

**Upper Darby School District  
Comprehensive Equity Plan Proposal  
2017-2018**

## **Introduction**

In 2017, Superintendent Daniel Nerelli announced his quest to challenge our assumptions about children's potential and the status quo and increase access, opportunity, inclusion and support for our most challenged learners.

The UDSD Comprehensive Equity Leadership Committee was established with the purpose of furthering the district's work in ensuring equitable opportunities and access for all students. Furthermore, developing a five-year plan that will provide a clear vision to address district goals.

The Comprehensive Equity Committee, which includes parents, teachers, administrators, and representation from the School Board of Directors came together with a shared commitment and spirit of collaboration in creating a more excellent and equitable outcome for students. To that end, the Equity Leadership Committee met regularly to engage in self-reflection, examine current practices and policies through an equity lens, and provide recommendations for eliminating gaps in opportunity and access due to race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, geography and gender. The committee conducted a cultural audit which included staff surveys, student focus groups, as well as a review of the comprehensive plan and district policies to gauge the baseline state of cultural competency in our district. John Council, Assistant Superintendent of Personnel facilitated the committee meetings. Additionally, three specialists, Andrea Lawful-Trainer (Diversity Training Consultant), Barbara Moore-Williams (BMW & Associates), and Bob Jarvis (Delaware Valley Consortium for Equity and Excellence), supported the committee's work.

UDSD Comprehensive Equity Leadership Committee will recommend specific action steps to the Superintendent on April 26, 2018. The proposed five-year plan will be presented to the Board on May 22, 2018 for implementation in the 2018-2023 school year.

The planning process addresses four action areas:

- \*Action Area One: Constructing and enacting an equity vision
- \*Action Area Two: Engaging in self-reflection and growth
- \*Action Area Three: Collaborating with families and communities.
- \*Action Area Four: Hiring and Placing Personnel

## **Members of the Comprehensive Equity Leadership Committee**

Dr. John Council	Assistant Superintendent of Personnel
Gina Curry	School Board Member
Dr. Matthew Alloway	Assistant Principal of Upper Darby High School
Leah Dawes	Parent of Upper Darby School District Student
Melissa Figueroa-Douglas	Assistant Principal of Beverly Hills Middle School
Dr. Nyshawana Francis-Thompson	Supervisor of Special Education – District Level
Andrea Gallo	Parent of Upper Darby School District Student
Vincent Gordon	Parent and Former School Board Member
Dennis Kearney	Assistant Principal of Beverly Hills Middle School
Carrie Chaitt	Instructional Coach
Frank Nunan	Upper Darby High School Athletic Director
Bill Rogers	Lead Teacher of Primos Elementary
Beth Terry	Special Education Teacher at Beverly Hills
Dina Williams	Principal of the UDSD Kindergarten Center
Aaronda Beauford	Principal of Stonehurst Elementary School
Cynthia Milord	Teacher at Highland Park Elementary School
Rebecca Kellich	Practicum Student

## **The Upper Darby School District Mission Statement**

To provide a comprehensive and challenging educational program which encourages all learners in a safe environment to respect others, value education, and appreciate and contribute to their community as confident, independent thinkers.

## **Overarching Equity Goal**

To ensure that every student, regardless of background, is exposed to relevant and engaging learning experiences and curriculum. Furthermore, to increase access, opportunity, inclusion and support for all learners.

## **The Upper Darby School District Belief Statements**

- All individuals are capable of learning.
- Individuals learn in different ways and at different rates.
- Individuals have the right to be treated with respect and dignity.
- Students are unique individuals with varied talents and skills.
- Successful learning experiences build self-esteem.
- Learning is most effective in a caring environment where high standards of social interaction are maintained.
- Education should encourage individuals to acquire knowledge and attitudes necessary to live in a changing global society.
- Critical thinking, problem solving and decision-making are essential life skills.
- Updates in technology necessitate continuous personal and organizational adjustment.
- Professional development of all staff is vital to meet the changing needs of students and to reflect current best practices.
- The educational program must meet the needs of all learners and be responsive to the needs and resources of the community.
- Cultural and ethnic diversity is a valued strength of our community.
- Society benefits when individual rights are balanced with the needs of the group as a whole.
- Quality public education directly benefits the entire community.
- Lifelong learning is essential for all individuals.
- Education is the responsibility of the entire community, the school, the family, and, most importantly, the individual.

## **Background: Research Finding and Elements of Equity**

The Upper Darby School District recognizes research findings that identify key elements in districts and schools that enhance educational equity and school reform.

The Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA, 2006) South Central Collaborative for Equity, identified six goals for educational equity and school reform.

