

Equity Policy Outline

Passed Rules Committee October 21, 2019

Definition:

SPS defines equity as providing the opportunities, support, environment, high expectations, and resources that every student needs to achieve educational success, to feel valued, and contribute to a thriving community.

This is different than equality, which means providing each individual student with the exact same conditions or resources regardless of need.

Purpose:

Somerville Public Schools (SPS) students have the right to respectful learning environments in which all of their identities, especially their racial and ethnic diversity, is valued and contributes to successful academic outcomes. This includes the embracing of intersectionality, the complexity of each unique student, and the convergence of their overlapping identities (such as race, ethnicity, gender identity, ability, sexual orientation, religion, nationality, language acquisition status, and socio-economic status).

This policy asserts that each and every student matters, and in particular, that educational outcomes should never be predictable by any individual's actual or perceived personal identity, and that equity demands intensive focus and attention to eliminate all gaps in student achievement correlated with demographic characteristics.

This policy exists to confront a legacy of institutional racism that results in achievement and opportunity gaps. These gaps include lower academic achievement and graduation rates, higher drop out and suspension rates, and fewer college and career opportunities for students of color than for their white peers. Moreover, when other variables are held constant (e.g. poverty indicators, special education status, language acquisition status), gaps along the lines of race and ethnicity are still present.

SPS acknowledges that complex societal and historical factors contribute to inequities within our school district. SPS must continuously examine all policies and practices for internal biases that contribute to achievement and opportunity gaps. SPS must provide all students with the support and opportunity to succeed.

This policy will uphold SPS' commitment that all staff will be culturally competent, and demonstrate mutual respect without regard to any individual's actual or perceived personal characteristics.

Equity Levers Crucial to Student Success:

There are a number of factors that influence success for all students. These factors include: (1) district and school policies and procedures, foremost pupil school assignment; (2) adequate resources; (3) high quality teaching and learning; (4) social, emotional, and physical health of students; (5) quality, diversity, competency, and stability of school leadership and staff; and (6) valued partnership with students' family and community.

Desired Outcomes:

1. Pupil assignment shall take into consideration district programming and neighborhood choice to result in equal access to opportunity and a diverse representation of the population at each K-8 and K-5.
2. Schools shall receive equitably allocated resources to respond to the needs of each student, which may result in differentiated resource allocation. This includes, after consideration of students' individual needs, equitable access to wrap-around support, material resources relative to the student body, and resources to support student mental health.
3. All students shall experience a rich, diverse, culturally responsive curricula, instruction, and assessments, which supports students' healthy identity development. All students should have access to advanced level courses at the high school level, including language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, history, career technical options, the arts, foreign language, and music.
4. SPS shall ensure schools are equipped to meet the social, emotional, and physical needs of each student.
5. SPS shall ensure that staff at each school are diverse, culturally competent, high-quality, stable and equity focused.
6. Family and community are valued and equal partners. As such, each school is responsible for building partnerships with every family with a specific goal of diversifying parent/guardian leadership and the SPS volunteer base. Our district and schools will work closely together with families and community members especially in the areas of building relationships, teaching and learning, and supporting advocacy.

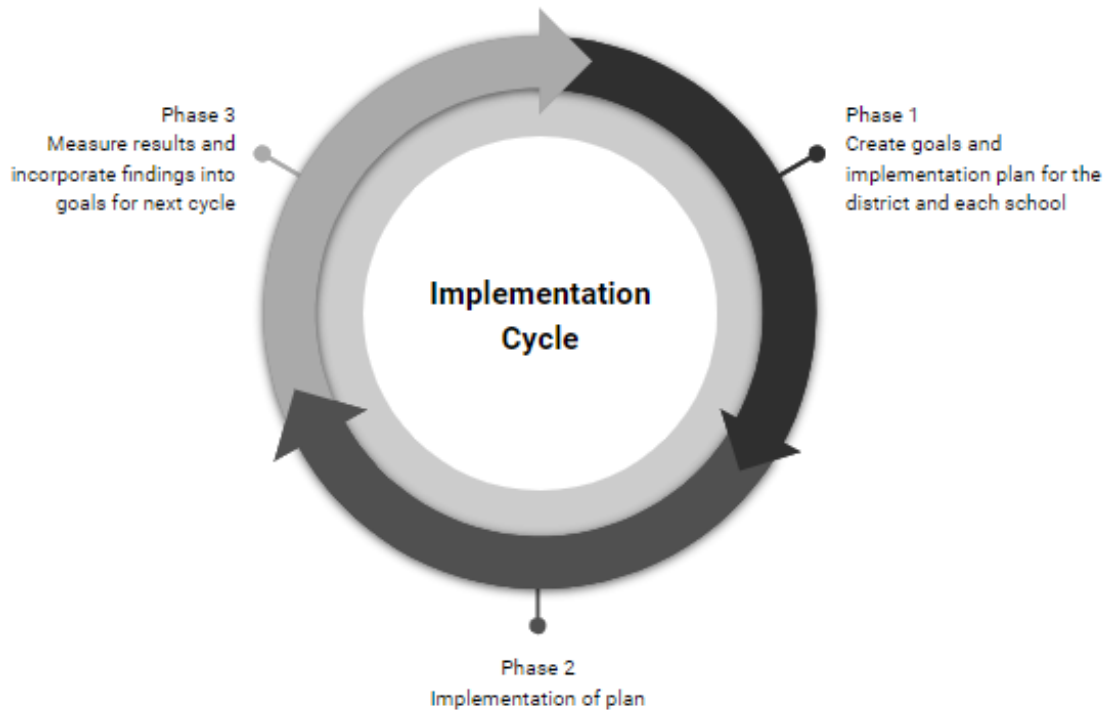
Equity Goals and Reports:

The Superintendent or designee shall develop and implement a system-wide racial/ethnic equity plan with clear accountability and metrics, which will result in measurable progress for all SPS students towards the desired outcomes outlined in this policy. Goals for schools, departments, and staff shall be connected to already existing prioritized structures of accountability and support to ensure progress is made. If a school or department is not making adequate progress towards the desired outcomes at the time of the report, the school or department will receive increased support. The Superintendent shall annually report progress on the plan and outcomes.

The district shall present the reports on the following data (where applicable aggregated and disaggregated by race/ethnicity, English Language Learners, indicators of poverty, and special education status):

Number of out-of-school suspensions and descriptions of in-school suspension programs; number of emergency removals; intervention programs used to prevent suspensions and support positive behaviors; specific supports for students with mental health conditions; school attendance; enrollment in advanced course work; number of dropouts; assignment into special education; college completion within six years, and any other data that district staff deem appropriate, useful and valid for this purpose.

The district shall develop a process to field complaints and violations of the values which this policy intends to uphold. This process will be clearly communicated to all staff and students. No SPS student or staff member who, in good faith, reports a violation of the equity policy shall suffer harassment, retaliation, or adverse consequences.



These desired outcomes shall be crafted into three phase goals in the following structure: