

# Act 1 of 2019: Where Are We and What Does it Mean for School Boards?

VSBA/VSA Conference, 10-20-22  
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# Warm Up Questions (turn and talk)

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What do I know about Act 1 of 2019?

What do I want to know about Act 1 of 2019?

# Session Objectives

- Participants will learn about Act 1 (2019), why it is important work, and about the status of the related Educational Quality Standards (EQS) Updates recommended by the Act 1 Working Group.
- Participants will explore how recommendations in the EQS updates impact the work of school boards and share how their board is already working towards the underlying goals of Act 1 (2019).

# Plan

- Introduction & Warm Up (5 min)
- What is Act 1 and Why is it Important? (10 min)
- Education Quality Standards (10 min)
- The Role of School Boards in this Work (40 min)
- What's Next (5 minutes)
- The Why (5 minutes)

# Remembering the Why

# Remembering the Why: 1999

The Vermont Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights published a landmark report titled "Racial Harassment in Vermont Public Schools." It found racial harassment appeared to be:

"pervasive in and around the State's public schools"

...and its elimination was

"not a priority among school administrators, school boards, elected officials, and State agencies charged with civil rights enforcement."

# Remembering the Why: 2017

The Act 54 report on “Racial Disparities in State Systems,” issued by the Attorney General and Human Rights Commission Task Force, concluded:

“Education is one of the five state systems in which racial disparities persist and need to be addressed.”

- We need to change the culture of our state with regard to race
- Suggests we “teach children from an integrated curriculum that fairly represents both the contributions of People of Color (as well as Indigenous people, women, people with disabilities, etc.), while fairly and accurately representing our history of oppression of these groups.”

# Remembering the Why: 2017

The 2017 U.S. Department of Justice report on hate crimes in Vermont of the 35 hate crimes reported in 2017:

- 51 percent were based on a motivation involving racial bias
- 23 percent were based on a motivation involving sexual orientation bias
- 17 percent were based on a motivation involving religious bias
- and 9 percent were based on a motivation involving disability bias



# Remembering the Why: 2019

Key findings from the 2019 Youth Risk Behavior Survey include:

- LGBT youth are 2x as likely (31% vs 15%) to have been bullied in the last 30 days than their heterosexual peers.
- LGBT youth are 3.5x as likely (38% vs 14%) to have experienced unwanted sexual contact in their lifetime than their heterosexual peers.
- LGBT youth are 3x as likely (13% vs 5%) to have skipped school in the last 30 days because of feeling unsafe than their heterosexual peers.
- LGBT youth are 4.5x as likely (19% vs 4%) to have attempted suicide in the last 12 months than their heterosexual peers.

# What is Act 1?

# 2019

## An Act Related to the Ethnic and Social Equity Standards for Public Schools

- Act 1 was advocated for by a coalition of BIPOC, LGBTQIA+, and people with disabilities to further education justice in VT
- The Ethnic and Social Equity Standards Advisory Working Group is established

# What is Act 1?

# 2019

## Role of The Ethnic and Social Equity Standards Advisory Working Group

- The Working Group shall review standards for student performance adopted by the State Board of Education under 16 V.S.A. § 164(9)
- The Working Group may review State statutes, State Board rules, and school district and supervisory union policies that concern or impact standards for student performance or curriculum used in schools
- CENTER: inclusion, cultural responsiveness, anti-racism, anti-discrimination and equity

# Who is the Act 1 Working Group?



- State leaders in education, high school students, civil society advocates, and community members who care deeply about education, justice, inclusivity, and social and racial equity in Vermont.
- Half were selected by the Educational Justice Coalition to represent diverse communities and half are education stakeholders in Vermont (representatives of VPA, VSA, VSBA, VT-NEA, VCLA and VISA ).

# Education Quality Standards

# What are the Education Quality Standards?

A governmental rule (in the form of a manual) authorized by the State Board of Education, which impacts all Vermont schools. A broad, multi-faceted guide, the EQS, broadly speaking:

(a) articulates important school values, objectives, and aspirations;

and

(b) provides direction to school districts as they develop curriculum and choose learning materials and instructional practices.

# EQS

## Educational Quality Standards

# Act I, EQS Revisions

## 2020-21

- The Act 1 Working Group determines revisions to the EQS as its first major task and establishes a subcommittee
- Extensive hours for the [ACT 1 working group](#) engaging stakeholders for many drafts towards a revised EQS

## Spring 2022

- VSBA creates a committee to review and provide recommendations on the revised EQS draft (VSA, VPA submit recommendations from members)
- The Act 1 Working Group votes unanimously to send the revisions to the State Board of Education
- Act I Work Group Submits Proposed EQS Revisions to Vermont [State Board of Education](#)
- Board of Education Subcommittee begins review of Revisions

## Fall 2022

- [Under Review in a VT State Board of Education Subcommittee](#)

The Act 1 Working Group reviewed EQS to make sure it guides schools to:



