

PHILOSOPHY-GOALS-OBJECTIVES AND COMPREHENSIVE PLANS

GOALS FOR THE DISTRICT

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION IN EDUCATION

The Governing Board of the Corona-Norco Unified School District values the contributions made to our mission and goals by all members of our diverse community of students, staff, parents/guardians, and community groups, and we believe it is a broadly shared responsibility of the school and community members to uphold these guiding principles. We believe that equality of opportunity, equality of access to programs, services, and resources are critical to academic and career achievement of all students and closing the achievement gap between the high-performing and low-performing students.

The Governing Board is committed to providing an equal opportunity for all individuals in education. The objective of the school system is to provide a program free from unlawful discrimination, including harassment (including sexual harassment), intimidation, and bullying targeted at any student by anyone, based on the student's actual or perceived ancestry, age, color, physical or mental disability, medical condition, gender, gender identity, gender expression, nationality, national origin, immigration status, race or ethnicity, ethnic group identification, religion, sex, sexual orientation, marital or parental status, pregnancy, or genetic information, or association with a person or group with one or more of these actual or perceived characteristics, to have an equal opportunity to achieve the maximum development of their individual potential. It is challenging to talk about equality along these categories of difference because groups are either empowered or disadvantaged due to these differences in backgrounds. If not properly addressed, inequality becomes the predictable outcome.

Equity

As the inequality prevails and turns into inequities in school practices, programs, and classroom norms, it is imperative that the Board recognizes, employs, and institutionalizes the role of EQUITY in valuing the backgrounds of all students especially those who have been traditionally underserved or marginalized. It is also important to realize the roles of schools not just as avenues for teaching and implementing inclusive practices but as sites for administrators, teachers, parents, and school community to organize themselves in order to engage in democratic civic life. This inclusive view of education implies the need to challenge any form of inequality, diminish inequitable practices, and promote community participation. Thus, the Board recognizes that certain groups in our society may have not demonstrated academic and career success because of systemic inequities and lack of equitable attention and recognition of their curricular and instructional needs. It is paramount to the Board that inequality, inequity, and student disengagement are factored in a comprehensive equity plan to address the needs of all learners.

The Board is also cognizant that inequalities are real and aims to provide proactive practices and establish an open mindset within our district culture to address them. In recognizing these inequalities, the Board aims to provide equity to elicit and enhance student engagement and foster encouragement, commitment, empathy, and hope for all district employees.

Inclusion

The Governing Board is committed to inclusive education, which is about developing and designing schools, classrooms, programs, and activities so that all students learn and participate together. Inclusive schools are characterized by a sense of community, high standards, collaboration, cooperation and flexible staff roles and responsibilities. Legal support for inclusion is a cornerstone of the reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), which provides that children with disabilities are entitled to receive special education services and that children are placed, to the maximum extent appropriate, in the least restrictive environment (LRE), in order for them to receive a free appropriate public education (FAPE).

The Board acknowledges there is a specific need to address how we define and implement educational opportunities for students with disabilities. The culture of CNUSD is such that safety, sense of belonging, and social acceptance are necessary components for students to thrive in their educational environment. It is with this understanding that we adopt a proactive approach to communicating and implementing inclusive practices. The impact of having a disability is not exclusive to any racial, ethnic, and socio-economic background. As such, we acknowledge a policy that embraces inclusive practices, and provides opportunities to integrate all students into the least restrictive environment to the maximum extent appropriate. The Board promotes an asset-thinking mindset towards our uniquely abled students. We embrace inclusive teaching and learning practices as beneficial for all students consistent with educational research demonstrating increased academic achievement and improved student behavior outcomes.

Diversity

The Governing Board believes that the diversity that exists among the district's community of students, staff, parents/guardians, and community members is integral to the district's vision, mission, and goals. Addressing the needs of the most marginalized learners requires recognition of the inherent value of diversity and acknowledgement that educational excellence requires a commitment to equity in the opportunities provided to students and the resulting outcomes.

The Board further recognizes that any form of inequities leads to educational, social, and career outcomes that do not accurately reflect the abilities, experiences, and contributions of students and employees. Such inequitable treatment limits future success and prevents individuals from making a full contribution to society.

Furthermore, the Board recognizes that addressing the needs of the most marginalized students requires recognition of the inherent value of diversity and inclusion for all students.

These benefits are well documented in educational research.

Thus, the Board believes that a policy on equity embraces the humanization of all students, teachers, administrators, staff, and families regardless of their categories of differences. This policy on equity is also influenced by our commitment to social justice which fosters respect for human rights, equality, fairness, care, access to quality education, and equitable student engagement.

The Board is therefore committed to ensuring that equity and inclusion are essential principles of our school system and are integrated into all policies, programs, operations, and practices. The Board shall make decisions with an awareness of impediments to learning faced by students of color and/or diverse cultural, linguistic, or socio-economic backgrounds. To ensure that equity is the intentional result of district decisions, the Board shall consider whether its decisions address the needs of students from racial, ethnic, and indigent communities and remedy the inequities that such communities experienced in the context of a history of exclusion, discrimination, and segregation. Board decisions shall not rely on biased or stereotypical assumptions about any particular group of students.

Furthermore, the Board believes in equal outcomes for ALL students and equal opportunities for ALL employees.

The Board and the Superintendent or designee shall develop and implement policies and strategies to promote equity in district programs and activities, through measures such as the following:

1. The Board will ensure that all policies and procedures:
 - a. Prohibit and correct intentional discrimination in any district program or activity on the basis of race, gender, color, ethnicity or national origin
 - b. Promote inclusion for all students in district schools
 - c. Support differentiated instruction benefiting all learners
 - d. Inspire a collaborative team model and encourages innovative and creative instructional strategies
 - e. Integrates models of lesson design that are inclusive of all learners
 - f. Foster student integration and diversity
 - g. Ensure equal educational opportunity and access for all students
2. The curriculum in our schools accurately reflects our demographics and opportunities are provided for student voices to be shared. A student whose history and heritage are valued and celebrated will learn better and be more successful than if that student is forced to overcome a cultural barrier.
3. Stakeholders are provided opportunities to challenge practices that deny equitable access to services and instruction in the district without fear of retribution.

4. All students are provided with equitable opportunities to be successful in the Corona-Norco Unified School District (CNUSD); institutional barriers to such success are identified and removed; and all learners are provided with support and rewards to develop abilities and achieve aspirations.
5. Promote the employment and retention of a highly qualified diverse staff that reflects the diverse community of CNUSD. Hiring and promotion practices are nondiscriminatory; all employees have equal opportunities for advancement; employee skills and knowledge are valued; and have equitable access to available support for professional development needs.
6. Equity focused professional development of all staff will encompass research-based methodologies to improve the quality of leadership, support and instruction for all students.
7. The contributions of our diverse community of parents/guardians and stakeholders to our schools are valued and encouraged; and they are provided with equitable opportunities for working with staff and with each other for the benefit of all students.
8. Welcome and empower students and families, including underrepresented families (including those whose first language may not be English) as essential partners in their student's education, school planning, and District decision-making.
9. The District shall create welcoming environments that reflect and support diversity of the student population and community. In addition, the District will include other partners who have demonstrated culturally-specific expertise, including government agencies, non-profit organizations, businesses, and the community in general, in meeting our educational outcomes.
10. Students, employees, parents/guardians and community partners are provided with fair and effective processes and procedures for resolving concerns and complaints that may arise from experiences of unfair or inequitable treatment within the school system. This means differentiating resource allocation, within budgetary limitations, to meet the needs of students who need more supports and opportunities to succeed academically.
11. Financial and human resources are provided to support the work of staff, students, parents/guardians and community groups in promoting equity and inclusion in the school system.
12. Procedures are aligned to the district's long-term plan for implementing, reviewing, assessing and developing policies, programs, operations and practices that promote equity in the district and for making changes where necessary.

Definition of Key Terms:

Categories of Difference: Multicultural characteristics that may predict the inevitability of inequality in schools brought about by the existing categories of difference in society that are reflected in the classrooms such as race, ethnicity, national origin, language, social class, religion, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, ability and disability conditions, and citizenship status.

Diversity: Diversity refers to the presence of a wide range of characteristics, backgrounds, and perspectives among students, educators, and staff. This includes differences in race, ethnicity, gender, age, socioeconomic status, abilities, sexual orientation, and more. It is the recognition and celebration of these differences, fostering an inclusive environment that promotes equal opportunities for all individuals to learn and grow.

Equity: Providing the program or instructional needs of students, when they need them. In embracing equity, it is vital to know the students well, how they learn, and what motivates and facilitates their engagement in a school's academic and other non-academic activities. Its major functions are to attend to the needs of all students including the traditionally underserved populations, provide a fair and open access to all, and recognize and value differences and open doors of access and opportunity for everyone by redistributing resources and services.

Inclusion: In a special education setting, inclusion refers to the practice of integrating students with disabilities into general education classrooms and activities to the greatest extent appropriate. It promotes an environment where all students, regardless of their abilities or disabilities, can learn together, interact, and participate with an opportunity for the same educational outcomes.

Social Acceptance: Refers to the willingness of individuals or groups to embrace and include others within a social or learning environment. It entails recognizing and respecting differences, backgrounds and perspectives of all individuals, fostering an inclusive and supportive atmosphere.

Social Justice: The notion of respecting and valuing differences in race, cultural beliefs, social norms, intellectual flexibility, and personal perspectives, orientations, and dispositions among students including its emphasis on equity, ethical values, justice, care, and respect. It is also a perspective based on principles that include understanding oneself in relation to other individual or group of individuals, appreciating diversity and promoting equity, recognizing inequities and how to diminish them, equitable participation and allocation of resources, creating a caring and culturally responsive learning environment, working together as a learning community, engagement in classroom inquiry, and critical thinking and reflection.

