Advancing racial equity: the role of government

Bloomington is a changing community. The incoming Kindergarten class will be mostly students of color. If we are to be culturally competent as a community and diverse and inclusive as an organization, then our team needs to take the lead in acknowledging and advancing racial equity within Bloomington. As a result of our commitment to racial equity, our residents will be authentically engaged in our civic processes, our workforce will be more reflective of our community, and Bloomington will sustain itself as a welcoming, vibrant, stable, healthy, safe and desirable place to live, play and do business.

In order to advance this commitment, we need to ensure that equity and disparities are considered when reviewing or adopting City practices, policies and ordinances. We also need to invest in resources, training, time and safe spaces for dialogue and healthy conversations on race within our organization. Trust is the foundation for building and maintaining a healthy community and once we better understand who we are as a community, we can begin to work toward building an organization that equitably serves our community.

Racial equity training

A team from the City of Bloomington is attending a year-long advanced racial equity training from the Local and Regional Government Alliance on Race & Equity. The "Advancing Racial Equity: the Role of Government" workshop will provide an introduction to the role, responsibilities and opportunities for government to advance racial equity.

Objectives

- Gain understanding of the role of government in relation to racial equity
- Develop a shared racial equity analysis including definitions of terminology
- Develop skills at analyzing policies and practices from a racial equity perspective and communicating about race
- Strategize with others about how government can advance racial equity

As a result of participation, each jurisdiction will have:

- Racial equity training curriculum
- Trained facilitators to implement training with other employees
- Racial equity tools to be used in policy, practice, programs and decisions
- Examples of policies and practices that help advance racial equity
- Racial equity action plan

Racial inequities are not random; they have been created and sustained over time. Inequities will not disappear on their own. A growing field of practice is available so that local and regional government can proactively work to advance racial equity, focusing on eliminating inequities and increasing success for all.

- Local and Regional Government Alliance on Race & Equity

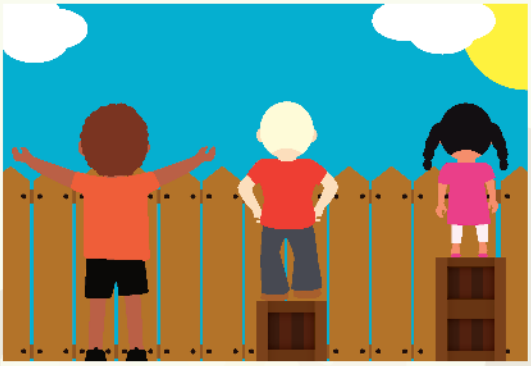
Shared definitions, concepts and principles

Equality

Equality is about Sameness.

Equality promotes fairness and justice by giving everyone the same thing.

It can only work if everyone starts from the same place.



Equity

Equity is about Fairness.

Our differences and history can create barriers to participation, so we must first insure equity before we can enjoy equality.

Racial equity - "Closing the gap" so that race does not predict one's success, while improving outcomes for all. To do so, one has to target strategies to focus improvements for those worse off and move beyond "services" and focus on changing policies, institutions and structures.

Bias - the evaluation of one group and its member relative to another. We all carry bias. Acting on bias can be discriminatory and create negative outcomes for particular groups.

Explicit bias

- Expressed directly
- Aware of bias
- Operates consciously
- Example – "I like whites more than Latinos."

Implicit bias

- Expressed indirectly
- Unaware of bias
- Operates subconsciously
- Example – sitting further away from a Latino than a white individual

Source: Unconscious (Implicit) Bias and Health Disparities: Where Do We Go from Here?

Institutional/Explicit

Policies which explicitly discriminate against a group.

Example: Police department fails to hire people of color.

Institutional/Implicit

Policies that negatively impact one group unintentionally.

Example: The Department of Health fails to make information about vaccinations and other vital services available to Somalis, Latinos and other immigrant populations.

Individual/Explicit

Prejudice in action – discrimination.

Example: An employee from Parks and Recreation uses racial slurs while working on a playground equipment at a City park.

Individual/Implicit

Unconscious attitudes and beliefs.

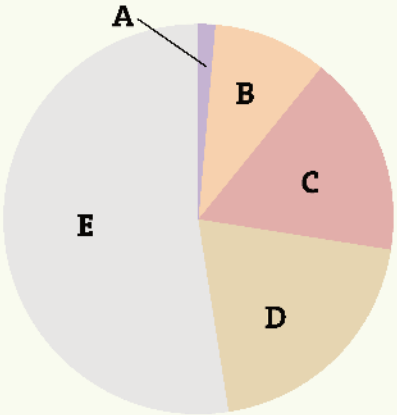
Example: An employee working the information desk calls for police when seeing a large group of young African Americans gather for a film celebrating the life of Thurgood Marshall.

Source: True Democracy? Racial Equity Opportunities for Government and Our Communities.

Full-time City of Bloomington employees

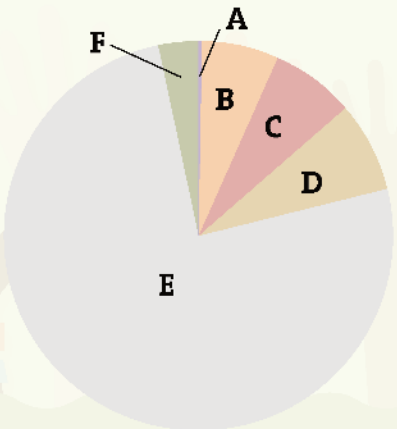
504	Caucasian
13	Asian/Pacific Islander
12	Hispanic
10	African American
1	American Indian
540	Total

2015-2016 school by ethnicity for all grades for Bloomington Public Schools



A. American Indian	1.5%
B. Asian/Pacific Islander	9.5%
C. Hispanic	16.7%
D. African American	19.9%
E. Caucasian	52.4%

2014 Estimates of Bloomington's Population by Ethnicity



A. American Indian	0.3%
B. Asian/Pacific Islander	6.4%
C. Hispanic	7.2%
D. African American	7.3%
E. Caucasian	75.8%
F. Other	3.1%

City of Bloomington Team:

Jamie Verbrugge, City Manager
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