

Gahanna-Jefferson Public Schools
160 South Hamilton Road
Gahanna, Ohio 43230

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(614) 471-7065



EQUITY AND ACCESS FOR ALL
GAHANNA-JEFFERSON PUBLIC SCHOOLS



Gahanna-Jefferson Public Schools
"WHERE STUDENTS COME FIRST"



Gahanna-Jefferson Public Schools

“WHERE STUDENTS COME FIRST”

Dear GJPS school family,

I am proud of the journey our schools have been on to become more diverse and inclusive, to ensure equal opportunities for all students, to build a greater sense of belonging and create connection for our school community, students, staff and families.

We say GJPS is a place “where students come first.” While we have taken important steps toward living that in our daily work, there remains so much more to be done. We have an obligation to engage all students, especially those who feel marginalized in any manner, so they feel connected, know they matter and believe they have a place here.

We support the continuing efforts within our nation to drive out racism, and we recognize that we as educators of the next generation have a unique responsibility to teach others to lead that charge.

Our work on equity connects to our vision, mission and beliefs. We aim to ensure student learning is our community’s most important investment and priority. At the same time, it’s important that our students feel a sense of belonging, a sense that they matter, and a sense that our schools and our community stand behind them. If we do this well, our students will have the opportunity to build a sense of autonomy, mastery, and purpose in life. Building equity and access for all requires that we build strong relationships, caring about our students and giving them a voice. We are committed to this work.

Our board of education has played a critical and valuable role, affirming our commitment to equity in a *Resolution Reaffirming the Board’s Commitment to District Core Values*, passed at our July 16, 2020, Board of Education Meeting. Our Equity Task Force has used this resolution to build a plan to create equity throughout our district. I thank them for their commitment and dedication to this work. This document describes our journey and our plan for ensuring Equity & Access for ALL.

Sincerely,

Steve Barrett
Superintendent

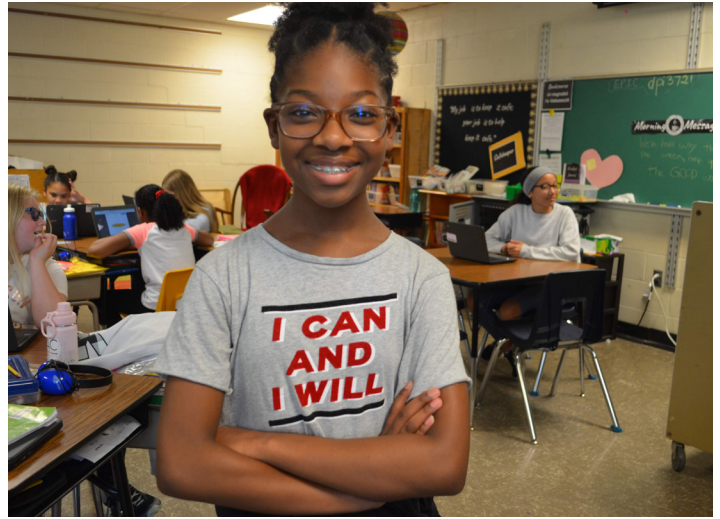




DISTRICT PHILOSOPHY FOR EQUITY & ACCESS

Gahanna-Jefferson Public School District embraces the rich perspectives and experiences that stem from our unique racial, ethnic, socio-economic, gender, ability, sexual orientation, language and religious diversity.

As a district, we are committed to ensuring all students thrive from having access to high-quality educational resources and stimulating academic experiences. We believe in providing a supportive and inclusive environment where students feel respected and free to be their authentic selves.



DISTRICT EQUITY TEAM COMMITMENT

The GJPS Equity team consists of educators dedicated to challenging our own personal biases and the systemic bias within our district. We are committed to working through difficult situations that may arise by disrupting the status quo and ensuring that students and staff, regardless of their identity, have the opportunity to grow and feel appreciated and valued in our district.

As a team, we will be guided by our district's equity philosophy, and we pledge to...

Empower staff and students to use their voices and be their authentic selves

Question and challenge systems

Unite the Gahanna community through partnerships and celebration of our diversity

Implement culturally relevant instructional practices in all learning environments

Transform policies and allocate resources to better serve our students and community

Yield an environment of sincere advocacy, inclusion, and understanding





EQUITY & ACCESS FOR ALL

WHY AND HOW

WHY EQUITY & ACCESS FOR ALL?

It is our shared responsibility to serve every GJPS student in a manner that ensures a high-quality educational experience and provides Equity & Access for ALL. Our students deserve to be seen, to be heard and to be valued. We must disrupt the societal and institutional norms that continue to marginalize groups of students and create barriers to their success.



HOW TO ACHIEVE EQUITY & ACCESS FOR ALL?

There is no blueprint for systemic equity work that touches every element of our organizational culture. We must be brave, look critically at our internal policies and practices and disrupt the inequalities within our district.

To achieve Equity & Access in our district, we must be intentional about eliminating diminished outcomes caused by structural racism and bias. Student voices are the foundation of our work and will be used to ensure our learning environments are designed for our students.

We will begin this work by:

- Developing district equity action teams
- Creating building-level equity teams
- Continuing professional learning around the topic of Equity & Access
- Increasing community engagement and partnerships
- Diversifying curricular resources
- Reframing & redesigning policy and instruction through a social justice and culturally relevant lens
- Cultivating a culture of accountability
- Ensuring equitable representation, access and outcomes in our programming and data
- Recruiting and retaining diverse staff and committing resources to this work
- Establishing shared language and resources for staff to support our diverse GJPS students
- Supporting staff and equipping them with the necessary knowledge and skills to engage with difficult topics and conversations



THE PATH OF EQUITY & ACCESS FOR ALL IN GJPS

THE TIMELINE TOWARD EQUITY & ACCESS



**APRIL
2019**

GJPS PDAC identified “Equity & Access for ALL” theme

**SEPTEMBER
2019**

GJPS Equity Team participation in Equity Institute

**SEPTEMBER
2019**

District book study of We Got This: Equity, Access and the Quest to Be Who Our Students Need Us to Be

**OCTOBER
2019**

Dr. Melissa Crum “Implicit Bias and Microaggressions” keynote

**JANUARY
2020**

Kristen Santel “Trauma-Informed Practice” keynote

**JANUARY
2020**

GJPS Equity Team expansion to include additional administrators

**JULY
2020**

Board Approval of Resolution Reaffirming Commitment to District Core Values

**JANUARY
2021**

Kelly Capatosto “Implicit Bias” keynote

**JANUARY
2021**

Round two of district book study of We Got This: Equity, Access and the Quest to Be Who Our Students Need Us to Be

**FEBRUARY
2021**

GJPS Equity Team expansion to include staff with development of Equity Action Teams

**SPRING
2021**

GJPS Equity Team expansion to include students and parents



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Resolution Reaffirming Board's Commitment to District Core Values

WHEREAS race is a social construct without biological meaning; and

WHEREAS racism is a social system with multiple dimensions: individual racism is internalized or interpersonal; systemic racism is institutional or structural, and is a system of structuring opportunity and assigning value based on the social interpretation of how one looks; and

WHEREAS, racism unfairly disadvantages some individuals while unfairly giving advantages to other individuals and causes persistent discrimination and disparate outcomes in education; and

WHEREAS, anti-racism is a conscious decision to make frequent, consistent, equitable choices daily; it is the active process of identifying and eliminating racism by changing systems, organizational structures, policies and practices and attitudes, so that power is shared equitably; and

WHEREAS, the Gahanna-Jefferson School District adopted vision, mission and belief statements with the underlying foundational principle that the district is a place "Where Students Come First"; and

WHEREAS, the Gahanna-Jefferson School District has a vision to build quality relationships with all students and lead in teaching, learning, and community engagement ensuring all students succeed; and

WHEREAS, the Gahanna-Jefferson School District has a mission to inspire, nurture, and empower all students to love learning; and believes, among other things that: significant learning happens when students form significant relationships; learning is inclusive of the development of empathy, an appreciation for diversity, and strong character; learning opportunities and resources must be equitable, relevant, and enable effective communication, critical thinking, creative thinking, collaboration, character development and citizenship; and

WHEREAS, the Gahanna-Jefferson School District intentionally began active social justice and equity work in selecting the professional development focus for the 19-20 school year - Equity and Access for ALL; through this lens, the administrative team and approximately 150 staff members participated in a book study called We Got This - Equity, Access, and the Quest to Be Who Our Students Need Us to Be by Cornelius Minor. In the fall of 2019, a team of

The Board of Education Resolution Continued

administrators participated in an Equity Institute to begin learning about ways to effectively facilitate awareness, conversation, and action related to inequitable systems and experiences for affected students. As a follow-up step to the Equity Institute, the GJPS Equity Team looked at data to identify areas of concern so action steps could be taken to create change. The work of the GJPS Equity Team is ongoing and will include the creation of a district action plan to address implicit bias, social injustice, educational inequity and racism; and

WHEREAS, it is not enough to state these values or merely affirm our previous commitments, we must actively engage in being anti-racist because of the tremendous responsibility we have in helping children grow into adults and in providing an opportunity for all students to achieve the American dream of equality of opportunity.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Gahanna-Jefferson Board of Education hereby re-affirms its commitment to be an anti-racist school district committed to social justice in education; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Gahanna-Jefferson Board of Education is committed to continuing to reviewing its policies and practices through an anti-racist and social justice lens; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Gahanna-Jefferson Board of Education is committed to continuing to require via policy that Gahanna-Jefferson City Schools commit to reviewing administrative procedures, goals, and objectives through an antiracist and social justice lens, striving for a racially equitable and diverse staff of educators and administrators, striving for an egalitarian culture that embraces differences and promotes a safe environment in which all students and educators can be their authentic selves; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Gahanna-Jefferson Board of Education is committed to continuing to conduct all human resources, vendor selection and grant management activities through a racial and educational equity lens, which includes a review of all internal policies and practices such as hiring, promotions, and leadership selection; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Gahanna-Jefferson Board of Education is committed to continuing to require via policy that Gahanna-Jefferson City Schools commit to reviewing curriculum through an antiracist and social justice lens, striving to reexamine how we frame our nation's history, and holistically evaluating and addressing the diversity of voices and viewpoints presented in curriculum; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Gahanna-Jefferson Board of Education commits to continuing to educate itself about race, racism, institutional racism, implicit bias, racist policies, and prioritize equity, inclusion, and diversity initiatives in our classrooms and throughout our schools why being "not racist" is not enough and will continue to work to allocate resources equitably to implement this resolution.



The construction of the GJPS Equity Framework formally began with the launch of the GJPS Equity Team in the fall of 2019.

Recognizing that district-level leadership is paramount in promoting meaningful change and improvement, the focus of GJPS' work during the 2019-2020 school year was on developing the cultural competencies of senior leaders and analyzing district data to inform change in the pursuit of excellence and equity.



During the 2019-20 school year, a representative group of district and building administrators attended an Equity Institute and held work sessions together to reflect and plan for the work ahead.

The district Equity Team developed an equity framework and will be outlining definitions of Equity & Access terms to be used in an ongoing manner within the GJPS school community.

This resource will be a continuously evolving document.

GJPS staff, students and community members will be engaged along the way to outline and implement actions for change in our district.



GJPS Equity Action Teams will join forces to review data more deeply, identify priority areas and create action steps that will guide our Equity & Access plan.

Our Action Teams will engage students and parents in an ongoing manner, and the work of each team will include reviewing policy, continuing the learning process for all staff and leading change efforts across the district.





EQUITY ACTION TEAMS AND PURPOSE STATEMENTS

To lead this work in our district, five action teams consisting of district administrators, teachers, support staff, students and parents will come together to review data and identify needs. These teams will create measurable goals and action steps for which to evaluate progress toward ensuring Equity & Access for ALL.



ACTION TEAMS AND AREAS OF FOCUS

The action teams' work will evolve and be shaped based on research, data and identified need.

SENSE OF BELONGING	Developing sustained, authentic relationships Empowering staff and students to use their voices to impact change in their community
DIVERSE STAFFING	Staff recruitment Staff retention
INCLUSIVE CURRICULUM & RESOURCES	Diversifying resources Reframing and designing instruction through a social justice and culturally relevant lens
EQUITABLE REPRESENTATION, ACCESS & OUTCOMES	Discipline outcomes Special Education identification and service Gifted & advanced programming placement
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND PARTNERSHIPS	Engaging families and community members in conversations and planning that cultivate an inclusive school environment Developing community education events and partnership experiences

ACTION TEAMS PURPOSE STATEMENTS

Our District Equity Action Teams will focus on the following purpose statements ensuring Equity & Access for ALL.



SENSE OF BELONGING

We will work intentionally to build strong relationships with students, develop a sense of belonging within our schools, and ensure students feel listened to and respected.



ANTI-RACISM AND INCLUSIVITY

We will work intentionally to identify and eliminate systemic racism and bias in our district by changing systems, organizational structures, policies, practices and attitudes, transforming our learning community into one that is firmly anti-racist and boldly inclusive.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT
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