1. Comparably High Achievement and other Student Outcomes  
As data on academic achievement and other students outcomes are disaggregated and analyzed, one sees high comparable performance for all identifiable groups of learners, and achievement/performance gaps are virtually non-existent.
2. Equitable Access and Inclusion  
The unobstructed entrance and involvement in, and full participation of learners in excellent community schools, programs, and activities within those schools.
3. Equitable Treatment  
The evidence of patterns of interaction among individuals that is free from threat, humiliation, danger and disregard that also exists within a supportive, quality environment characterized by genuine acceptance, valuing, respect, support, safety and security, so that students, parents, community and staff feel challenged to risk becoming invested in the pursuits of learning and excellence.
4. Equitable Opportunity to Learn  
The creation of challenging learning opportunities such that every child, regardless of characteristics and educational needs, is given the requisite pedagogical, social emotional and psychological and materials supports to achieve the high academic standards of excellence that are established.
5. Equitable Resource Distribution  
The assignment of funds, staff and other resources for equity and excellence, including: qualified staff equitably and appropriately assigned: appropriate facilities and other environmental learning spaces; quality instructional technology and infrastructure; appropriate instructional materials and equipment, and all other instructional supports for learning that are also distributed in the manner required to allow all diverse learners to achieve high academic standards.
6. School Accountability  
The assurance that all education stakeholders accept responsibility and hold themselves and each other accountable and responsible for every learner having full access to quality education, qualified teachers, challenging curriculum, full opportunity to learn, and appropriate support for learning so that they can achieve at excellent levels in literacy and core content areas.

The LEAD Tool, are practices used to assess a school's climate, instructional practices, and policies through the lens of 10 equitable practices.

1. Engaging in self-reflection and growth
2. Constructing and enacting an equity vision
3. Developing organizational leadership for equity
4. Modeling ethical and equitable behavior
5. Allocating resources
6. Fostering an equitable school culture
7. Collaborating with families and communities
8. Influencing the sociopolitical context
9. Hiring and placing personnel
10. Supervising for improvement of equitable instruction

## **Upper Darby School District Equity Plan**

The Upper Darby School District proposes the following Equity Action Plan as a result of our findings and collaborative work. After review by our Equity Leadership Committee, the Equity Action Plan was developed based on the Intercultural Development Research Association, The Leadership for Equity Assessment & Development (LEAD) Tool, and Hanover Research. This plan will be proposed to the School Board of Directors for further discussion.

### **Definitions of terms**

For the purpose of this plan, the following terms shall have these specific meanings:

1. Educational Equity: the educational policies, practices, and programs necessary to
  - a. Eliminate educational barriers based on gender, race/ethnicity, national origin, color, disability, age, or other protected group status; and
  - b. Provide equal educational opportunities and ensure historically underserved or underrepresented populations meet the same rigorous standards for academic performance expected of all children and youth.
2. BELT: In each school the principal will establish a Building Equity Leadership Team who has the responsibility to meet the goals of the district equity plan. (See objective 1a.)
3. Inclusion: The unobstructed entrance and involvement in, and full participation of learners in programs, advanced level courses, career and college counseling services and activities within the schools.
4. Diversity: A mixture of individuals sharing differing beliefs, backgrounds, and experiences to form awareness and understanding of each other.

**Action Area One: Constructing and enacting an equity vision**

Objectives:

- 1a. The UDSD will have personnel in place with the shared responsibility for support and evaluation of district equity goals.
- 1b. The UDSD will have a system for monitoring, accountability and follow up measures established to address the achievement gap that exists among diverse learner populations.
- 1c. The UDSD will establish systems for monitoring, accountability and follow up measures to address discrimination that impedes or denies access or full inclusion and success.
- 1d. The UDSD will have a Board Policy designed to to fully embrace the constructing and enacting of a Comprehensive Equity Plan.

Objective	Action Steps
<p>1a. The UDSD will have staffing in place with the shared responsibility for support and evaluation of district equity goals.</p>	<p>1. Hire a District Equity Officer. The summary of the position is described below. A detailed Job Description will be provided from the Human Resources Department. The District Equity Officer will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lead the development and implementation of proactive diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives, which will support the District’s Equity Plan.</li> <li>• Support and monitor the fair and consistent application and interpretation of District policies and/or State, Federal, and local regulations.</li> <li>• Engage classified, certified, administrators, staff, families and students to build a welcoming and inclusive culture.</li> <li>• Design and implement professional development initiatives on cultural competency, gender differences, disability, sexual harassment, and other topics designed to increase awareness and support of equity and inclusion values, and maintaining compliance with applicable laws.</li> </ul> <p>2. Create and maintain a school-wide Building Equity Team in each school. The principal develops a Building Equity Leadership Team (BELT) per school. The purpose of the team is to recognize and welcome the bounty of cultures that are present in their diverse classrooms, make efforts to</p>



