



WHAT IS EDUCATIONAL EQUITY?

According to the National School Boards Association’s Center for Public Education, schools and districts implement educational equity “when all students receive the resources they need, so they graduate prepared for success after high school.”¹ Therefore, **equity does not mean creating equal conditions for all students but rather targeting resources based on individual students’ needs and circumstances** to remove barriers and create the same opportunities for all students.²

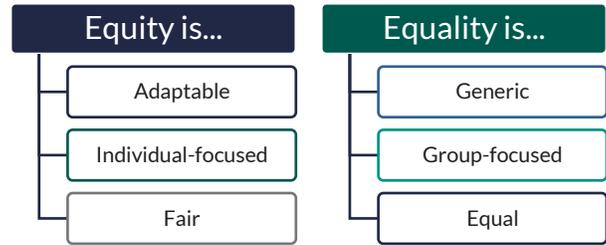


Educational equity means that every student has access to the educational resources and rigor they need at the right moment in their education across race, gender, ethnicity, language, disability, sexual orientation, family background, and/or family income.

Source: The Aspen Education and Society Program and the Council of Chief State School Officers³

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN EQUITY AND EQUALITY

Although equity and equality are often used interchangeably, there are important differences between the two concepts for resolving issues faced by different students in the classroom. While equality means that everyone has exactly the same rights, opportunities, and resources, equity provides students with resources that fit their circumstances.⁴



Source: Waterford⁵

DIVERSITY, INCLUSION, AND CULTURAL COMPETENCE

The terms diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) are often used together, but while they are related, they are not interchangeable. Similarly, cultural competence is often discussed in the context of DEI and is defined below along with diversity and inclusion.

Diversity	The variety of personal experiences, values, and worldviews that arise from differences of culture and circumstance, including race, ethnicity, gender and gender identity, age, religion, language, disability status, and more.
Inclusion	The act of creating environments in which individuals and groups feel welcomed, respected, supported, and valued by eliminating practices and behaviors that marginalize so that everyone can fully participate in opportunities.
Cultural Competence	The ability to communicate and work effectively across cultural lines by acknowledging and navigating differences in individuals’ worldviews.

Source: Rutgers⁶ and the National Center for Cultural Competence⁷

EDUCATIONAL EQUITY IS NOT THE SAME AS CRITICAL RACE THEORY

Critical Race Theory (CRT) and educational equity are fundamentally different. The Arizona School Boards Association explains the difference between what CRT is, what it is not, and how it differs from educational equity.

What CRT is

CRT is an analytical tool developed by legal scholars approximately 40 years ago for use in university-level courses to help students think critically about the impact of historical and present-day racism, primarily on the legal system.

What CRT is Not

The term “critical race theory” is being inaccurately used by some to encompass a wide range of distinctly different topics including educational equity, social emotional learning (SEL), cultural awareness and restorative practices. It is also being used to describe discussions of racism in classroom instruction.

How Equity is Different

Educational equity is a recognized educational approach to providing opportunities and achieving excellent outcomes for all students. Simply put, pursuing educational equity is being intentional about identifying issues that are preventing students from fully engaging in their education and then providing targeted solutions or resources to address them.

Source: Arizona School Boards Association⁸

WHAT ARE THE GOALS OF EDUCATIONAL EQUITY?

The Intercultural Development Research Association identifies six goals to guide districts and their communities as they work together toward a more equitable education. These goals can be used to evaluate the current state of equity in the district and identify the areas in which additional work must be done.⁹

<p>Comparably High Academic Achievement and Other Student Outcomes</p> <p>Improved student outcomes for all groups of learners with virtually non-existent achievement and performance gaps.</p>
<p>Equitable Access and Inclusion</p> <p>Unobstructed access to and full participation of all learners in schools, programs, and activities.</p>
<p>Equitable Treatment</p> <p>An accepting, valuing, respectful, supportive, safe, and secure environment in which students can pursue learning and excellence without fear of threat, humiliation, danger, or disregard.</p>
<p>Equitable Opportunity to Learn</p> <p>Every child, regardless of characteristics and identified needs, is presented with the challenge to reach high standards and receives the necessary instructional, social, emotional, and psychological supports to achieve those high standards.</p>
<p>Equitable Resources</p> <p>Resources, such as money, time, qualified staff, appropriate facilities, materials, and supports, are distributed in ways to ensure that all students can achieve high academic standards.</p>
<p>Accountability</p> <p>All stakeholders accept responsibility and hold themselves accountable for supporting every learner's education, including full access to a quality education with qualified teachers, a challenging curriculum, the full opportunity to learn, and appropriate, sufficient support for academic success.</p>

Source: Intercultural Development Research Association¹⁰

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF EDUCATIONAL EQUITY?

