WORKBOOK:
LEADING FOR EDUCATIONAL EQUITY THROUGH SCHOOL BOARD GOVERNANCE

Getting Your Board Ready for Analysis, Action & Accomplishment

MABE
MARYLAND ASSOCIATION OF BOARDS OF EDUCATION

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We've noticed over recent months how common it is for people to confuse the notion of "equality" with "equity." It's understandable when you step back to think about it.

During our time working with the MABE Educational Equity Committee, for instance, we've seen that while some board members have long viewed equity for students as a core school board concern, for others, the concept of equity – and sometimes even the word itself – still may be fairly new. It can be easy to confuse the two terms, use them interchangeably, or view them as somehow being inconsistent with one another.

We go into further detail in this workbook on what we see the definition of educational equity being, but in short: while "equality" refers to each student being given the exact same resources, "equity" begins with the recognition that each student has differing – sometimes enormously differing – educational needs that will require allocation of additional resources to provide equality of educational opportunity for each student.

A growing body of research indicates that educational equity strengthens not only each student in his or her learning, but also by extension strengthens their school and community, in that incorporating educational equity makes each student that much more likely to thrive and succeed. Indeed, building a focus on educational equity isn't just the right thing to do; from a pragmatic perspective, it’s also a shifted way of thinking about each student’s education that in the end benefits us all by helping ensure more young people grow into empowered, productive members of their communities.

We see this moment in time, and our related equity workbook presented here, as representing a prime opportunity to help boards of education grasp the critical importance and understanding of what educational equity is, how it must be built into school board governance throughout Maryland, and how all of us, not just each student, can reap profound rewards as a result.

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MABE Educational Equity Committee Charge Statement

GOALS:

· To provide a forum for local boards of education to participate in examination and discussion of the concept and issue of “equity” as it relates to student opportunity, learning and instruction in Maryland public schools, as well as to encourage shared learning on equity.

· To make recommendations for a shared definition of “equity” and its relationship to the work of boards of education in terms of MABE’s work and the local efforts of boards of education.

PRODUCT/DESIRED RESULTS:

· To develop a core value around a shared understanding and vision of equity as it relates to the work of boards of education.

· To produce guiding principles related to equity that will inform MABE programming and professional development opportunities.

· To develop or identify equity policy elements and strategies on equity that would serve as a resource for member boards in crafting local policy.
INTRODUCTION

This Leading for Educational Equity Through School Board Governance Workbook is designed to assist a Maryland local board of education in formulating a plan to exercise their governance role in the pursuit of educational equity for each of their students. It is recommended that a board undertake this process with help from an experienced facilitator.

A quick reminder of the fundamental nature of a board’s governance role will hopefully be helpful at this point. Boards do not have the same role in this process as the Superintendent/CEO of the school system, who is charged with the "day-in, day-out" operations of the entire school system. The simplest and best way to keep the Board’s proper governance role in mind is to focus solely on the “what” and the “why,” while leaving the “how” to school system staff.

Maryland law makes a board responsible for the creation of educational policies designed to provide a quality and equal education opportunity for all children. Boards are also directed to seek ways to promote the interests of the schools under their jurisdiction.

The Maryland State Board of Education has established educational equity as a priority for all school systems in the State and adopted COMAR 13A.01.06 Educational Equity regulations providing:

.01 Purpose*. The purpose of this chapter is to establish as a matter of policy and priority that:

A. Each Maryland public school will provide every student equitable access to the educational rigor, resources, and supports that are designed to maximize the student’s academic success and social/emotional well-being;

B. Each local school system’s procedures and practices provide for educational equity and ensure that there are no obstacles to accessing educational opportunities for any student; and

C. Achievement will improve for all Maryland students and achievement gaps will be eliminated.

The MABE Educational Equity Committee believes the pursuit of educational equity is a journey, not a destination, and wishes you a successful and rewarding journey.

*Full text is available in Appendix A.
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