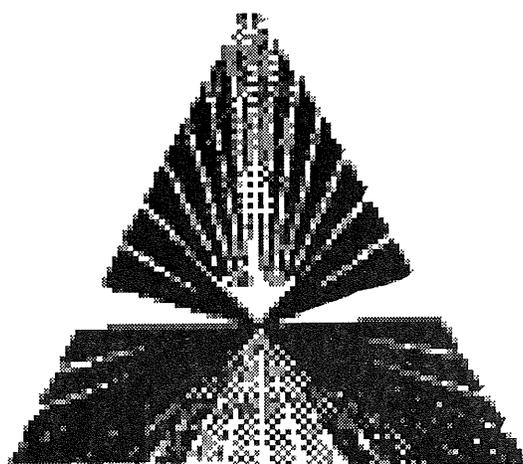


**System-Building
Standards
for Educational Reform**
An Equity Perspective



**NATIONAL ALLIANCE FOR
PARTNERSHIPS IN EQUITY**

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Information contained in this document may be copied with appropriate reference to its source. For additional information regarding the standards, implementation, or program sources, please contact:

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System-Building Standards for Educational Reform: An Equity Perspective

To achieve the goals of standards-based educational reform, attention must be focused on all aspects of the educational system from financial resources to classroom instruction. Without this focus, setting a higher bar will only exacerbate an inequitable system of have's and have-nots. If our goal is to have a higher standard and greater numbers of students meeting or exceeding these standards, the educational system must change as well as the content of the curriculum.

Executive Summary

The National Alliance for Partnerships in Equity has identified ten essential system-building standards which are designed to help eliminate current inequities. Each standard has specific indicators to help educators and policy-makers examine and improve the total educational system. The system-building standards address variables in the areas of:

- **The Educational Environment**
- **Issues of Governance and Policy**
- **Preservice and Inservice Education**
- **Teaching Practices**
- **Assessment Practices**
- **Evaluation of Personnel and Curricular Materials**
- **Individualized Educational Planning**
- **The Allocation of Financial Resources**
- **Data Collection and Accountability**
- **Partnership Building with Community/Business/Parents**

The United States has prided itself on educating all citizens. Our public education system is a cornerstone that sets us apart from other countries. With the ever-growing diversity in America today, it is critical that we continue to focus on providing the best free public education possible. In order to accomplish this goal of **quality** education for **all**, we are affirming that **equity** is essential to the reform process.

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WHO IS THE NATIONAL ALLIANCE FOR PARTNERSHIPS IN EQUITY (NAPE)?

NAPE is a consortium of state agencies responsible for vocational and technical education who have joined forces to provide national leadership for sex equity in vocational education. NAPE supports and encourages educational policy and programming for young and adult women and men that reduces the gender barriers and biases commonly found in our educational systems. The students who have been served through these efforts consistently describe these programs as having changed their lives, enhanced their options, strengthened their confidence, and improved their skills.

Many of the practices and policies developed through sex equity funding have been found to be equally advantageous for other underrepresented groups. Similar principles underlie efforts made toward improving the achievement and economic preparation of disadvantaged students, students with disabilities, English language learners, gifted students, and others. These principles that promote equality have been identified in this statement of standards. With the advent of the renewed emphasis on standards-based education, NAPE wanted to share this body of knowledge and experience which has been accumulated over more than fifteen years in all fifty states. Along with other research-based documentation, NAPE is pleased to present its System-Building Standards for your use. Knowing that Federal funding is limited in its scope and knowing that educational equity is powerful in improving academic success, it is the hope of the members of NAPE that these standards will be incorporated into all educational programs, including vocational education, to focus awareness on critical elements of reform that will make a difference. It will be helpful for state and district-level administrators, pre-service education programs, school boards and legislators.

Statement on Standards

What is Standards Based Educational Reform?

Our nation's leaders are concerned about improving the quality of education in America today. A call to raise standards in education is being heard across the country. The goal of this effort is to prepare America's youth for today's highly complex and diverse society.

Demographic changes and the demands of a post-industrial, knowledge-based economy, require that all students reach high levels of academic excellence. To help all students reach high levels of attainment, leaders are asking that schools set higher expectations for what students should know and be able to do. Standards that relate to content and academic learning are being developed across the country.

