



EQUITY



Frequently Asked Questions

WHY DOESN'T PENNSBURY JUST FOCUS ON ACADEMICS AND NOT EQUITY?

The importance of equity versus academics in education is a complex and often debated topic. Equity and academics are not in opposition to each other; rather, equity and academics are both crucial aspects of education, and they should not be viewed as competing priorities.

The goal should be to provide all students with equitable access to high-quality education, including strong academic content, to help them reach their full potential and participate fully in society. Achieving this balance is essential for a just and prosperous society.

WHY IS PSD FOCUSING ON EQUITY? SHOULDN'T THE FOCUS BE ON EQUALITY?

Equality is providing the same, one-size-fits-all approach to all students, despite their unique needs. Pennsbury School District recognizes that students enter our schools with vastly different strengths, needs, and experiences; therefore, we are committed to fostering an inclusive school community that embraces individual differences as assets to be built upon.

Educational equity is the process of acknowledging differences and responding to differences with strategies, structures, and supports that remove barriers to success so that all students have equal access to meaningful learning.

DOES THE DISTRICT'S COMMITMENT TO EQUITABLE PRACTICES FOCUS SOLELY ON DIFFERENCES OF RACE?

No. PSD's commitment to educational equity addresses all students. It acknowledges differences such as race, ethnicity, color, age, religion, gender, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, language, disability, or socio-economic status-- so that educators identify barriers to learning and better match strategies and supports with student needs.

WILL TALKING ABOUT DIFFERENCES CREATE MORE DIVISION OR SEPARATION OF STUDENTS?

No. PSD is committed to an inclusive learning environment for every student. This requires proactive teaching and learning experiences to ensure a learning environment free of bias, racism, and discrimination.

Learning about differences as assets fosters safe, supportive relationships, feelings of belonging, and healthy identity development which are foundational to rigorous and meaningful learning.

WHAT IS CRITICAL RACE THEORY (CRT)?

Critical Race Theory is an analytical framework that examines United States history and society through the lens of race. CRT was developed by legal scholars and is typically associated with the study of law in institutions of higher learning.

DOES PSD TEACH CRITICAL RACE THEORY (CRT)?

No. PSD does not teach Critical Race Theory. PSD does not have a course, program, or curriculum that teaches CRT. All District curricula are based on the standards and curriculum determined by the Pennsylvania Department of Education.

HAS PSD MADE CURRICULUM CHANGES RELATIVE TO POLICY 832: EDUCATIONAL EQUITY?

PSD has developed a Character, Culture and Wellness framework which outlines competencies for all students in social-emotional learning (SEL), character, cultural proficiency, and wellness. The competencies within the framework are organized by grade bands to ensure that the skills at each level are developmentally appropriate for students throughout the PreK-12 school experience. The skills and competencies outlined in the Character, Culture & Wellness Framework will be taught through direct instruction and embedded into the broader curriculum across disciplines.

PSD's goal is to ensure our curricula and instructional practices are differentiated and universally designed to foster positive identity development in all students. This means curricula are aligned with state standards and also reflect the diverse cultural perspectives and identities of students and their families.

WHAT IS SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING (SEL)? DOES PSD'S SEL PROGRAMMING FOCUS ON RACE?

According to the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL), "SEL is the process through which all young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions."

Pennsbury's SEL programming does not focus on race. The SEL program focuses on skills for learning, empathy, emotional management, and problem-solving.

WHAT CHANGES WILL BE MADE TO THE HIRING PROCESS TO ADDRESS GOALS RELATED TO WORKFORCE DIVERSITY?

PSD is in the process of identifying and addressing barriers to the recruitment, hiring, retention, and development of district employees and maintaining an employment process that is free of discrimination and bias.

PSD has attended and hosted job fairs to recruit candidates from diverse backgrounds to participate in the interview process.

The interview process is designed to identify highly qualified faculty and staff who reflect diverse backgrounds and/or demonstrate an understanding of cultural proficiency and a commitment to educational equity.

WHAT AREAS OF CONCERN WERE IDENTIFIED IN THE PSD EDUCATIONAL EQUITY AUDIT?

PSD data revealed an elevated risk for negative outcomes for specific demographic groups. Black, Hispanic, and Multi-racial students, as well as those with disabilities and from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, consistently score lower on state achievement tests, are underrepresented in advanced courses, are disciplined at higher rates, and report less sense of belonging than their peers report.

PSD administration is working to develop goals and action plans to respond to the disparities in the data and prioritize the needs of historically marginalized student groups. For more information, see the Educational Equity Audit Summary linked here.

