



EQUITY-ORIENTED POLICY REVIEW PROCESS GUIDE

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About Great Lakes Equity Center

Great Lakes Equity Center is one of ten regional Equity Assistance Centers funded by the U.S. Department of Education under Title IV of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. The Center serves the public educational agencies in Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, and Wisconsin by providing a wide range of technical assistance supports.

The mission of the Center is, to ensure equity in student access to and participation in high quality, research-based education by expanding states' and school systems' capacity to provide robust, effective opportunities to learn for all students, regardless of and responsive to race, sex, and national origin, and to reduce disparities in educational outcomes among and between groups.



About This Tool

The purpose of this Equity Tool is to support teams in engaging in an equity-oriented policy review process. This planning guide is intended to be used in partnership with the Policy Equity Analysis Toolkit, and provides guiding questions, prompts, and considerations organized as follows:

Part 1: Planning for the Review

- 1) Assembling a Representative Team and Establishing Roles
- 2) Planning Meeting Logistics
- 3) Orienting and Norming the Team

Part 2: Conducting the Policy Review

- 4) Individual Policy Review
- 5) Group Discussions
- 6) Summarizing and Prioritizing Findings and Considerations

There is no one *right way* to conduct collaborative, deliberative, equity-oriented policy reviews, and teams may choose to modify this process or use an entirely different process. Regardless of the process used, equity leaders should take great care in ensuring diverse viewpoints that are representative of the school, school district, or state agency are sincerely and authentically included and considered, and that decision are inclusive and collaborative.

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PART ONE: PLANNING TO CONDUCT THE ANALYSIS

I. Assembling a Representative Team and Establishing Roles

A team that is inclusive, collaborative and focused on ensuring equitable practices helps to prevent recommendations that may marginalize particular groups (Skelton, 2015). When organizing an equity-oriented policy review team, planners must guard against tokenism and deficit thinking. Teams can be authentic partnerships by establishing cultural reciprocity, drawing on individuals' funds of knowledge (Moll et al, 1992), and negotiating policy and practice with families (Kyser et al., 2015). When assembling the team, equity leaders should address the following questions and

Guiding Questions

	What will be the team configuration?
	Who will participate, and how will recruitment occur?
	How will visibility and awareness of the opportunity for all stakeholders be ensured?
	To what extent is the team diverse and representative of the learning community?
	Are there members on the team who can adequately address the policy issues?
	What will the roles be, and who will fill those roles? Also, who gets to decide on the roles and who will fulfill them?

Key Considerations

Differences should be framed as assets or benefits to the learning community and embrace the rich, intersecting dimensions of diversity each individual brings to the group.

Team participants should reflect the population demographics represented in the district and school community. Consider any or all of the following identities: race/ethnicity, gender expression, religion (or claimed non-religion), school roles, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, dis/ability status, national origin, citizenship status, linguistic status, etc.

All stakeholder groups who participate in or are affected by policy interpretation, appropriation, and implementation should be included in the review process. Often times those who are struggling under the system are absent from the conversation.

Consider creating and assigning the following roles: Facilitator, Timekeeper, Recorder, Reporter, Observer/Critical Friend.

See *Educate* section of the Policy Equity Analysis Toolkit for more information

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II. Planning Meeting Logistics

The social and physical surroundings should be culturally responsive to participants, and meeting times should accommodate participants' schedules. The space should accommodate everyone (e.g., community members with dis/abilities, visual impaired, climate controlled, members who bring children, etc.) and provide the necessary facilitation tools to host an open discussion. Consider arranging the room so that a round table discussion can take place, ensuring that all members have the opportunity to interact each other. Additionally, consider hosting meetings in various areas of the community aside from school or district buildings (Macey, Thorius, & Skelton, 2013). Meeting planners should consider the following questions and points.

Guiding Questions

	When will you meet?
	Where will you meet?
	How frequently will you meet?
	How will the meeting space be arranged?
	What materials and services will be provided for the team meetings?
	How will you assure that meeting times, locations, and structure ensures access for all interested stakeholders to participate?

