EMPHASIZING EQUITABLE AND CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE PRACTICES TOOLKIT

Toolkit 7 in the Utah Educational Leadership Toolkit Series

Prepared for Utah Leading through Effective, Actionable, and Dynamic (ULEAD) Education

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In this toolkit, Hanover Research and ULEAD explore strategies and resources that current and aspiring school principals can utilize to meet the criteria outlined in Strand 7: Equity and Cultural Responsiveness of the Utah State Standards for Educational Leadership.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

This toolkit provides guidance and resources to support current and aspiring school principals in developing their personal capacity for leadership and meeting the criteria outlined in the **Utah State Standards for Educational Leadership** (located **here**). Specifically, this toolkit is designed to develop current and aspiring principals' skills and knowledge related to **Strand 7: Equity and Cultural Responsiveness**.

Utah's Educational Leadership Strand 7: Equity and Cultural Responsiveness

Strand 1: Visionary Leadership	Strand 2: Teaching and Learning	Strand 3: Management for Learning	Strand 4: Community Engagement	Strand 5: Ethical Leadership	Strand 6: School Improvement	**Strand 7: Equity and Cultural Responsiveness**

> *Effective educational leaders honor the heritage and background of each student, use culturally responsive practices, and strive for cultural competency and equity of educational opportunity to promote each student's academic success and wellbeing.*
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> **Standard 7.1:** Create and sustain a school environment in which each student is known, accepted, valued, trusted, and respected.
>
> **Standard 7.2:** Ensure each student has equitable access to effective teachers, learning opportunities, academic and social support, and other resources necessary for success.
>
> **Standard 7.3:** Lead faculty and staff to equitably distribute and target resources at the right moment and in the right places to achieve student success.
>
> **Standard 7.4:** Implement school procedures to address student behavior in a positive, equitable, and unbiased manner.
>
> **Standard 7.5:** Address matters of equity and cultural responsiveness in all aspects of leadership.
>
> **Standard 7.6:** Promote the preparation of students to live productively in and positively contribute to society including participation in representative governments and other civic processes.

Source: Utah State Board of Education[1]

Research shows that—aside from teachers—**school principals are the most influential school-based factor in promoting student achievement.**[2] Specifically, research finds that principals account for a quarter—on average—of their school's overall impacts on student achievement outcomes. Likewise, research observes that differences in student achievement up to 20 percentage points may occur when a school has an "above-average principal" rather than an "average principal."[3]

Effective principals are integral to their school's success.[4] Research shows that effective principals positively impact the mission and vision of their schools and student and staff outcomes.[5] In particular, effective principals are more likely to retain qualified and effective teachers, which helps drive student achievement.[6] More broadly, research shows that "it takes multiple in-school factors coming together to significantly improve student achievement on a larger scale" and "that principals are in a unique position to bring those factors together."[7] The impact of having an effective principal is greater in schools facing more challenges. Researchers find "no documented instances[…]where troubled schools are turned around if they do not have a talented leader."[8]

Indeed, it is accurately and "widely believed that a good principal is the key to a successful school" given the many roles they fill: instructional leader, staff evaluator, lead disciplinarian, overseer of daily operations, school representative to families and the community, and more.[9] Principals are integral to all aspects of their school's operations, from the quality of the teachers to the instructional strategies used with students to the overall school climate.[10]

As such, principals require an array of knowledge and skills to act as effective change agents, instructional leaders, and personnel managers.[11] This **Emphasizing Equitable and Culturally Responsive Practices Toolkit**—and the six accompanying toolkits in the *Utah Educational Leadership Toolkit Series*—support Utah's current and aspiring principals in meeting the demands of the Utah State Standards for Educational Leadership to successfully:[12]

- Shape a vision of academic success for all students, one based on high standards;
- Create a climate hospitable to education in order that safety, a cooperative spirit, and other foundations of fruitful interaction prevail;
- Cultivate leadership in others so that teachers and other adults assume their part in realizing the school vision;
- Improve instruction so teachers can teach at their best and students can learn at their utmost; and
- Manage people, data, and processes to foster school improvement.

Why Utah's Schools Need Strong and Effective Principals

> *Everyone remembers a teacher that inspired them. How many people remember their principals? Principals ensure that schools are open, that teachers are receiving the support they need, and that classrooms are environments that will help all students learn.*
>
> *The strongest model for schools is one in which principals are creative, innovative instructional leaders. They find opportunities for teachers to lead. They support teachers in their growth and create a safe space for adults to take risks in their learning. As educators look at what builds a great school, they need to look at the principal. Who is at the helm? What vision have they set for their communities? How have they developed an environment that fosters learning and creativity?*
>
> ***Students need great teachers, and teachers need great leaders. One can't exist without the other.*** *Principals bring in opportunities for their communities. They find resources where there weren't any before. They connect families. They find places for children to thrive both in and outside of the classroom.*

Source: U.S. Department of Education[13]

OVERVIEW

This toolkit:
- ✓ **Defines equity** and introduces the **potential issues of equity** that U.S. students have historically experienced and may continue to experience at school;
- ✓ Provides strategies and tools to help educators **identify and counteract explicit and implicit bias** in their work with students;
- ✓ Explores best practices and policy guidance for **embedding culturally responsive and equitable practices** as part of a multi-tiered system of **academic supports and interventions**; and
- ✓ Discusses additional strategies and approaches to **improve equity in school disciplinary practices and social-emotional supports**.

AUDIENCE

This toolkit is designed to support current and aspiring school principals across the state of Utah in meeting the criteria outlined in the Utah State Standards for Educational Leadership, particularly in relation to **Strand 7: Equity and Cultural Responsiveness**.