Student Engagement: Is demonstrated through a variety of activities and may be described as behavioral which shows efforts, cognitive which shows deliberate use of strategy, emotional which shows expression of interest and affection, and agentic which shows attempts to contribute to learning activities. Research literature identifies different types of student engagement: Academic engagement, social engagement, cognitive engagement, affective engagement, and agentic engagement.

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Definitions

Free and appropriate public education (FAPE) means that special education and related services that are provided at public expense, under public supervision and direction, and without charge; meet the standards of the California Department of Education, including the requirements of 34 CFR 300.1-300.818 include appropriate preschool, elementary school, or secondary school education for individuals between the ages of 3 and 21; and are provided in conformity with an individualized education program (IEP) that meets the requirements of 34 CFR 300.320-300.324. (Education Code 56040; 34 CFR 300.17, 300.101, 300.104)

Least restrictive environment (LRE) means that, to the maximum extent appropriate, students with disabilities, including individuals in public or private institutions or other care facilities, be educated with individuals who are nondisabled, including the provision of nonacademic and extracurricular services and activities. Special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of students with disabilities from the regular educational environment occurs only if the nature or severity of the disability is such that education in the regular classes with the use of supplementary aides and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily. (Education Code 56040.1: 34 CFR 300.107, 300.114, 300.117)

Inclusion refers to supporting students with disabilities through individualized supports, so they are able to access the grade level standards in the Least Restrictive Environment. Inclusion emphasizes creating an environment where students with disabilities are valued, participate meaningfully in all aspects of school life, and are provided with appropriate accommodations and modifications to help them succeed academically, socially, and emotionally.

Elements of Inclusive Education

Every child should have access to a high-quality education provided in a safe, supportive, and predictable learning environment free from discrimination. The district will cultivate healthy, trusting relationships among students and staff, promoting social acceptance and a sense of belonging for every individual. Through these safe efforts, we strive to create an environment where every student is empowered to succeed academically and personally. The goal is to foster a sense of belonging, respect, and social acceptance among all students, promoting a culture of

diversity and acceptance.

Multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS)

A culturally and linguistically responsive multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS) is a comprehensive prevention framework designed to improve developmental, social, emotional, academic, and behavioral outcomes using a continuum of evidence-based strategies and

supports. Within a MTSS framework, educators implement:

- Universal strategies and supports designed for all children,
- Targeted strategies and supports for children with additional needs, and
- Intensive strategies and supports to meet the specific needs of individual children.

(<https://sites.ed.gov/idea/idea-files/guide-positive-proactive-approaches-to-supporting-children-with-disabilities/>)

Through our CNUSD Strategic Plan, we are committed to a consistent student experience where all students are supported through the multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS) with consistent behavioral expectations and consistent and appropriate interventions for students who need additional support.

We will provide universal professional development to ensure teachers and staff are equipped to work with all students, potentially including education on:

- MTSS roles and responsibilities
- Trauma-informed education
- Social and emotional wellness
- Universal Design for Learning
- Restorative Practices

Inclusive practices

Inclusive practices refer to actions, policies, and behaviors that create environments where everyone feels valued, respected, and supported, regardless of their differences. Inclusive practices involve embracing diversity, promoting equity, and actively working to remove barriers to participation and inclusion. Inclusive practices foster a sense of belonging and enable individuals from diverse backgrounds to thrive and succeed together.

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is a framework to guide the design of learning environments that are accessible and challenging for all. UDL challenges educators to consider how to intentionally design instruction and assessment to promote multiple means of engagement, representation, and action/expression. UDL is rooted in a strengths-based approach to learning for all children, and research has demonstrated that UDL can increase developmental

outcomes and academic achievement.

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) is a MTSS framework focused on improving behavior by integrating data, systems, and evidence-based practices within three tiers of support: universal, targeted, and individual. These tiers are fluid, and the amount of support and interventions should be differentiated over time and across settings based on the child's needs. Using this tiered system, all children would benefit from universal supports and services, while smaller groups that need more targeted and intensive supports and services would receive them.

Restorative practices focus on developing caring connections, listening to and valuing others' opinions, promoting accountability, repairing harm, and supporting reintegration back into the educational environment. Implementing restorative practices as a targeted support could include using restorative group conferencing, restorative circles, and conversations among students to facilitate healing. Research suggests that combining restorative practices with schoolwide positive behavioral supports reduces disciplinary referrals and disparities in the use of discipline. <https://sites.ed.gov/idea/idea-files/guide-positive-proactive-approaches-to-supporting-children-with-disabilities/>

Inclusive education encompasses a multi-tiered system of support paired with evidence-based inclusive practices to support all students in receiving instruction based on their academic, social, and emotional needs.