

Equal Educational Opportunity

The district shall provide equal and bias-free access for all students to all school facilities, courses, programs, activities and services and give them maximum opportunity to achieve their potential regardless of race, creed, color, national origin, ancestry, age, sex, affectional or sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, marital status, liability for service in the Armed Forces of the United States, nationality, place of residence within the district, socioeconomic status, disability, or pregnancy. Enforcement of other district affirmative action/equity policies (2224, 4111.1, 4211.1 and 6121) contribute to this legally required equality of educational opportunity.

Staff members shall maintain professional relationships with pupils at all times and develop wholesome and constructive relationships with them. Staff members shall be expected to regard each pupil as an individual and to accord each pupil the rights and respect that are his/her due.

Staff members shall promote a learning environment that encourages fulfillment of each pupil's potential in regard to his/her program, consistent with district goals and with optimal opportunities for pupils. This goal may be reached by adapting instruction to individual needs, by:

- A. Insisting on reasonable standards of scholastic accomplishment for all pupils;
- B. Creating a positive atmosphere in and out of the classroom;
- C. Extending the same courtesy and respect that is expected of pupils;
- D. Treating all pupils with consistent fairness.

The board of education guarantees all pupils equal access to all academic programs within the learning environment.

Pupils shall respect the rights of other pupils to receive an education in an environment that is conducive to learning and personal growth. No pupil shall have the right to abridge another pupil's right to privacy or right to hold personal beliefs which are different from those of the mainstream.

Service Animals

Individuals with disabilities shall be permitted to be accompanied by their service animals in all areas of the school facilities where members of the community, participants in services, programs or activities, or invitees, as relevant, are allowed to go.

Harassment

The district's affirmative action program is part of each academic program regarding all pupils. No one, including pupils, staff members, vendors, volunteers, or visitors--shall commit an act of harassment/discrimination of any kind against any member of the school community on any of the grounds prohibited by law.

"Harassment, intimidation or bullying" is defined as any gesture, any written, verbal or physical act, or any electronic communication, whether it be a single incident or a series of incidents, that is reasonably perceived as being motivated either by any actual or perceived characteristic, such as race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, or a mental, physical or sensory disability, or by any other distinguishing characteristic, that takes place on school

grounds, at any school-sponsored function or on a school bus, or off school grounds, in accordance with law, that substantially disrupts or interferes with the orderly operation of the school or the rights of other students, and that:

- A. A reasonable person should know, under the circumstances, will have the effect of physically or emotionally harming a student or damaging the student's property, or placing a student in reasonable fear of physical or emotional harm to his/her person or damage to his/her property; or
- B. Has the effect of insulting or demeaning any student or group of students; or
- C. Creates a hostile educational environment for the student by interfering with the student's education or by severely or pervasively causing physical or emotional harm to the student.

All reported incidents of harassment, intimidation or bullying shall be handled according to law and board policy 5131.1 Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying. Harassment may be claimed by a third party. That is, individuals who are not directly involved in the behavior may experience a hostile environment. They shall have the same legal rights to act under this policy as those directly victimized.

Any member of the student body may file a formal grievance related to harassment. The school anti-bullying specialist will receive all complaints and initiate a thorough investigation and will protect the rights of both the pupil making the complaint and the alleged harasser. If the victim is from a protected class, the affirmative action officer will be included in the investigation. Filing of a grievance or otherwise reporting harassment of any kind will not reflect upon the pupil's status nor affect future grades or class assignments.

The administration will inform all pupils that sexual harassment is prohibited in the educational setting. Specifically, no person employed by the district or by a vendor, or acting in a voluntary capacity, shall threaten or insinuate, either directly or indirectly, that a pupil's refusal to submit to sexual advances will adversely affect the pupils standing in the school setting. Pupils are forbidden to harass other pupils or staff members or vendors or volunteers through conduct or communications of a sexual nature within the school setting.

Findings of discrimination in the form of harassment will result in appropriate disciplinary action.