UNDERSTAND ISSUES OF EQUITY

RECOGNIZE THE SCOPE OF EQUITY-RELATED ISSUES

Principals must acknowledge ongoing demographic changes in the U.S. population and the cognitive and theoretical evolution in how individuals perceive, discuss, and examine the concept of "identity."[14] In particular, it is important to understand that students and their families—and even school staff and community stakeholders—may use a multitude of labels to define who they are.[15] These labels can be based on personal characteristics (e.g., gender, age, sexual orientation, disability status), demographics (e.g., race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status), and culture (e.g., religion, personal values, political affiliation).[16] Furthermore, principals should know that the students and families their school serves may assert multiple identities in any of these areas, each of which comes with potential disadvantages and privileges.[17]

Intersectionality of Identities

Source: YW Boston[18]
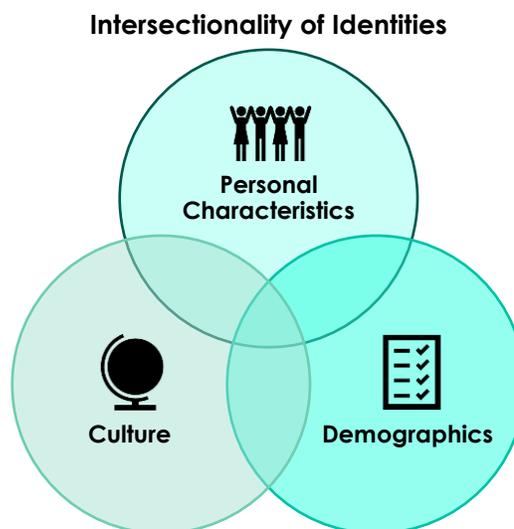
Equally important, **principals themselves and school stakeholders must understand what equity is in order to obtain the requisite knowledge and implement systemic practices to achieve it.**[19] Specifically, educators need to conceptualize equity as students receiving those things they require to "succeed—access to opportunity, networks, resources, and supports—based on where [they] are and where [they] want to go."[20] This concept of *equity* differs from the concept of *equality*, to which it is often erroneously equated.[21] While the terms are related, *equality* denotes students receiving "the same treatment and access to resources" as their peers—regardless of their background, identity, or ability level.[22] Comparatively, *equity* provides students with the treatment, resources, and supports they need to meet high expectations and achieve at the same level as their peers.[23]

However, it is important to remember that "equity is a difficult ideal to maintain and many strategies attempting to maintain it have fallen far short in the implementation."[24] Equity is a complex problem encompassing a variety of interconnected factors, both school-based (e.g., curriculum and instruction, availability of resources) and community-based (e.g., income levels, population demographics).[25] Because equity is a core component of a school's broader work around educational climate and bolstering academic and behavioral outcomes for all students—especially those facing disadvantages—principals must drive concerted efforts to address problems of equity and equalize outcomes among diverse students.[26] This necessitates greater prioritization of equity within principals' work with students, staff, families, and community members to address existing barriers to learning and promote more equal outcomes among students.[27]

Equality vs. Equity
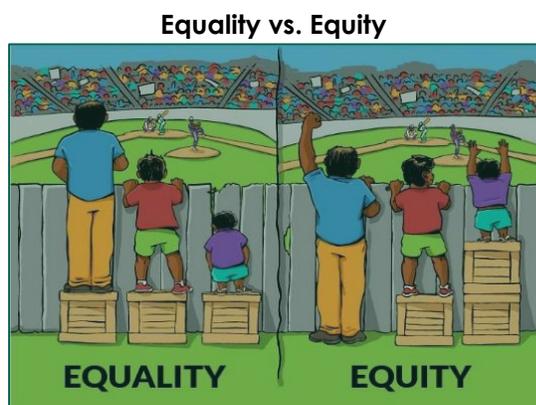
Source: Interaction Institute for Social Change[29]

Potential Forms of Inequity Experienced by K-12 Students

FORM	DESCRIPTION
Societal Inequity	Minority students may be disadvantaged by pre-existing bias and prejudice. Conscious and unconscious discrimination can surface in ways that adversely affect learning, academic achievement, educational aspirations, and post-graduation opportunities. While not always the case, inequity in education is most commonly associated with groups that have suffered from discrimination related to their race, ethnicity, nationality, language, religion, class, gender, sexual orientation, or disabilities.
Socioeconomic Inequity	Evidence suggests that students from lower-income households underperform academically relative to wealthier peers. They also tend to have lower educational aspirations and enroll in college at lower rates. Likewise, schools in poorer communities may have fewer resources, less funding, and fewer teachers. Educational opportunities (e.g., specialized courses, technology access, co-curricular activities, sports) may be limited, and facilities may be outdated or dilapidated.
Cultural Inequity	Students from diverse cultural backgrounds may be disadvantaged in a variety of ways. For example, immigrant students and their families may have difficulties navigating the public education system. These students may struggle in school because they are unfamiliar with American customs, social expectations, slang, and cultural references.
Familial Inequity	Students may be disadvantaged due to personal and familial circumstances. For example, some students may live in dysfunctional households, or they may receive little educational support from their families, even when families want their children to succeed in school. Evidence also suggests that students whose parents have not earned a high school or college degree may underperform academically, and they may also enroll in and complete postsecondary programs at lower rates.
Programmatic Inequity	School programs may be structured in ways that are perceived to be unfair, because they contribute to unequal educational results for some students. For example, students of color tend to be disproportionately represented in lower-level classes with lower academic expectations—and possibly lower-quality teaching—which can perpetuate achievement gaps. This can reinforce stereotypes about minorities.
Staffing Inequity	Wealthier schools in more desirable communities may be able to hire more teachers and staff and more experienced and skilled teachers and staff. Students attending these schools will likely receive a better-quality education. In contrast, students who attend schools in less-desirable communities with fewer or less-skilled teachers will likely be at a disadvantage. In addition to potential inequities in employment (e.g., minorities being discriminated against during the hiring process, female educators not being promoted to administrative positions at the same rates as their male colleagues), students may be disadvantaged by a lack of diversity among school staff.
Instructional Inequity	Students may be enrolled in courses taught by less-skilled teachers—who may teach in a comparatively uninteresting or ineffective manner—or in courses in which significantly less content is taught. Students may also be subject to conscious or unconscious favoritism, bias, or prejudice by some teachers. Relatedly, the way in which instruction is delivered may not work as well for some students as it does for others.
Assessment Inequity	Students may be disadvantaged when completing assessments due to their design, content, or language choices. Students may also have learning disabilities or physical disabilities that may impair their performance. In addition, situational factors may adversely affect test performance. For example, lower-income students who attend schools that do not regularly use computers may be disadvantaged when taking tests that are administered on computers and require basic computer literacy.
Linguistic Inequity	Non-English-speaking students, or students who are not yet proficient in English, may be disadvantaged in English-only classrooms or when taking assessments presented in English. In addition, these students may be disadvantaged if they are enrolled in separate academic programs, held to lower academic expectations, or receive lower-quality instruction as a result of their language abilities.

Source: Glossary of Education Reform | Great Schools Partnership[28]

Principals should recognize that meaningful inclusion of all students and equity in education are continuously promoted, maintained, and even diminished by a complex interplay of organizational policies, their own words and actions, and the words and actions of staff, students, families, and community members.[29] Inclusion and equity are processes—not static states.[30] As such, principals must consider that organizational growth in these areas takes time and requires attention, resources, and commitment to sustain.[31] Likewise, principals must set an example by acting and speaking in such a manner that individuals from different backgrounds and varying demographics

LEARN MORE
Watch the videos linked below to learn more about issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion:
- **"Building Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Schools"** – Alliance for Excellent Education
- **"Solving the Achievement Gap Through Equity, Not Equality"** – Tedx Talks
- **"How Schools Can Improve Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Practices"** – National Association of Independent Schools
- **"Rachel Lotan on Building Equitable Classrooms"** – Stanford Center for Opportunity Policy in Education, Stanford University

feel accepted, valued, and fairly treated. Principals should also encourage staff, students, families, and community members to do the same.[32] Likewise, principals should model and encourage a problem-solving mindset among stakeholders to identify and explore solutions to existing issues of equity at their schools (e.g., achievement gaps, staff capacity in a given area).[33]

Importantly, equitable practices will differ based on the characteristics of the school and the particular challenges students face. For example, a school with a high concentration of English learners may devote greater resources to programs to support these students, whereas a district with few or no language learners will place greater emphasis on other areas.[34] School contexts and histories directly influence which resource deficits, achievement gaps, and community dynamics perpetuate unequal outcomes, necessitating that principals and their school communities examine available data and stakeholder perceptions around issues of equity.[35] This allows the school community to take action—and sometimes make difficult decisions around the allocation of staff, resources, and attention—to address localized problems.[36]

Data Inquiry Cycle for Exploring Equity Issues and Solutions

1. Identify the problem regarding student experiences or outcomes	2. Define targeted questions around the problem to guide further investigation	3. Identify multiple data sources to answer the questions
6. Create a plan and engage in a cycle of improvement to rectify the problem of equity	5. Explore resources, research, and evidence-based practices to draft goals	4. Use a data-driven dialogue process to generate priorities relative to the problem
7. Review progress toward goal achievement and solving the original problem	8. Celebrate successes related to the problem and identify lingering issues	9. Restart the cycle to address remaining problems of equity experienced by students

Source: Mid-Atlantic Equity Consortium[37]

Essentially, **principals should seek to understand the needs and characteristics of students attending their school, what programs and practices work "for whom and under what circumstances to achieve success," and the specific institutional practices that align with student needs.**[38] This means looking at a given school's current and historical data in a number of areas (e.g., academic performance, behavior, attendance, social-emotional learning) in order to

expose existing gaps in performance, access, or opportunities between different groups of students.[39] Essentially, principals should lead school stakeholders in finding patterns or trends in available data to determine inequities between different demographics of students, as well as potential reasons driving those inequities and solutions to address them.[40] For example, a school may find that it suspends black male students at twice the rate it suspends students from any other race-gender grouping.[41] Alternatively, a school may determine that it classifies students receiving free or reduced-price lunch for gifted and talented programs at one-third the rate of those not receiving free or reduced-price lunch.[42]

ERASE Framework for Investigating Issues of Equity

	STEP	DESCRIPTION
E	**Examine Data**	Start with available data around student opportunities and outcomes and disaggregate these along demographic lines. Produce data sets and visual representations (e.g., infographics) of data that can generate rich discussions.
R	**Raise Questions**	Begin with open questions of participants around what they notice and why they think differential outcomes exist. Allow for questioning of deeply held beliefs or assumptions to bring different perspectives and experiences into the dialogue.
A	**Ascertain Solutions for Root Causes**	This can be one of the most difficult steps as it moves from identifying red flag areas to diagnosing problems and identifying meaningful solutions. Look systematically at available research and best practices targeted at the root causes identified through this analysis to ensure that the scope of possibilities is known and discussed.
S	**Select Strategic Solutions**	At this point, it is important to prioritize both short-term and long-term strategies. These may include: additional training or hiring of staff; alteration of policies or procedures or development of new policies; identification of new data to collect; development of new programs for students; or revisiting of strategic plans.
E	**Evaluate Progress**	Reexamining data periodically and making adjustments to policy and practices are necessary to ensure that the issues that were identified through data-driven conversations are addressed. It is also important to celebrate even the smallest of successes.

Source: VUE[43]

On the following page, the **"Reflection Guide for Supporting Equity in K-12 Schools"** records a list of guiding questions that principals can use in discussions with school stakeholders around equity. Included questions encompass a number of items related to equity, such as academic outcomes, behavioral outcomes, and student participation in specialized school programming.

Resources to Inform Conversations Around Achievement Gaps and Equity

The National Education Association publishes four short discussion guides (Resources #1-4)—linked via the icons below—to support educators in examining issues of equity at their schools. The School Reform Initiative publishes a related tool (Resource #5), a protocol for engaging in data-driven dialogue. These resources will help users identify problems, explore factors contributing to achievement and excellence gaps, and determine stakeholder responsibilities for supporting equity.	
Resource #1: "Identifying Achievement Gaps in Your School, District, and Community"	➦
Resource #2: "Identifying Factors that Contribute to Achievement Gaps"	➦
Resource #3: "Identifying Stakeholders' Responsibilities for Closing Achievement Gaps: District and School Based Strategies"	➦
Resource #4: "Identifying Stakeholders' Responsibilities for Closing Achievement Gaps: Stakeholder Actions"	➦
Resource #5: "Data Driven Dialogue"	➦

Source: National Education Association and School Reform Initiative[44]

Reflection Guide for Supporting Equity in K-12 Schools

<u>Directions</u>: Principals can use the questions listed below to guide various school stakeholders—staff, families, community members, and even students—in answering important questions around equity. The listed questions address equity in a number of areas, including academic outcomes, behavioral outcomes, participation in specialized school programming, access to high-quality curriculum and instruction, and wider problems faced within the local community.

- What are the average outcomes for our school's students on key academic indicators (e.g., standardized test scores, graduation rates, course grades)?

- What are the average outcomes for specific student sub-groups on key academic indicators (e.g., standardized test scores, graduation rates, course grades)?

- What gaps in academic performance exist between different student sub-groups? How can we address these gaps?

- What are the average outcomes for our school's students on key non-academic indicators (e.g., attendance, behavior, social-emotional learning)?

- What are the average outcomes for specific student sub-groups on key non-academic indicators (e.g., attendance, behavior, social-emotional learning)?

- What gaps in non-academic performance exist between different student sub-groups? How can we address these gaps?

- What is the overall demography of our school's student population?

- Do participation rates for individual student demographics in special programs (e.g., gifted and talented education, special education, remedial coursework) reflect the school's demography?

- What disparities in specialized program participation rates exist between different student sub-groups? How can we address these gaps?

- How do students perceive their educational experience?

- How do families, school staff, and community members perceive students' educational experience?

- How do the resources allocated to our school (e.g., staff, instructional materials, technology) compare to those allocated to our in-district peers (i.e., other schools with the same or similar grade spans)? Do we need to advocate for more resources in any areas?

- How are resources (e.g., staff, instructional materials, technology) allocated throughout the school? Are any programs over- or under-resourced relative to their needs?

- How does our school's staff perform in the area of _____? Do we need to offer additional training or policy guidance to improve performance in this area?

Source: Multiple[45]

IDENTIFY AND MANAGE PERSONAL AND STAKEHOLDER BIASES

While students should learn and "grow up in a world free from bias and discrimination," the unfortunate truth is that both bias and discrimination continue to impact the lives of all people.[46] Though it may be uncomfortable or difficult to admit, everyone possesses biases, yet people can take action to acknowledge and manage behaviors resulting from bias.[47]

As such, **principals must lead the way for school stakeholders in confronting systemic and individual biases and prejudices.** Principals must avoid being silent on issues of equity and should actively pursue a school climate in which all students, staff, and families feel like they belong and treat one another with fairness, respect, and dignity.[48] Furthermore, principals should guide stakeholders in recognizing how their individual biases—and the systemic biases historically associated with the U.S. education system—may neglect the life and schooling experiences of students. Essentially, they should interrogate how a person's identity (e.g., race, socioeconomic class, gender, sexual orientation) can either limit their access to certain opportunities, result in increased access to privileges, or influence the expectations placed on them.[49]

Schools should adapt to diversity, and all stakeholders should "recognize, respect, and value all cultures and integrate those values into the [school] system."[50] This means taking an active approach to minimize the impacts students may experience due to "societal norms, institutional biases, interpersonal interactions[,] and individual beliefs."[51] Importantly, this approach should penetrate all aspects of a principal's role as school leader and the broader operations of and activities conducted at schools.[52] If accomplished, such a dynamic will provide school stakeholders—particularly staff—with the ability to:[53]

- Appreciate the context of student experiences and utilize that knowledge to inform practice;
- Recognize and adjust for students' needs;
- Incorporate linguistic and other contextual nuances in practice;
- Appreciate cognitive and cultural diversity;
- Recognize and remove biases; and
- Create a foundation for trusting relationships with students and families.

In particular, principals should recognize and explore the conscious and unconscious biases they have and the assumptions they make about individual students or specific groups of students based on any one defining characteristic, such as socioeconomic status, disability status, or gender.[55] Recognition of

School Actions to Reduce Impact from Biases

- The school establishes the foundations for its commitment to equity and justice in its defining documents (e.g., mission statement).
- The school respects, affirms, and protects the dignity and worth of each member of its community.
- The principal articulates strategic goals and objectives that promote diversity, inclusion, equity, and justice in the life of the school.
- The school develops meaningful requirements for cross-cultural competency and provides training and support for all members of its community, including families, students, and staff.
- The principal keeps the school accountable for living its mission by periodically monitoring and assessing school.
- The school works deliberately to ensure that its administration, faculty, and staff reflect the diversity of its student body.
- The principal ensures that diversity initiatives are coordinated and led by a designated individual who is a member of one of the school leadership teams, with the training, authority, and support needed to influence key areas of policy development, decision-making, budget, and management.
- The school uses inclusive language in all written, electronic, and oral communications.
- The school adopts a nondiscrimination statement applicable to the administration of all its programs and policies, in full compliance with local, state, and federal law. That said, the school makes the law the floor—not the ceiling—for establishing itself as a diverse, inclusive, safe, and welcoming community for all students, staff, and families.

Source: National Association of Independent Schools[56]

conscious, or explicit, bias (i.e., when a person intentionally articulates their attitudes about a particular group or person) and unconscious, or implicit, bias (i.e., a feeling or assumption about a "type" of person or group of which the possessor is not actively aware and may involuntarily act on) is vital to avoid inequitable behaviors resulting from either type of bias.[56]

On the next page, the **"Personal Assessment of Bias in Thoughts, Speech, and Actions"** can support principals in identifying their existing perceptions and behaviors that may be biased. While this tool is just one of many to identify biases, it will help leaders establish a strong foundation for implementing inclusive and equitable practices.

Key Paradigm Shifts for Educational Equity and Bias Reduction

ADVANCING EQUALITY TO ADVANCING EQUITY
▪ Do all students who walk into my school or classroom have an opportunity to achieve to their fullest capabilities regardless of race, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, socioeconomic status, home language, (dis)ability, and other identities?
▪ Do I understand that equity requires eliminating disparities in access and opportunity—what some people call fairness or justice—and that sometimes when we advocate equality (i.e., giving everybody the same thing) we fail to meet this requirement?
▪ When I advocate for equity, do I account for all types of access? Do I consider physical, social, economic, and cultural access? For example, all students might have "access" to advanced math classes insofar as they are available to anybody who takes the prerequisites. But, do I consider ways some students (e.g., female students) are socialized not to pursue advanced math, which also is a matter of access and equity?

FIXING MARGINALIZED FAMILIES TO ERADICATING MARGINALIZING PRACTICES
▪ Do I tend to find fault in students of color, students experiencing poverty, and other students and families while failing to examine ways policies and practices, as well as larger societal factors (e.g., inequities in access to living wage work, health care, and safe and affordable housing), drive outcome disparities?
▪ Do I tend to use strategies for addressing educational outcome disparities that focus on "fixing" marginalized families rather than addressing the conditions that marginalize families?

COLOR BLINDNESS TO SELF-EXAMINATION
▪ Am I ignoring the existence or implications of difference as a way to avoid addressing the inequities related to them?
▪ Is color-blindness possible? And, if so, is it desirable when it denies people what may be important dimensions of their identities?

LEARNING ABOUT "OTHER" CULTURES TO FIGHTING FOR THE RIGHTS OF ALL STUDENTS
▪ Although learning about students' individual cultures is a valuable pursuit, do I stop there or do I commit to fighting for their rights, such as the right to schools in which policies and practices are constructed around their interests, needs, and experiences?
▪ "Other" than what?

CELEBRATING DIVERSITY TO COMMITTING TO EQUITY
▪ Do I require marginalized students to celebrate diversity while the inequities they experience go unaddressed?
▪ Might building equity initiatives around "celebrating diversity" perpetuate the very inequities we should be eliminating?

Source: Equity Literacy Institute[57]

Personal Assessment of Bias in Thoughts, Speech, and Actions

<u>Directions</u>: School principals (and other educators) can use this tool to determine the prevalence of specific behaviors in their day-to-day interactions with others. They can then review their responses to the included items to identify areas for improvement and create goals around those areas.

BEHAVIOR	NEVER	RARELY	OCCASIONALLY	OFTEN
I educate myself about the culture and experiences of other racial, religious, ethnic, and socioeconomic groups.				
I spend time reflecting on my own upbringing and childhood to better understand my own biases.				
I look at my own attitudes and behaviors as an adult to determine the ways they may be contributing to or combating prejudice.				
I evaluate my use of language to avoid terms or phrases that may be degrading or hurtful to other groups.				
I avoid stereotyping and generalizing other people based on their group identity.				
I am comfortable discussing various forms of prejudice (e.g., racism, sexism, classism) with others.				
I am open to other people's feedback about ways in which my behavior may be culturally insensitive or offensive to others.				
I give equal attention to other people regardless of race, religion, gender, socioeconomic class, or other difference.				
I am comfortable giving constructive feedback to someone of another race, gender, age, or other demographic.				
I work intentionally to develop inclusive practices at my school.				
I take time to notice the environment of my school to ensure that visual media represent diverse groups.				
When others display bias, I feel comfortable speaking up, asking them to refrain, and stating my reasons.				
I demonstrate my commitment to social justice in my professional work by engaging in activities to achieve equity and inclusion.				

Source: Anti-Defamation League[58]

SUPPORT EQUITABLE OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL

PROMOTE CULTURAL RESPONSIVENESS IN ACADEMIC PROGRAMMING

Teachers practicing effective instructional strategies that are culturally responsive, aligned with research, and differentiated to student needs is a prerequisite for giving diverse students equitable access to high-quality curricula, coursework, and learning activities. As such, **principals should deliberately promote the application of culturally responsive teaching as an implicit component of academic programming.**[59] In essence, culturally responsive educators understand that each and every student is capable of achieving at a high level provided that they are supported with "practices, curriculum, and policies that respect [their] identities and cultures."[60] Educators view student differences as assets—rather than barriers to learning—and leverage knowledge of students' personal identities, prior experiences, and sociocultural background to plan and implement relevant, engaging, and effective instruction.[61] Indeed, culturally responsive and equitable schools are characterized by:[62]

LEARN MORE

Watch the videos linked below to learn more about cultural responsiveness and equity in instruction and academic interventions:

- **"Culturally Responsive School Leadership"** – College of Education, University of Illinois-Urbana-Champaign
- **"Culturally Responsive Teaching in the Student-Centered Classroom"** – Center for the Collaborative Classroom
- **"Increasing Educator Effectiveness With Culturally Responsive Teaching"** – Regional Educational Laboratory Northwest, Institute of Education Sciences
- **"Why Is It Important to Ensure Instruction and Intervention Are Culturally Responsive"** – National Center on Intensive Intervention, American Institutes for Research

- An inclusive climate and visual environment;
- Multicultural and culturally responsive pedagogy, curricula, and instructional materials;
- A wide variety of instructional strategies to meet differing learning styles and backgrounds;
- Utilization of student funds of knowledge and outside resources to provide diverse tools, strategies, and role models;
- Availability of extracurricular activities to enrich the curriculum and provide multicultural experiences;
- Active outreach to and substantive involvement of families from all groups in varied aspects of the educational program, both planning and instructional; and
- Recognition of multiple intelligences and student strengths through academic opportunities, honors, leadership roles, and creative options.

What Is Culturally Relevant and Responsive Pedagogy?

> " *Culturally relevant and responsive pedagogies are tools that assist teachers in supporting their students' "above and below ground" development. They focus on the academic and personal success of students as individuals and as a collective by ensuring that students engage in academically rigorous curriculum and learning, that they more fully understand and feel affirmed in their identities and experiences, and that they are equipped and empowered to identify and dismantle structural inequities—positioning them to transform society.* "

Source: Teach for America[63]

Recommendations for Building Culturally Responsive Schools

ADVANCING CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE LEADERSHIP
- Conduct individual and building-wide self-assessments. Consider completing an inventory in which a person writes down as many identity descriptors as possible to help identify their cultural, philosophical, and social identities. Begin to understand the social contexts that guide individual belief systems.   - Create a positive climate and culture by intentionally promoting inclusivity and positive relations among students, among teachers and staff, and between students and adults on site.   - Explore innovative ways to reach the surrounding community and families to utilize their strengths, keep them better informed, and involve them in creating and sustaining a positive climate and culture.

DIVERSIFYING STUDENT AND ADULT CAPACITY TO TRANSFORM SCHOOLS
- Establish clear practices for collaborating with families and community members on a regular basis, and act ethically with integrity and fairness when working with them. Understand how to navigate and influence the larger political and cultural context so diversification and equity can flourish.   - Provide strong professional development on cultural competence, equity, and social justice so that teachers and staff can improve classroom instruction and provide equitable school management strategies that will improve achievement for all students.   - Provide flexibility for decision-making to incorporate diversity in instruction, curriculum, staffing, and hiring. Include strategies that engage students, staff, communities, and stakeholders in diversity and social justice efforts in the transformation process.   - Recruit qualified teachers who are enthusiastic about change. Promote buy-in.

UTILIZING ASSETS TO ENSURE CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE TEACHING AND LEARNING
- Create a repository of research and resources for staff and teachers. Use the material to help build foundational knowledge and skills for ensuring culturally responsive teaching and learning.   - Provide opportunities for faculty and staff to engage in professional conversations in developing skills related to cultural sensitivity to individual students and flexibility in adapting their content, curriculum, and teaching strategies.   - Equip educators with the skills to increase their instructional differentiation repertoire to meet the educational needs of students. Principals should consider specialized training in the following areas: English language learners; exceptional children services; students of economically depressed families; and students who have experienced social hostility, such as racism or sexism.   - Develop student interest surveys, and lead teachers to learn about students' interests. Incorporate staff meeting time for teachers to report on: what motivates students to learn; how a relationship has been built with each student; and what they learned about students' interests. Ensure that teachers identify and have a specialized focus on students who are marginalized or are at-risk.   - Initiate discussions with local, state, and national evaluation process designers to include indicators or cultural responsiveness as essential components in teacher and staff observations.   - Incorporate recommendations from educational texts and other materials into the teacher evaluation process and performance improvement plans for teachers and staff who have demonstrated deficits in cultural responsiveness.

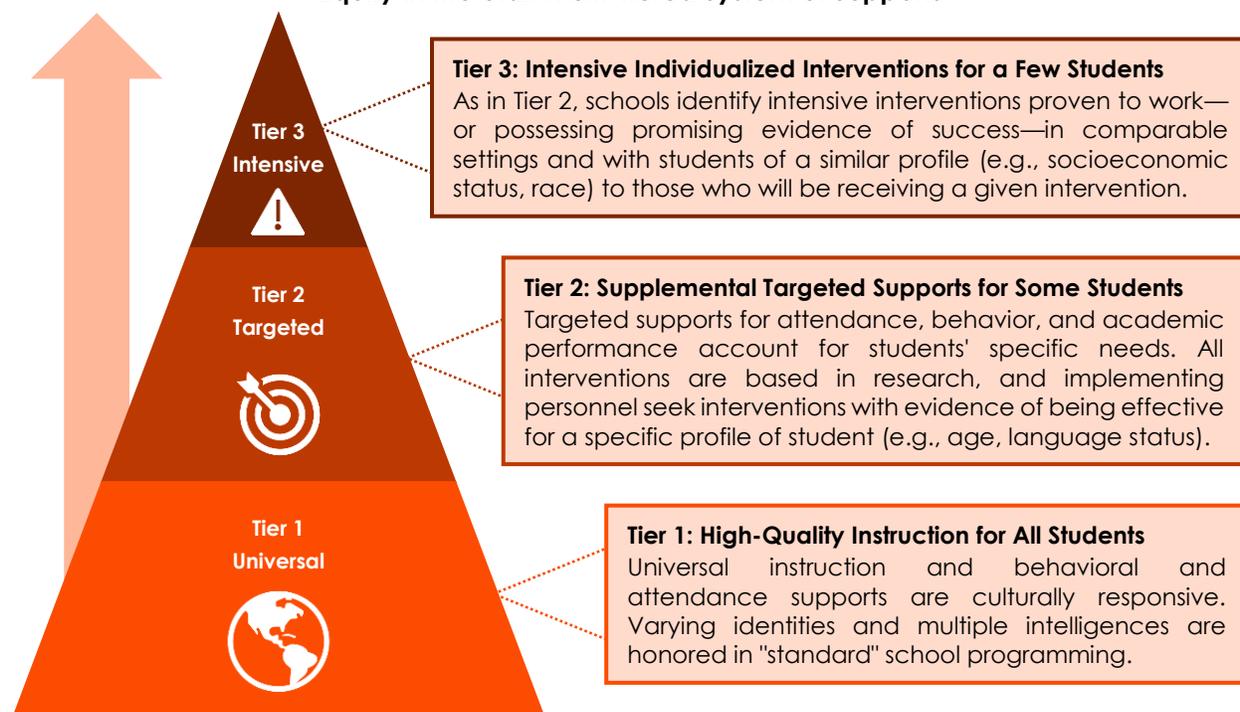| DEVELOPING AWARENESS AND LEADING THE CHARGE TO PROVIDE DIVERSE OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL STUDENTS |
|---|
| ▪ Create student diversity leadership training and diversity workshops for administrative teams and student leaders. Student leaders can train peers on subjects related to diversity and tolerance, which will be guided by administrators and counselors. |
| ▪ Provide chats, newsletters, and/or blogs written and led by the principal and school leadership team to promote the diverse school culture and showcase how the school values diversity. |
| ▪ Endorse student-teacher collaboration by celebrating the school's diversity through developmentally appropriate activities and celebrations. |
| ▪ Promote regular school-to-family communications in the native languages of parents and guardians. |
| ▪ Include representatives from all demographic groups in the school's diversity planning. |

Source: National Association of Elementary School Principals[64]

Importantly, **principals must demand that culturally responsive practices and a commitment to equity penetrate all aspects of their schools' academic programming, including universal instruction, tiered and intensive academic interventions, and extra- or co-curricular activities of an academic nature.** Principals should support their teachers and other staff members in recognizing how their own backgrounds, identities, and biases affect how they interact with diverse students in instructional settings. At the same time, faculty and staff must be aware that students' backgrounds, identities, and biases will impact how they perceive their interactions with school personnel.[65] This means that principals should encourage their school's instructional staff to carefully consider the identities and past experiences of their students when designing and delivering instruction or referring students to targeted interventions within a Response-to-Intervention (RTI) framework.[66]

Indeed, "equitable education for each student" is one of the eight critical components of the Utah Multi-Tiered System of Supports (UMTSS), which encompasses RTI.[67] Within the UMTSS, students will experience high-quality, evidence-based instruction as part of their regular classroom activities. If students require additional support, their schools tailor academic interventions that reinforce classroom instruction to their specific learning needs and profiles.[68] This means that principals in Utah should encourage teachers and instructional staff to constantly reflect on students' backgrounds, identities, and learning needs to acquire new knowledge and awareness to refine universal (i.e., Tier 1) instruction and targeted and intensive interventions (i.e., Tiers 2 and 3) in a manner that acknowledges the diversity of student needs resulting from differences in personal identities, demographics, and culture.[69]

Equity in the Utah Multi-Tiered System of Supports

Tier 3: Intensive Individualized Interventions for a Few Students
As in Tier 2, schools identify intensive interventions proven to work—or possessing promising evidence of success—in comparable settings and with students of a similar profile (e.g., socioeconomic status, race) to those who will be receiving a given intervention.

Tier 2: Supplemental Targeted Supports for Some Students
Targeted supports for attendance, behavior, and academic performance account for students' specific needs. All interventions are based in research, and implementing personnel seek interventions with evidence of being effective for a specific profile of student (e.g., age, language status).

Tier 1: High-Quality Instruction for All Students
Universal instruction and behavioral and attendance supports are culturally responsive. Varying identities and multiple intelligences are honored in "standard" school programming.

Source: Multiple[70]

Notably, many attributes of effective "standard" instruction and specialized interventions are mirrored in culturally-responsive practices. For example, culturally responsive instruction and interventions seek to foster critical thinking, provide responsive feedback on performance, and model important skills for students via carefully scaffolded demonstrations and tasks.[71] Principals should emphasize this overlap while also highlighting culturally responsive practices' focus on affirmation of the abilities of diverse students and consideration of how students' and teachers' identities and biases shape teaching and learning.[72] Instruction and interventions should be shaped to students' needs, and the degree to which a given school acknowledges student identities and combats bias is a major determinant of its ability to address those needs.[73]

Resources to Explore Culturally Responsive Instruction and Interventions

Many organizations publish technical guidance to support teachers in understanding culturally responsive academic programming. By reviewing some of these resources, principals can expand their knowledge of what culturally responsive instruction and interventions look like in theory and in practice.

The first three resources are guides for teachers to understand the foundations of culturally responsive pedagogy and related techniques. These guides come from the Region X Equity Assistance Center at Education Northwest (Resource #1), the Equity Alliance at Arizona State University (Resource #2), and the Collaboration for Effective Educator, Development, Accountability, and Reform Center at the University of Florida (Resource #3). Relatedly, Resource #4 is a series of checklists from the Mid-Atlantic Equity Consortium that allow users to observe teacher and school practices for evidence of equity.

Resource #1: "Culturally Responsive Teaching: A Guide to Evidence-Based Practices for Teaching All Students Equitably"	↱
Resource #2: "Culturally Responsive Teaching Matters!"	↱
Resource #3: "Innovation Configuration: Culturally Responsive Teaching"	↱
Resource #4: "Equity Audits"	↱

Source: Multiple[74]

PROVIDE EFFECTIVE BEHAVIORAL AND SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL SUPPORTS

Like academics, school-based supports for student behavior and social-emotional development need to emphasize cultural responsiveness and equity "to achieve equitable outcomes for all student groups."[75] As such, principals should educate school staff and other stakeholders on how student identities, backgrounds, and life experiences impact their behavior and social-emotional skills.[76] Furthermore, principals must lead staff in evaluating how perceptions of student identities, backgrounds, and life experiences—along with related biases—influence how they interpret student behaviors and form relationships with students.[77] Awareness of these two interconnected dynamics is vital to ensure fairness in disciplinary procedures and the application of related social-emotional supports, which have historically discriminated against disadvantaged student groups such as students of color and students with disabilities.[78]

