

I. Purpose

The policy is to ensure that ALL students are provided opportunities to receive the skills, knowledge, and understanding to succeed according to their individual abilities in higher education, careers, life readiness, and the community. The District operates from and is accountable to the equity standards set forth in this policy consistent with applicable laws, rules, and regulations and the binding court opinions that interpret them.

This policy promotes educational access, opportunity, safety, and belonging within the school district community in a manner consistent with law based on the following principles:

- A. Discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, religion, or marital status against a District student is prohibited.
- B. No District student shall, on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, religion, or marital status be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any District educational program or activity.
- C. The criteria for a program or course shall not have the effect of restricting access by persons of a particular race, color, national origin, sex, disability, religion, or marital status. Special selection criteria for admission for participation in programs or courses shall be related to program standards and requirements.
- D. All District education classes shall be available to all students without regard to race, color, national origin, sex, disability, religion, or marital status. However, nothing in this policy is intended to eliminate the provision of programs designed to meet the needs of students with limited proficiency in English, gifted students, or students with disabilities or programs tailored to students with specialized talents or skills.
- E. Students may be separated by sex only as permitted by state and federal law.
- F. Guidance services, counselling services, health services, and financial assistance services shall be available to all students equally.
- G. It is the policy of the District to create an educational or work environment free of harassment on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, religion, or marital status.
- H. Equal employment opportunities shall be provided to all applicants and

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employees without regard to race, color, national origin, sex, disability, religion, or marital status.

- I. The District shall pursue strategies to overcome student underrepresentation in educational programs consistent with F.S. 1000.05 and Section 6A-19 of the Florida Administrative Code.

II. Definitions

A. *Educational equity* – An educational system that ensures all students have access to the opportunities, resources and educational rigor they need throughout their educational career to maximize academic success. The educational system that views each student’s individual characteristics as valuable, focuses on delivering education in a manner consistent with state standards, and while developing civic, character, and life skills for every student that build confidence and support mental health, in order to develop and prepare more resilient students

B. *Equity lens* – A process for analyzing and implementing policies to achieve the intent outlined in F.S. 1000.05, Section 6A-19 of the Florida Administrative Code, and Section I. of this policy.

C. *Responsive instructional practices* – involve recognizing and incorporating the assets and strengths all students bring into the classroom, and ensuring that learning experiences, from curriculum through assessment, are relevant to all students, in accordance with state standards, and delivered in an age-appropriate manner.

D. *Belonging* – The feeling of security, support, and validation for all people when there is a sense of acceptance, inclusion, identity, equality, and fair treatment within an environment (i.e., school, classroom, or work).

E. *Dignity* - The right of a person to be valued, honored, and respected for their own sake, and to be treated equally and fairly.

III. Professional Learning

A. The District will ensure that professional learning and educator resources include a focus on creating inclusive learning environments in which all students and families have a sense of belonging by honoring the dignity of each person.

B. The District will provide opportunities for all Sarasota County School District personnel to complete professional learning experiences that build personal, professional, and organizational capacity to understand the impact of educational access and opportunity within our district.

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- C. The District will provide evidence-based professional learning with a focus implementing responsive instructional practices that are effective for students of all backgrounds and abilities, in accordance with state standards, and that are delivered in an age-appropriate manner.

IV. District-Wide Student Support

- A. The District will set high expectations for all students, strive to close the achievement gap for lower performing students, and aim to increase the educational learning and results of every student through its commitment to allocating and aligning resources, interventions, and programs to student needs.
- B. The District will aim to resolve existing disparities, gaps, and disproportionalities by implementing practices focused on enhanced achievement through an equity lens.
- C. The District will select and develop instructional materials that promote efficient and faithful teaching of factual and objective topics in a manner that is consistent with state standards, in accordance with FS1003. 42 and Section 6A-1.094124 of the Florida Administrative Code.
- D. The District will ensure that District students and families have access to the information necessary to successfully navigate the school system, including access to information about resources, opportunities, and policies in appropriate languages and trainings.

V. Data

- A. The District, through the analysis of FLDOE Educational Equity Update Report, and systemwide disaggregated district data, will identify and address systemic deficiencies that create gaps in academic achievement, as well as any disproportionality in student discipline and placement in special education programs, and disparities in access to gifted and accelerated coursework including AICE, IB, and AP programs. Results will be communicated in a transparent and accessible manner to all stakeholders, and a plan will be developed to mitigate and specifically address inequities.
- B. The District will continuously examine its practices, policies and procedures to understand the impact on existing outcome disparities and develop solutions so that every student and staff member is able to thrive.

VI. Recruitment, Retention, and Hiring

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The District will continuously reevaluate recruitment procedures, update job descriptions, and strive to recruit and retain highly qualified administrators, teachers, and support staff who reflect the racially and culturally diverse community of Sarasota County Schools, as mandated by the FLDOE Educational Equity Update Report.

STATUTORY AUTHORITY:

Section 1000.05, F.S. "Florida Educational Equity Act"

LAW(S) IMPLEMENTED:

Title IX of the Educational Amendment Act of 1972
Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964
Title III of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001
Section, 1003.42, Florida Statutes
Section 6A-19 of the Florida Administrative Code
Section 6A-1.094124 of the Florida Administrative Code

HISTORY:

ADOPTED: 01/18/22

REVISION DATE(S): 09/19/23

FORMERLY:

NOTES: