



**CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT  
OF EDUCATION**

**TONY THURMOND**  
STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF  
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

---

1430 N STREET, SACRAMENTO, CA 95814-5901 • 916-319-0800 • WWW.CDE.CA.GOV

November 17, 2020

To our California Department of Education team members in our State Special Schools:

As I have settled into my first few months partnering with our California Department of Education (CDE) team members, advancing equity across our organization and schools, it has been my great privilege and honor to get to know each of you better, to learn from you, and to be inspired by the many ways you go above and beyond to serve learners of all backgrounds and abilities. Thank you for welcoming me into your communities.

At this moment in our history, every public educator in the nation is acknowledging the long-standing systemic barriers that have denied all students the opportunity to achieve equally due to inequities in our communities. For far too long our public schools have not been designed or equipped to ensure a level the playing field for learners. Now is the time to rethink those systems. We owe it to our students.

A few weeks ago, Dr. Stephanie Gregson, Chief Deputy Superintendent of Public Instruction, sent a note to all CDE staff members with a high-level outline for our Department's implicit bias initiative. Today I, along with Kindra Britt, Deputy Superintendent, Access for All Branch; Dr. Robin Zane, Director, State Special Schools and Services Division; Clark Brooke, Superintendent, California School for the Deaf, Fremont and Dr. Nancy Hlibok Amann, Superintendent, California School for the Deaf, Riverside, and; Gina Ouellette, Superintendent of the California School for the Blind are following up with the teams from our State Special Schools. As a group that directly serves students, we have unique opportunities in this space: to design strategies that not only go deeper and are more holistic, but ones that can also be the model for how other schools across California approach this work in a meaningful, lasting way.

I want to take this opportunity to provide a high-level update and outline of what our equity work plan will look like over a 24-month period with a projected start date of March 2021 for full implementation:

1. **Setting the groundwork:** professional development for administrators, staff and educating and training teachers, students and parents, with the purpose of creating a common understanding – and a safe space for self-reflection – of how race, class, and power influences their school community

11/12/20

Page 2

2. **Research and reflection:** an equity needs assessment that takes a deep dive into data, organizational structures, clinical and instructional practices and assumptions to determine specific equity strengths, growth areas, and opportunities for new solutions
3. **Skill-building, enhancing clinical practice and instructional change:** Staff will work collaboratively to develop and lead ongoing trainings that use consultation, coaching, observation, data analysis, and reflection to design effective systems and individual-based interventions

As we move through each step of our journey together, we'll go deeper into specific timelines and components. As you can see, this is far from the "one-and-done" implicit bias trainings too many organizations, unfortunately, check off their lists before moving back to the status quo. To truly achieve equity for all learners, this is tough, long-term work that must engage all participants in the system with a common vision, language, and outcome.

We are truly excited to accelerate this work with each and every one of you. We will need to lean on your experiences and expertise throughout this process, so please provide feedback as we go along. We also will continue to provide updates as we learn, lead, and grow alongside each other.

Thank you for all you do to ensure every learner has the access and opportunity to achieve in school and in their lives.

Sincerely,



Daniel Lee, Psy.D, CSP  
Deputy Superintendent of Equity



Kindra Britt  
Deputy Superintendent of Public Instruction



Robin Lee Zane  
Director State Special Schools and Diagnostic Centers