Indeed, **principals should ensure that faculty and staff receive training and guidance on how to appropriately and fairly enforce school disciplinary policies.**[79] Such training and guidance should promote culturally responsive classroom management strategies that encourage school personnel to recognize the cultural lenses through which they view and interpret student behavior. In addition, this training and guidance should provide educators with tools and strategies to learn more about students' cultures and identities. Doing so will allow staff to better understand the contexts in which their students live and learn, as well as any potential divergence of behavioral norms that a student may experience inside and outside of school.[80] "Cultural mismatches" and subjective interpretation and punishment of student behaviors can result in dramatic inequities among students from different backgrounds, so principals need to increase their school community's understanding of fair and equitable discipline.[81]

LEARN MORE

Watch the videos linked below to learn more about cultural responsiveness and equity in behavioral and social-emotional practices:

- **"Resources for Enhancing Equity in School Discipline"** – Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports OSEP Technical Assistance Center
- **"School Discipline: Issues of Equity and Effectiveness"** – American Educational Research Association
- **"Equity and SEL – What Educators Need to Know and Do"** – Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning
- **"Creating Equity in Education Through Social and Emotional Learning"** – Literacy Organizational Capacity Initiative, University of Chicago, and Consortium for Educational Change

Principals should also work with stakeholders to establish a robust system of supports to address students' behavioral and social-emotional needs.[82] This system should act as part of the larger UMTSS.[83] Like RTI, it should encompass universal supports and preventative efforts to foster positive behavior and social-emotional outcomes and interventions to address barriers to those outcomes. The three tiers of a given school's behavioral and social-emotional support system must account for student identities and cultures to be successful.[84]

Principals can consider the application of one or more of a variety of potential strategies within behavioral and social-emotional support systems, such as positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS), restorative justice, and bullying prevention education.[85] In choosing what programs, approaches, or policies to use across Tiers 1, 2, and 3, principals should examine each option's impacts on the students their school serves and how those initiatives will hold students to similarly high expectations.[86] Principals should also lead stakeholders in collecting new and using available disciplinary, behavioral, and social-emotional outcomes data to identify areas "where inequities are strongest."[87] Depending on the needs of their school's students and existing inequities, principals may choose to deploy multiple approaches in tandem within its tiered system for behavioral and social-emotional supports.[88]

Action Steps for Improving Equity in School Climate and Discipline

CLIMATE AND PREVENTION
- Engage in deliberate efforts to create positive school climate
- Prioritize the use of evidence-based prevention strategies to promote positive student behavior
- Promote social-emotional learning to complement academic skills and encourage positive behavior
- Train and support all school personnel on how to engage students and support positive behavior
- Collaborate with local mental health, child welfare, law enforcement, and juvenile justice agencies and other stakeholders to align resources, prevention strategies, and intervention services
- Ensure that any school-based law enforcement officers focus on improving school safety and reducing inappropriate referrals to law enforcement

CLEAR, APPROPRIATE, AND CONSISTENT EXPECTATIONS AND CONSEQUENCES
- Set high expectations for behavior and adopt an instructional approach to discipline
- Involve families, students, and school personnel in developing and implementing discipline policies and codes of conduct
- Communicate policies and codes of conduct regularly to school stakeholders
- Ensure that clear, developmentally appropriate, and proportional consequences apply for misbehavior
- Establish appropriate procedures for students with disabilities and due process for all students
- Remove students from class only as a last resort and return them to their regular class as soon as possible
- Ensure that any alternative settings provide students with academic instruction

EQUITY AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT
▪ Train all school staff to apply school discipline policies and practices in a fair and equitable manner so as not to disproportionately impact students of color, students with disabilities, or at-risk students ▪ Use proactive, data-driven, and continuous efforts, including gathering feedback from families, students, and school personnel to prevent, identify, reduce, and eliminate discriminatory discipline and unintended consequences

Source: U.S. Department of Education[89]

Principals and other school stakeholders must be able to recognize instances and patterns of inequity as they relate to behavioral and social-emotional outcomes (e.g., students with disabilities being suspended more often than students without disabilities).[90] Specifically, principals and their collaborators should use available data to identify, document, and understand gaps in student outcomes in order to successfully address them with new programs or currently deployed supports and interventions.[91] Knowledge of inequities in discipline and social-emotional supports is a prerequisite to eliminating those inequities.[92]

Resources to Explore Culturally Responsive Instruction and Interventions

Many organizations publish technical guidance to support educators in implementing culturally responsive practices to promote students' behavioral and social-emotional outcomes. By reviewing some of these resources, principals can expand their knowledge of historical inequities within the larger U.S. education system, as well as learn strategies to promote equitable classroom management, application of disciplinary consequences, and implementation of behavioral and social-emotional supports at their schools.
All resources listed below provide guidance on one or more aspects of cultural responsiveness and equity in behavioral and social-emotional systems of supports in K-12 schools. These resources come from: ▪ The Metropolitan Center for Urban Education at New York University (Resource #1); ▪ The Council of State Governments Justice Center (Resource #2); ▪ The Equity Alliance at Arizona State University (Resource #3); ▪ The National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments, U.S. Department of Education (Resource #4); ▪ Public Counsel (Resource #5); and ▪ The U.S. Department of Education (Resource #6).

Resource #1: "Culturally Responsive Classroom Management Strategies"	
Resource #2: "The School Discipline Consensus Report: Strategies from the Field to Keep Students Engaged in School and Out of the Juvenile Justice System"	
Resource #3: "Culturally Responsive Positive Behavioral Support Matters"	
Resource #4: "Addressing the Root Causes of Disparities in School Discipline: An Educator's Action Planning Guide"	
Resource #5: "Fix School Discipline: Toolkit for Educators"	
Resource #6: "Guiding Principles: A Resource Guide for Improving School Climate and Discipline"	

Source: Multiple[93]

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