

MEMORANDUM

Item P

TO: State Board of Education
FROM: Daniel M. French, Ed.D., Secretary of Education
SUBJECT: Summary of Equity Work
DATE: August 13, 2021

The Board asked me to summarize state-level equity work in our education system. This work has been in place for a number of years. Ensuring each student has access to a high-quality education is a key responsibility of the state.

The General Assembly has established several task forces and groups that are charged with examining educational equity issues in one form or another. These groups include:

- The Act 129 (2012) Hazing, Harassment and Bullying Prevention Advisory Council;
- The Act 1 (2019) Ethnic and Social Equity Working Group; and the
- Act 35 (2021) Task Force on Equitable School Environments.

Recent policy initiatives directly related to improving equity include literacy reform, the improvement of school facilities, and the development of Community Schools. Act 46 and Act 173 can also be seen as major policy initiatives to address equity concerns.

Beyond education, the General Assembly established a Racial Equity Advisory Panel and a cabinet-level Executive Director of Racial Equity in 2012. Xusana Davis is the state executive director and coordinates racial equity work among state agencies and departments.

The Agency of Education's focus on equity is well established and touches on many aspects of the education system. Over the years, the agency has sponsored numerous professional development and grant opportunities to address issues of equity in our education system. Additionally, the agency has leveraged its leadership to advance equity policies at the state, regional, and national levels.

The agency's leadership in addressing issues of equity can be seen in the activities related to the development of Vermont's ESSA State Plan. In the development of the plan, the agency:

- Submitted an Equity Plan related to educator staffing;
- Developed the "Historically Marginalized" group designation in an attempt to remediate suppression logic and create greater transparency;

- Developed an Equity Lens Tool after engaging in agency-wide anti-bias training to create a habit of questioning internal, agency biases;
- Engaged in the Supporting Educational Equity listening tour to surface field recommendations from BIPOC and female educators to address educational inequity;
- Co-facilitated a New England regional task force on diversifying the educator workforce; and
- Offered a series of grant opportunities to support education systems in local efforts to develop equity literacy in our schools.