Equity in School

The board of education shall maintain an academic environment that is free from harassment and provide equal and bias free access for all students to all school facilities, courses, programs activities and services, regardless of race, creed, color, national origin, ancestry, age marital status, affectional or sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, religion, disability, nationality or socioeconomic status. The board shall ensure that:

- A. School classrooms and facilities will be barrier free;
- B. Attention will be directed at attaining minority representation within each school that approximates the district's overall minority representation. Exact appointment is not required. The ultimate goal shall be to achieve the greatest degree of racial balance that is feasible and consistent with sound educational values and procedures;
- C. Utilizing on an annual basis a State-approved English language proficiency measure for determining the special needs of English language learners and their progress in learning English;
- D. Utilizing bias-free multiple measures for determining the special needs of students with disabilities,
- E. The district curriculum will be aligned with the New Jersey Learning Standards and address the elimination of discrimination by narrowing the achievement gap by:

1. Providing equity in educational programs and by providing opportunities for students to interact with others proactively regardless of status;
 2. Ensuring there are no differential requirements for completion of course offerings or programs of study solely on the basis of race, creed, color, national origin, ancestry, age, marital status, affectional or sexual orientation, gender, religion, disability, or socioeconomic status;
 3. Ensuring courses shall not be offered separately on the basis of race, creed, color, national origin, ancestry, age, marital status, affectional or sexual orientation, gender, religion, disability, or socioeconomic status;
 4. Reducing or preventing the underrepresentation of minority, female, and male students in all classes and programs, including gifted and talented, accelerated, and advanced classes;
 5. Ensuring schools demonstrate the inclusion of a multicultural curriculum in its instructional content, materials, and methods, and ensuring students understand the basic tenets of multiculturalism;
 6. Ensuring African-American history, as well as the history of other cultures, is infused into the curriculum and taught as part of U.S. history;
 7. Ensuring instruction on the Holocaust and other acts of genocide is included in the curriculum of all elementary and secondary schools, as developmentally appropriate.
 8. Ensuring that students are not discriminated against because of a medical condition.
- F. All students shall have support services, including intervention and referral services, school health services and counseling services; and
- G. Physical education program and athletic programs shall be equitable and co-educational and do not discriminate based on protected class status.

Procedures shall be made available for pupils and/or parents/guardians who wish to file a grievance protesting alleged discriminatory or sexually (or other) harassing action. An immediate report of the allegation should be made to the affirmative action officer or Superintendent/Principal. Violations of this policy or its related procedures shall be cause for appropriate disciplinary action.

Bias-Related Incidents

An employee of the board who becomes aware in the course of his/her employment that a student or other staff person has committed a bias-related act (hate crime) or is about to commit one shall immediately inform the building principal and Superintendent/Principal. All incidents of bias-related act shall be reported whether they occur during school hours on school grounds or otherwise. The principal or his or her designee shall promptly notify the local police department and the bias investigation officer for the county prosecutor's office.

The principal or his or her designee shall immediately notify the local police department and the bias investigation officer for the county prosecutor's office where there is reason to believe a bias-related act that involves an act of violence has been or is about to be physically committed against a student, or there is otherwise reason to believe a life has been or will be threatened.

All incidents shall be reported utilizing the Student Safety Data System according to board policy 5131.5 Violence and Vandalism.

Appeals

Grievances related to equity in school and classroom shall be submitted to the affirmative action officer. Any individual may petition the Commissioner in writing to resolve a dispute arising related to equity in school and classroom.

Implementation

The Superintendent/Principal shall direct development of procedures regarding the implementation of this policy to include sanctions, protection of individual rights to confidentiality and due process, and

notification procedures. The Superintendent/Principal shall ensure that, annually, all staff and all pupils (in means and terms that are age-appropriate) be thoroughly informed of this policy, their right to file grievances under this policy and the law and the procedures relative to filing. Further, all staff and pupils shall be informed annually of the identity of the district's affirmative action officer and how he/she may be contacted.

The Superintendent/Principal shall also ensure that staff and pupils participate in educational programs relating to this policy and the maintenance of a safe and nurturing educational environment.

The Superintendent/Principal shall use all customary methods of information dissemination to ensure that the community is informed of its policies on educational equity.

