

# Equity Audit



## What is an equity audit?

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An equity audit is a study of the fairness of an institution's policies, programs, and practices. Such audits represent a significant investment in resources, both human and material. Thus, it is worthwhile to anticipate potential challenges and develop a plan for addressing them. The goal is that the process will move as smoothly as possible, and the results will help inform the next steps. The tool presented here is designed to facilitate equity audits in educational settings. This tool helps to critically examine policies, programs, and practices that directly or indirectly impact students or staff relative to their race, ethnicity, gender, national origin (English Learners), language, disability, age, sexual orientation, sexual identity, religion, or other socioculturally significant factors. A regular organizational audit may have an equity component, but that is not its specific purpose.

## What is MAEC's Equity Audit Tool?

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MAEC, Inc. developed the three Equity Audit tools found in this document to offer districts, schools, and teachers a way to begin conducting an equity audit. These tools were designed to:

1. Help educators develop a more concrete understanding of what it means to practice equity, and
2. Reflect on whether current school policies, procedures and practices are equitable.

This tool can be used for individual or small group reflection, or it can be used as part of a large-scale process for advancing equity.

MAEC's Equity Audit consists of three questionnaires for school leaders, educators, and staff to assess if their schools and classrooms are equitable across various criteria. The three questionnaires are: *Criteria for an Equitable School* (composed of 101 questions), *Criteria for an Equitable Classroom* (composed of 36 questions), and *Teacher Behaviors that Encourage Student Persistence* (composed of 59 questions). These tools examine practices, policies, and procedures at each level to determine if the school community is creating a positive, equitable learning environment that allows students and staff to perform at their highest levels. The questionnaires are meant to provide a birds-eye view of various aspects of equity and highlight many systemic barriers to equity that might exist. The MAEC team developed the questionnaires relying on extensive experience in the field of educational equity and a review of relevant literature.

### What is an Equity Audit? An Analogy.

**Service:** providing shoes.

**Equality:** everyone gets a pair of shoes.

**Equity:** everyone gets shoes that fit.

**Equity Audit:** determining

- (1) who "everyone" is,
- (2) what constitutes "shoes," and
- (3) creating decision-making processes for how "fit" is identified and evaluated.

## What is different about the 2021 version?

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MAEC significantly revised the tool based on feedback from practitioners and researchers. The updated audit accounts for the new realities many schools face with COVID-19, including virtual learning. *Questions that relate to COVID-19 can be found in a maroon color throughout the document.* This tool can be used as a reflection tool in a comprehensive equity audit process. For more guidance on conducting an equity audit, please refer to MAEC's *An Equity Audit: Is It In Your Future*. MAEC also revised the scale for rating each item from a two-point scale to a four-point scale to account for the different stages at which institutions may find themselves on their equity journey. Expanding the scale allows for a more thorough look at where each entity is in regards to equitable policies, practices, and procedures.

## How to implement MAEC's Equity Audit tool

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The district/school will develop a process for answering the questions on the Equity Audit tool. One person should not complete this process: it should involve all key stakeholders and include diverse voices. Representatives from the following groups should be included: administrators, faculty, staff, students, parents, and community members. One valuable way to fill out the document is by establishing an equity committee and discussing each question so that the committee reaches a consensus on how to rate the question. Another is to conduct the audit as a survey among key stakeholders and to use the average score per question.

An important reminder is that the Equity Audit is a tool that provides a starting point in evaluating your institution's current state concerning equity. It provides a snapshot of your district/school's state at one point in time. By no means is it exhaustive and does not include all potential systemic barriers to equity or focuses on all groups that might not be receiving required supports. Once you receive the initial data from this tool, it might be necessary to investigate your system further to better understand different constituents' individual experiences with additional data collections.

For guidance on next steps after completing an equity audit, please [contact MAEC](#).

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