Currently educational leaders must also respond to the challenge of improving schools and other educational institutions so students from diverse groups have equal opportunity for educational success, economic self-sufficiency, and community responsibility. Profound inequities create barriers to educational excellence for many students in schools across the United States (Hammond, 1996). One in four students does not complete high school (Council of Chief State School Officers, 1987). This disturbing trend of school failure is further reflected in lower average achievement scores, higher teen pregnancy and expulsion rates, and widely documented incidences of gender bias and harassment in classrooms (American Association of University Women, 1992; National Coalition of Educational Equity Advocates, 1994). In addition, schools with large concentrations of minority and low income students are often funded inequitably and staffed by teachers who are least likely to possess the skills needed to work successfully with diverse students (Hammond, 1996). Clearly, school improvement efforts can no longer ignore the issue of equity. School improvement must focus, not only on what students should know and be able to do, but on the fair and equal success of a diverse student population. (Hammond & Sclan, 1996).

A STATEMENT ON EQUITY

Equitable educational systems foster the maximum development of individual potential. A commitment to equity ensures that all students develop the knowledge and skills needed to participate effectively in community life as workers, citizens, parents, leaders, and role models for future generations. To assure educational excellence for all students, schools must address the diversity that students bring to the learning environment and organize schools and classrooms to support the academic achievement and success of all students (Hammond and Sclan, 1996).

The National Alliance for Partnerships in Equity believes:

- Equity is an integral part of the school improvement process and applies to all programs within a school
- Equity must be viewed as inseparable from quality in the measure of educational excellence
- Equity helps to ensure that all students experience the highest levels of academic success possible, economic self-sufficiency, and social mobility

System-Building Standards: Educational Excellence from an Equity Perspective

Why Do We Need System-Building Standards?

State and local educational agencies have recently assumed more responsibility for deciding how to best improve schools. Many states have developed or are in the process of developing school improvement plans in accordance with a variety of newly established content and performance standards¹ and assessment measures (The State Education Improvement Partnership, 1996). The National Alliance for Partnerships in Equity has developed this set of system-building standards to assist educational agencies and school partners in improving schools and enhancing student achievement by addressing equity issues.

System-building standards establish appropriate expectations for educational systems in the same way that content standards establish expectations for student learning. It cannot be assumed that by changing the content standards, all students will be able to meet the new standards. Consequently, the entire system of educational delivery must be examined to assure all students are able to meet the new expectations. The system-building standards that are outlined in this document address a range of variables in the educational environment (e.g.; governance, preservice and inservice education, teaching practices, evaluation, assessment, and outreach) that increase a school's capacity to foster the maximum achievement of all students. By addressing variables in the total educational environment, the system-building standards provide a concrete approach to improving schools and enhancing student achievement. These standards apply to all levels of the educational system (K-12, postsecondary and adult). When applied, these standards create educational systems that are committed to excellence for all students. While these standards address fundamental equity issues, particular attention is given to issues of gender and diversity.

¹ A standards-based system includes content standards, performance standards, and performance assessments. Content standards (sometimes referred to as curriculum frameworks) specify what students are expected to know and be able to do in certain disciplines at specified levels of their education. Performance standards identify the manner in which proficiency must be demonstrated and the expected levels of performance,

determining "how good is good enough" and set the parameters for performance assessment. Performance assessment provides indicators of student performance, including testing, observation, and documentation of student work over time and provide measures of individual progress toward achieving standards.

Getting Started: Using the System-Building Standards

The system-building standards that are outlined in this document are put forth to provide state and local leaders with direction on a range of issues related to educational equity. Each standard is accompanied by a series of indicators that can be used to focus attention on specific elements essential to meeting that standard. Where appropriate, specific content standards for student knowledge and skill development are also included. The indicators provide guidelines to consider in meeting the standard.

Within a system building approach to equity, school improvement and enhanced student achievement begins with a philosophical orientation that quality education must include success for all students and be built on principles of equality and a respect for human diversity. Based on this philosophy, the system-building standards can be used to develop school improvement plans that comprehensively restructure variables in the educational system to promote equity. Within such an environment, mutually supportive variables of the schooling process work together to enhance the opportunities and success for all students.

Collectively, the system-building standards in this document are designed to ensure that equity permeates all aspects of the schooling process. The National Alliance for Partnerships in Equity recommends that these standards be disseminated to the U. S. Department of Education, to state departments of education, state councils, state equity coordinators, standards development groups, state school boards, site administrators, and other educational leaders involved in designing comprehensive school improvement plans. The ten system-building standards that are presented are most effectively used when integrated with existing academic standards, career development standards, and/or employability standards. They may also be used as a component of developing a school improvement plan to assure that factors supporting success for all students are scrutinized. With the contention that school improvement must enhance the achievement of all students, the system-building standards establish equity as a core tenant of the educational process.

