

What does the district mean by the term “educational equity”?

The Weston Public Schools define educational equity as providing all students the high quality instruction and support they need to reach and exceed high levels of achievement, and to fulfill their potential. Our equity work will raise the bar for everyone, but will not diminish expectations for anyone. Achieving the goal of educational equity for all students means that we:

- provide every student with access to high quality curriculum, support, and other educational resources.
- promote educational equity as a priority in professional development and educator evaluation.
- create schools with a welcoming and inclusive culture and environment.
- provide multiple pathways to success in order to meet the needs of the diverse student body and actively encourage, support and expect high academic achievement for each student.

What is the purpose of the equity audit?

The overall purpose of the equity audit is to partner with students, families, and employees to gather data and generate ideas on how our schools can best serve students of all backgrounds.

How is Weston’s equity audit funded?

The district’s equity audit is funded through a federal grant. None of the funding is provided through local tax dollars.

Where did the idea for an equity audit come from?

In recent years public schools in Massachusetts have received clear directives from the U.S. Department of Education and the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to address equity in our schools. Toward that end, in 2020 the district established a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Committee consisting of students, families, community members, employees and a School Committee representative. The DEI committee went on to identify the value that other school districts locally and nationally have derived from equity audits, including Acton-Boxborough, Belmont, Dover-Sherborn, Needham, Sudbury, and others.

In addition to the equity-related directives from the U.S. DOE and Mass. DESE, why is the district conducting an equity audit?

While the Weston Public Schools maintain extremely high levels of student performance, which result in rankings placing us among the top districts in the state, some students continue to struggle. It is our responsibility to continually work to close those achievement gaps while holding all students to high expectations of performance.

Who is involved in our district’s equity audit?

The equity audit process is led by members of the district’s administrative team and members of the district’s DEI Committee. This group is supported by consultants from [The Leadership Academy](#). Community members will be involved in the process via focus groups and surveys.

Who is The Leadership Academy?

The Leadership Academy (TLA) is a nationally recognized nonprofit organization whose mission is to build the capacity of educational leaders to deliver educational equity. Originally launched to develop outstanding school leaders for the New York City Department of Education's low-performing schools, TLA prepared more than 550 aspiring principals for the NYC system over 14 years, the vast majority of whom entered the principalship. Since then, TLA has worked with educators and school systems across the country, providing consulting and training services, and other tools and services. TLA has conducted equity audits with many districts.

How and why was The Leadership Academy selected?

After an extensive selection process in early 2022, district leaders selected [The Leadership Academy](#) as the consultancy with which we will conduct our audit. One reason is their emphasis on deep engagement with the voices of students, families, and staff. Another reason is the proven efficacy of their process, which begins with data collection, and is followed by a collaborative root-cause analysis phase.

How will our district's equity audit be conducted?

Our equity audit will be conducted in four phases.

- In phase one, the district's DEI committee has worked with The Leadership Academy to identify and plan out the audit's focus areas, work tasks, timelines and responsibilities.
- In phase two, the DEI committee and The Leadership Academy will collect and analyze a variety of information. The information will consist of data and artifacts maintained by the district, several focus groups, and online surveys to capture others' perspectives.
- In phase three, the DEI committee and The Leadership Academy will develop a final report and action plan. The creation of the report and action plan will build on the key findings from the data analysis conducted in phase two.
- In phase four, The Leadership Academy will meet with district leaders to review progress against the action plan and address obstacles preventing progress.

What will our district's equity audit focus on?

Our equity audit will focus on two key areas: instruction and community engagement. In exploring the district's *instruction*, the audit will consider, among other things, the extent to which:

- students experience teachers' high expectations for grade-level work and beyond, as well as the individualized support and feedback needed to meet those expectations.
- a variety of media and online platforms are leveraged to support student learning.
- targets are set that aim to narrow gaps for specific students and increase achievement for all children.
- targeted, multi-tiered systems of support to provide equitable and universal access to culturally responsive learning opportunities that support the achievement of rigorous college- and career ready academic standards for all students.
- students are engaged in project-based learning that centers on solving community problems of interest to students.

And in exploring district's *community engagement*, the audit will consider, among other things, the extent to which:

- System-level events, including athletics, the arts, public service, PTO, are scheduled to provide opportunities for families with varied work and home commitments to attend and participate.
- Events are designed to offer parents opportunities to see what their children are learning
- School leaders are given feedback on ways they can more effectively engage family members
- School leaders and teachers are given training to help family members support children's learning at home.
- The code of student conduct is collaboratively created and processes are in place to ensure it is applied fairly and equitably to all students.

Tell me more about the focus groups.

A key element of the equity audit process consists of inviting community members to join in a series of focus groups, 10-12 people per session, grouped as Middle School and High School students, and as families and employees. Spots in these sessions and the number of sessions are limited, and the opportunity to participate will be made available to all families and employees in coming weeks.

Given space in the focus groups is limited, how can I participate if I'm unable to participate in a focus group?

Any parents, employees, or grades 6 through 12 students who are not able to participate in a focus group are welcome to respond to an anonymous online survey to be sent out later this month containing the same questions from the focus groups.

Who can I talk to if I have additional questions?

To better understand our equity priorities, please feel free to review the [state-level equity frameworks](#), as well as our [district's strategic plan](#). If you have remaining questions about the Equity Audit process, please contact Director of Equity and Professional Learning [Ms. Amy Kelly](#), or superintendent@weston.org for more info.