<p>1a. continued</p>	<p>embrace multicultural teaching using culturally responsive instruction. Through the BELT the team’s desire is to recognize, honor and celebrate the diversity of the school’s community population and to promote appreciation, acceptance and respect for cultural differences and similarities. It is also the aim of the team to consider the cultural values embedded in lessons which might not be understood or shared by students and staff of other cultures, and whether these cultural references might be meaningless or confusing for students or staff.</p> <p>3. Create a Building Liaison position in each school. The principal appoints a teacher who serves on the BELT as the school’s Teacher Cultural Liaison to serve for a period of one (1) school year. The liaison would be responsible for providing culturally diverse programming and community outreach event planning. The liaison would also meet quarterly with the district’s Building Equity Leadership Team.</p> <p>4. Create a district-wide Equity Data Team. This data team will ensure high comparable performance for all identifiable groups of learners by monitoring and reviewing academic achievement data and other student outcomes. The District-wide Equity Data Team will be comprised of the Building Liaison from each school.</p>
<p>1b. The UDSD will have a system for monitoring, accountability and follow up measures established to address the achievement gap that exists among diverse learner populations.</p>	<p>The District Equity Officer with the support of the Office of Curriculum and Instruction will develop a plan based on academic achievement data and other student outcomes to ensure that there are comparably high achievement and social outcomes for all learners. The plan will have clear and measurable accountability standards and procedures that can be assessed and reported to the public.</p>

<p>1c. The UDSD will establish systems for monitoring, accountability and follow up measures to address discrimination that impedes or denies access or full inclusion and success.</p>	<p>The District Equity Officer with the support of the Director of Pupil Services will create and implement a plan to ensure the unobstructed entrance and involvement in, and full participation of learners in programs, advanced level courses, career and college counseling services and activities within the schools. The plan will have clear and measurable accountability standards and procedures that can be assessed and reported to the public.</p>
<p>1d. The UDSD will have a Board Policy designed to to fully embrace the constructing and enacting of a Comprehensive Equity Plan.</p>	<p>The Board of School Directors will adopt a written equity policy to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Maintain an Equity Officer</li> <li>● Authorize the District-wide Equity Data Team to develop a Needs Assessment and implement a Comprehensive Equity Plan, over a five-year period of time, and submit an annual Statement of Assurance of its implementation and progress.</li> <li>● Adopt the Comprehensive Equity Plan by board resolution, and facilitate and support implementation of the Comprehensive Equity Plan.</li> </ul>

**Action Area Two: Engaging in self-reflection and growth**

Objectives:

2a. The UDSD will provide equity-focused leadership to district and school planning efforts.

2b. The UDSD will incorporate equity-focused strategies into the Teacher/Staff professional development.

2c. The UDSD will integrate new staff into equity and anti-bias teacher practices.

Objective	Action Steps
<p>2a. The UDSD will provide equity-focused leadership to district and school planning efforts.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The Equity Plan will be incorporated into the District Improvement Plan</li> <li>2. The Equity Plan will be incorporated into the School Improvement Plans</li> <li>3. The Equity Plan will be incorporated into the components of the district Title 1 Plan annually then submitted to PDE.</li> <li>4. The Equity Plan will be incorporated into the UD Administrator Goals, discussed during goal setting meetings, and evaluated during mid-year and end of year evaluations.</li> </ol>
<p>2b. The UDSD will incorporate equity-focused strategies into the Teacher/Staff professional development.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Principals and Instructional Coaches, along with the BELT, will incorporate professional development instructional strategies which provide equitable outcomes for all learners into existing teacher/staff professional development.</li> <li>2. Teacher/staff professional development will address how to create a culturally inclusive classroom environment.</li> <li>3. Teacher professional development will provide inquiry-based opportunity for building capacity to work with diverse student populations.</li> <li>4. Teacher/staff professional development will address the impact of holding high expectations for all students.</li> </ol>
<p>2c. The UDSD will integrate new staff into equity and anti-bias teacher practices.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. New Teacher Induction, New Teacher Orientation, and Building Support training for new teachers will acclimate new staff to the District’s Equity Plan and ongoing equity practices.</li> </ol>

**Action Area Three: Collaborating with families and communities.**

Objectives:

3a. The UDSD will establish partnerships with community organizations to address the needs of students.