System-Building Standards

1) Educational environments are created that honor diversity and respect the individual

Indicators:

- ▤ Diversity and human difference are openly and sensitively discussed in the school and community both informally and as part of the formal curriculum.
- ▤ School personnel understand how student learning is influenced by individual experience, gender, talents, and prior learning, as well as language, culture, family, and community values.
- ▤ Policies are in place to ensure that schools and school personnel respect diversity. Clear procedures exist for resolving discrimination and harassment complaints of students and school personnel.
- ▤ Acceptable behavior, language, and dress standards are clearly identified and non-discriminatory. Disciplinary policies are clear and penalties are equal for all students.
- ▤ Published documents, informational brochures, school-wide displays, and visual materials portray females and males of varied racial, ethnic, age, and ability groups in a variety of roles.
- ▤ Respectful behavior is modeled and reinforced so students develop positive views of themselves and their futures.
- ▤ Inclusive language is used by all those in the educational environment including students and staff.
- ▤ Resources are allocated to provide safety for all students; programs are established that reduce incidents of fighting, battery, and weapons use (e.g., natural helpers, peer mediation, anger management).

RELATED STUDENT-CONTENT STANDARDS: ¹

- Students know how to work and relate effectively across genders, cultures, and abilities.
- Students possess knowledge of laws, ethics, and dynamics related to discrimination, bias, prejudice, and stereotyping in the learning environment and workplace that are age and developmentally appropriate
- Students exhibit positive attitudes toward self, especially as it relates to their gender, demonstrating confidence in their ability to learn and accept personal responsibility.
- Students identify societal attitudes about gender roles for men and women.
- Students address societal attitudes about gender roles for men and women to promote and reflect fairness.

¹ Within the construct of system-building standards there is specific content that addresses equity issues in a direct way with students. Where appropriate these content standards are presented. It is recommended that content standards related to equity be included in curriculum frameworks or courses of study. They are applicable across content areas and may be adapted for developmental appropriateness.

2) Educational leaders assure equity in governance

Indicators:

- ⌄ An identified individual or group (e.g., administrator and/or experienced faculty) takes leadership for ensuring equity is an integral part of daily school life and all educational processes.
- ⌄ School personnel, especially those from underrepresented groups, have the opportunity to influence formal and informal decision-making at all levels.
- ⌄ All school committees contain members who are knowledgeable about equity issues and are representative of the diversity of the educational community.
- ⌄ Leadership roles (e.g., department chairs and chairs of special committees) reflect the gender and ethnic make-up of the educational community.
- ⌄ Administrators are evaluated on their support and incorporation of equity standards
- ⌄ School resources are targeted at addressing equity and diversity issues including making time available to staff members to collaborate and improve their own skills and knowledge regarding student diversity.

3) Preservice and inservice education equips faculty, administrators, and staff with the skills needed to teach and work with diverse student populations and communities

Indicators:

- ⌄ Regular inservice education is offered to help educational staff identify and overcome bias and to confidently meet the needs of a diverse classroom/school.
- ⌄ Information is provided to educational staff regarding local, regional, and national workshops, conferences, and professional development opportunities related to diversity and equity issues. Equitable support is provided for participation in those activities.
- ⌄ Teachers increasingly indicate they feel prepared to meet the needs of diverse students and understand the profession in the context of our diverse society.
- ⌄ Preservice teacher education links content knowledge, experience, and diversity with instructional strategies that enhance student achievement.
- ⌄ Preservice practicums and/or student teaching experiences provide teachers and administrators experience in working with a wide variety of students.
- ⌄ Curriculum standards for professional programs emphasize the integration of theory and practice as related to diversity and utilize performance assessment and field experience to support learning.
- ⌄ Curriculum standards for professional programs emphasize all aspects of subject content and include the contributions of diverse populations.

4) Fair and impartial teaching practices are incorporated into classrooms to facilitate the academic achievement of all students

Indicators:

- 🏠 Teachers positively reinforce the abilities and interests of all students when interacting with students, parents, or school personnel.
- 🏠 Teachers hold high expectations and standards for all students.
- 🏠 Teaching strategies and methods address the learning styles of each student.

- 🏠 Teacher interactions are structured to provide maximum interaction with every student.
- 🏠 All classroom procedures and patterns, including seating, lines, activity areas, academic, and athletic groups are gender, ability and race inclusive.
- 🏠 Students are taught to understand and value diversity through both the formal and informal curriculum.
- 🏠 Heterogeneous grouping is predominately used to promote social understanding and enhance opportunities for success in a wide variety of social settings.
- 🏠 Alternatives to tracking are explored especially where data indicates that tracking leads to lower achievement and aspirations for students.
- 🏠 Inclusive language is modeled in teaching.