Key Considerations

Consult with the stakeholders and team to identify times and locations in which all participants feel comfortable, safe, and able to contribute to the team's work. Also, some jobs may be scheduled iteratively, with employees having short or little notice of when they are scheduled to work, and little flexibility on requested times or days off. The team should be responsive to shifting schedules.

Include materials and services that encourage inclusivity and participation. For example, planners may want to have relevant documents translated into team members' primary language if different from the dominant language spoken in school. It may also be important to include translators to make meetings more accessible, inclusive, welcoming, collaborative and effective.

See *Educate* section of the Policy Equity Analysis Toolkit for more information

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III. Orienting and Norming the Team

After identifying and assembling the team, establishing clear goals is the next step in conducting a successful equity-oriented policy review. Goals orient the team by providing for clarity about the rationale and intended outcomes of the policy review. Furthermore, team members should agree on a set of norms (i.e., commitments and practices) for how team members will work, interact, and conduct their work. In order to ensure that the policy review achieves the vision of supporting equitable learning communities while respecting and meaningfully including each team member, goals and considerations for norms should address the following essential questions.

Guiding Questions

	Who are the team members, how do they identify or describe themselves, and what aspects of the learning community do they represent?
	What is the reason or purpose for conducting a policy equity analysis?
	How does the a policy equity analysis align with district equity goals and improvement plan?
	What do you want staff, students, community members to learn from this process?
	How will you know if we have met our goals and desired outcomes?
	How will policies for review be framed and introduced? In other words, will the team choose policies to review, or will those policies already be selected?
	When conducting the policy analysis, what data or artifacts will be included? Who gets to decide what to include? Who gets to decide how the data and artifacts are interpreted?
	How have we ensured the voices and perspectives of historically under-represented groups are central to creating goals and norms?
	What are the agreed-upon norms of communication, and through what media (face-to-face, email, phone, etc.) will communication occur?
	What are the agreed-upon norms of decision-making (i.e., consensus vs. majority vote, team findings will be implemented vs. team findings are recommendations for another decision-making body, etc.), and through what media will decision-making occur?
	How will you know if the agreed-upon norms and “ground rules” are working?

See *Educate* section of the Policy Equity Analysis Toolkit for more information

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III. Orienting and Norming the Team Cont...

Example Group Norms (Singleton & Linton, 2006, p. 18)

Choose to be Present/ Stay engaged: I commit to be fully invested and present emotionally, mentally, and physically in the work, both in meetings and beyond. I will attend to patterns of and

Experience Discomfort: I commit to sit with, experience, and accept discomfort with ideas, disagreements, and dissonance; I will engage in self-reflection and encourage my colleagues to do so also.

Suspend Judgement: I commit to being humble, open to receive new ideas and evidence that may challenging my own thinking, and to avoid making judgements or conclusions before hearing others out and fully weighing all relevant information.

Be Transparent/ Speak Your Truth: I commit to being honest about my feelings and thoughts, to thoughtfully clarify misinterpretations or misrepresentations of my contributions to build shared understanding; and not to speak on behalf of others.

Detach from Outcomes: I commit to moving beyond blaming students, families, and communities for troubling outcomes and examine how instructional and school-wide practices contribute to those outcomes.

Expect and Accept Non-Closure: I commit to accepting that this work will be ongoing and may lead to more questions than answers.

Assume Positive Intentions: I commit to presuming that my colleagues hold high expectations for the work, are working to the best of their ability, and have good intentions.

See *Educate* section of the Policy Equity Analysis Toolkit for more information

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PART TWO: CONDUCTING POLICY REVIEW

IV. Individual Policy Review

Using the Policy Equity Analysis Tool (PEAT), each review team member will independently review the policy or practice documents the team identified for analysis. For productive conversation and authentic exploration of difference, it is important that all team members feel comfortable enough and able to both use the PEAT, and to speak their own truths about how they experience or interpret the policy or practice in question.

