



# 4 TANGIBLE WAYS

TO PURSUE EQUITY AS A  
SCHOOL BOARD MEMBER

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BY CHISLEY CONSULTING GROUP, LLC.

# INTRODUCTION

Everyone's talking about equity. Aside from virtual/remote learning, the term, "equity" can feel like the latest buzzword not only across education spaces but also spanning the business field. Depending on your individual definition, the word "equity" can bring about feelings spanning from discomfort and division to safety and expectations.

Let's establish a shared meaning for the term. Equity, simply put, means making sure everyone gets what they need. **Equity in schools is about creating the learning conditions that ensure all children get the knowledge and skills needed to be successful.**

As school board members, you play a major role in ensuring equitable learning environments in your schools. Your leadership, oversight, and guidance set the stage for success. As school board members equity starts with your beliefs. **You must believe that ALL children can learn, Effective School Leadership is essential and High-quality teachers make all the difference.**

But...how do we put equity into action as board members?

**Here are 4 tangible ways to initiate you into leading equitably as a board member.** This guide should serve as a launching point, not the final destination.

## Core Beliefs



## Step 1: **WRITE YOUR OWN EQUITY STORY.**

We all have life stories and we bring our personal stories to work with us daily. Writing a short equity story can help open our eyes to the challenges faced by others and help us work to dismantle barriers. Start by writing your language story. Think about the importance of language and linguistics. Was English your first language? How did you learn language? What languages didn't you learn? Is language something you're proud of? How has language impacted your confidence? How has language allowed you to connect with others? Have there been times when language was a barrier for you?

### **SAMPLE STORY:**

I don't have too many memories of systematically learning English. However, I do remember growing up speaking what I came to know as "proper" English. By 4th grade, I soon realized that the English I grew up speaking, (the English that my mother allowed in her home) was considered "talking White". I'll never forget being bused from the inner city to a suburban school district, getting on the bus, chatting with a friend, and being made fun of by another black student my same age because of the way I spoke. My mom was incredibly strict about using proper English at home, so my siblings and I weren't allowed to use slang - even in the comfort of our house. I never saw anything wrong with it at the time and I'm not sure if I do now- but I've come to learn that my mom was teaching us to assimilate to dominant white culture. To speak in a way that would be respected by people outside of my race...probably for our own safety and ability to gain access to the professional environments she hoped we'd have someday.

**What's your language story? Write at least one key experience that shaped your thinking around language.**

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*Consider: How might language create barriers in education/learning at your school?*

## Step 2: **WRITE THE VISION AND MAKE IT PLAIN.**

Organizations that are truly committed to ensuring equitable outcomes have a vision for what that work looks like on a daily basis. They find a way to make their mission, vision, and values operational. Organizations truly committed to equity write a vision for what TRUE equity could look like within their organizations. Then, they develop strategies for making that vision come to fruition. What vision or dream do you have for equitable outcomes in your school building? Is your vision centered around eliminating learning gaps in literacy between white students and Hispanic students? Does your vision center around making sure every dropout recovery student in your building graduates with a college acceptance or job making a livable, financially sustainable wage? Do you want every student to graduate with the ability to be financially FREE? If you're serving large populations of immigrant students, what vision do you have for them? What vision do you have for high school parents navigating the complexities of trying to finish high school while also caring for a dependent? Write your vision. Make it plain!

### EXAMPLE:

Canada envisioned an equitable country for immigrants, so, they build an education system with an emphasis on equity. Canada prides itself on its ability to get excellent results for **all** students, including students from different social backgrounds including immigrants. Canada integrates content from different cultures into its curriculum because it wants to make sure students see the world from different perspectives and develop positive attitudes towards diversity. They use tangible strategies to make their vision of a diverse, equitable education system real. In result, within three years of arrival, the children of new immigrants are scoring as high as their non-immigrant schoolmates. (World Class: How to Build A 21st Century School System by Andreas Schleicher)

*What do I want to be true for all kids at \_\_\_\_\_ School?*

**Write your vision. What do you want to be true for students at your school?**

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## Step 3: EQUITY IS NOT JUST ABOUT RACE, BUT RACE IS OFTEN THE DOMINANT INDICATOR.

While we know that equity spans beyond race, we also know that race is an indicator for life outcomes in the United States. For example, Life expectancy for American Indian and Alaskan Native and Black Americans is significantly lower than White Americans. Additionally, while the household wealth of Black and Latino Americans is growing, it still trails that of Asian and White American (CNN, 2023).

### ADDITIONAL FACTS:

- African American Students are less likely to have access to college-ready courses than White students. (UNCF)
- Students of color are often concentrated in schools with fewer resources. (UNCF)
- While Latino students make up 25% of the student population in US schools, only 8% of teachers in the U.S. are Latino and only 4% are leaders on school boards. (Latinos for Education)
- Hispanic Americans are more likely to work in service-related professions and less likely to hold managerial positions. (Minority Health)

### WHY THIS MATTERS?

Recognizing the data and facts affecting different student subgroups in your school is crucial for avoiding oversight of inequities. In Africa, among the Masai tribe, there exists a traditional greeting: "**Kasserian Engeri.**" This phrase translates to "**And how are the children?**" Unlike the common inquiry "How are you?" prevalent in many cultures, the Masai direct their attention towards the well-being of the children. This greeting exemplifies their unwavering focus on the next generation.

## 5 Equity-Driven Questions to Ask During Board Meetings

01

**How are the children (in general)?**

02

**What social-emotional/ wholistic challenges are they facing? What interventions are in place and how are those interventions going?**

03

**What academic challenges are students facing? What interventions are in place to overcome those barriers and how are those interventions going?**

04

**What gaps are we noticing between various subgroups of students? (i.e. White, Black, Hispanic, Asian, Bi-racial, Students with Disabilities, English Learners)**

05

**How are we closing learning gaps between those subgroups of students? What evidence do we have to show our progress?**

Step 4:

## WHERE YOUR TREASURE IS, THERE YOUR HEART WILL BE ALSO.

Take a look at what your school is funding? Where you put your resources is a direct reflection of what your school values. Review your revenue and expenses.

### LIST YOUR TOP 5 EXPENSES.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

It is likely that your top three expenses include salaries and benefits, purchased services and supplies. Looking at the overall budget categories probably reveals similarities across schools.

**BUT for this activity, you should dig deeper.**

Look specifically at a category **that does not include salaries and benefits**. For example, take a deeper look at your purchased services or supplies. What are your most expensive purchased service or supply contracts? List them here:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

*Once you have those listed, dig even deeper.*

Vendor/ Organization	Contract Amount	Is this strategically aligned to our goals?	Racial Background of Vendor	Gender Identity of Vendor	Is this vendor local? National? International?	Is this vendor reflective of our DEI stance?
1.						
2.						
3.						
4.						

**Upon reviewing the table above, what observations have you made? Are there any discernible trends you, as board members, wish to address or delve into further?**

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**How does your spending align with your school’s mission, vision, and values?**

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**How is your school prioritizing equitable allocation of financial resources?**

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## ABOUT CHISLEY CONSULTING GROUP

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