

Equity and Professional Learning

A Summary of Equity-Based Professional Learning

and N.J.A.C. 6A:7



**New Jersey Department of Education
Division of Field Services
Office of the Professional Learning Network**

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1st Edition
Released January 2020



Introduction

The guidance in this document is intended to provide technical assistance to district boards of education (including charter schools/renaissance school projects) and staff regarding the pre-kindergarten through grade 12 requirements to provide equity- and access- related professional learning to all staff as required by N.J.A.C. 6A:7-1.6(b). It will assist district boards of education in ensuring that both staff and students, “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” are provided equity and access in educational opportunities.

The New Jersey Department of Education requires that district boards of education provide professional learning specific to required topics. Equity professional learning is listed as a requirement for, “New staff within 1st year,” and, “all staff on a continuing basis (as determined by district)”. It should be developed to train school staff to identify and resolve equity and access issues arising from prejudice. To meet this requirement, boards of education must follow the rules established in [N.J.A.C. 6A:7 et seq.](#) Accountability and oversight for this training policy is conducted through the three-year [Comprehensive Equity Plan](#) (CEP) which is submitted for review and approval to the County Offices of Education. Contact information for each office can be found on the [County Office of Education](#) webpage.



Equity Professional Learning for Classroom Practice

Information based on N.J.A.C. 6A:7-1.6(a)

Required Participants

All district boards of education are required to provide professional learning to each staff member for how to identify and resolve issues of equity and access. Parents and community members must be invited to participate in the professional development training. This includes, but is not limited to the following positions:

- Administrators
- Teachers
- Counselors
- Child study team members
- School nurses
- Coaches (academic, athletic, etc.)
- Paraprofessionals
- Instructional aides
- Custodians
- Food Servers
- Bus Drivers
- Etc.

Guiding Questions for “Required Participants”

- How is your district ensuring that you include every staff member in this training?
- What types of equity and access training would be meaningful for different position types and levels of experience?
- How does your district differentiate your equity and access trainings so that staff members can engage in ways that build on their background experience and position type?
- How are you including parents and community members in the training?



Training Frequency

Equity and access professional learning must be provided to all staff on a continuing basis. All first-year staff must receive this training, and district boards of education must be able to show evidence that they have continuing training for staff who have been working in the district for more than one year.

Guiding Questions for “Training Frequency”

- What has your district done to ensure that first-year staff members are consistently provided equity and access professional learning?
- How is your district planning and sequencing equity and access professional learning for staff members who have been in your district for more than one year?
- How is your district documenting the frequency and content of equity and access professional learning?

Training Scope

Through equity and access professional learning, district boards of education must explicitly address how staff can ensure equity and access to educational programs and services for diverse groups of students. District board of education should use sources of data like the school district equity needs assessment (required by 6A:7-1.4(c)1) to identify opportunity gaps and other equity and access issues. Chief school administrators can also report out on equity and access professional learning to the district board of education before the certification of the statement of assurances pursuant to 6A:7-1.4(c). Professional learning must, at a minimum, address inequities and prejudices that arise for students based on the following:

- Race
- Creed
- Color
- National origin¹
- Ancestry
- Age
- Marital status

¹ The Comprehensive Equity Plan includes professional learning related to immigration status and English proficiency as a part of staff development and training requirements related to national origin



- Affectional or sexual orientation²
- Gender
- Religion
- Disability
- Socioeconomic status³

Guiding Questions for “Training Scope”

- What existing programs and practices can your district enhance to build equity?
- What new programs and practices is your district creating to build equity?
- What data points do you have in your district (surveys, discipline data, performance data, etc.) that can help you identify structural inequities, prejudice, and bias in your school district?
- How are you training staff to analyze data to identify issues of equity and access?
- How can your district build ongoing professional learning that empowers teachers to work towards social justice in solidarity with diverse groups of students?
- How can you create professional learning broad enough to cover all of the diverse groups listed in the “training scope” section while also building up teachers’ expertise of the specific student diversity in your district?
- What data are you utilizing to ensure that marginalized student and parent voices are incorporated into the data you collect to identify issues of equity and access for professional learning?
- How can you provide spaces within the professional learning during which marginalized students and staff can present their experiences with equity and access on their own terms?
- What feedback data do you plan to collect as a part of ongoing professional learning to ensure that training experiences are not only compliant, but also effective?

² “Affectional or sexual orientation” is used because it comes directly from 6A:7 et seq., and, as a result, it may not align with current, preferred terminology

³ The Comprehensive Equity Plan includes professional learning related to homelessness/housing status as a part of staff development and training requirements related to socioeconomic status



Equity for School and Classroom Practices

Information based on N.J.A.C. 6A:7-1.7 et seq.

District boards of education are required to address the following structural areas of bias in school and classroom practices. These requirements can also be leveraged when considering areas of focus for professional learning.

- Ensuring all students access to all facilities, courses, programs, activities, and services;
- Ensuring all students access to curriculum and instruction that eliminates discrimination by providing equity in educational programs;
- Ensuring all students access to positive interactions with individuals of other races, creeds, colors, national origins, ancestries, ages, marital statuses, affectional or sexual orientations, genders, disabilities, or socioeconomic statuses;
- Ensuring all students have access to adequate and appropriate counseling services; and
- Ensuring all students have access to physical education and athletic programs that are equitable, co-educational, and are free from discrimination.

Guiding Questions for “Equity for School and Classroom Practices”

- What quantitative data can you collect for your district related to structural inequity, prejudice, and bias as it related to access for marginalized students (e.g. collect data related to the percentage of subgroups of students enrolled in gifted and talented courses)?
- What qualitative data can you collect for your district (e.g. athletes, honors students,)?
- What equity-related data is available between schools and districts that can be used to determine opportunities for change?
- How can you use that data to inform the professional learning that you provide?
- How can you ensure that those in control of access in specific areas (e.g. counseling services) receive specific professional learning about ensuring structural equity and access in that area?

