

# Equity Project Portfolio



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# Background

The ISBE Equity Project Portfolio is the culmination of four years of equity work across the Illinois State Board of Education. What started as a Lunch and Learn program that was focused on equity in 2018 became a launching point for our agency to embark on several projects designed to embed and operationalize equity across the agency, in alignment with goals from ISBE’s Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Plan and ISBE’s Strategic Plan 2020-2023.



### ISBE Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Plan 2022:

- GOAL 1 - We will create an equity impact analysis tool that will be used to guide all decisions and communications provided to the field.
- GOAL 2 - ISBE will promote and expect diversity, equity, and inclusion in all Illinois public school districts.
- GOAL 3 - ISBE staff will reflect the demographics of Illinois’ student population.
- GOAL 4 - ISBE will foster a deeper understanding of and action toward addressing Illinois’ achievement gaps.
- GOAL 5 - ISBE will educate advocates, stakeholders, and Local Education Agencies regarding the equitable designation of funds to decrease achievement gaps.
- GOAL 6 - ISBE will increase diverse educator recruitment and retention.

### ISBE Strategic Plan 2020-2023:

**Equity Goal (Internal)** - An equity impact analysis tool will guide all decisions and communications provided to the field. The equity impact analysis tool will be developed, implemented, and used by all agency staff.

**Equity Goal (External)** - An Equity Journey Continuum will be used to publicly indicate where each Illinois school district is on its equity journey. The Equity Journey Continuum will be researched, developed and incorporated into each district’s public Report Card by the 2022 reporting year.



Goal 1: Student Learning - Every child will make significant academic gains each year, increasing their knowledge, skills, and opportunities so they graduate equipped to pursue a successful future, with the state paying special attention to addressing historic inequities.

Goal 2: Learning Conditions - All districts and schools will receive the resources necessary to create safe, healthy, and welcoming learning environments, and will be equipped to meet the unique academic and social and emotional needs of each and every student.

Goal 3: Elevating Educators - Illinois’ diverse student population will have educators who are prepared through multiple pathways and are supported in and celebrated for their effectiveness in providing each and every child a high-quality education that meets their needs.

## Equity Improvement Efforts

### Equity Impact Analysis (EIA) | Embedding EIA into Agency Processes

#### Annual Director Self-Assessment Questionnaires

Internal Audit | Completed | January-April 2022

Internal Audit added a question to the annual Self-Assessment Questionnaire inquiring how each department has embedded or how it is considering using the Equity Impact Analysis Tool (EIAT) questions to address equity in your work and align with ISBE's Strategic Plan and equity statement.

#### ISBE Hiring Process

Operations | Ongoing | September 2020-December 2023

The Operations Center has applied the Equity Impact Analysis Tool to the ISBE hiring process. The Human Resources team has added an equity statement to job postings. It is also tracking and monitoring the diversity of applicants to ensure we are moving toward a diverse workforce as outlined in the Agency Recruitment Plan, which focuses on aligning the makeup of agency staff to that of the students in Illinois. The focus at this time is on the Hispanic population as that is where we see the greatest disparity. The HR team is working with the Communications team on a media campaign to promote ISBE in diverse communities. (DEI Goal 3)

#### Language Access & Language Access Complaint Form

Policy & Communications | Completed | January 2020-June 2022

ISBE hired a dedicated language access coordinator and Spanish language translator to assist persons who primarily speak a language other than English with accessing the agency's services. ISBE created a comprehensive internal Language Access Plan to streamline and codify the agency's policies and procedures regarding translation and interpretation services, a language services webpage to instruct members of the public on how to access language services, and a Language Access Complaint Form. The complaint form, translated into 10 languages and posted on the agency's website, provides an avenue for members of the public to notify ISBE of denial of access to State services, benefits, or programs on the basis of their language. The agency's language access coordinator receives all complaint forms and conducts follow-up with the complainant to resolve the issue.

#### Grant Authorization

Education & Finance | Completed | April-June 2022

Each Grant Authorization Form (GAF) and Contract Authorization Form (CAF) opportunity that is presented at Expenditure Review must answer the six Equity Impact Analysis questions, which place an equity lens on our funding opportunities for all districts. Trainings on the use of the new forms was conducted at the Education Center leaders meeting in June 2022.

#### Policies & Procedures Manuals

Research & Evaluation | Completed | April-August 2022

Each department is embedding the Equity Impact Analysis Tool in the policies and procedures manuals that are currently being written for each department. These manuals are scheduled to be shared with upper management at the end of August.