3b. The UDSD will use appropriate communication to share ways families and community partners can support the school’s agenda at home or outside the classroom.

3c. The UDSD families will be informed of important school policies and student expectations.

3d. The UDSD will provide opportunities for parents to improve their parenting skills and better support learning at home.

Objective	Action Steps
<p>3a. The UDSD will establish partnerships with community organizations to address the needs of students.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The District Equity Officer will actively pursue new opportunities for community partnerships.</li> <li>2. The District Equity Team will organize an updated list of Community Partners that help to address the needs of students.</li> <li>3. The Building Equity Liaison will update the District Equity Team with new or revisions to partnerships as reported through the BELT.</li> <li>4. The District Equity Officer will work with the Manager of Media Services to publish a list of community partners on the district website.</li> </ol>
<p>3b. The UDSD will use appropriate communication to share ways families and community partners can support the school’s agenda at home or outside the classroom.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The Equity Officer will establish a system to advertise the current district website translation tools to all school stakeholders.</li> <li>2. The Equity Officer will establish a system to inform school administrators of the translation tools available through Parentlink.</li> <li>3. The Equity Officer will research and recommend to the superintendent available translation programs and procedures for written translation requests.</li> </ol>

<p>3c. The UDSD families will be informed of important policies and student expectations.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The District Equity Team will review and identify policies that address all forms of prejudice and discrimination, in addition to policies that support community and family engagement.</li> <li>2. The Building Equity Liaison will communicate relevant policies to each BELT.</li> <li>3. Schools will utilize School-based family events (Home and School meetings, Back to School Night, etc) as opportunities to inform parents of policies and student expectations.</li> </ol>
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<p>3d. The UDSD will provide opportunities to engage families in parenting skills and supports for learning at home.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The District Equity Officer will communicate with community partners to organize school workshops/events that will engage families in parenting skills and supports for learning at home.</li> <li>2. The District Equity Officer will communicate events through the Manager of Media Services and building communication avenues (Parentlink, Wednesday folders).</li> </ol>
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### Action Area Four: Hiring and Placing Personnel

Objectives:

4a. The UDSD will prioritize equity-related understanding, commitment, or skills in hiring practices and actively recruits and retains diverse personnel.

4b. The UDSD administrators will collaborate with teachers, staff, students, family, and community members in ongoing processes for recruiting, hiring, retaining, and advancing diverse staff as well as educators with strong equity commitments, understanding, and skills.

4c. The UDSD will create a pipeline for sustainable recruitment, hiring, and promotion of educators with strong equity commitments, understanding, and skills.

Objective	Action Steps
<p>4a. The UDSD will prioritize equity-related understanding, commitment, or skills in hiring practices and actively recruit and retains diverse personnel.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The District Equity Officer working with the Human Resources Department will review the District Recruitment Plan, participate at Job Fairs and develop staff surveys relevant to recruitment and retention of diverse staff.</li> <li>2. School Equity Liaisons will review survey data under the BELT meeting process to guide building leadership in aligning hiring practices to district equity goals.</li> </ol>
<p>4b. The UDSD administrators will collaborate with teachers, staff, students, family, and community members in ongoing processes for recruiting, hiring, retaining, and advancing diverse staff as well as educators with strong equity commitments, understanding, and skills.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The District Equity Officer will meet with the UDSD Strategic Recruitment Committee, who is tasked with the responsibility to create and maintain pathways to teaching through school volunteer opportunities, student teaching placements, and University partnerships.</li> <li>2. School Equity Liaisons will collaborate with building leadership to support volunteers and student teacher placements.</li> </ol>

4c. The UDSD will create a pipeline for sustainable recruitment, hiring, and promotion of educators with strong equity commitments, understanding, and skills.

1. The District Equity Officer will meet with the UDSD Strategic Recruitment Committee to review the TEACH UD plan for building a school to teacher pipeline.
2. School Equity Liaisons will communicate the tenets of TEACH Upper Darby through the BELT meeting process.

## **Equity Resources**

Delaware Valley Consortium for Excellence and Equity (DVCEE), 2017

Equity In Action, Professional Learning for Culturally Responsive Teaching, Equity Alliance at ASU, 2009

Excellence Through Equity Plan, Bethlehem Area School District, 2015

Strategies for Building Cultural Competency, Hanover Research, August 2014

Intercultural Development Research Association South Central Collaborative for Equity, Revised 2006

The Leadership for Equity & Development (LEAD) Tool, Ten High-Leverage Equitable Practices, [Leadtool.educationnorthwest.org](http://leadtool.educationnorthwest.org), 2018