

EDUCATIONAL EQUITY IN SCHOOL DISTRICT POLICY AND ACTION

Robert L. Jarvis, Ph.D.

rjarvis@upenn.edu

Catalyst@ Penn GSE Graduate School of Education

University of Pennsylvania

October 2018

The Quest

- Eliminating the Predictability of Achievement and Attainment Disparities Defined By Race/Ethnicity, Gender, First Language, (Dis)ability or Economics
- Challenging the Status Quo and Building Our District's Capacities for Continuous Improvement
- Clarifying the Root Causes of Our Observed Attainment-Achievement-Opportunity to Learn-Expectation Gaps
- Challenging Our Assumptions About Our Diverse Children's "Potential" for High Level Learning
- Increasing Access, Opportunity, Inclusion and Support for Our Historically Underperforming and Most Challenged Learners and Their Families
- Committing to Professional Learning Around Effectively Responding to Difference
- Increasing Focus on Our Students' Strengths/Assets Versus Deficits
- Seeing Our Schools and Ourselves as Passion and Dream Facilitators
- Enhancing Educators and Students Sense of Efficacy: Confidence and Competence
- Developing Coherence and Connectedness in Curriculum and Student Learning Experiences
- Making Ethical and Effective Decisions Through an Equity Lens From the Boardroom to the Classroom: Who Benefits? Will the Decision Open or Close Doors of Opportunity?
- Recognizing the Value of Networks and Expanded Sharing of Promising Practices Within and Between Schools and Districts

The ultimate challenge for our educational system is to assure that each and every student, regardless of background, is exposed to relevant and engaging learning experiences and curricula that they will need in order to thrive in today's and tomorrow's world. Our community's future social and economic viability and progress will be highly contingent on our district's capacities to open doors of opportunity for all, and not just a historically privileged few.

It is in our common shared interest that all of our children, regardless of racial/ethnic background or economic condition or other dimension of identity or difference, receive learning experiences and support that expand opportunities for growth and increasingly high levels of achievement, and that nurture and cultivate untapped passion and potential for learning in their school experience with us, in postsecondary education, in work and in life.

Educational equity is based on the principles of fairness and justice in allocation of resources, elimination of institutional barriers to access and opportunity, and creation of the real possibility of equality in positive academic and life outcomes for each student and between diverse groups of students. It means that students' identities will not predict or predetermine their success in our school district, in postsecondary education or in life.

It is based on a shared commitment to ensure that every student receives what they need to maximize that success, and that we are committed to assure all students' equitable opportunity to access high

level, meaningful and engaging learning experiences, while actively eliminating institutional barriers in district and school policy and practice that limit or deny this access.

To achieve educational equity **we commit** to:

- Systematically use disaggregated district-wide, school level and individual student level quantitative and qualitative data to inform district, school and classroom decisions and monitor progress, i.e. race, ethnicity, gender, (dis)ability, economics, first language, sexual orientation.
- Raise the measured achievement of all students while systemically narrowing the gap between our lowest and highest performing student groups.
- Eliminate the predictability of disproportionate over-representation of students identified by race/ethnicity, poverty, or gender in special education, discipline referrals and suspensions, and under-representation in gifted-enrichment programs, honors level or other advanced learning courses or learning experiences.
- Graduate all of our students ready to succeed and thrive in postsecondary education and in the workforce and engage productively in increasingly diverse local, regional, national and global communities.

In order to achieve educational equity and opportunity for each and every student **we will**:

- Provide every student with equitable access to;
 - a high quality and relevant curriculum;
 - high interest and accessible co-curricular activities;
 - caring, committed and competent educators; and
 - relevant and necessary support services through differentiated human and material capital resource allocation.
- Regularly review current policies, procedures, programs, and staff professional learning for the promotion of educational equity, and revise as required, in order to continuously improve student learning and reduce disparities in access, opportunity and outcomes within and between student groups.
- Create and expect physically and emotionally safe and supportive schools with welcoming and inclusive cultures that positively value and support the diversity of our students, their families and the communities we serve.
- Actively involve students, staff, families and community members that reflect our district's demographics in informing our decisions regarding the narrowing and eliminating of opportunity, achievement and other attainment gaps.
- Actively work toward a teacher and administrator workforce that reflect the diversity of the student body. The district will recruit, employ, support and retain a workforce that includes racial, ethnic, gender and linguistic diversity, as well as high skilled and culturally responsive administrative, instructional and support personnel.
- Provide support for on-going professional development to strengthen all employees' knowledge and skills for viewing their own and school practices and policies through an equity lens.
- Provide curricula, learning resources and assessments that reflect the diversity of students and staff that support understanding and appreciation of culture, class, language, ethnicity, poverty, ability and other differences that contribute to the success of our society and uniqueness of each student and staff member.