Date: October 7, 1999
Revised: March 8, 2007
Revised: January 25, 2012
Revised: June 25, 2014
Revised: October 19, 2016
Revised: May 16, 2018

<u> X </u>	Monitored
<u> X </u>	Mandated
<u> X </u>	Other Reasons

QSAC Monitored:

DPR: Governance – 1
SOA: Governance – 1

Note: Monitored as part of the New Jersey Department of Education's assessment of district Comprehensive Equity Plans (CEP).

Mandated:

N.J.A.C. 6A:7-1.4 requires the board to have educational equity policies in place.

The required comprehensive equity plan must include policy statements that:

- A. Recognize and value the diversity of persons and groups within society and promote the acceptance of persons of diverse backgrounds regardless of race, creed, color, national origin, ancestry, age, marital status, affectional or sexual orientation, gender, gender identity or expression, religion, disability, or socioeconomic status; and
- B. Promote equal educational opportunity and foster through the policies, programs, and practices of the district board of education a learning environment that is free from all forms of prejudice, discrimination, and harassment based upon race, creed, color, national origin, ancestry, age, marital status, affectional or sexual orientation, gender, gender identity or expression, religion, disability, or socioeconomic status;
- C. Each district board of education shall develop once every three years a comprehensive equity plan that shall identify and correct all discriminatory and equitable educational and hiring policies, patterns, programs and practices affecting its facilities, programs, students and staff. The comprehensive equity plan shall include:
 - 1. An assessment of the school district's needs for achieving equity in educational programs. The assessment shall include staffing practices, quality of program data, stakeholder-satisfaction data, and student assessment and behavioral data disaggregated by gender, race, ethnicity,

limited English proficiency, special education, migrant, date of enrollment, student suspension, expulsion, child study team referrals, preschool-through-grade-12 promotion/retention data, preschool through grade 12 completion rates, and re-examination and re-evaluation of classification and placement of students in special education programs if there is overrepresentation within certain group;

2. A description of how other Federal, State, and school district policies, programs, and practices are aligned to the comprehensive equity plan;
3. Progress targets for closing the achievement gap;
4. Professional development targets regarding the knowledge and skills needed to provide a thorough and efficient education as defined by the New Jersey Student Learning Standards (formerly the Core Curriculum Content Standard or the CCCS), differentiated instruction, and formative assessments aligned to the New Jersey Student Learning Standards and high expectations for teaching and learning; and
5. Annual targets that address school district needs in equity in school and classroom practices and are aligned to professional development targets.

Other Reasons:

Federal law requires provision of comparable restroom, locker room and shower facilities for both sexes.

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) imposes obligations on boards of education both as employers and providers of education. Many of these obligations duplicate or expand existing obligations under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and other federal law.

The Every Student Succeeds Act requires that homeless and migrant children be granted considerations to ensure that they receive a free public education. Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 states that no person shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subject to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.

N.J.S.A. 2C:16-1 makes a person guilty of the crime of bias intimidation if he commits, attempts to commit, conspires with another to commit, or threatens the immediate commission of an offense specified in chapters 11 through 18 of Title 2C of the New Jersey Statutes; N.J.S.A. 2C:33-4; N.J.S.A. 2C:39-3; N.J.S.A. 2C:39-4 or N.J.S.A. 2C:39-5:

- A. With a purpose to intimidate an individual or group of individuals because of race, color, religion, gender, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, national origin, or ethnicity; or;
- B. Knowing that the conduct constituting the offense would cause an individual or group of individuals to be intimidated because of race, color, religion, gender, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, national origin, or ethnicity; or
- C. Caused any victim of the underlying offense to be intimidated and reasonably believe the offense was committed with a purpose to intimidate the victim or any person or entity in whose welfare the victim is interested because of race, color, religion, gender, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, national origin, or ethnicity; or the victim or the victim's property was selected to be the target of the offense because of the victim's race, color, religion, gender, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, national origin, or ethnicity

N.J.S.A. 10:5-3 forbids discriminatory practices against any person or that person's spouse, partners, members, stockholders, directors, officers, managers, superintendents, agents, employees, business associates, suppliers, or customers by reason of race, creed, color, national origin, ancestry, age, sex, gender identity or expression, affectional or sexual orientation, marital status, familial status, liability for service in the Armed Forces of the United States, disability or nationality.

N.J.S.A. 10:5-3.1 requires employers to provide reasonable accommodations to pregnant women and those who suffer medical conditions related to pregnancy and childbirth, such as bathroom breaks, breaks for increased water intake, periodic rest, assistance with manual labor, job restructuring or modified work schedules, and temporary transfers to less strenuous or hazardous work. Accommodations that cause an undue hardship in the conduct of an employer's business are not required.

N.J.S.A. 10:5-4.1 applies all provisions of the statutes against discrimination to the disabled.

N.J.S.A. 10:5-27 reads: "With respect only to affectional or sexual orientation and gender identity or expression, nothing contained herein shall be construed to require the imposition of affirmative action plans or quotas as specific relief from an unlawful employment practice or unlawful discrimination."

N.J.A.C. 6A:7-1.4(b) requires the board to inform the community of its policies on educational equity.

N.J.A.C. 6A:16-6.3(e) requires school employees to inform the building principal and chief school administrator if they believe a bias-related crime has been committed or is about to be committed on school grounds, including on a school bus or at a school sponsored activity.

N.J.A.C. 6A:7-1.7 requires the board to provide equal and bias-free access for all students to all school facilities, courses, programs, activities and services regardless of race, creed, color, national origin, ancestry, age, marital status, affection or sexual orientation, gender, gender identity or expression, religion, disability or socioeconomic status.

Legal References:

<u>N.J.S.A. 2C:16-1</u>	Bias Intimidation
<u>N.J.S.A. 2C:33-4</u>	Harassment
<u>N.J.S.A. 10:5-1 et seq.</u>	Law Against Discrimination
<u>N.J.S.A. 18A:36-20</u>	Discrimination; prohibition
<u>N.J.S.A. 18A:37-14</u>	Electronic communication, harassment, intimidation or bullying defined
<u>N.J.S.A. 18A:38-5.1</u>	No child to be excluded from school because of race, etc.
<u>N.J.A.C. 6A:7-1.1 et seq.</u>	Managing for Equality and Equity in Education
<u>See particularly:</u>	
<u>N.J.A.C. 6A:7-1.4, -1.7</u>	
<u>N.J.A.C. 6A:16-6.3(e)</u>	Reporting students or staff members to law enforcement Authorities
<u>N.J.A.C. 6A:17-1.1 et seq.</u>	Education of Homeless Children and Students in State Facilities
<u>N.J.A.C. 6A:30-1.1 et seq.</u>	Evaluation of the Performance of School Districts

Davis v. Monroe County Board of Education, 526 U.S. 629 (1999)

State v. Mortimer, 135 N.J. 517 (1994)

20 U.S.C.A. 1681 - Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972

20 U.S.C.A. 794 et seq. - Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973

20 U.S.C.A. 1400 et seq. - Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (formerly Education for All Handicapped Children Act) -Part B

42 U.S.C.A. 12101 et seq. - Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

28 C.F.R. 35 - Nondiscrimination on the Basis of Disability in State and Local Government Services (covers service animals)

Hawkins-Stafford Elementary and Secondary School Improvement Act of 1988, (Pub. L. No. 100-297) amending Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965.

Saxe v. State College Area School Dist., 240 F. 3d 200 (3d Cir. 2001)

Every Student Succeeds Act, Pub. L. 114-95, 20 U.S.C.A. 6301 et seq.

L.W. v. Toms River Regional Schools Board of Education, N.J., No. A-111-05 (Feb. 22, 2007), 2007 N.J. Lexis 184. The New Jersey Supreme Court ruled that a school district may be held liable under the New Jersey Law Against Discrimination (LAD), N.J.S.A. 10:5-1 to -49, when students harass another student because of his perceived sexual orientation. A district school will be liable for such harassment if it knew or should have known of the harassment but failed to take reasonable remedial actions. The matter was remanded to the Director of the Division on Civil Rights.

Comprehensive Equity Plan, New Jersey State Department of Education

Cross References:

2224	Nondiscrimination/affirmative action
4111.1	Nondiscrimination/affirmative action
4211.1	Nondiscrimination/affirmative action
5134	Married/pregnant pupils
6121	Nondiscrimination/affirmative action
6141	Curriculum design/development
6145	Extracurricular activities
6161.1	Guidelines for evaluation and selection of instructional materials
6171.4	Special education