Numerous research studies indicate a positive impact of equitable and inclusive practices on students and society, including improved academic outcomes, social-emotional learning, and future economic and employment prospects. These include but are not limited to:

Higher average test scores	Increased likelihood to enroll in college	Decreased likelihood of dropping out
Reduced achievement gaps	Improved critical thinking, problem-solving, and creativity	Readiness for local, national, and global citizenship
Increased self-confidence	Reduced anxiety	Decreased rate of unemployment and poverty as adults

Source: Multiple¹¹

WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO ACHIEVE EDUCATIONAL EQUITY?

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) developed the ten steps listed in the table below to achieve equity in education. These steps are across three main areas of education policy: design of education systems, practices in and out of school, and the allocation of resources.

Ten Steps to Educational Equity

Design of Education Systems

1. Limit early tracking and streaming and postpone academic selection.
2. Manage school choice to contain the risks to equity.
3. In upper secondary education, provide attractive alternatives, remove dead ends, and prevent dropout.
4. Offer second chances to gain from education.

Practices In and Out of School

5. Identify and provide systematic help to those who fall behind at school and reduce year repetition.
6. Strengthen the links between school and home to help disadvantaged parents help their children to learn.
7. Respond to diversity and provide for the successful inclusion of migrants and minorities within mainstream education.

Resourcing Allocation

8. Provide strong education for all, giving priority to early childhood provision and basic schooling.
9. Direct resources to the students with the greatest needs.
10. Set concrete targets for more equity, particularly related to low school attainment and dropouts.

Source: OECD¹²

WHAT QUESTIONS SHOULD I ASK ABOUT EDUCATIONAL EQUITY?

What is our district's plan to ensure that every student has access to a quality education?

What role do I play in promoting an inclusive and equitable school environment?

What does personal accountability for educational equity look like?

What are the district's strengths as it relates to diversity, equity, and inclusion? How do I know?

What are opportunities for district growth as it relates to diversity, equity, and inclusion? How do I know?

ENDNOTES

¹ “Educational Equity. What Does It Mean? How Do We Know When We Reach It?” Center for Public Education, 2016. <https://www.nsba.org/-/media/NSBA/File/cpe-educational-equity-research-brief-january-2016.pdf>

² “Leading for Equity: Opportunities for State Education Chiefs.” The Aspen Education & Society Program and the Council of Chief State School Officers, 2017. https://ccsso.org/sites/default/files/2018-01/Leading%20for%20Equity_011618.pdf

³ Ibid.

⁴ “Why Understanding Equity vs Equality in Schools Can Help You Create an Inclusive Classroom.” Waterford.Org. <https://www.waterford.org/education/equity-vs-equality-in-education/>

⁵ “Why Understanding Equity vs Equality in Schools Can Help You Create an Inclusive Classroom.” Waterford.Org, July 7, 2021. <https://www.waterford.org/education/equity-vs-equality-in-education/>

⁶ “DEI Committee Good Start Guide.” Division of Diversity, Inclusion, and Community Engagement at Rutgers University–New Brunswick. <https://nbdiversity.rutgers.edu/dei-committee-good-start-guide>

⁷ “Definitions of Cultural Competence.” National Center for Cultural Competence. <https://nccc.georgetown.edu/curricula/culturalcompetence.html>

⁸ “Educational Equity and Critical Race Theory: What You Need to Know.” Arizona School Boards Association. <https://azsba.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Educational-Equity-and-Critical-Race-Theory-What-You-Need-to-Know.pdf>

⁹ Rodriguez, R.G. and A. Villarreal. “Community and Public Engagement in Education- Opportunity and Challenge.” Intercultural Development Research Association, November 2003. <https://www.idra.org/resource-center/community-and-public-engagement-in-education/>

¹⁰ “Six Goals of Educational Equity.” IDRA, July 7, 2021. <https://www.idra.org/equity-assistance-center/six-goals-of-education-equity/>

¹¹ [1] Summers, A. “How Educational Equity Benefits All Students.” Great Schools Partnership, September 25, 2019. <https://www.greatschoolspartnership.org/how-educational-equity-benefits-all-students/> [2] Nantz, D.W.S., David Boddy, Megan Mumford, and Greg. “Fourteen Economic Facts on Education and Economic Opportunity.” Brookings, March 24, 2016. <https://www.brookings.edu/research/fourteen-economic-facts-on-education-and-economic-opportunity-2/> [3] OECD. *Equity and Quality in Education: Supporting Disadvantaged Students and Schools*. OECD, 2012. https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/equity-and-quality-in-education_9789264130852-en [3] “The Educational Opportunity Project at Stanford.” <https://edopportunity.org/explorer> [4] “The Benefits of Socioeconomically and Racially Integrated Schools and Classrooms.” The Century Foundation, April 29, 2019. <https://tcf.org/content/facts/the-benefits-of-socioeconomically-and-racially-integrated-schools-and-classrooms/>

¹² “Ten Steps to Equity in Education.” OECD, January 2008. <https://www.oecd.org/education/school/39989494.pdf>