

Equity Lens Tool

Objective: The Vermont AOE is committed to improving the learning of every student by ensuring that educational equity is at the center of all decision-making at the state, local and building levels. By utilizing an equity lens tool, the AOE aims to provide a common vocabulary and protocol for evaluating policies, programs, practices and decisions for equity; and to produce policies, programs, practices and decisions that result in equitable outcomes. (*Adapted from Portland Public Schools Racial Equity Lens*)

Definition: Educational equity means that every student has access to the resources, opportunities and educational rigor they need at the right moment in their education, whatever their **race, gender/identity, sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion, language, disability, family background, or family income may be**. (*Adapted from CCSSO, Leading for Equity*)

Protocol: For any policy, program, practice or decision, consider the following questions as they pertain to the bolded group characteristics above:

1. Who are the groups affected by this policy, program, practice or decision? What are the potential impacts on this group or groups?
2. What assumptions and/or biases regarding the stakeholders/communities/students/groups affected by this policy, program, practice or decision have you surfaced/considered?
3. What equity gaps* currently exist for these stakeholders/communities/students/groups?
4. Does this policy, program, practice or decision have the potential to create, ignore or worsen existing equity gaps or produce other unintended consequences? If yes, how?
5. What are the barriers to more equitable outcomes that you have identified (e.g., mandated/legal, political, emotional, financial, programmatic or managerial) and how can they be mitigated and/or eliminated?
 - a. What are the current policies, programs, practices and decisions that can be adapted or refined that will result in more equitable outcomes?
 - b. If barriers or equity gaps persist, what new policies, programs, practices and decisions must be made to ensure equitable outcomes?
6. In using this protocol, what questions were raised and remain unresolved regarding the policy, program, practice or decision?

* Generally speaking, *opportunity gap* refers to inputs—the unequal or inequitable distribution of resources and opportunities—while *achievement gap* refers to outputs/outcomes—the unequal or inequitable distribution of educational results and benefits. *Equity gap* pertains to inputs and outputs as both contribute to the presence or absence of educational equity.