5) Fair and impartial assessment practices are incorporated into classrooms and testing programs

Indicators:

- 🏠 Educational progress and/or student achievement is based on multiple forms of assessments that include authentic assessments such as performance-based or portfolio assessments.
- 🏠 Assessment strategies are sensitive to how students learn (e.g., written, verbal, kinesthetic, and/or visual) and are administered in a manner that permits individual students to demonstrate mastery of content.

- 🏠 Assessment strategies are subject to continuous review and improvement.
- 🏠 Accommodations in assessments are made and are based on the students' need. Accommodations do not give the student an advantage over other students and do not change the nature of what is being tested.
- 🏠 All students are provided with alternatives for earning credit through challenge exams and performance tests.

6) Curricula and personnel are evaluated to ensure that issues of equity and diversity are consistently addressed

Indicators:

- 🏛️ Curriculum materials appeal to and are relevant to the interests and needs of a diverse student audience (i.e. students see an accurate and consistent reflection of themselves including gender, race, abilities in the materials they study); if not, supplemental materials are consistently utilized or materials are developed.
- 🏛️ A process is in place to regularly screen curricula and instructional materials, including computer software, for potential bias and stereotyping.
- 🏛️ Inclusive language is used in the classroom and in curricular and learning materials including computer software.

- 🏛️ Equitable teaching strategies are included in teacher and administrator evaluation and accountability.
- 🏛️ Teacher-student interaction patterns are studied to promote equitable involvement with every student.

7) Data on student achievement and programs is collected and evaluated to ensure that all groups benefit from educational practices and policies

Indicators:

- 🏛️ The number of underrepresented students completing high level courses increases, especially in the areas of math, science, and technology, until they match or exceed their representation in the general population.
- 🏛️ The number of underrepresented students who meet state and local performance standards increases until they match or exceed that of the general population.
- 🏛️ Data reflecting student achievement is evaluated and used to provide direction for systemic change and improvement.
- 🏛️ The percentage of underrepresented students who earn a high school diploma, postsecondary certificate or diploma, or certificate of final achievement increases until the percentage matches or exceeds that of the general population.
- 🏛️ Underrepresented and at-risk students have increased success and lower drop-out rates.

- 🏛️ A data collection system clearly identifies the educational progress of all students; information is disaggregated to identify performance of all population groups.
- 🏛️ Class enrollment trends are monitored relative to gender, ethnicity, ability, and other socio-cultural factors.

8) The entire learning curriculum is available to all students through comprehensive, individualized planning and course selection

Indicators:

- 🏛️ Students are integrated in all programs without regard to gender, race, disability, and/or national origin to enhance their potential for future success.
- 🏛️ Master schedules encourage gender fair enrollment (e.g., a traditionally female class is not scheduled at the same time as a traditionally male class).
- 🏛️ Computer technology is available to all students including equitable access to up-to-date equipment and software that is free of stereotyping and bias.
- 🏛️ Underrepresented groups are recruited and encouraged to enroll in advanced math, science, and technology courses and programs as well as other programs where gender imbalance exists (e.g. young men in family-related programs, advanced languages, etc.)
- 🏛️ Mentoring and support groups exist for students who enroll in non-traditional classes.
- 🏛️ All students have the opportunity to earn college credit and take advanced standing courses prior to graduation from high school.
- 🏛️ A career development process is available to help students identify traditional and nontraditional career options, understand occupational trend projections for high wage and high skilled careers, and to develop individualized educational and career plans.
- 🏛️ Support services exist, where needed, to ensure participation in educational programs (e.g., child care needs for teen parents; transportation needs for students without economic availability of personal transportation; tuition, textbooks, or tools for students who demonstrate financial need; and accommodations for learners with disabilities and second language learners).

STUDENT-RELATED CONTENT STANDARDS:²

- Students identify the relationship of changing demographics of the workplace related to gender and diversity to career planning, career decision-making, and realities in the workplace.
- Students describe the impact of gender role expectations on the development of life skills (e.g., punctuality, appropriate emotional expression, time management) and their importance in managing the dual roles of work and family.
- Students identify the benefits for both males and females in acquiring skills in math, science, technology, reading, and writing and the benefits of educational achievement for all students.
- Students identify the impact of socio-cultural roles and expectations in their decisions related to education, career planning, and course selection.

² See footnote on page 5.

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