

# Equity, Equality, and You



Diversity, equity, equality, inclusion, and social justice. These are the concepts that educators are parsing to create safe and

inclusive school environments where all students can thrive. And while a new report by Scholastic on principals and teachers' views on education equity describes that overwhelmingly, educators agree that equity in education for all children should be a national priority, it is also evident that such leadership requires clarity around the nuances of what it means to provide students a well-rounded education—regardless of race, national origin, immigration status, gender identity, disability, or religion.


Consider, for example, the distinction that Washington, D.C., principal Jennifer Thomas describes: “Often-times, equity is confused with equality and as a result, our marginalized students do not receive the support and opportunities they need to experience success.” The Center for Public Education distinguishes between the two concepts by defining equality as treating all students the same, with equal access to resources, as compared to equity, which “is achieved when all students receive the resources they need so they graduate prepared for success after high school.”

Thomas, who leads a K-5 school that is working toward closing the achievement gap, believes that a first step to ensuring equity is that school leaders know that their school district is committed to achieving it. “This commitment can be demonstrated by having conversations about equity, race, privilege, and poverty, and how these things impact the kids we serve,” says Thomas.

Achieving equity is not just an issue for schools with disadvantaged

populations. The Scholastic report, “Equity in Education” (2016), describes that across school poverty levels, students face barriers to learning that stem from outside of the school environment. High percentages of principals report serving students who are experiencing family or personal crisis (95 percent), come to school hungry (85 percent), and are in need of mental health or

healthcare services (91 percent and 82 percent, respectively).

NAESP is committed to supporting the nation’s principals in not only understanding these barriers to learning, but also in advancing solutions. Here’s what some of your peers have to say about the systems of support that school leaders need most to ensure equity in diverse learning environments. 

## Access to High-Quality Teaching

All students should have equitable access to the teacher. This means that the teacher does not just focus on the struggling learners, but makes time for all students at an individual level. Teachers need time to learn, discuss, and digest.

—Joe Stanzione, Monterrey, Mexico

## Stimulating Environments

At the top of my list are field trips, technology, and mentors. I want field trips to expose my students to the unlimited opportunities available in life. Technology will help close the digital divide to help our children compete in the 21st century. Putting another caring adult in the life of a child will promote connectedness and a sense of belonging, and help students feel they are valued and appreciated.

—Marcia Sidney-Reed, Gardena, California

## Multiple Measures of Learning

Teachers need the chance to be flexible. To encourage a growth mindset environment, everyone needs to be OK with failure and realize that making mistakes means learning is happening. Finally, we need to somehow remove the standardized testing pressure. We have created a society that thinks standardized test scores tell us what we need to know. If we are going to be equitable in education, then we need to be able to assess and understand our students in many different ways.

—Liz Garden, Groton, Massachusetts

In the coming months, look for voices of your school leadership colleagues to be increasingly showcased in this space. At NAESP, we are dedicated to ensuring you are listened to, heard, and impactful.