



Soaring Heights Charter School

Equity and Equality Policies

I. Purpose and Summary

Pursuant to the equity code, N.J.A.C. 6A:7, Managing for Equality and Equity in Education, adopted on May 7, 2003 by the State Board of Education, Soaring Heights Charter School Board of Trustees (“board”) has established the following equity and equality policies to achieve and maintain compliance with all state and federal laws governing equity in educational programs.

The purpose of these policies to enable SHCS to achieve and maintain compliance with all applicable laws, codes, regulations, and guidelines governing equity in education including, but not limited to: N.J.S.A. 18:36-20; N.J.S.A. 10:5; N.J.A.C. 6A:7; Guidelines for the Desegregation of Public Schools in New Jersey (1989); Titles VI and VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964; Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972; Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973; The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990; Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (I.D.E.A.) of 1997.

All the policies, programs and practices of the board shall recognize and value the diversity of persons and groups within society and promote the acceptance of persons of diverse backgrounds regardless of race, creed, color, national origin, ancestry, age, marital status, affectional or sexual orientation, gender, religion, disability or socioeconomic status; and promote equal educational opportunity and foster a learning environment that is free from all forms of prejudice, discrimination and harassment based upon race, creed, color, national origin, ancestry, age, marital status, affectional or sexual orientation, gender, religion, disability or socioeconomic status.

The board shall inform the school community it serves of these policies including statements in written material such as the Student Planner and registration materials for

students and staff. At least once a year, these policies shall be described orally in meetings with parents and staff.

The board shall develop a comprehensive equity plan once every three years, which shall identify and correct all discriminatory and inequitable educational and hiring policies, patterns, programs and practices affecting its facilities, programs, students and staff.

The board shall assess the charter school's needs for achieving equity and equality in educational programs based on an analysis of student performance data such as State assessment results, K-8 promotion/retention data, K-8 completion rates and re-examination and re-evaluation of classification and placement of students in special education programs if there is over representation within certain groups; staffing practices; student demographic and behavioral data; quality of program data; and stakeholder satisfaction data prior to developing the comprehensive equity plan. The purpose of the needs assessment is to identify and eliminate discriminatory practices and other barriers to achieving equity in educational programs.

The comprehensive equity plan shall address:

- i. Professional development pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A: 7-1.5; and
- ii. Equality in school and classroom practices pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6a: 7-1.6; and
- iii. Equality in employment and contract practices pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A: 7-1.8.

The comprehensive equity plan shall include goals, objectives, timelines and benchmarks for measuring progress.

The charter school board of trustees shall submit the comprehensive equity plan to the county superintendent of schools for approval and a copy of the comprehensive equity plan to the New Jersey State Department of Education.

If the comprehensive equity plan is not approved by the county superintendent of schools, the board shall revise the plan in accordance with the instructions of the county superintendent of school and shall submit the revised plan to the county superintendent within 30 days of the notification of non-approval.

The board shall, at the end of each school year, report on their annual progress on achieving the objectives of the comprehensive equity plan. The Lead Person shall also provide to the department a statement of assurances and certification that:

- i. The charter school will continue to maintain compliance with N.J.A.C 6A:7; Titles VI and VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964; the Guidelines for the Desegregation of Public Schools in New Jersey; and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 U.S.C 794);
- ii. The charter school will perform all required activities as provided for in this chapter and report such assurances to the charter school's board of trustees annually.
- iii. The charter school will continue to implementation of its approved comprehensive equity plan; and
- iv. The charter school's board of trustees will provide a resolution approving the affirmative action officer for each school year of the three-year comprehensive plan.

The board shall annually designate a member of its staff as the affirmative action officer and form an affirmative action team, of whom the affirmative action officer is a member, to coordinate and implement the requirements of N.J.A.C. 6A:7. The board shall assure that all stakeholders know who the affirmative action officer is and how to access her/him. The board shall appoint as the affirmative action officer a staff member who has a New Jersey standard certification with an administrative, instructional, or educational services endorsement, pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6:11. et. seq.

