

Equity & Excellence: Educating All Students

Dr. Jeanette Bartley

Illinois Mathematics & Science Academy

- Residential STEM Academy
- Grades 10 - 12; gifted and talented students
- 651 students from 54 Illinois counties
- Rigorous application process
- 57% of Faculty have doctoral degrees; all have Master's degrees

Illinois Mathematics & Science Academy

- Mission: To ignite and nurture creative, ethical, scientific minds that advance the human condition.
- Beliefs: We Believe That...
 - ***All people have equal intrinsic worth.***
 - All people have choices and are responsible for their actions.
 - Belonging to a community requires commitment to the common good.
 - ***Diverse perspectives enrich understanding and inspire discovery and creativity.***
 - Honesty, trust and respect are vital for any relationship to thrive.
 - ***Learning never ends.***
 - ***Meaning is constructed by the learner.***
 - ***No one's path in life is predetermined.***
 - ***The ability to discern and create connections is the essence of understanding.***
 - We are all stewards of our planet.
 - We can significantly improve life on our planet.

Equity & Excellence at IMSA

Equity and Excellence Plan Outcomes

Outcome #1: Providing professional learning that continuously develops the Cultural Competence and equity awareness of staff, including faculty, as well as board members and external partners.

Outcome #2: Implementing strategies to recruit, support, and retain Culturally, Linguistically and Economically Diverse groups and support and retain Marginalized groups.

Outcome #3: *Differentiating resources as necessary to provide every student with access to Culturally Competent pedagogy, curriculum, co-curriculum, support, facilities and other educational resources with an ultimate goal of achieving Excellence.*

Equity and Excellence Policy Outcome #3

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Equity and Excellence Policy Outcome #3

Results from the ECAP: Culturally Responsive Teaching

- The Equity Context Analysis Process yielded that culturally responsive teaching is not evident approximately 50% of the time (score = 344/696).
- It was agreed upon by 50% of parents and observed during classroom interactions that 21% of the time instruction is not relevant to and representative of students' lived experiences and personal identities, and builds upon students' prior knowledge.

Equity and Excellence Policy Outcome #3

Results from the ECAP: Positive Representations of Diverse Peoples

- As observed, positive representations of diverse peoples (e.g., lived experiences, personal identities, and world views) are not present throughout IMSA in texts, displays, and materials, and experiences of historically marginalized groups are not represented accurately, evident 47% of the time during classroom interactions, 58% of the time during school building walk-through and agreed upon by 69% of parents.
- It was further observed that sufficient structures are not in place to ensure cultural, socio-emotional, physical, and intellectual safety in the learning community, observed 36% of time during school building walk-through and 14% of time during classroom observations.

Equity and Excellence Policy Outcome #3

Strategies

Apply learnings from professional development to begin revising current curriculum to be culturally responsive by framing the value of differentiation within the context of the achievement of educational equity.

Examine access to culturally responsive and differentiated academic, social-emotional, and assistive supports and create a plan (faculty-staff collaboration) to achieve equity.

Improve access by creating a pathway for CLED students to meaningfully participate in higher level/advanced STEM courses, leadership positions, academic/social-emotional supports, etc.

What we have done

External Program Reviews

- Discipline-specific program reviews over the last 10 years
- Program reviews to evaluate pedagogy and curriculum in relation to IMSA's mission, Core competencies, and Standards of Significant Learning
- Evaluations based on interviews with students, faculty, and staff and classroom observations

Program Deep Dives

- Check-in process by the Board of Trustees
- Focused on three areas
 - Responses to External Program Reviews
 - Program Impact (related to 2nd legislative charge)
 - Equity in the Classroom
 - How is an equity lens evident in the following areas?
 - In the classroom learning environment
 - On course syllabi
 - In formative assessments
 - In the instructor's pedagogy

Assessments & Equity Professional Development

- Whole group work and discipline-specific PLCs to evaluate current assessments from an equity lens
 - Do curricula and assessment strategies provide multiple opportunities to engage students and assess student learning?
 - Are students given multiple and varied assessments to assess student learning?
 - Do assessments take into account where individual students are at in the learning process?

Successes & Challenges

- Successes
 - We have a holistic view of our curricula and where work needs to be done
 - ‘Backwards mapping’ needs; began with assessment and equity
 - Foundation has been laid for future work related to teaching and learning through an equity lens

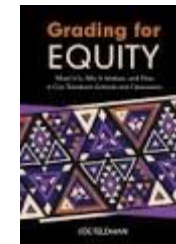
Successes & Challenges

- Challenges/ Work ahead
 - Need to look at how we are 'grading' students' learning
 - Need to focus on progress and growth over final grades

Where we are now

Mastery Grading

- *Summer 2021*
 - Cohort of faculty, Principal, and Dean of Academics attended virtual Mastery Grading Conference
 - Cohort book study on *Grading for Equity*
 - Principal's Office established funding for the purchase of related resources for the 2021-2022 academic year
 - Principal's Office established criteria for setting up Action Teams



Mastery Grading

- *Fall 2021*
 - Principal's Office set up Action Teams with faculty
 - Equity Grading
 - Competency/Mastery-based Learning
 - Mastery Grading Pilots
 - Scientific Investigations - Chemistry
 - Literary Explorations 1

Mastery Grading

- *Spring 2022*
 - Action Teams present findings & recommendations to IMSA's leadership
 - Additional Mastery Grading Pilots
 - Literary Explorations II
 - Statistics
 - Professional development focused on mastery grading (Matt Massey, ASCTE; Tom Guskey)

Mastery Grading

- Successes
 - Some teachers are trying out forms of mastery grading in their courses
 - Teachers (and students) are seeing the value in mastery grading
 - Failure is a sign of progress

Mastery Grading

- Challenges
 - Our current grading system is based on traditional letter grades; this works for some, but not all
 - Getting buy-in from all stakeholders
 - Ensuring that all stakeholders understand what mastery grading means, looks like, and why it's important particularly in relation to equity for all students

Moving Forward

Mastery Grading

- Encourage more teachers to pilot some form of mastery grading in at least one of their courses
- Provide additional professional development on mastery grading
- An Academy-wide review of grading policies and processes; move toward more equitable grading policies and processes across all disciplines
- Set up research project to collect data on the pilots to assess alignment to Equity & Excellence Plan
- Possible transition to a mastery (competency)-based learning system

Examining Curriculum for Cultural Responsiveness

Course description and objectives that reflect diversity

How does my discipline help prepare students to live and work in today's global and interdependent world?

Content integration that includes multiculturalism

What issues of diversity, social justice, and civic engagement are infused in my course curriculum & how?

Instructional resources and materials

How inclusive are my selected materials?

Faculty and student worldviews and learning styles

How do student and faculty worldviews, learning styles, and teaching strategies match, and how are my students' learning styles accommodated?

Instructional strategies

How diversified are my strategies for facilitating instruction and classroom dynamics?

Equity-mindedness

What are some inequities that exist and in what ways do I make my teaching personalized and responsive to these inequities?

Assessment diversification

How do assessment activities accommodate my students' learning styles?

Thank You!