

## RACIAL EQUITY

*Mount Vernon School District defines equity as providing every student what they need to be successful. When students engage in meaningful cross-cultural exchanges, when race is no longer a predictor of student performance, and when each student and family feel a sense of community within the Mount Vernon Schools, we are closer to this goal.*

### STATEMENT

Mount Vernon School District (MVSD) seeks to graduate inspired critical thinkers who honor diversity and are committed to the betterment of their own lives and the lives of others. When coupled with our strategic goal of 100% of our students graduating with the knowledge and skills necessary to be successful in post-secondary education, careers and life, we become accountable for the achievement of each student's fullest potential.

We believe every student can achieve this goal; and yet, longstanding inequitable practices have hindered students of color<sup>1</sup> from attaining academic parity with their white peers, leading to disproportionate student outcomes. In order to ensure race, ethnicity and culture cease to be a predictor of student performance in MVSD, we must eliminate systems, structures, practices and behaviors contributing to discrepancies in student learning and graduation outcomes.

Therefore, MVSD commits to eliminate all forms of discrimination<sup>2</sup> and inequity in order to provide safe and productive learning opportunities for every student.

To this end, the Board of Directors actualizes our commitment to social justice and racial equity by directing the Superintendent to implement a framework of principles, actions, behaviors, and practices, with system-wide accountability measures.

We believe all members of the MVSD community have the shared responsibility to:

1. engage in district-wide reflection to identify and eliminate systemic, fundamental barriers to educational equity;
2. ensure cultures of equity transform inequitable policies and systems;
3. provide instruction, curriculum and learning environments reflecting the strengths and needs of our students allowing them to reach their full potential; and,
4. elicit and engage students, family and community voice and advocacy in our schools, classrooms and in decision-making efforts.

<sup>1</sup>At the time of the policy adoption "students of color" was the prevalent terminology used in the equity literature to identify the student demographic negatively impacted by racial bias. Emerging terms such as; marginalized, global majority, minoritized, etc. may become the term used in future literature, nomenclature and in legal code definitions.

<sup>2</sup>Many aspects of an individual's identity intersect to create overlapping oppressions. These include race, gender identity, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, differing abilities, language, religious beliefs, and culture.

## GUIDING PRINCIPLES

MVSD acknowledges disparities in student performance across racial groups stemming from inequities in students' academic and other school experiences. These inequities have limited the opportunities and resources available to students of color and their families, resulting in what some scholars have called an "educational debt."

*"The only way to meet the needs of our students is to actively dismantle systemic barriers and replace them with policies and practices that ensure all students have access to the instruction and support they need to succeed in our schools."* – State Office of Superintendent of Public Schools.

As a result, MVSD brings an urgency to our equity and social justice efforts. In order to eliminate inequities and social injustices to create cultures of equity, MVSD affirms the following:

1. We believe racial equity work involves restructuring processes and practices related to instruction, student discipline, resource allocation, curriculum adoption, hiring, and all other systems that have historically impeded the success of students of color.
2. We believe adults perpetuate the educational debt when they operate from an historical framework of implicit and/or explicit discrimination and bias.
3. We believe all students deserve humanizing pedagogy that builds on students' lived experiences and develops critical consciousness - i.e., an ability to recognize systems of inequality and a commitment to challenge these systems - and cross-cultural awareness. We also believe teachers and other adults in schools can develop students' capacities to use their critical consciousness and cross-cultural awareness to act in a manner that leads to productive social change.

This requires that our educators:

- a. develop a deep understanding of the historical context, culture, and strengths of all of our students and recognize that diversity and cultural differences are assets to all members of our community.
  - b. increase their knowledge and understanding of intercultural and cross-cultural communications in order to authentically connect and partner with families and students;
  - c. integrate students' and families' language, cultural skills and knowledge to create a sense of belonging and to foster an academic identity in all students;
  - d. create learning environments relevant to and reflective of our students' lived experiences, as well as school and district cultures that value all of our students' unique backgrounds and contributions in our society;
  - e. facilitate critical student dialogues to enhance cultural understandings, agency and advocacy for social justice
  - f. develop students' capacities to use their critical consciousness and cross-cultural awareness to act in a manner that leads to productive social change.
4. We believe partnering with families and community-based organizations that have a role in supporting our students will reinforce the support necessary for students to be successful and will ultimately enhance the greater Mount



Vernon community.

## **EQUITY GOALS AND PRINCIPLES**

MVSD actualizes its commitment to racial equity by committing to the following goals and associated principles:

### **Equity Goal 1: Engage in district-wide reflection to identify and eliminate systemic barriers to educational equity**

**Principle #1:** We believe racial equity work involves restructuring processes and practices related to instruction, student discipline, resource allocation, curriculum adoption, hiring, and all other systems that have historically had a negative impact on students of color, impeding their success.

### **Equity Goal 2: Ensure cultures that transform inequitable policies and systems**

**Principle #2:** We believe that adults perpetuate the educational debt when operating from a historical framework of implicit and/or explicit discrimination and bias.

### **Equity Goal 3: Provide instruction, curriculum, and learning environments reflecting the strengths and needs of our students allowing them to reach their academic and social emotional potential**

**Principle #3:** We believe all students deserve humanizing pedagogy that builds on students' lived experiences and develops their critical consciousness and cross-cultural awareness. We also believe teachers and other adults in schools should develop students' capacity to use their critical consciousness and cross-cultural awareness to act in a manner that leads to productive social change.

### **Equity Goal 4: Elicit and engage students, family and community voice and advocacy in our schools, classrooms and in decision-making efforts.**

**Principle #4:** We believe partnering with families and community-based organizations that have a role in assisting our students will reinforce the support necessary for students to be successful and will ultimately enhance the greater Mount Vernon community.

In order to actualize MVSD Racial Equity Goals and Principles, the Board of Directors instructs the superintendent to oversee the development of an annual action plan that identifies the specific priority actions, strategies, and outcome measures for each goal area. Progress on this action plan is to be incorporated into the District's regularly scheduled progress report to the Board.



## DEFINITIONS

**Agency:** In social science, agency is defined as the capacity of individuals to act independently and to make their own free choices. By contrast, structure is defined by those factors of influence (such as social class, religion, gender, ethnicity, ability, customs, etc.) that determine or limit an agent and their decisions.

**Knowledge of Cultural Differences:** Awareness of an individual's own cultural preferences and how they impact their interactions with others, as well as the ability to plan for multicultural interactions and reflect on the accuracy of their understandings and assumptions.

**Critical Consciousness:** An ability to recognize systems of inequality and a commitment to challenge these systems

**Critical Dialogue:** A conversation that inspires insight and wisdom on a particular topic, both for the individuals participating in the discussion and the collective thinking of the group.

**Cultural Equity:** Embodies the values, policies, and practices that ensure that all people— including but not limited to those who have been historically underrepresented based on race/ethnicity, age, disability, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, socioeconomic status, geography, citizenship status, or religion - are treated equitably.

**Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT):** "The process of using familiar cultural information and processes to scaffold learning. Emphasizes communal orientation. Focused on relationships, cognitive scaffolding, and critical social awareness." (Hammond, Z. 2015)

**Disaggregated Data:** Results from taking a closer look into smaller pockets of system-wide data to uncover patterns and trends that may be true for a subset of students, but not for all students across the system. For example, examining the data on male students of a given race/ethnicity who are economically disadvantaged to determine whether their assessment scores are below the scores of their white, economically advantaged peers.

**Diversity:** While this policy focuses primarily on racial equity, the District recognizes that equity must apply to all protected classes, including:

Age	Sexual Orientation
National Origin	Family Structure
Economic Status	Use of Service Animals
Citizenship	Gender Identity or Expression
Pregnancy	Veteran Status
Race	Language Accessibility
Creed or Religion	Cognitive/Physical Ability
Gender	Marital/Relationship Status
Culture	

**Educational Debt:** Term coined by scholar, Gloria Ladson-Billings in 2006 that describes the opportunities and resources held back from students over the decades. Shifts the focus to system and structural influences and the historic, economic, sociopolitical, and moral foundations of the disparate educational outcomes between white students and students of color.

**Job Embedded:** Refers to professional learning that is grounded in the daily work of teachers. It is characterized as learning by doing and encourages teachers to actively engage in and reflect on their practices through professional collaboration and involvement in instructional coaching.

**Equity-related learning/training:** A reference to the professional and personal development opportunities to learn about diverse cultural experiences present throughout the community along with implicit bias and barriers to equity.

**Equitable:** Opportunities that are available to all students, resulting in the elimination of significant gaps in outcomes. Equitable practices seek to increase access to opportunities for achievement among students not performing to their full potential.

**Educational Equity:** Refers to raising the achievement of all students (1) narrowing the gaps between lowest and highest performing students and (2) eliminating the racial predictability and disproportionality of which student groups occupy the highest and lowest achievement gaps.

**Equity Lens:** A tool for analysis, planning, decision-making, and evaluation. It may be used to diagnose or analyze the impact of the design and implementation of policies or programs on under-served, marginalized, and diverse individuals and groups and to identify appropriate accommodations to eliminate barriers. (See example under *Equity Lens Tool*.)

**Equity Lens Tool:** Aims to provide protocols and accountability questions for strategic equity resource allocation and decision-making. (Following example adapted from the State of Oregon).

1. Who are the racial/ethnic and underserved groups affected? What is the potential impact of the resource allocation and strategic investment to these groups?
2. Does the decision being made ignore or worsen existing disparities or produce other unintended consequences? What is the impact on eliminating the opportunity gap?
3. How does the investment or resource allocation advance our Equity vision and strategic plans?
4. What are the barriers to more equitable outcomes? (e.g. mandated, political, emotional, financial, programmatic or managerial)
5. Have we intentionally involved stakeholders who are also members of the communities affected by the strategic investment or resource allocation? How do we validate assessment of protocols 1 through 3?
6. How will we modify or enhance strategies to ensure the individual and cultural needs of each learner?

**Inequity:** Lack of fairness or justice.

**Institutional bias:** Defined in the literature as the failure to provide appropriate services or access to a group of people because of their race, color, or culture. This may be seen in the practices, systems, attitudes, behaviors, or by looking at the results of the organization. This is beyond acts of prejudice and is likely built into the organization's systems. This may not be the result of any conscious prejudice or discrimination, but rather of the majority simply following existing rules or norms.

**Implicit bias:** The attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner.

**Explicit bias:** Refers to the attitudes and beliefs we have about a person or group on a conscious level.

**Intersectionality/Intersectional Ties:** The cumulative way in which the effects of multiple forms of discrimination (such as racism, sexism, and classism) combine or overlap in the experiences of marginalized individuals or groups.

**Opportunity Gap:** Acknowledges that there are still structural issues with institutionalized racism, disparate educational opportunities, and different treatment experienced by students of color. More specifically, opportunity gap refers to inputs-the unequal or inequitable distribution of resources and opportunities.

**Pedagogy:** Methods and practices of teaching. Particular focus on Equity and CRT practices.

**Performance Gap:** Observed and persistent disparity on a number of educational measures between the performance of groups of students, especially groups defined by gender, race/ethnicity, and socioeconomic status.

**Race:** For the purpose of this policy, “race” is defined as “A social construct that artificially divides people into distinct groups based on characteristics such as physical appearance (particularly color), ancestral heritage, cultural affiliations, cultural history, ethnic classification, and social, economic, and political needs of a society at a given period of time. Racial categories subsume ethnic groups.” Marianne Adams, Lee Anne Bell, and Pat Griffin, editors, *Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice: A Sourcebook*. (2007)

**Racial Equity:** The condition that would be achieved if one's **racial** identity no longer predicted, in a statistical sense, how one fares.

**Social Justice:** The removal of social, political, and economic inequalities among people.

**Systemic Change:** (Race and Equity) Changes across the entire system of classrooms, schools, departments, and the district office to policies, procedures, and practices that prevent students from accessing powerful educational opportunities and/or preventing families from participating in our schools as full partners in their children's education.