectives to offer.

When assembling a new group of DEC members, consider candidates in relationship with one another to foster a supportive and balanced composition. For example, a trusted staff member working alongside students may be supportive in further elevating student voice. As the skills of collaboration and deep listening will be vital to this role, selecting members who either have a history utilizing said skills or who demonstrate their ongoing commitment to collaboration in diverse settings will be important.

Avoid Tokenism

While ensuring the composition of the District Equity Committee elevates underrepresented voices, avoiding the tokenism of individuals from underrepresented populations during the nomination and appointment process is critical. This is particularly true for regions where diverse populations can be limited.

Recommendations include:

1. Frame appreciation for the valuable perspective specific to the lived experience individuals with underrepresented identities can bring.
2. Build and sustain relationships based on reciprocity and follow-through.
3. Foster environments that allow each member to bring the multifaceted and intersectional identities they hold as individuals. Consider factors of culturally-responsive care and hospitality to foster inclusivity:
 - These factors include considerations for safety, comfort, scheduling needs, child care, food and fulfillment of ADA requirements in meeting spaces to meet the needs of every member and allow them to participate.

Group Size

When designing and adapting the DEC, the size of the group can impact the efficacy of what the group is able to accomplish while working in collaboration. Ideally, the group is large enough to accomplish the tasks needed, yet still small enough to communicate effectively with opportunities for each voice to be heard. A recommended range is anywhere from 8 to 14 people. An effective DEC could function well with as few as five members for small and rural districts. This is not a dictate, rule, or requirement, and the size of the group can be set within each district's policy formation. See [Appendix B](#) for committee size considerations.

Roles

Your DEC's design may include leadership and role titles. If this is the case, it is advised to document any authority that is delegated. In general, it is helpful to define roles, duties, and responsibilities early on for all members. Consider how roles can be designated to foster efficacy and collaboration. Some roles may best be suited to individuals with specific skill sets, and some may rotate. Responsibilities to consider include:

- Facilitation
- Notetaking
- Liaison to the Budget Committee

- Timekeeper
- Agenda Coordinator
- Schedule Coordinator
- Liaison between the DEC and the superintendent/district

Member Terms of Service

While not required, districts may consider establishing Member Terms of Service that clearly outline the roles, responsibilities, and commitments of each member. If Member Terms of Service are established, determine what is most appropriate for the district's need and context, whether an informal document to be shared amongst members, or a more formal contractual document.

If informal, consider:

- Collaboratively developing the Member Terms of Service with the DEC; possibly including:
 - Commitments expected of individual members;
 - The process for leaving or being asked to leave the position.
- Communicating the Member Terms of Service to potential members interested in joining before they begin the application process.
- Ensuring the Member Terms of Service is accessible and available as a translated document.
- Addressing general term of service variables, including:
 - Does a member's term of service extend beyond their enrollment in the district, such as when a student graduates?
 - Does a member's term of service continue if they leave their status of employment within the district?

Addressing Barriers to Participation

Longstanding barriers may impact participation from underserved or marginalized communities. These could include variables with easier fixes, such as coordinating DEC meetings in a place, time, and way of doing business that is accessible and less rooted in protocols that are difficult to follow (e.g. Robert's Rules). This could also include deeper variables such as relationships that have not been built with communities. If the district has created a team tasked with coordinating the membership nomination process, this team could also address these kinds of barriers.

Again, consider factors of culturally responsive care and hospitality to foster inclusivity for each member: safety; scheduling needs; childcare; food; transportation; translation; interpretation, and fulfillment of ADA requirements in meeting spaces. Considering these factors will help reduce barriers to participation and support the needs of every member.

Sharing DEC Work with the Community: A Promising Practice from a Small ESD

Because of the large geographic area of its ESD, one regional partnership holds all its Equity Committee meetings virtually to eliminate extensive travel time. Meetings are accessible by video or phone, ensuring all members can participate. The ESD proactively addresses potential barriers, most commonly connectivity issues, and provides support as needed to ensure full and equitable participation for all committee members.

Section 3: Structure and Organization

The structure and organization of your District Equity Committee will vary depending on your district's needs and variables like district size, existing equity teams, and bandwidth to staff the DEC.

