

## EQUITY POLICY

### Equity Statement:

Colorado Springs School District 11 (hereinafter referred to as “the District” or “District 11”) is committed to equity and is committed to providing an ecosystem of equitable practices to meet the unique needs of all.

The Board hereby finds and declares the following:

- All students can learn and profoundly impact our world.
- We must create solutions that level the playing field while concurrently raising the bar for all students.
- We must provide each student appropriate resources needed to achieve success.
- We must provide safe school environments for all student, in collaboration with surrounding communities.
- The Board acknowledges persistent gaps in achievement, learning, expectations, opportunities, and disciplinary outcomes among marginalized student groups (see definition of “Marginalized” below).
- The Board recognizes that students of various races and ethnicities have been disadvantaged by long-standing inequities, the causes of which are multi-faceted, and reflect historical, social, and institutional factors.
- The Board believes that as a diverse urban school district, a systemic approach is critical to ensure that ALL students, including marginalized groups, have equitable learning opportunities, experiences, and outcomes.
- The Board recognizes the impact of systemic inequities on teaching and learning, and that it is critical that all staff be adequately trained in diversity, cultural competencies, and equity.
- The Board recognizes a need for the District to build a system that supports an ecosystem of equity to enhance the complex Pre-K-12 education system.
- As a community, we must share responsibility for addressing the opportunity gaps that exist within our society and impact our students’ ability to reach their full potential.

### Definitions

**Marginalized:** a person or group treated as peripheral or less important than other people or groups, typically (but not exclusively) based on race, LGBTQ+ identification, culture, ethnic origin, ability, undocumented status, gender, socioeconomic status, homelessness, immigrant or refugee status, or English acquisition status.

**Achievement Gaps:** the difference in educational success between students of color, various races, ethnicities, cultures, and students of different socioeconomic backgrounds.

**Systemic Racism:** the collective failure of a public or private organization to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their race, color, culture or ethnic origin which can be seen or detected in practices, processes, systems, attitudes and behavior. Systemic racism looks beyond individual acts of prejudice to the systemic biases that may be built into institutions. These systemic biases discriminate against and disadvantage people of color through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness or racial stereotyping.

**Cultural Accountability:** an organization of accountable employees. Results are communicated and understood by everyone. Accountability is determined proactively, before the fact, not reactively, after the fact.

**Cultural Competencies:** the knowledge, attitudes, skills and practices that allow individuals to form relationships and create learning environments that support the academic achievement and personal development of learners from diverse racial, cultural, and socioeconomic groups, which are vital for adults to foster productive academic relationships with students. Cultural competence includes: recognizing the educational impact of race and culture, addressing demographic inequities in achievement, building relationships across racial and cultural differences, adapting curriculum to reflect racial and cultural diversity, and ongoing self-reflection about one's cultural competence.

**Cultural Responsiveness:** the ability to learn from and relate respectfully with people of your own culture as well as those from other cultures.

**Equity:** District 11 defines equity as a framework that provides everyone the same access to the same opportunities. We recognize that advantages and barriers exist, and that, as a result, not everyone starts from the same place. Equity begins by acknowledging unequal starting places and works to continually correct and address the imbalance.

**Education Equity:** District 11 defines educational equity as a framework that provides every student the same access needed to take advantage of the opportunities, resources, and educational rigor they need throughout their educational career to maximize academic success, workforce readiness, and social emotional well-being, and to view each student as valuable

**Equity Policy:**

A. The District believes:

- In the inherent worth of every individual and the power of equitable practices to unleash potential.
- Diversity enriches the human experience and strengthens community.
- Healthy relationships provide mutual understanding and enhance life.
- Continuous learning nourishes life.
- Integrity is fundamental to building trust.

The District will not:

- Allow past practices to create barriers to new and innovative ideas;
- Avoid conflict or difficult conversations, nor engage in problem solving through the lens of blame;
- Engage in initiatives that are misaligned with our mission.

B. The District shall welcome and empower ALL students and families as essential partners in their students' education, school planning and District decision-making. The District fosters welcoming environments that reflect and support the racial and ethnic diversity of the student population and community. Additionally, the District will partner with entities who have demonstrated culturally specific expertise (i.e. government agencies, non-profit organizations, businesses, etc.) in order to support our educational goals.

C. On an ongoing basis, the District shall annually allocate its financial, capital and human resources equitably and not necessarily equally.

D. The District shall promote and facilitate opportunities for all staff to improve their cultural competencies and cultural accountability in serving our diverse student body and community.

E. Practices, procedures and programs that result in over or under representation of any group of students compared to peers shall be reviewed, with urgency and through the lens of accountability, to assure that such results are due to meeting student legitimate educational, social or emotional needs.

F. The District shall utilize hiring practices that support and stimulate racial, gender, and language diversity in its staff by recruiting, employing, training and retaining its employees. The District is committed to increasing the recruitment and retention of a highly qualified diverse staff. The District believes it is critical that students of all races, ethnicities, backgrounds, and cultures are exposed to role models with similar backgrounds and cultures. The recruitment of a diverse workforce affords all students an opportunity of inclusiveness in the education system. Diversity in our education workforce provides all children with the opportunity to learn from others with dissimilar backgrounds and recognizes the value of diversity in all learning environments.

G. The District shall ensure that all employees are treated equitably.

H. The District shall engage in best business practices that model equity. For example, the District shall promote the diversification of its vendor and supplier corps, to include minority, LGBTQ, various abilities, and women-owned businesses, in accordance with law and District policy. See Board Policy DJ, Procurement and Contracting.

I. The District shall provide teaching staff with professional development specifically designed to strengthen the employee's knowledge and skillset for eliminating opportunity encumbrances and achievement inequities between historically marginalized students and white students.

J. Teachers, administrators and District staff shall collaborate to establish and implement culturally responsive instructional practices, curriculum and assessments. In addition, teachers, administrators and District staff shall adopt a teaching and learning culture that includes high expectations of students and staff, varied teaching and learning styles, and individualized as well as systemic supports for teachers and students.

K. The District shall continually adopt its discipline practices towards equitable discipline structures, such as restorative practices and Trauma Informed Care. The District will provide professional development to staff around these practices.

The Board and Administration shall actively model its commitment to equity to align all processes and procedures to applicable law and this policy. To that end, the Board holds itself, all District site decision makers, and all faculty, support staff and participants, accountable for building a District-wide culture of equity.

Adopted May 27, 2020

CROSS REFS.: Policy AC, Nondiscrimination/Equal Opportunity

Policy DJ, Procurement and Contracting  
Policy GBA, Open Hiring/Equal Employment Opportunity and  
Affirmative Action  
Policy GBAA, Employee Sexual and Racial Harassment/Discrimination  
Policy JB, Equal Educational Opportunities  
Policy JBB, Sexual and Racial Harassment/Discrimination toward  
Students

LEGAL REFS.: HB 19-1192