# Active Projects

## Equity Journey Continuum (District & State)

Status: Active | Date: July 2020–Present

### PURPOSE

The Equity Journey Continuum will be an informational tool that districts can use to identify and track progress toward closing equity gaps in student achievement, opportunities, and supports. Through the lens of equity, the tool will analyze a continuum of measurable, district-level data points with district control in the three areas of ISBE's Strategic Plan - Student Learning, Learning Conditions, and Elevating Educators. All stakeholders will benefit from transparency of district-level equity practices and improved outcomes for students.

### BACKGROUND

Districts have not historically had a tool to embed and measure equity within their operation to drive systemic change. As a result, some groups of students have had less/limited access to educational practices, supports, and resources, which has resulted in differing achievement between student groups and, eventually, imbalances in student outcomes.

For example, data has illustrated consistent differences or equity gaps across student groups in areas critical for student success, including access to advanced academic programs in high school, application of suspension and expulsion policies, and/or teacher experience/education.

### STAKEHOLDERS

The project team will consist of ISBE staff members across departments. The Equity Journey Continuum will provide data to districts, the state, and the education community to help drive equitable outcomes for the students of Illinois.

### ENGAGEMENT

ISBE will utilize a pilot program to engage a diverse representation of districts across the state, along with opportunities for district stakeholders to provide feedback on the Equity Journey Continuum, proposed metrics, continuum design, and purposes.

In addition, engagement opportunities will exist at key points throughout the project for district administrative staff, district board members, and student groups via a webpage specifically devoted to equity efforts and an email address for questions and input. ISBE will provide access to information and professional development/training opportunities for district representatives and the public.

### SUCCESS MEASURES

The Equity Journey Continuum will provide district-specific, data-driven evidence of achievement and/or access gaps across student groups. Districts will not be required to collect and submit any new/additional data, yet they will have more information available to them to adjust programs, supports, and services to ensure all students can reach their highest potential.

Each district's data will place it along an equity continuum – from Step 1 (large gaps) to Step 4 (minimal gaps) – in the three areas of ISBE's Strategic Plan – Student Learning, Learning Conditions, and Elevating Educators.

Once the Equity Journey Continuum project is fully implemented, districts will be able to review their annual data through an equity lens, implement changes based on their data, and witness equity improvements or progress in their equity journey. Focusing resources and implementing changes based on the data will result in more equitable, individualized access and opportunities and improved outcomes for all students within the district. A high-level view of each district's Equity Journey Continuum, as well as a State Equity Journey Continuum with aggregate statewide data, will be publicly available on the Illinois Report Card website. (DEI Goal 2 and ISBE Strategic Plan Goal [External])

# Equity Journey Continuum (Agency)

Status: Active | Date: July 2021-Present

## PURPOSE

While school districts across the state work to enhance equity in areas within their control using the Equity Journey Continuum as outlined by the ISBE Strategic Plan, it is essential for ISBE to use equity as a core value and measure its own progress toward being more equitable.

This project will focus on the development and implementation of an Agency Equity Journey Continuum Tool to inform ISBE's own equity journey.

## BACKGROUND

Historically, some groups of students have had less/limited access to educational practices, supports, and resources, which has resulted in differing achievement between student groups and, eventually, imbalances in student outcomes. How ISBE conducts business with school districts, offers opportunities, communicates information, and develops internal processes can impact districts' resources and supports; their ability to meet the needs of their students; and students' ability to experience success in reaching their highest potential. ISBE has not historically had a tool to embed and measure equity within the agency to drive systemic change by ensuring its own internal processes and stakeholders supports are equitable for the education community.

## STAKEHOLDERS

The project team will consist of ISBE staff members across departments and ISBE partners, who will develop the Agency Equity Journey Continuum.

The Agency Equity Journey Continuum will be utilized by all agency management and staff to inform equitable decisions, processes, and supports that impact the education community .

## ENGAGEMENT

Feedback loops will be established among the state superintendent, management and staff, Equity Steering Committee, Equity Advisory Working Group (EAWG), and ISBE Board members.

To inform the development and implementation of the Agency Equity Journey Continuum Tool, stakeholders will be engaged in conversations during the All-Agency and EAWG meetings. The state superintendent and ISBE leadership will have conversations with department staff, and there will be an equity webpage containing webinars, information, and other resources. An equity email inbox will also be available for stakeholders to submit questions and inquiries, as necessary.

