

Summit Hill School District 161

Equity Audit Overview

9.24.2021

We are happy to share additional information pertaining to the District 161 equity study. Please review the following information to learn more about the current equity study.

When did this originate?

The equity audit process was brought forth to the Board of Education at an annual planning session (special meeting) on March 10, 2021.

The Board of Education reviewed new business regarding the equity audit process at a regular meeting on March 17, 2021. A yearlong process was approved.

The Board of Education heard an update on the equity audit at a regular meeting on May 19, 2021.

Is the Illinois State Board of Education requiring this?

The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) recently released a three-year strategic plan identifying goals and priorities for 2020-2023. ISBE states, "Equity underlies every strategy and goal in this strategic plan. Formalizing the role of equity in decision-making and evaluation of success also serves as its own goal. The strategies under this goal seek to operationalize equity in the agency and in each school district so that we truly move the needle toward equitable student outcomes in our state."

To summarize the importance of this goal, ISBE has also identified the following statement on equity, "Illinois has an urgent and collective responsibility to achieve educational equity by ensuring that all policies, programs, and practices affirm the strengths that each and every child brings within their diverse backgrounds and life experiences, and by delivering the comprehensive supports, programs, and educational opportunities they need to succeed."

The strategic plan further identifies the following external goal: An Equity Journey Continuum will be used to publicly indicate where each Illinois school district is on its equity journey. This will be incorporated into each district's public Report Card by the 2022 reporting year.

By end of the 2020-21 school year

An Equity Journey Continuum will be developed for the field and the agency to pilot.

By end of the 2021-22 school year

Districts will pilot and provide feedback with the continuum being finalized at the end of the school year.

By end of the 2022-23 school year

The Equity Journey Continuum will be published on each school district's 2022 Report Card.

What is an equity audit?

An equity audit will provide baseline information about where we currently are and where we need to go in our equity journey, we will conduct an equity audit with an external consulting firm. This is a yearlong process, however our equity work will be ongoing. With the help of a consultant, we will engage the stakeholders of Summit Hill School District 161 in several focus groups. This is a fact-finding process that aids in the development of tangible recommendations to mitigate inequities.

What is a focus group?

Focus groups will be facilitated by our consultant. This will allow stakeholders an opportunity to provide feedback about their experiences with equity in our school(s)/district. The purpose of a focus group is to learn from individual experiences in school so we may celebrate what we are doing well and determine areas where we may wish to grow.

This is not a survey. A series of five to eight questions will be asked and a discussion will take place. The consultant will lead each focus group by asking participants to respond to open-ended questions for approximately one hour. Participation is voluntary and focus group input is confidential. The consultant will scribe responses to capture stakeholder input, but names will not be aligned to statements.

Will students be involved?

Focus groups will take place in 5th-8th grades with a limited number of participants. Two student sessions will take place at Summit Hill Jr. High and two sessions at Walker Intermediate. Students/parents will have to sign-up in order to participate - - this is not a school-wide activity. For the student sessions, a Summit Hill 161 teacher will supervise and monitor the groups.

What questions will be asked?

A series of five to eight questions will be asked and a discussion will take place. In general, the questions will revolve around an individual's perspective about feeling welcome, included, and valued. Participants will respond based upon their interactions within the school and district.

Some of the **student** questions will include: What do you like about your school? What would you change about your school? Do you see yourself reflected in assignments? In what ways have adults asked for your input?

Some of the **family** questions will include: What comes to mind when you hear equity? What do you like about your child's school? What would you change about your child's school? Do you feel your child and family are represented in the curriculum?

Some of the **staff** questions will include: How do you define equity? In what ways has your school engaged in conversations about identity? How have students been affirmed? Are you treated equitably?

What is the goal?

The goal is to ensure we have schools where students feel safe, valued, heard, and challenged.

What is Critical Race Theory (CRT) vs. Culturally Responsive Teaching and Leading (CRTL) Standards?

Critical Race Theory (CRT) is not a curriculum, it is more of a practice. CRT is a complex framework that examines if, and how, systems and policies perpetuate racism.

District 161 is not exploring CRT.

The Culturally Responsive Teaching and Leading (CRTL) Standards have been adopted by Illinois. They require teacher training programs (colleges and universities) to incorporate concepts such as implicit bias, inequity, advocacy, and social-emotional development into educator training coursework.

District 161 values the experience of all of our students and are committed to making learning relevant for our students.

What is the District Equity Leadership Team?

The District Equity Leadership Team (DELT) includes the superintendent, district administration, at least one administrator at each school level in the district, and is open to any staff member. It is recommended to include staff members that work with special populations such as English Learners and students with an IEP.

On August 16, 2021, a DELT meeting was facilitated by the consultant. This was an organizational meeting to determine the logistics of the equity audit – general overview, make-up of focus groups, and determine questions that will be asked. During this initial year, the DELT will formally meet with the consultant to set the parameters for the individual focus groups. The DELT will also be instrumental in future years to interpret the audit information and formulate next steps.

What is the cost and what is included?

The equity audit is a yearlong process and was approved for \$19,800. This is considered the basic package. Additional packages were available to include more focus group sessions and further data collection. The fee will be billed in three installments. Local funds, not grants, will be utilized for payment. This fee will include:

- Organizational meeting with district staff
- 18 focus groups of staff, students, families (parents, guardians, caretakers)
- District quantitative data analysis (not school specific)
- End-of-year Board of Education presentation by auditor (schedule-dependent)
- Comprehensive equity audit report

What units of study are currently mandated by ISBE?

The Illinois State Board of Education maintains a list of Mandated Units of Study for all schools across the state. The last update was published in September of 2020. It is typical to see an annual update reflecting new legislation.

This is a guidance tool to help schools and districts identify the areas of study that are mandated by the Illinois School Code and the Illinois Administrative Code. Statutory and regulatory references are included for all curriculum areas and should be reviewed carefully to ensure that schools are meeting all requirements.

<https://www.isbe.net/Documents/IL-Mandated-Units-of-Study.pdf>