Promote critical thinking around the history, contributions, and viewpoints of many different ethnic and social groups



Encourage students to explore questions about ethnic and social identities as well as issues around equality and racism



Provide welcoming spaces for all students



Develop pathways for families to talk about their child's experiences related to race, ethnic, or social group identity at school



# Ways the Updates Support All Students

## The recommended EQS changes ask schools to:

- ✓ Prepare students to work, train, and learn in socially and culturally inclusive spaces
- ✓ Create learning spaces that improve student wellbeing including opportunities for movement in the classroom
- ✓ Create classroom cultures based on restorative justice that center the values of relationships, respect, responsibility, repair, and reintegration
- ✓ Provide students with high-quality, evidence-based reading instruction in the early grades

# Ways the Updates Support All Students (Continued)

The recommended EQS changes ask schools to:

- ✓ Have administrators take part in professional development that will help further equity in the supervisory union/school district
- ✓ Offer counseling services that are respectful of students' identities and support students who experience or witness racism or discrimination
- ✓ Engage students, parents/legal guardians, and community members when developing Ethnic Studies programming and resources embedded across the curriculum
- ✓ Teach about ways different social, cultural, racial, linguistic, ethnic and Indigenous groups have throughout history and currently contributed to building and strengthening democracy in the US and globally

# Ways the Updates Support Students Living in Poverty

## The recommended EQS changes ask schools to:

- ✓ Recognize and reduce any financial barriers to accessing flexible pathways such as out-of-school learning opportunities
- ✓ Further economic justice by asking schools to teach about and help students understand why everyone should have economic opportunities

# Ways the Updates Support BIPOC Students

## The recommended EQS changes ask schools to:

- ✓ Create opportunities for educators to explore their own identities and biases
- ✓ Create learning environments where students can explore ethnic, cultural, and racial perspectives and issues within and beyond the classroom
- ✓ Collect data to see if there is disproportional representation in school programs such as suspension and detentions, special education, or advanced placement courses

# Ways the Updates support LGBTQIA+ Students

The recommended EQS changes ask schools to:

- ✓ Develop flexible pathways that understand and respect students' LGBTQIA+ identity
- ✓ Provide access to counseling on gender identity and gender transition
- ✓ Provide health services that are respectful to students' lived experiences as LGBTQIA+ young people



# Ways the Updates Support Students with Disabilities

## The recommended EQS changes ask schools to:

- ✓ Providing learning experiences designed for neurodiversity that include multiple ways for students to access learning
- ✓ Use using educational and assistive technology to reduce barriers to learning
- ✓ Offer flexible pathway learning opportunities that recognize the lived experience of students who are neurodiverse and/or have disabilities
- ✓ Have a collection of accessible print, multimedia, alternate format instructional materials (e.g. MP3 audio files, electronic braille, and other forms of E- texts)



# Ways the Updates Support Multilingual Students

## The recommended EQS changes ask schools to:

- ✓ Communicate to parents/legal guardians about opportunities for flexible pathways in ways that are culturally and linguistically inclusive including using their home language
- ✓ Communicate the technical center eligibility requirements to students, staff, and parents/legal guardians in inclusive ways such as using the home language
- ✓ Provide multilingual students programs and accommodations that make sure multilingual students have access to grade-level learning so they can move through the grades and graduate
- ✓ Make sure multilingual students have access to all instruction and school-based programs by providing interpretation, technology, and other services

# Statement of Purpose

## The Statement of Purpose:

“The purpose of these rules is to ensure that all students in Vermont public schools and approved independent schools are afforded educational opportunities that are substantially equal in quality, equitable, anti-racist, culturally responsive, anti-discriminatory, and inclusive, and enable them to achieve or exceed the standards approved by the State Board of Education.”



# Statement of Purpose (cont.)

The Statement of Purpose expands discrimination categories beyond federal legal definitions:

In addition to the non-discriminatory protections in Section 2113, these rules strictly prohibit discrimination against any student pursuing an education or participating in the general life or activities of a public school or an approved independent school as a result of, or based upon, ethnicity, caste, language and linguistic diversity, socio-economic status, religion, housing status, and non-citizenship or immigration status.

These rules further require all schools to strive for a culturally responsive pedagogy that critically examines and imparts a comprehensive historical and socially conscious understanding of:

- A. the causes and effects of bias and discrimination as a result of, or based upon, the reasons set forth in Section 2113 of this Manual and in this Statement of Purpose;
- B. why all persons should have equitable access to social and economic opportunity;
- C. why persons and institutions must identify and prevent individual, group, and systemic racism, discrimination and all forms of unfair treatment; and
- D. the positive and multi-faceted contributions of different social, cultural, racial, linguistic ethnic and Indigenous groups to the historical and ongoing project of building and strengthening democracy in the United States and globally.

[...]

This manual adopts a definition of Discrimination that is broader than its legal definition. Nothing herein shall be construed as creating or recognizing any private right of action.