The affirmative officer shall:

- i. Coordinate the required professional development training for certificated and non-certificated staff pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A: 7-1.6;
- ii. Notify all students and employees of charter school grievance procedures for handling discrimination complaints;
- iii. Ensure that the charter school grievance procedures, which include investigative responsibilities and reporting information, are followed.

The affirmative action team shall;

- i. Develop the comprehensive equity plan pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A: 7-1.4 (C);

- ii. Oversee the implementation of the charter school's comprehensive equity plan to pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A: 7-1.4 (C).
- iii. Collaborate with the affirmative action office on coordination of the required professional development training for certificated and non-certificated staff pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A: 7-1.6;
- iv. Monitor the implementation of the comprehensive equity plan, and;
- v. Conduct the annual charter school internal monitoring to ensure containing compliance with state and federal statutes governing educational equity, pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A: 7-1.4(d) et. seq.

II. Professional Development

Pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A: 7-1.6 relating to professional development, the board shall provide professional development training for all school personnel on a continuing basis to identify and resolve problems associated with the student achievement gap and other inequities arising from prejudice on the basis of race, creed, color, national origin, ancestry, age, marital status, affectional or sexual orientation, gender, religion, disability or socioeconomic status.

1. The professional development training shall be provided to all certificated and non-certificated staff.
2. The charter school board of trustees shall invite parents and other community members to participate in the professional development training.
3. The charter school board of trustees shall ensure that all new certificated and non-certificated staff are provided with professional development training on educational equity issues within the first year of employment.

III. School and Classroom Practices

Pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A: 7-1.7 relating to equality in school and classroom practices, the board shall provide equal and bias-free access for all students to all school facilities, courses, programs, activities and services, regardless of race, creed, color, national origin, ancestry, age, marital status, affectional or sexual orientation, gender, religion, disability or socioeconomic status, by:

1. Ensuring equal and barrier-free access to all school and classroom facilities;
2. Attaining minority representation in the school which approximates the community's overall minority representation. Although exact apportionment is not required, the school's goal is to achieve the greatest degree of racial balance which is feasible and consistent with sound educational values and procedures;
3. Utilizing a State approved English language proficiency measure on an annual basis for determining the special needs and progress in learning English of language-minority students pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A; 15-1.3(c);
4. Utilizing bias-free multiple measures for determining the special needs of students with disabilities, pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A: 14-3.4;
5. Ensuring that support services, including intervention and referral services pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6:26, and school health services pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6:29, are available to all students; and
6. Ensuring that a student is not discriminated against because of a medical condition, including pregnancy. A student shall not be excluded from any education program or activity because of a long-term medical condition unless a physician certifies that such exclusion is necessary. If excluded, the student shall be provided with equivalent and timely instruction, which may include home instruction, without prejudice or penalty.

The board shall ensure that the charter school's curriculum and instruction are aligned to the State's Student Learning Standards and addresses the elimination of discrimination by narrowing the achievement gap, by providing equity in educational programs and by providing opportunities for students to interact positively with others regardless of race, creed, color, national origin, ancestry, age, marital status, affectional or sexual orientation, gender, religion, disability or socioeconomic status, by:

- a. Ensuring that there are no differential requirements for completion of the course offerings or programs of study solely on the basis of race, creed, color, national origin, ancestry, age, marital status, affectional or sexual orientation, gender, religion, disability or socioeconomic status.
- b. Ensuring that courses shall not be offered separately on the basis race, creed, color, national origin, ancestry, age, marital status, affectional or sexual orientation, gender, religion, disability or socioeconomic status.
- c. Reducing or preventing the under representation of minority, female and male students in all classes and programs including gifted and talented, accelerated and advanced classes.

d. Ensuring that the school demonstrates the inclusion of multicultural curriculum in its instructional content, materials and methods, and that students understand the basic tenet of multiculturalism.

e. Ensuring that African American history, as well as the history of other cultures, is infused into the curriculum and taught as part of the history of the United States, pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A: 35-1 and the New Jersey Student Learning Standards.

f. Ensuring that instruction on the Holocaust and other acts of genocide is included in the curriculum of all elementary and secondary schools, as developmentally appropriate, pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A: 35-28.