Guiding Questions

Once your DEC's membership has been set, here are some key questions that can guide the launch of the group.

1. Why are you meeting? What is the committee's purpose?
2. Who sits at the table? How are guests treated? Can visitors audit meetings?
3. What operating policies and member expectations will the group uphold?
4. How are decisions made?
5. How will the roles and duties of members support the organization and operation of the DEC?
6. Does the committee see benefits or drawbacks from establishing a quorum to meet, deliberate, or make recommendations?
7. How will the group meet its responsibilities, including responding to concerns or questions?

Structure & Processes

As you consider the size of your District Equity Committee, you will also want to plan for key structural, operational, and logistical questions. Consider questions such as: How will decision-making work? What meeting protocols will support DEC dialogue and operations? How frequently will the DEC meet and where?

Decision-making

One-person-one-vote with majority prevailing is a common decision-making approach, but there are other effective methods, as well. In a **collaborative decision-making** process, the group may decide that reaching a decision by consensus would be best. Then, the governing document would define consensus and define what happens if consensus cannot be reached. The governing document usually also defines how many members of a governing body must be present for the decision to be made—called a quorum. Regardless of the method, DEC members will ideally agree with the choice the group sets on decision-making and “own” it for some length of time. Of course, you can change the decision-making method at a specified juncture, particularly if it is not working for the group.

Meeting Protocols & Processes

While establishing a DEC, it is important to talk about the kind of dialogue the group wants to have and how. Likewise, it is important to set the technical roles and logistical needs of each DEC. Because the larger purpose of a DEC is to help a diverse community identify both community assets and solve challenges, the methods used for agenda setting, discussion, and supporting members' sustained participation are essential. As DECs set their agendas and agree on how meetings should be facilitated, ODE suggests that time should be spent building relationships and determining an approach both to participatory decision-making and how the group engages with tension in a way that supports different perspectives.

Establishing and Sustaining District Equity Committees

Fostering a Generative Space

DECs are meant to support deeper equity reflection and response in the district. As such, they are meant to be able to hold sensitive and sometimes contentious discussions on issues that matter deeply for students, families, staff, and community members. There are many approaches to holding a space that is conducive to this. You should consider your own community and culture, what frameworks (e.g. Courageous Conversations; Critical Friends Protocols) that are already in place or understood, and what you could build on to foster a generative space for the DEC. As an example, [Appendix C](#) summarizes five equity-centered alternatives to common “ground rules” from Arao & Clemens’s [“From Safe Spaces to Brave Spaces”](#) that can help create a generative space.

Frequency

Each DEC will have the autonomy to decide the frequency of meetings based on their context and needs. It might make sense for the DEC to meet more frequently as it first gets going to create conditions for relationship, purpose, and clarity of structure. ODE recommends establishing a regular meeting rhythm. There are likely times when the DEC needs to gather more frequently to be responsive to community needs or to support more significant engagement in planning efforts or budgeting.

Location

The DEC can work together with the superintendent to determine a central location (either on a school campus or other community location) so that all members have access (thinking about distance and time). Meeting location may be in a virtual setting to provide accommodations for distance, travel, or other considerations.

Section 4: Empowering and Resourcing Your District Equity Committee

The DEC brings people together to have honest conversations and to create action plans that work to dismantle current and historical inequities through continuous improvement. The DEC navigates many new relationships, systems, and issues, and members may encounter issues and tensions related to positionality and power within the district. This section offers recommendations and considerations for preparing and supporting DEC members as they engage in these conversations.

Requirements

Empowering the District Equity Committee with the right tools, conditions, context, and resources is crucial for its long-term success. Section 3 of [OAR 581-022-2307](#) states that:

- **Each school district, in consultation with the District Equity Committee [*Educational Equity Advisory Committee*], is required to provide sufficient support to District Equity Committee members to participate in meetings, including, but not limited to, access to district-managed emails, translation and interpretation services, and relevant public meeting and security trainings.**

Supporting the DEC to do their best work

Beyond the requirements for what a district is required to provide for the DEC are several additional supports that you could offer the District Equity Committee. In most cases, DEC members are volunteering their time and capacity to support the district. Here are best practices and considerations for how you can support and sustain the DEC to do their deepest work in service to your district and community:

- Designating a district staff member to the DEC specifically for administrative, operational, and coordination support. This can support DEC members to spend their time and bandwidth discussing equity issues rather than engaging in administrative work.
- The superintendent and district staff can support the DEC by providing context, story, and knowledge related to: district/school/community history; knowledge of operational budgets and state/federal plans; key anecdotes, vignettes and stories to help paint a picture of the district landscape; and other helpful insights that will allow the DEC to have as informed a discussion as possible. Think of this like the way in which some school boards or a site committee is staffed and supported with any inquiries.
- It is critical that the superintendent is responsive to the DEC's requests and needs. Whether it is a request for follow-up, to attend certain meetings or contact specific staff, if the DEC feels like the superintendent is a cheerleader for their work and backs that with action, they will feel more empowered to do deeper work on behalf of the district.
- Allocate funding for the District Equity Committee. Supporting a DEC could be an allowable use of several grant programs (such as the Student Investment Account) or the general fund. If funding allowed, a partial staffing of FTE could ensure the DEC has steady operational momentum that could be used to help cover: DEC gatherings/retreats (to support relationship-building and deeper strategic vision); professional development for the DEC; travel/food costs to help DEC members meet communities and families (especially in rural areas).
- Offering professional development, team-building activities, training or other opportunities to the DEC that can help them create shared equity frameworks, consciousness, and knowledge. Consider

the training needs that will collectively best support members to work in alignment towards the district's equity goals. For small and rural districts where personnel are limited, perhaps consider engaging your ESD for training and support for the District Equity Committee members.

Supporting the DEC with Local, District Policy

Statute and rule allow for a range of approaches to the design and implementation of District Equity Committees. Some districts may wish to codify their own local board-adopted policies for the operations of their District Equity Committee.

If districts would like support with the creation or review of equity policies that can enhance the work of the DEC, they may contact the Policy Team at the [Oregon School Boards Association](#). For another key resource on equity and local district policy, see Race Forward's [Equity Policies Toolkit for School Boards](#).

Key Connection Points

Creating conditions for the success of the District Equity Committee involves connecting the DEC with critical work in the district. Establishing touchpoints with key partners and existing equity efforts across the district will support the DEC to more effectively advise on important equity issues with greater context about the district's ongoing equity work. This could include:

- Regular briefings from the superintendent, district staff, community members, community-based organizations, culturally specific organizations, and/or other key equity teams in the district.
- Establishing a connection between the DEC and the district's Civil Rights Coordinator early on. [Civil Rights Coordinators](#) oversee discrimination complaints, provide guidance to district personnel regarding civil rights concerns, and coordinate efforts to prevent discrimination. As the DEC establishes its realm of focus, there may be overlap with topics where Civil Rights Coordinators are also working.
- Creating connections between the ESD and the DEC to find opportunities for reinforcing equity efforts.
- Sharing the [District Equity Committee Implementation Self-Assessment Tool](#) with the DEC.
- Creating standing agenda items in DEC meetings for presentations about other district equity work.
- Identifying what other meetings and teams DEC members can attend (either regularly or on an ad-hoc basis).
- Identifying publicly available data that the DEC may find helpful in supporting their work, such as SEED Survey data (see callout box in [Section 1](#)).

Safeguarding Transparency, Accountability and Safety

Applicability of Public Meetings Law

The passage of HB 2453 in 2025 addresses prior concerns for DEC members' safety in relation to Oregon Public Meetings Law. Throughout the rulemaking process and early implementation stages, ODE heard significant discussion, questions, and concerns regarding the applicability of Public Meetings Law to District Equity Committees. In accordance with HB 2453, District Equity Committees now advise superintendents directly, not the district school board, and thus are no longer considered governing bodies subject to Public Meetings Law.

Districts should consult with their legal counsel about any questions regarding the applicability of Public Meetings Law to the way their DEC functions. This particularly applies to districts who were implementing their DEC prior to HB 2453's passage and are retaining aspects of a more formal relationship between the DEC and the school board. Questions regarding how a proposed design does and does not interact with Public Meetings Law needs to be addressed by local legal counsel. ODE is not able to provide legal advice on the applicability or requirements of Oregon's Public Meetings Law.