Guiding Questions

	How will team members be oriented to and develop understanding of how to use the Policy Equity Analysis Tool (PEAT)?
	Is the PEAT accessible to all team participants; are necessary translations, readers, scribes, or other supports provided?
	How will shared understanding about procedures, goals, and outputs from the individual review be decided and communicated?
	How will individual review findings be summarized and communicated to the team?

Key Considerations

Consider the following key framing questions (Great Lakes Equity Center, 2014; Macey, Thorius, & Skelton, 2013):

1. What is the intent behind the policy being reviewed?
2. What social constructions does this policy embrace?
3. Who benefits from the way things are and who does not (Freire, 1998)?
4. What actions will redress the inequities we see in our policies (Kozleski & Waitoller, 2010)?

When providing evidence or data to support ratings or claims, consider quantitative and numerical data, but also consider qualitative data like the stories from staff, students, and parents/caregivers, open-ended survey questions, and observations (Macey, Thorius, & Skelton, 2013). These qualitative data provide valuable insights.

See *Empower* section of the Policy Equity Analysis Toolkit for more information

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V. Group Discussions

Following the individual reviews using the PEAT, the review team will debrief and discuss individual findings. Group discussions about individual findings provide opportunities to surface assumptions and call attention to issues individuals may not be aware of, based on their positions, roles, and identities in learning communities. When participating in group discussion, team members should expect to experience discomfort, but at the same time expect to value and appreciate ways in which others experience and benefit from (or don't benefit from) the policy or practices in question.

Guiding Questions

	Who will facilitate and moderate team discussions? (Consider an outside moderator)
	What will be the process/activities to support team discussions about key questions?
	What will be the results and products generated from the team discussions to support and generate findings?
	How will tenets of equity (inclusive representation, meaningful access and participation, and positive outcomes for all) be centered in team discussions?

Key Considerations

It is important to follow the norms and roles established by the group in Step Three. If those norms or roles are actually limiting the discussion by preventing viewpoints from entering the conversation, or limiting the potential outcomes or products generated by the discussion, the team may want to revisit those norms.

See *Educate, Engage, and Empower* sections of the Policy Equity Analysis Toolkit for more information

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VI. Summarizing and Prioritizing Findings and Considerations

After doing the challenging work of establishing a diverse, representative team, having accessible team meetings in which team members determine goals and norms, conducting individual policy reviews, and engaging in powerful group discussions, it is now time to summarize the team's work and generate findings and recommendations. Keep in mind this process is oriented toward change of policy and practice, so findings should be oriented toward actions that members of the learning community can take to make schools equitable for all students.

Guiding Questions

	How will individual findings be summarized into considerations and recommendations?
	What will be the process for prioritizing and selecting the top-level considerations and recommendations for action planning?
	What beliefs and attitudes about people, including bias, stereotypes, and prejudices, are influencing priorities, findings, and considerations (Welner, 2001)?
	How will findings from the team's review be communicated transparently to others?
	What are the next steps, and how will accountability for the next steps be established?

Key Considerations

The team may find it helpful to use prioritization criteria to make decisions about and condense findings. For example...

ROUND 1: Use the following criteria to prioritize findings to three or four recommendations.

- **Urgency**—What is most important in terms of impact and timeliness?
- **Agency**—Which recommendations are within the school, district, or agency's purview or power to change or enhance?
- **Efficacy**—Which recommendations would most directly benefit the educational experiences of students?

ROUND 2: Use the following criteria to pick one or two of the recommendations from Round 1.

- **Feasibility**—For which recommendations does the school, district, or agency have the resources to implement in ways that advance desired changes?
- **Sustainability**—For which recommendations does the school, district, or agency have the resources to sustain actions over time in light of competing priorities and shifting contexts (e.g., community demographics, personnel changes, budget changes, etc.)? (Skelton, 2013)

See *Empower* section of the Policy Equity Analysis Toolkit for more information



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