IV. Counseling Services

Pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A: 7-1.7(c) relating to equality in counseling services, the board of trustees shall ensure that all students have access to adequate and appropriate counseling services as follows:

1. When informing students about possible careers, professional or vocational opportunities, the board shall not restrict or limit the options presented to students on the basis of race, creed, color, national origin, ancestry, age, marital status, affectional or sexual orientation, gender, religion, disability or socioeconomic status.

2. The board shall not adopt for use tests, guidance or counseling materials which are biased or stereotyped on the basis of race, creed, color, national origin, ancestry, age, marital status, affectional or sexual orientation, gender, religion, disability or socioeconomic status.

V. Athletic Programs

Pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A: 7(d) relating to equality in athletic programs, the board shall ensure that the charter school's physical education program and its athletic programs are equitable, co-educational and do not discriminate on the basis of race, creed, color, national origin, ancestry, age, marital status, affectional or sexual orientation, gender, religion, disability or socioeconomic status as follows:

1. If locker and shower facilities are constructed in the future, the board shall provide separate but comparable facilities on the basis of gender;

2. The athletic program as a whole shall provide equal opportunities for students of both sexes to participate in sports at comparable levels of difficulty and competency.

VI. Employment and Contract Practices

Pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A: 7-1.8 relating to equality in employment and contract practices:

1. The board shall ensure that all persons regardless of race, creed, color, national origin, ancestry, age, marital status, affectional or sexual orientation, gender, religion, disability or socioeconomic status shall have equal and bias free access to all categories of employment in the public educational system of New Jersey, pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A: 7-1.1.
2. The board shall not enter in any contract with a person, agency, or organization that discriminates on the basis of race, creed, color, national origin, ancestry, age, marital status, affectional or sexual orientation, gender, religion, disability or socioeconomic status, either in employment practices or in the provision of benefits or services to students or employees, pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A: 7-1.1.
3. The board shall not assign, transfer, promote or retain staff or fail to assign, transfer, promote or retain staff, on the sole basis of race, creed, color, national origin, ancestry, age, marital status, affectional or sexual orientation, gender, religion, disability or socioeconomic status, pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A: 7-1.1.
4. The board shall ensure equal pay for equal work among members of the charter school's staff, regardless of race, creed, color, national origin, ancestry, age, marital status, affectional or sexual orientation, gender, religion, disability or socioeconomic status pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A: 7-1.1.

VII. Accountability

Pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A: 7-1.9 relating to accountability:

1. The board's obligation to be accountable for the requirements of this chapter is not precluded or alleviated by any rule or regulation of any organization, club, athletic association or other league or group.
2. The charter school shall, within 120 days of adoption of this new chapter, submit its comprehensive equity in educational programs that includes a cohesive set of policies, programs and patterns and equal access to education opportunity for all learning students and teachers.
3. The comprehensive equity plan shall include the following:

- a. A needs assessment that includes student assessment and behavioral data disaggregated by gender, race, ethnicity, Limited English Proficiency, Special Education, Migrant, date of enrollment, student suspension, expulsion, Child Study Team referrals, K-8 promotion/retention data, K-8 completion rates and re-examination and re-evaluation of classification and placement of students in special education programs if there is over representation with certain groups; staffing practices; quality of program data; and stakeholder satisfaction data.
- b. A description of how other federal, state and charter school policies, programs and practices are aligned to the comprehensive equity plan;
- c. Adequate yearly progress targets for closing the achievement gap;
- d. Professional development targets regarding the knowledge and skills needed to provide a thorough and efficient education as defined by New Jersey Student Learning Standards, differentiated instruction, and formative assessments aligned to the New Jersey Student Learning Standards and high expectations for teaching and learning.
- e. Annual target addressing the charter school's needs in equality in school and classroom practices that are aligned to professional development targets.