Maintaining Transparency

While DECs' relationship to Public Meetings Law has changed as a result of HB 2453, the intent for transparency and accountability has not. Where HB 2453's changes to make DECs advisory to the superintendent and not the board affect how publicly visible DECs may be, districts should consider other avenues to maintain transparency and accountability with community.

Supporting the safety and well-being of DEC members

ODE recognizes the challenging reality that community leaders' stewarding work focusing on educational equity has been and could be impacted by threats, harassment, or intimidation. Districts should make pragmatic assessments about how to navigate these challenges in relationship with DEC members, and in ways that keep this important work moving. Districts are encouraged to consider creating and implementing documented working agreements between the superintendent and the DEC that include clear safety plans and protocols to prioritize the safety and wellbeing of DEC members. Consider:

- Referring to Every Student Belongs district-adopted policies to affirm and ensure every student, employee, and visitor is entitled to high quality educational experiences and environments free from discrimination or harassment.
- Connecting with the School Safety and Prevention Specialist to partner on preparing for the safety and wellbeing of DEC members.
- Consulting this ODE resource on [Ensuring focal student group safety and privacy](#).

It is vital to plan for the safety and well-being of DEC members.

There are limitations to what state guidance can offer to adequately ensure the safety and well-being of DEC members. For additional guidance in this regard, school administrators will benefit from connecting

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with the [Coalition of Oregon School Administrators](#) (COSA). COSA can provide proactive and responsive resources related to risk management, safety planning, and providing protocols for use with students, staff, and volunteers.

COSA can be reached at support@cosa.k12.or.us

Appendix A: Getting Started

At the time of this revised guidance being released (June 2026), all Oregon school districts are required to have a District Equity Committee established. This Appendix holds important information and considerations for the start-up phase of a DEC, which may be useful as districts experience leadership transitions or transitions between regional DEC consortia configurations and individual district committees.

For a DEC in start-up or restart planning phases, this Appendix offers considerations for 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.

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 identifying existing groups, teams, and work that could be involved in the development or functionality of your DEC.
3. Begin communicating the DEC criteria and your plan/process to educators and community.

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

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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 - 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 on how DECs 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 D: [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 as well as 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. 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 groups and school communities in equitable and culturally sustaining ways. ODE has developed a

[District Equity Committee Implementation Self-Assessment Tool](#) that provides DEC members a starting point for evaluating the equity work already in progress with consideration for next steps.

Suggested approach for implementation of the District Equity Committee

This approach to implementation uses the backward mapping strategy to identify key processes and procedures to fully enact District Equity Committees.

1: Getting Ready

- 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: Assess and Plan

- 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 the demographics and needs of students and the broader school community. Design outreach to meet desired membership.

3: Engage

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

4: Committee Member Selection

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

5: Ongoing Implementation

- The new DEC meets with the superintendent to build a shared understanding of the role of the DEC and supports needed.
- The first meeting of the District Equity Committee is set and the work begins.

Some creative approaches that implementing districts have used to support the start-up phases of their DEC are:

- 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.
- Dialogue around implementation of the DEC between administrators and students; administrators and staff; staff and students; and administrators and students.

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- 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 operationalization of the DEC.

Step Three: Begin a regular DEC meeting cadence

As you plan the first District Equity Committee meetings, here are some considerations that could be structured into the first few agendas to establish a strong foundation:

- **Set the Stage:** Ideally, the superintendent would attend the first meeting to help provide purpose, background, and lay a foundation for why the committee is critical. The first meeting will set the stage for the function, spirit, and purpose of the District Equity Committee, and the superintendent can help reinforce the value and the need for the DEC.
- **Build relationships:** The DEC should spend time building relationships, sharing stories, and offering mutual connections. The DEC is composed of individuals, each with their own unique experiences, voices, and perspectives, and will be nourished by the way individual thoughts or concerns can be fully expressed.
- **Fine Tune the Logistics:** If key logistical/operational details have been decided already (such as leadership, decision making, meeting protocols and processes, frequency, location), spend time explaining those decisions and why those decisions have been made. If some/all of those have not yet been deliberated, those details are valuable to dedicate intentional time to discuss.
- **Offer Space for Shared Visioning:** The District Equity Committee is intended to be a long-term support for the district while also being able to be responsive to short-term needs/issues that arise. Creating conditions for success over time may involve dedicating time upfront to shared visioning, collective brainstorming, responsive discussion, and interactive activities that allow the DEC to envision how progress in equity work implementation could look, sound, and feel. Allow these conversations to prime future planning and prioritization of topics.
- **Determine Strategies for Community Engagement & Involvement:** Begin an initial conversation about how the DEC will keep the community informed and if the DEC will exercise its ability (the statute reads *may*) to generate and share an annual report. ODE recommends districts and the DEC discuss any implications of this choice with legal counsel.