## SUCCESS MEASURES

The Agency Equity Journey Continuum will be an informational tool to track agency progress reflecting internal data metrics, including equity-focused professional development/learning such as the Equity Impact Analysis Tool (EIAT) indicated in the ISBE Strategic Plan, staff participation, and hiring practices. This tool will be an internal measure of ISBE's efforts to incorporate equitable practices and processes using internal equity metrics. ISBE stakeholders will be able to review data annually through an equity lens, implement changes based on the data, and witness equity improvements and/or progress in the agency equity journey. A high-level view of the metrics will be available annually for public viewing.

# Equity Heroes Flyers

Status: Active | Date: January 2021-Present

## PURPOSE

The goal of the project is to highlight individuals and organizations that have worked hard in the past to accomplish goals and continue to make strides to increase equity and inclusion. Topics of the flyers will cover many aspects of equity, including, but not limited to, race, ethnicity, heritage, disability, LGBTQ+ identities, and gender. Each flyer will have a topic and may include history, individual/organization features, facts, a call to action, and an opportunity for community feedback. Whenever possible, flyers will spotlight individuals and organizations from Illinois, with a specific focus on youth when appropriate to increase relatability for Illinois students. The project will create shareable resources that can serve as inspiration in regard to equity work and benefit various communities by raising awareness.

## BACKGROUND

ISBE does not currently have a resource that highlights achievements of notable individuals and organizations that have demonstrated past and current work to make strides in the areas of equity and inclusion. This project will be a positive way to contribute to agency work to increase the collection of equity resources and awareness efforts.

## STAKEHOLDERS

The project team will consist of management and staff from centers throughout the agency to allow for differing perspectives and a wide range of ideas.

The flyers will be available to ISBE staff, schools, and community members.

## ENGAGEMENT

An email address will be made available for the stakeholders to make suggestions/nominations to feature in the flyers. ISBE will promote the flyers via multiple communications mediums, and the project team will monitor analytics associated with the page views.

The project team will collaborate to ensure diversity in the topics that are selected and that there is equitable representation throughout the state.

## SUCCESS MEASURES

The completed project includes a streamlined and sustainable process for producing high-quality monthly flyers, which are posted externally via the ISBE Equity webpage and are accessible to internal and external stakeholders, thus increasing awareness of various equity-related topics and communities.

The process to produce the flyers will be a collaborative effort by the team and Communications to identify and draft the flyers, review content, and ensure visual medium is consistent with ISBE branding. We can also reflect on community feedback and make changes/improvements to the process. Outcomes of the project will be shared with the Equity Action Working Group.



# State Mandated – Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Training 2022

Status: Active | Date: July 2022–Present

## PURPOSE

The Introduction to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion training is being developed in partnership with the Illinois Department of Human Rights (IDHR) Institute for Training and Development. It will serve as a part of the onboarding and annual OneNet trainings for state workers and appointees. This foundational training ensures all agencies, regardless of size or capacity, will have a required training for their employees so that they have a shared DEI awareness, knowledge, and professional expectation that they can build upon and apply as they work to equitably serve the people of Illinois.

## BACKGROUND

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion continue to be top priorities across the nation. As employees of the state of Illinois, it is our responsibility to ensure we act ethically, respect our co-workers and clients, and protect confidential information and technological resources. Online courses have been developed to assist in this effort; they are to be completed by logging into OneNet.

## STAKEHOLDERS

The Governor's Office of Equity, in partnership with the IDHR, developed the Introduction to DEI trainings with the support of the Morten Group, an equity consulting firm.

## ENGAGEMENT

Representatives from all state agencies responded to a request from the Governor's Office of Equity and IDHR and participated in a two-day DEI training in spring 2021. The training was conducted virtually, and agency stakeholders who participated in the training provided feedback regarding training design.

## SUCCESS MEASURES

All agency staff is to complete the training by the end of July before the results are analyzed. A survey to assess agency equity needs will be conducted to guide our continued internal efforts to embed and operationalize equity through capacity-building activities.



# Completed Projects

## Equity Impact Analysis Toolkit

Status: Completed | Date: July 2020–October 2021

### PURPOSE

An Equity Impact Analysis Tool (EIAT) guided all decisions and communications provided to the field. Illinois has an urgent and collective responsibility to achieve educational equity by ensuring that all policies, programs, and practices affirm the strengths that each and every child brings within their diverse backgrounds and life experiences, and by delivering the comprehensive supports, programs, and educational opportunities they need to succeed. Agency staff used the EIAT to analyze and embed equity in agency paperwork, projects, processes, and policies.

### BACKGROUND

The creation of an Equity Impact Analysis Tool is required for ISBE to operationalize and embed equity in agency work. This work, which is based on an employee-driven desire to focus on educational equity, grew from limited internal efforts to help identify biases. It was key to creation of a Board-approved Equity Impact Analysis Tool as part of the 2020–2023 ISBE Strategic Plan and DEI Plan.