The comprehensive equity plan shall be written every three years. The board shall initiate the comprehensive equity plan within 60 days of its approval, and shall implement the plan in accordance with the timelines approved by the departments. The board acknowledges that if it does not implement the comprehensive equity plan within 180 days of the approval date of the plan, or fails to reports its progress annually, sanctions deemed appropriate by the Commissioner of Education or his/her designee shall be imposed, and may include action to suspend, terminate, or refuse to award continued federal or state financial assistance, pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A: 55-2. Annual progress in meeting targets shall be reported annually.

VIII. Appeals

Pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A: 7-1.10 relating to appeals:

The Board acknowledges that in accordance with N.J.S.A. 18A: 6.9, any individual may petition the Commissioner of Education in writing to resolve a dispute arising under these regulations pursuant to procedures set forth in N.J.A.C. 6A: 3 et. seq.

Addendum to Soaring Heights Charter School

Equity and Equality Policies

1. The board shall prohibit or eliminate all forms of harassment, including sexual harassment, intimidation and bullying.
2. The board shall collect and analyze Annual Yearly Progress data for underperforming subgroups disaggregated by gender, race, ethnicity, limited English proficiency, special education, migrant status, date of enrollment, student suspension, expulsion, child study team referrals; K-8 promotion/retention data; K-8 completion rates and re-examination and re-evaluation of classification and placement of students in special education programs if there is over representation within certain groups; staffing practices; quality of program data; and stakeholder satisfaction data. The school will identify any school-level underperforming subgroups on Annual Yearly Progress reports for state assessments.
3. The Board Grievance Committee will investigate and resolve discrimination complaints, grievances and incidents between students, based on race, national origin, sexual orientation, gender, religion, English proficiency, housing status, socio-economic status or disability.
4. The board shall report on progress made in meeting the adequate yearly targets established for closing the achievement gap as set by the Department of Education.
5. The school will provide equity in educational programs in all areas, including all courses of study (including physical education); library materials/instructional materials and strategies; technology/software and audiovisual materials; guidance and counseling (including harassment, intimidation and bullying, sexual harassment and grievance procedures); extra-curricular programs and activities;

tests and other assessments; reduction and/or prevention of underrepresentation of minority, female and male students in all classes and programs.

6. The school will ensure that minority and female students are not underrepresented in gifted and talented or accelerated/advanced programs.
7. The school will ensure that minority and male students are not disproportionately represented in detentions, suspensions, expulsions, dropouts or special needs classifications.
8. The school will ensure equal and bias-free access for all students to computers, computer classes, career and technical education programs, and technologically-advanced instructional assistance.
9. The school will ensure that all English language learners have equal and bias-free access to all school programs and activities.
10. The school will ensure that all students with disabilities have equal access to all school programs and activities.
11. The school will ensure that all school registration procedures are in compliance with State and Federal regulations and case law.
12. The school will utilize a state-approved language proficiency assessment on an annual basis for determining the English language proficiency of English language learners.

13. The school will utilize bias-free measures for determining the special needs of students with disabilities.

14. The school will ensure that support services (e.g., school-based youth services, health care, tutoring and mentoring) are available to all students, including English language learners.

15. The school will ensure access to adequate and appropriate counseling services for all students, including females, minority students, English language learners, non-college-bound students, and students with disabilities.

16. The school will present a full range of possible occupational, professional and Career and Technical Education choices for all students.

17. The school will target recruiting practices for underrepresented populations in every category of employment.

18. The school will ensure that employment applications and pre-employment inquiries conform to the guidelines of the New Jersey Division on Civil Rights.

19. The school will provide equality in employment and contract practices for all persons.

Readopted August 2023.