Appendix B: Committee Size Considerations

Size of DEC	Pros	Cons
Less than 8 members	<p>Decision-making process is much easier with fewer people.</p> <p>Cost of managing the DEC is lower.</p> <p>Recruitment process may be easier.</p> <p>A smaller team may be more nimble and develop more efficient collaboration skills.</p>	<p>Less diversified due to reduced numbers.</p> <p>DEC operations may be impacted due to attendance issues.</p> <p>Greater workload for individual members, potential for burn out.</p> <p>Potential for less analysis and discussion on key issues due to lack of different perspectives.</p> <p>Greater potential for “groupthink”.</p> <p>Desired skill set may not be achieved.</p> <p>Less flexibility in turnover & succession planning.</p>
Greater than 10 members	<p>Greater opportunity for genuine diversity.</p> <p>Broader range of skill sets.</p> <p>Workload may be shared across greater numbers.</p> <p>Potential for enhanced analysis and deliberation.</p> <p>Able to cope with absence of members.</p> <p>More effective for turnover & succession planning.</p>	<p>Less time for each DEC member to weigh-in.</p> <p>Greater potential cost to fund DEC.</p> <p>Potential for cliques to develop.</p> <p>Not enough work to keep members stimulated and interested.</p> <p>Potential for reduced commitment (i.e. plenty of people to do the work).</p> <p>Increased numbers do not necessarily mean better decisions.</p>
Between 8-10 members	<p>Potentially large enough to meet diversity and skill base needs.</p> <p>Adequate numbers to “spread the workload” and retain interest at the same time.</p> <p>Cost to fund DEC is not excessive.</p> <p>DEC member engagement can be maximized without impact on the decision making process.</p> <p>Orderly succession can be managed.</p> <p>Attendance issues are mitigated.</p>	<p>At 8 members, if 2 or more are absent, DEC effectiveness and diligence may be negatively impacted.</p> <p>Requires full commitment of all members as numbers do not allow individuals to take an extended leave of absence.</p> <p>Lower numbers may impact community perceptions of appropriate representation and governance.</p> <p>Even numbers may be problematic in a 4 - 4 vote.</p>

Appendix C: From Safe Spaces to Brave Spaces

Five equity-centered alternatives to common “ground rules” from Arao & Clemens’s [“From Safe Spaces to Brave Spaces”](#) that can help create a generative space:

1. Instead of “agreeing to disagree,” center “controversy with civility,” a “value whereby different views are expected and honored with a group commitment to understand the sources of disagreement and to work cooperatively toward common solutions”
2. Instead of “Don’t take things personally,” an agreement around “own your intentions and your impact” supports an understanding that “the impact of our actions does not always connect or align with our intentions and that positive or neutral intentions do not trump negative impact.”
3. Rather than simply asking others to “Challenge by choice,” encourage members to pay attention to how factors like power, privilege, race, class, gender, etc. inform their decision about whether and how to engage in challenging dialogue and what the impacts of not challenging themselves are (on them and/or on others).
4. While “respect” is often understood as a universal value, what is less discussed is the different ways that respect looks across cultures and communities. “The objective here is not to lead participants to consensus but rather to support them in maintaining increased mindfulness of the different ways they can demonstrate respect to one another.
5. Finally, a common ground rule says there should be “No attacks.” Rather than accept this rule casually, Arao & Clemens “ask [their] participants to describe the differences between a personal attack on an individual and a challenge to an individual’s idea or belief or statement that simply makes an individual feel uncomfortable.” This can lead to deeper nuance around what is underneath the perceived threat.