### STAKEHOLDERS

The Equity Impact Analysis Tool impacted agency staff at all levels as well as external stakeholders (e.g., school districts, programs) and the communities we serve. The burden of incorporating and embedding the EIAT falls on all agency staff. The embedding of equity across the agency will benefit our most vulnerable and marginalized communities served by the agency.

### ENGAGEMENT

A cross-departmental Equity Action Working Group met quarterly to discuss the creation of the tool, the collecting of supporting resources, and the development of agencywide trainings in Q1 and Q2. Survey data was collected in Q3 and Q4 to determine the impact of trainings, usefulness of resource materials, and to guide future trainings that reflect the needs of agency stakeholders.

### SUCCESS MEASURES

Equity Impact Analysis Tool: A tool was developed and distributed to agency staff for analyzing and embedding equity in paperwork, projects, processes, and policies across the agency.

EIAT Resources: Resources were collected and posted in ISBE Connects.

All-Agency Training: Ninety percent of agency staff participated in the All-Agency EIAT Training.

Data Collection: A post-training survey gathered data to measure the effectiveness of the training and guide future training decisions. (DEI Goal 1 and ISBE Strategic Plan Goal [Internal])

# Courageous Conversations Book Study

Status: Completed | Date: January 2021-March 2022

## PURPOSE

A book study engaged staff in conversations and reflections that built knowledge and capacity around improving educational equity and assisted in attaining the goals set forth in the ISBE Strategic Plan. The book “Courageous Conversations About Race” will be utilized to provide staff a basic introduction to educational equity concepts.

## BACKGROUND

Collaborative discussions within the Equity Action Working Group identified an equity gap within the agency. Members of the group discussed challenges that resulted from not looking at things from different perspectives, lack of understanding that people from different cultural backgrounds see things with different biases and points of view, and not having equity principles embedded throughout the work of the agency.

The state superintendent has previously utilized “Courageous Conversations About Race” to lead group discussions that have expanded capacities on educational equity awareness.

## STAKEHOLDERS

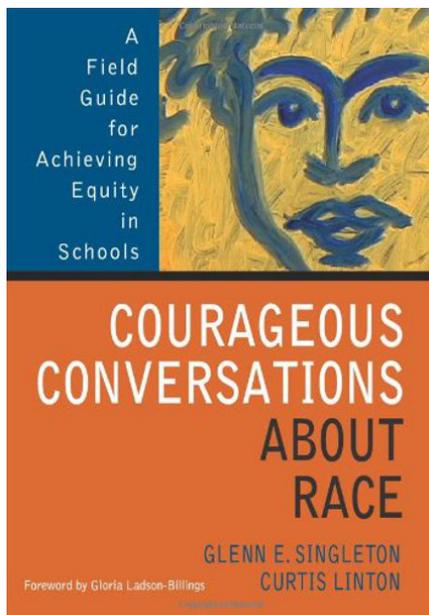
All agency staff and contractors had the opportunity to take advantage of this book study.

## ENGAGEMENT

Agency staff facilitated the books study based on a common syllabus and facilitator guide. Small groups of no more than 15 individuals (disaggregated by gender, ethnicity, department, and location) met on a regular schedule throughout the year to review and discuss the contents of the “Courageous Conversations” book. Book study participants were afforded time during their normal work hours to participate in the book study. Exit surveys were used after each book study session to allow facilitators to determine comprehension levels, understand the challenges faced by participants, and prepare for the next session with their group. Project leads met with the facilitators biweekly to collaborate on the successes, challenges, and risk and issue mitigation strategies. Resources and online collaboration tools were made available to all book study participants.

## SUCCESS MEASURES

Book study participants have read the entire “Courageous Conversations” book and collaborated with their peers on difficult topics. Conversations were organic to allow for the various unique perspectives of the participants in each group. Participants enhanced their capabilities to contribute to growing the capacities of others in understanding and applied equitable practices throughout the agency in an effort to meet the objectives of the ISBE Strategic Plan.



Surveys administered during the book study revealed an overall growth in educational equity awareness among participants. Specifically, surveys allowed participants to reflect on their level of comfort and familiarity. A temperature check was included as a measure of growth after completing each of the three parts of the book – passion, practice, and persistence.

Certificates of Celebration were provided to participants.

Data obtained throughout the project was utilized to inform future iterations of equity capacity-building opportunities. The final results of the book study was shared with the Equity Steering Committee and the state superintendent.