



Tahoma School District Equity FAQs

Equity is one of our core values in Tahoma. To us, equity means supporting all students by recognizing and accommodating their distinct needs. We see students as unique individuals and understand that students need different levels and kinds of support. Examples include students with disabilities, students who receive special services, students who speak English as a second language, students who benefit from advanced programs, students of color, or LGBTQ students.

Our vision is described on the [equity page of our website](#): “We believe that Tahoma Schools must be welcoming, supportive and safe for every student and every adult. Students, staff, and leaders honor diversity and are committed to creating a culture of respect that is inclusive and committed to equitable practices. Understanding and empathy are valued and expected.”

What does “equity” mean to Tahoma?

Equity means treating all children as the individuals that they are, not treating all children the same. In order to thrive, students need to be treated with kindness and respect by adults and by their fellow students. We are deeply committed to ensuring that all students receive what they personally need to develop to their full potential and succeed. To that end, we commit to examining the disparities in our system and to implementing equitable practices to eliminate those disparities. Equity ensures all students have what they need to learn and thrive.

What does Tahoma’s equity work include?

Tahoma is just beginning its equity work. Our equity goals are being formulated in the areas of professional development, curriculum and instruction, family engagement, student voices, school climate, and staffing.

What is Critical Race Theory?

Critical Race Theory (CRT) was originally defined as an academic concept more than 40 years ago, with the core idea that race and racism are social constructs rather than scientific ones, and suggests that “racism is not merely the product of individual bias or prejudice, but also something embedded in legal systems and policies” ([Education Week](#), 2021). This theory is not part of Washington state’s standards for teaching, and it is not part of Tahoma curriculum.

Washington State Senate Bill 5044, which the Legislature approved this year and which went into effective on July 25, 2021, does not mention Critical Race Theory but does address dismantling institutional racism in the public school system. “The legislature plans to continue the important work of dismantling institutional racism in public schools and recognizes the

importance of increasing equity, diversity, inclusion, antiracism, and cultural competency training throughout the entire public school system by providing training programs for classified staff, certificated instructional staff, certificated administrative staff, superintendents, and school directors that will be provided in an ongoing manner,” the bill states.

The interpretation of what CRT is, and its role in K-12 curriculum, has recently become a national conversation topic. At Tahoma, we are **not** teaching students:

- that certain races are superior to others
- that individuals of certain races are inherently racist
- to discriminate against others, based on race or any other distinction
- to hate certain races, the United States of America or its political parties

How are you addressing racism within the district?

We strive to be anti-racist. That means we are working to develop the skills to dismantle racist actions, policies, and institutions, replacing them with those that support racial equity. Our student population is becoming more diverse and our achievement and discipline data show disparities between racial groups. We have heard from many of our students about the racism they have experienced or seen in our schools. These circumstances have propelled the Tahoma School District to prioritize equity as a focus for our school system. We are learning about cultures and training our staff in cultural competency. As our community diversifies, we are charged with reshaping our practices to best meet the needs of all students and families. Our School Board and Superintendent have committed to providing effort and resources in order to identify and work toward equity goals.

How are you incorporating equity work into Tahoma’s curriculum and instruction?

Our goal is to provide curricula that includes diverse perspectives and counter narratives, and uses culturally responsive instruction to support each student. Since this goal is extensive in a K-12 system, we will begin with identifying counter narratives for K-5 classrooms and considering social studies units that explore U.S history from multiple perspectives. Counter narratives offer positive alternatives to widely accepted stereotypes. Counter narratives give a voice to people who might otherwise not have one, and they can be used to share a different point of view.

How are you planning to diversify staffing?

Our staff does not currently reflect the diversity in our country. Our goals include hiring and retaining a highly qualified staff that is increasingly diverse and representative of our global population to serve as role models for all students. We will still hire the best applicant for the position, but we will cast a wider net to try to attract a more diverse pool of applicants.

In Tahoma, we have long had a practice of putting the student at the center of the room for any and every discussion and decision. Our district’s work in equity holds that tenet at its heart -- but with an addition -- we want to ensure that every Tahoma student and staff member feels safe, comfortable and welcome.