# The Role of School Boards

# What does the revised EQS say about School Boards?

“Supervisory union boards shall use the standards as the basis for the development and selection of curriculum, methods of instruction, locally developed assessments, and the content and skills taught and learned in school.”

Instructional Practices

Flexible Pathways

Curriculum Content and Coordination

Graduation Requirements

Supporting School Leadership

Professional Learning

Continuous Improvement Plan

# Instructional Practices

## What the recommended changes do:

- Indicate that educators shall be supported in:
  - Examining how their own biases may impact their teaching practices
  - Modeling high expectations for all learners
  - Applying culturally responsive teaching practices
  - Reducing barriers to learning for all learners
  - Cultivating learner agency
  - Fostering well-being in their classrooms
  - Applying the tenets of restorative justice practices

## Role of School Boards:

- Promote hiring practices that express the desired values of educators up front
- Hire and retain superintendents that have values and leadership skills that align with promoting more equitable and inclusive education systems

# Flexible Pathways

## What the recommended changes do:

- Expanded ways to embrace the diversity of students including cultural, racial, ethnic, linguistic, social, disability-related, and neurodivergent identities when planning for and providing flexible pathways
- Make resources and opportunities related to flexible pathways accessible to all students and families who wish to participate
- Addressed that schools monitor who uses programs and who doesn't participate so that schools can identify and address any barriers to participation

## Role of School Boards:

- Request data from administrators on who is accessing flexible pathways and why or why not students are participating in flexible pathways
- Actively pursue student voice on flexible pathway experiences

# Curriculum Content and Coordination

## What the recommended changes do:

- Define literacy instruction and its importance
- Include the importance of valuing the diverse language backgrounds of all students
- Added that the curriculum should be accessible to families
- Included research and development of age and grade appropriate Ethnic Studies content to be included in the school curriculum
- Continuously monitor the progress towards these goals
- Create intentional community engagement in the process

## Role of School Boards:

- Ensure existing policies align with and create new policies to lead to the effective implementation of Ethnic Studies across Curriculum Content Areas
- Monitor progress toward the goals laid out in the EQS
- Engage community members (particularly from those who are often underrepresented in this work) in the development and implementation of ethnic studies

# Graduation Requirements

## What the recommended changes do:

- Align the changes of the manual with expected graduation requirements
- Added information outlining a district's responsibilities in supporting English Learners on their path to graduation, particularly as it pertains to the student's personalized learning plan

## Role of School Boards:

- "It is the responsibility of the supervisory union board to ensure alignment in expectations for all students within a supervisory union."
- Have a clear vision for student outcomes (e.g. Portrait of a Graduate, Vision for Student Learning)
- Ensure the vision for student learning maintains high expectations for all students
- Use data to investigate disproportionate negative outcomes for students (e.g. disciplinary action, academic achievement) and invest resources in services that aim to improve success of those on the margins

# School Leadership and Professional Learning

## What the recommended changes do:

- States the clear goal of creating anti-racist, culturally responsive, inclusive learning spaces for education leaders
- Requires school leadership, including principals, school boards, and others, to participate in professional development that increases their understanding of these goals and advances equity

## Role of School Boards:

- Invest in vertical professional development aligned with these goals
- Hire and retain superintendents that have values and leadership skills that align with promoting more equitable and inclusive education systems
- Promote hiring and sustainment of educators of color, LGBTQ+ staff; promoting a diverse and inclusive workforce



# Continuous Improvement Plan

## What the recommended changes do:


- Added that schools must review data for demographic or discriminatory patterns
- Required data analysis for uneven representation in any aspects of school experiences

## Role of School Boards:

- School board should provide feedback and approve the continuous improvement plan to include strategies and support systems to ensure the school maintains a learning and social environment that is safe, orderly, civil and positive, culturally responsive, anti-racist, inclusive, and anti-discriminatory, and free from harassment, hazing and bullying
- Use data to investigate disproportionate negative outcomes for students (e.g. disciplinary action, academic achievement) and invest resources in services that aim to improve success of those on the margins

# What's Next?





THE ONLY WAY TO DEAL  
WITH AN UNFREE WORLD IS TO  
BECOME SO ABSOLUTELY FREE  
THAT YOUR VERY EXISTENCE  
IS AN ACT OF REBELLION.  
-ALBERT CAMUS

Exit Ticket:  
What's  
Your Why?

# Additional Resources

[Ethnic and Social Equity Standards Advisory Working Group | Agency of Education \(vermont.gov\)](#)

## **Supporting Materials:**

[Moving Vermont into the Future](#)

[Moving Education Forward in Vermont: An Act 1 Working Group Update](#)

[Memorandum: Revisions to the Series 2000 - Educational Quality Standards/Manual of Rules and Practices](#)

[Act 1 Ethnic Studies and Social Equity Working Group - Supplemental Guidance to Revised EQS Manual](#)