THE FACTS ON EDUCATION

How can student success be reimagined through an equity and anti-oppression lens?

The goal of every student is to be successful at school. Yet we know that some students – especially BIPOC students – are not thriving and achieving success due to systemic barriers, persistent inequities, and forms of oppression grounded in aspects of their identities that impact their educational outcomes. Student success has been commonly identified with various forms of measurable outcomes, such as: academic achievement, graduation rates, persistence, and self-efficacy. This approach to student success ignores the impact of systemic racism and other forms of oppression on students' educational advancement. Creating teaching and learning conditions where all students can thrive means rethinking student success beyond traditional markers to address systemic barriers, policies, and practices that are harmful to BIPOC students and prevent their success. In other words, student success should also be about student experiences that allow them to thrive in all aspects of school life.

FIVE EQUITY AND ANTI-OPPRESSIVE PRACTICES THAT SUPPORT STUDENT SUCCESS

1. Redefine student success to include equity and anti-oppression criteria
Student success is more than grades and graduation rates. When creating school improvement plans, include criteria for success that takes into account forms of oppression that prevent students – especially BIPOC students – from achieving success.

2. Include student voice in defining student success
Students do not want success plans developed for them, but with them. A student-centred approach is holistic and considers ways in which students are marginalized by systems of oppression.

3. Equity and anti-oppressive practices must be intentional
Equity and anti-oppressive practices are not just an "add-on." They must be intentionally embedded into everyday practice. Both teachers and administrators need to understand equitable and anti-oppressive practices, and ways in which this approach advances student success.

4. Focus on students' social, mental, and economic well-being.
As the pandemic has demonstrated, students' social, mental, and economic well-being impacts their educational outcomes. This must be acknowledged and considered at the classroom and school-wide level. Criteria to measure student success should include measures for students' social, mental, and economic well-being, taking into account the harmful effects of racism and all forms of oppression, and their impact on students' overall achievement and success.

5. Encourage meaningful and respectful relationship connections with community.
Develop ways to measure healthy school-community relationships as part of the criteria and a factor impacting student success. Relationships with communities where students come from must be seen as central to student success – especially BIPOC communities, where experiences navigating the school system are not always positive.

Student success is about equity and challenging oppression so students can thrive. We can:

- Ensure students' experiences in the school space are affirming of their identities, experiences, and histories.
- Name ways in which students are oppressed and create an action plan to intentionally dismantle them.
- Move away from pathologizing students and hold systems accountable to create conditions conducive for students to thrive and succeed.

- Develop a shared understanding of new approaches to student success through professional development and capacity-building activities informed by equity and anti-oppressive approaches.
- Collaboratively develop questions to gain deeper understanding of how students and communities are experiencing schooling.

For online resources and references please visit:
www.edcan.ca/facts-on-education

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