



Who is teaching your children? How DEI policies influence K-12 educator hiring in America

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INTRODUCTION

The kinds of commitments public school systems are making these days aren't simply words on a page. They inform everything the district does, including who gets to teach there.

More and more, America's public school classrooms are becoming ground zero for political indoctrination. The same contentious ideologies and social activism that have taken over colleges and universities have crept into K-12 education. Increasingly, critical race theory and ill-defined concepts such as "systemic racism" and "unconscious bias" are adopted into policy and curriculum as undeniable truths and packaged as diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) or Social Emotional Learning (SEL). The push isn't new, but many parents were unaware this is what happened in their children's classrooms until pandemic-era school closures and e-learning gave them a front-row seat to their children's education.

While much attention has been turned to identity politics infiltrating American classrooms, less focus has been paid to the influence on the people schools are hiring to impart this indoctrination on students. A recent survey shows DEI departments and administrative positions have become more common, especially in large districts.¹ What about classroom teachers?

The National Opportunity Project (NOP), a nonprofit government watchdog and education organization, has produced the nation's first survey and overview of the DEI hiring process in K-12 education. If Americans are concerned about political indoctrination in their children's classrooms, NOP must start by understanding how public school districts hire teachers to impart such politics. Is there reason to believe districts are seeking teachers who have certain political or social beliefs—and weeding out those who don't? For instance, are applicants to a P.E. instructor position screened for their beliefs about equity? Is a qualified candidate for a third grade teaching slot less likely to get the job if she publicly espouses conservative views? Can a critic of critical race theory expect to be seriously considered for a job teaching world history?

The kinds of commitments public school systems are making these days aren't simply words on a page. They inform everything the district does, including who gets to teach there. If applicants to such districts who don't subscribe to certain views are weeded out, then the practices are merely another tool for indoctrinating K-12 students into a single political ideology.

Importantly, the findings of this report raise serious legal questions in the wake of the Supreme Court's recent decision outlawing race-based college admissions. Employment policies in K-12 public schools that consider race, creed, and political ideology and are infused with biased language and decision-making processes unfairly, and sometimes illegally, skew hiring in favor of certain applicants.

¹ Greene, Jay and James Paul. (2021, October 19). Equity Elementary: "Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion" Staff in Public Schools. Heritage Foundation. <https://www.heritage.org/education/report/equity-elementary-diversity-equity-and-inclusion-staff-public-schools>.

Report methodology

To get a sense of whether viewpoint discrimination is afoot in teacher hiring, NOP surveyed some of the largest K-12 systems in the U.S., plus several districts with a local or national reputation for embracing controversial and divisive political and social initiatives. For the latter, NOP used news media coverage² and simple internet searches for public school systems' policies, vision statements, strategic plans, and administrative offices or positions related to diversity, equity, and inclusion. NOP identified which districts were already committed to these concepts and gathered examples of how such convictions are applied to teacher-hiring.

NOP received responsive records from 69 school districts of 74 NOP contacted.³

From each district, NOP requested⁴:

- Sample job postings and qualifications for teaching positions
- Internal documents detailing the hiring process
- Job applications for teaching positions
- Other screening forms, tools, or protocols
- Assessments given to candidates
- District- or building-level interview questions and guidelines and
- Rubrics for evaluating candidates (e.g., their application or interview responses)

In reading responsive records, NOP “flagged” content or practices that incorporated DEI concepts or ideologically-slanted language. Because NOP expected that ideological preference in the teacher hiring process would be an outgrowth of broader commitments the school board had made, NOP also compared flagged content with language in any public declarations the district made or approved (e.g., diversity statements, equity pledges, anti-racism resolutions).

What NOP found

Among districts that provided records, NOP found myriad examples of political and social ideology influencing the teacher hiring process. NOP also faced resistance to providing either requested records or fully-unredacted documents.

Appendix 1 lists each district to which NOP sent a request, followed by three columns that indicate whether 1) the district provided any responsive records, 2) the district denied and/or redacted records, and 3) records from the district evidenced ideological bias in teacher hiring. A blank box in the last column should not be interpreted to mean the district doesn't practice any kind of ideological screening. Rather, it indicates NOP did not identify such bias in the records obtained through the public records request.

2 e.g.: Will, Madeline. (2021, December 7). Districts Are Trying to Screen Out Racial Biases During Teacher Job Interviews. Education Week. <https://www.edweek.org/leadership/districts-are-trying-to-screen-out-racial-biases-during-teacher-job-interviews-heres-how/2021/12>. And, White, Stephanie. (2021, June 23). Why Hiring Diverse Teachers is Just One Way to Let Our JCPS Students Know They Matter. Courier Journal. <https://www.courier-journal.com/story/opinion/2021/06/23/jcps-must-hire-diverse-teachers-let-students-know-they-matter/7695793002/>.

3 Districts from whom NOP requested but didn't receive records were Minneapolis Public Schools, St. Paul (MN) Public Schools, Hillsborough County School District (FL), Virginia Beach Public Schools, Madison (WI) Metropolitan School District, Carmel Clay Schools (IN), and New York City Public Schools. Several others responded but could not produce records at a reasonable fee.

4 NOP excluded from request and analysis any documents related specifically to recruitment.

NOP organized the evidence of the bias NOP noted into five themes:

1. Ideological qualifications in teacher job postings
2. Application and interview questions that screen for political and social ideology
3. Using evaluation criteria to find an ideological fit
4. Setting racial and ethnic diversity hiring goals
5. Identity quotas for hiring committees and interview panels

The examples chosen within each theme are illustrative, rather than comprehensive.

1. Ideological qualifications in teacher job postings

Districts are using coded language in job postings—specifically, in attributes that qualified candidates should have—that potentially deters ideological dissenters from applying. These are invitations for (or virtue signals to) ideological partners.

Examples of coded ideological language:

- Chicago Public Schools says it wants “inclusive educators” with “cultural competence.”
- Baltimore County Schools says candidates should be able to “provide for equitable learning experiences” and “demonstrate the qualities of an equity-literate educator.”
- In Michigan’s Grand Rapids Public Schools, qualified applicants “must have a demonstrated ability to work in an economically, culturally, and racially diverse environment.”
- Successful candidates in State College Area School District, Pennsylvania, “must demonstrate a commitment to diversity and recognized equity and inclusivity as the foundations to prepare each student for lifelong success, our mission.”

Washington, D.C.
Public Schools
wants teachers
who “Define,
understand, and
promote equity so
that we eliminate
opportunity gaps
and systematically
interrupt
institutional bias.”

The most politically-charged job ads incorporate strong language about racism, systems, and/or justice. They position teachers as soldiers who share responsibility for upending societal barriers. Their message to applicants is clear: *Be prepared to join our crusade, or don’t apply.*

Examples of politically-charged job postings:

- Applicants to Evanston Township High School District 202 in Illinois, must “demonstrate a commitment to social justice, equity, excellence and high expectations for all students.”
- Denver Public Schools says qualified candidates “will have an anti-racist mindset and will work to dismantle systems of oppression and inequity in our community.”
- Washington, D.C. Public Schools wants teachers who “Define, understand, and promote equity so that we eliminate opportunity gaps and systematically interrupt institutional bias.”
- City Schools of Decatur, Georgia, wants candidates who are “committed to CSD’s goal



toward dismantling systemic racism and generating racial equity.”

2. Application and interview questions that screen for political and social ideology

NOP also found application and interview questions that presume and screen for agreement with equity, diversity, and related concepts. Some were more open-ended, like this prompt on Illinois’ Mundelein High School’s application: “Our school’s core values are equity, growth, and collaboration. Please detail how you would demonstrate these values.” But NOP also encountered questions that were loaded and presumptive.

Example application questions:

- Edina Public Schools, Minnesota: “Describe a time when you experienced or witnessed an inequity. What steps did you take in response to the situation?”
- Niles Township 219, Illinois: “What is most significant to you about the potential for you to work with students of races and cultures different from your own?”
- In Evanston/Skokie School District 65, Illinois: “What do you think it means to be conscious of race and culture in an educational environment? What is your current thinking about equity, and how has your thinking changed over time? Specifically, how are you looking to grow your practice of leading/teaching with a racial equity lens?”
- Denver Public Schools: “Do you think the classroom is an appropriate place to discuss race? Culture? If so, what do those discussions look like?”

Likewise, NOP saw a range of questions in interview protocols that interrogate candidates on DEI concepts. Some ask more generally about addressing diversity or equity at the classroom level. Others explicitly regard the teacher as a social justice warrior.

Example interview questions:

- “Loudoun County Public Schools [Virginia] is becoming more racially and ethnically diverse. How would race and diversity impact your classroom?”
- Gwinnet County Schools, Georgia: “What are your experiences working with, and respecting, students’ diversity, including language, culture, race, gender and special needs?”
- Homewood-Flossmoor High School, Illinois: “What does culturally-responsive teaching mean to you? Provide an example of how you have created equity in your classroom.”
- Montgomery County Public Schools, Maryland: “How do you incorporate gender diversity and the different racial and cultural backgrounds of your students and families into your daily instruction and classroom environment?” and “How do you ensure that student outcomes are not predictable by race, ethnicity, culture, gender, or sexual orientation?”
- Spokane Public Schools, Washington: “What does a socially just classroom look like?”



Most alarming are questions that go beyond teaching responsibilities to personal disclosure. An interview question in Atlanta Public Schools in Georgia is, “What about your background makes you more/less likely to fit into this community?” Candidates in Niles Township 219 in Illinois, might be asked, “How have you raised your level of consciousness regarding your own values and biases and how they may affect people who are racially or culturally different from you?”

3. Using evaluation criteria to find an ideological fit

The criteria or guidance that some districts give to anyone evaluating a candidate is the starkest, most direct evidence of screening teachers for ideological conformity. Perspectives that diverge from or fail to mesh with the district’s views on equity, for example, are judged poorly.

Interview teams in two Chicagoland districts are told to gauge the match between a candidate and the district’s equity beliefs:

- Oak Park 97 says to consider “whether a candidate demonstrates interests and skills that reflect the district’s equity policy and match the school’s culture and needs.”
- Niles Township 219 tells committee members to look for candidates who (among other things) are “equity driven” and embody district values. Two of these values are, “We embrace diversity and will work to eliminate the racial predictability of student achievements,” and, “We are committed to employing professional staff members who are culturally competent, reflective of our student body, and qualified to advance district initiatives.”

Applicants to Spokane Public Schools in Washington are asked about their “cultural competency” and how they will support classrooms of students who are diverse in certain ways. Raters are directed to look for training related to DEI ideologies (e.g., diversity training, implicit bias training) in applicants’ responses.

Fairfax County Public Schools in Virginia asks teacher candidates, “What does equity mean to you? How do you plan to keep equity at the center of your classroom?” Responses that show strong agreement with DEI concepts like “equity journey,” “equity work,” and “understand that race is social construct” are rated more highly on a scoring rubric. Examples from Fairfax’s screening interview rubric follow.

Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) screening interview rubric questions

Revised 08/26/2021

FCPS Screening Interview Candidate Name: _____ Interview Date: ____/____/____

1. CARING CULTURE: What are some ways you promote a welcoming and inclusive environment for students, families, and colleagues where all feel acknowledged, valued, and affirmed?

COMMENTS: _____

SCORING RUBRIC QUESTION 1:

4 Outstanding Candidate	3 Strong Candidate	2 Average Candidate	1 Developing Candidate
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communicates understanding in their own equity journey, their role in breaking down barriers, and their impact on the equity work. Regularly reflects and focuses on affirming the identities, cultures, languages, abilities, and experiences of students/families/colleagues in their daily work. Assesses the classroom practices to be culturally responsive which can include recognizing and celebrating race and ethnicity of students. Focuses on elevating student voices. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides concrete examples of strategies in providing access and opportunities for students/families. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communicates their progress in their equity journey and seeking resources to understand deeper. Reflects on the culture and languages of their students/families to plan instruction. Assesses their classroom practices to include activities that recognizes cultures and languages in parts of their week. Utilizing the traditional discipline system while reflecting on how to engage the student differently. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communicates the need for supporting students and families so that they fit in. Reflects on various cultures in their units of study. Addressing race and ethnicity in units of study only. Communicates the traditional discipline practices for students. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communicates the equity work to be from external sources (other than self). No reflection on affirming the identities, cultures, languages, abilities and experiences of students/families/colleagues. Practices reflecting on maintaining the status quo.

ADDITIONAL LOOK FORs: ____ Focus on internal work ____ Centered on identity of students ____ Affirm, assess, advance

Revised 08/26/2021

FCPS Screening Interview Candidate Name: _____ Interview Date: ____/____/____

2. PREMIER WORKFORCE: What does equity mean to you? How do you plan to keep equity at the center in your classroom?

COMMENTS: _____

SCORING RUBRIC QUESTION 2:

4 Outstanding Candidate	3 Strong Candidate	2 Average Candidate	1 Developing Candidate
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstrates understanding of their own equity journey and their need for continuous reflection and growth. Communicates that equity work is ongoing and necessary to the close student achievement gap for all students Focuses on elevating student voices. Provides concrete examples of strategies of their commitment to serve to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communicates their progress in their equity journey and seeking resources to understand deeper. Students frequently have opportunities to reflect on their learning. More formulaic answer in terms of lesson structure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refers to a past culturally proficiency module that they have completed. Relying on external resources. Speaking to strategies that support people to "fit in". 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communicates the equity work to be from external sources (other than self).

ADDITIONAL LOOK FORs: ____ Understanding that race is a social construct ____ Focus on their own development ____ Inquiry-based



In City Schools of Decatur in Georgia, interview teams decide whether to give a candidate writing task as part of the decision-making process. One prompt the team can choose follows:

“An upset parent emails you regarding a classroom discussion with your students about Critical Race Theory. They accuse you (the teacher) of anti-Americanism, changing “real history,” and of making White children feel marginalized and attacked. Please discuss your course of action and draft a response to this parent.”⁵

The team creates a rubric to evaluate the response and must “assure that there is at least one person of color and one woman or gender-fluid person” involved in scoring the response.

Long before candidates’ get the interview stage, North Shore School District 112 in Illinois, conducts an “Internet & Social Media Reference Check” when someone applies. Application reviewers are directed to “use the Internet to check the candidate’s appropriate presence of the web,” and determine whether the candidate’s name yields a “neutral hit” on various social media platforms and websites. No definitions for appropriate or neutral are given, which implies the person sizing up the application should use his/her own perceptions of what those terms mean as a compass.

North Shore School District 112 “Internet & Social Media Reference Check”

Internet & Social Media Reference Check:

Please use the Internet to check the candidate's appropriate presence on the web. Search their full name; search their full name and "IL"; full name and the word "blotter;" full name with undergraduate college name; and other combinations that may produce a hit on the Internet. Please look for the following:

- ☐ Did the candidate's name yield a neutral hit on Google?
- ☐ Did the candidate's name yield a neutral hit on Facebook?
- ☐ Did the candidate's name yield a neutral hit on Twitter?
- ☐ Did the candidate's name yield a neutral hit on Instagram?
- ☐ Did the candidate's name yield a neutral hit on Tik Tok?
- ☐ Was the candidate's website page professional? *You will need to access their last place of employment and search the website for their page.

⁵ Contrast with a question in Atlanta Public Schools: “How would you handle a parent who stormed into your room during class and accused you of picking on and being biased against his/her child?”

4. Setting racial and ethnic diversity hiring goals

It's not uncommon for U.S. companies or organizations to say they want diversity among their employees. But some school districts go beyond the American "melting pot" idea, or removing barriers to certain groups of applicants, to saying faculty and staff should or will directly "mirror" or "reflect" characteristics of the student body. Not only does this standard create a moving target, but it could also exclude highly qualified candidates due to their race or other immutable attribute.

Hinsdale Township High School District 86 in Illinois, wants teachers to reflect the student community in "race, cultural background, linguistic skill, physical abilities, and disabilities, sex, and sexual identity."

Diversity hiring goals examples:

- Wellesley Public Schools in Massachusetts, aims to "hire and retain faculty and staff who share our commitment, and who mirror our student population."
- Oak Park-River Forest High School in Illinois, couches the teacher diversity goal in a desire for all students to succeed: "We are committed to helping all students reach their full potential, with the ultimate goal of closing the opportunity gap for our students of color. Accordingly, we seek faculty and staff who reflect the demographics of our student population, have high expectations for all students, and value student voice in education."⁶
- The School District of Clayton in Missouri, makes a more explicit connection to controversial ideology. They strive to "use a racial equity framework to design and implement processes for recruiting, hiring and retaining a diverse workforce capable of ensuring and sustaining academic progress for a racially, ethnically and socially diverse student body."
- Hinsdale Township High School District 86 in Illinois, goes beyond race and ethnicity to specify a range of "school community" characteristics it wants staff more closely reflect: "race, cultural background, linguistic skill, physical abilities, and disabilities, sex, and sexual identity."

5. Identity quotas for hiring committees and interview panels

Consistent with the ideological emphasis on identity and identity politics, the guidelines for forming hiring committees and interview panels in some districts use identity quotas. Public school districts are setting criteria for staff who must be part of interview or selection committees that could discriminate against otherwise qualified staff, due to race, gender, or sexual orientation. The directions are akin to the teacher diversity goals highlighted earlier.

- At Illinois' Oak Park-River Forest High School an interview panel "should as much as possible reflect the racial diversity of our student population." The elementary district in Oak Park is stricter and more explicit: "You MUST have a minimum of two team members of color. If this is not possible, contact HR prior to beginning onsite interviews. HR will provide you with a member of color."

⁶ 56% white, 20% African-American, 12% Hispanic, 9% multiracial, and 3% Asian.

- Also in Illinois, Hinsdale District 86 tells assistant principals and department chairs to “include a diverse group (veterans, new staff, race, gender, etc.). Consider including staff outside the department or school if there is no diversity within the department or if partnering with another department makes sense (i.e. a co-teacher, paraprofessional, etc).”
- An “equitable hiring tool” workbook in City Schools of Decatur in Georgia, directs leaders to staff hiring teams for racial and gender equity by “ensur[ing] that there is at least one person of color and one woman or gender-fluid individual on the interview panel. Individuals who embody other aspects of diversity should be included as well.”⁷

In each case, the district’s definition of diversity and beliefs about how specific kinds of racial and gender identity are beneficial for selecting teachers, are guided by ideology.

Records denied or redacted

As previously mentioned, some districts refused to release either any or certain records related to their hiring process. Most often, Freedom of Information officers denied access to interview questions or protocols or rubrics, saying they constituted examination questions under state or case law. While most districts provided a PDF of their online job applications, some insisted they were not able to do so, or didn’t respond when it was explained how other districts had provided such copies. The School District of Philadelphia and Jefferson County Public Schools in Kentucky, are two examples. Not only did each say there was no way to provide a copy of the application, but they also denied the rest of the requested records or said the records didn’t exist. Indianapolis Public Schools uses Nimble—a platform with optional artificial intelligence components—for its application process but would not provide screenshots of the pages.

There were also a handful of districts—including Evanston Township High School District 202 in Illinois— who said all or portions of NOP’s request for teacher hiring records was too burdensome, even after repeated attempts to narrow the request by limiting to a school level or individual school/department. One of the country’s largest districts, Los Angeles Unified, denied half the record types NOP requested, and did not reply to requests for clarification regarding the applicability of state statutes cited in their response. Districts that redacted or wouldn’t release interview question protocols (e.g., Ann Arbor Public Schools in Michigan; Montgomery County Public Schools in Maryland) claimed they constitute examination questions or assessments and are therefore exempt under state law—or would compromise the integrity of the hiring process.

A number denied access to third-party tools or assessments⁸ given to teachers, noting case law and statutes allowing exemption from public records requests. To the extent that teachers are asked or evaluated for conformity with controversial or debatable viewpoints, ideological discrimination could occur. Without seeing what teachers are being asked, taxpayers don’t know if they’re paying for teachers with certain beliefs to be screened out. Some of these platforms allow a district to choose questions, or tailor prompts. It’s easy to imagine a district’s DEI commitments directing what they do or don’t choose to include.

⁷ Additional guidance follows: “Need help identifying people to assist you? Get in touch with your school’s Equity Team and/or any of the CCAR affiliates. You may also reach out to Staff Support or the Equity Department. IMPORTANT NOTE: Diverse review panels are not effective if you do not take the other steps described in this tool.”
⁸ Such assessments included Power School Teacher Match, Gallup TeacherInsights, Teaching Playbook, TeacherFit Urban, Haberman Teacher Pre-Screener, Educator’s Professional Inventory, and Educator Talent Inventory.

Withholding records or parts thereof could hide hiring practices that are ideologically biased.

There's a fine line between compromising the integrity of the hiring process and accountability to the public. But withholding records or parts thereof could hide hiring practices that are ideologically biased. Redactions to a job fair interview process at Virginia's Loudoun County Public Schools are a good example. The interviewer is required to pose a question about racial and ethnic diversity and listen for specific things in the candidate's response. Unless the criteria are transparent, suspicion of viewpoint bias remains.

Round One Interview evaluation form from Loudoun County Public Schools

Question 5

LCPS is becoming more racially and ethnically diverse. How would race and ethnic diversity impact your classroom?

36. Candidate articulates: *

Check all that apply

- ☐ [Redacted]
- ☐ [Redacted]
- ☐ [Redacted]
- ☐ [Redacted]
- ☐ [Redacted]
- ☐ [Redacted]
- ☐ [Redacted]
- ☐ [Redacted]
- ☐ [Redacted]
- ☐ [Redacted]
- ☐ [Redacted]
- ☐ [Redacted]

The same suspicion is true for all districts that denied or redacted documents, even those that make some sense. Because there were districts who gave us not only all records requested, but more than NOP requested or expected—without redactions— it raises the question of what districts reticent to release everything are hiding. At minimum, it suggests the examples we've highlighted may only scratch the surface of what public schools devoted to controversial ideologies are doing to screen applicants' political and social views.

Why do these hiring practices matter?

The influence of political and social ideology on teacher hiring in K-12 public district schools is unmistakable. But it also comes as no surprise, given the devotion that districts articulate through various public commitments and policies. Whether branded as an Equity Statement, Commitment to Educational Equity, Anti-Bias/Anti-Racism Presuppositions, or similar, such manifestos recast the role and purpose of public schools as arbiters of social justice and racism-eliminators. Such pronouncements aren't simply words on a web page. They inform strategic plans and corresponding goals—which manifest in how job postings are written, interview questions are crafted, hiring committees are selected, etc.

Denver Public Schools communicate their mission and vision through Equity Statements.

DPS Equity Statement

Equity in Action

Racial and Educational Equity is our collective responsibility. We will achieve equity when we dismantle deeply rooted systems of oppression that have historically resulted in inequitable access and distribution of opportunities and resources for those who represent marginalized identities, including race, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, language and ability. We will create conditions where we all belong, are included, have clear purpose (why) and have the autonomy to lead in our respective areas. By creating these conditions, we will eliminate the predictability of success or failure for our students and team members.

Our Equity Approach

When we,

- recognize, acknowledge and honor communities, cultures and lived experiences
- know the public education system is inequitable and historically rooted in white, heteronormative, Eurocentric culture
- accept that our equity work is a journey and not a destination
- center and respond to the lived experiences of our most marginalized communities to create equity for all

Then we will be able to,

- commit to decentering these systems as the norm and to unlearn the beliefs, mindsets, and practices that create these structural and institutional barriers
- lead from an asset based mindset to eliminate predictability of student outcomes and success
- redistribute resources to our most marginalized students, families and team members

So that we,

dismantle oppressive systems and structures rooted in racism, and center our most marginalized students and team members, with a focus on racial and educational equity.



DENVER
PUBLIC
SCHOOLS

Culture, Equity &
Leadership Team

Denver Public Schools is a strong example. Denver's Equity in Action statement articulates a belief that racial and educational equity is a collective responsibility, achieved by dismantling deeply rooted systems of oppression. Denver embraces this dismantling as an achievable and necessary action step. It's then no surprise that it shows up as a qualification and duty in job postings, like this one for an elementary-grades art teacher.

Denver Public Schools' statements are then implemented in the hiring process, including job postings.

What You'll Need:

- Hold a Bachelor's degree in Education or related field required. Master's Degree, preferred. A Master's Degree is only required for Concurrent Enrollment positions.
- Have a valid [Colorado Department of Education \(CDE\)](#) teaching license. Click [here](#) for additional information regarding specific requirements and qualifications for the various subject areas (DPS does accept a CDE Application Receipt for 90 days.)
- Lead for racial and educational excellence and work to dismantle systems of oppression and inequity in our community, along with believing in and supporting all students so they feel seen and heard with access to high quality education.
- Live and work with a permanent home address in Colorado while working with us.
- Have the ability with or without accommodations to meet the [physical demands](#) of the position.

There appears to be no room in Denver Public Schools for teachers with views that contradict or deemphasize this ideology. Like many districts that embrace similar philosophies, the desire for diversity doesn't seem to extend to diversity of perspective. The most sought-after candidates are those who demonstrate willingness to conform to controversial views on race, identity, and a teacher's essential role and responsibilities. The implication is that the best teachers hold these views not only race and equity, but on what a teacher must and can do.

The approach has consequences. An outstanding middle school math teacher with impeccable credentials, glowing references, and a record of helping students achieve high standards who holds more moderate or conservative views—or is simply not explicit or outspoken about their views in these areas—could be excluded from consideration. All this assuming the candidate is willing or feels invited to express those views, sticks with the process after encountering biased questions, or even decides to apply after reading the language in a job posting.

But aren't most teachers who are likely members of politically left-leaning teachers' unions all for incorporating progressive political and social ideology into the hiring process and classrooms? In some places, certainly. Yet public school teachers may have more diverse perspectives than parents and taxpayers assume. Some surveys indicate educators are more likely to report being Democrat than Republican but aren't more likely to identify as liberal than conservative.^{9,10} Teachers unions and teacher prep programs at colleges and universities doubtless encourage certain political perspectives, and the predispositions of teachers who tend to go into public K-12 education are doubtless more liberal or progressive than those who choose private religious schools.

Specific to DEI-related issues, a recent national study found there is lower agreement with certain tenants of DEI among teachers than among liberals overall.¹¹ Analysts Jay Greene, Ph.D., and James Paul of The Heritage Foundation conclude: "Teachers may very well be allies, not opponents, in the pushback against the application of critical race theory and other divisive ideologies in the classroom."

In the Heritage study, surveyed teachers reported less agreement than did liberal respondents with various diversity, equity, and inclusion statements. Only one-fourth to one-third of teacher respondents agreed or strongly agreed with hiring policies aimed at increasing the representation of certain racial, ethnic or gender identity. Support for race- or gender-based affinity groups and elimination of accelerated courses in the name of racial equity was low and the benefits of "diversity training" not universally supported. Half of teacher respondents agreed that differential outcomes among racial groups constitute compelling evidence of racism.

Survey Results: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Respondents were asked to what extent they agreed with various statements. Shown are the percentages who answered "Agree" or "Strongly Agree."

	Overall	PERCENT AGREE		
		Liberal	Teacher	Conservative
"I want America to be a melting pot where people from different backgrounds and different experiences unite around common values."	87	91	90	83
"Do you agree that schools should organize students into affinity groups, so that children can gather in designated safe spaces where everyone shares the same racial or gender identity?"	11	13	9	7
"When it comes to hiring, companies should consider applicants' race, ethnicity, and gender identity to increase diversity."	17	41	24	4
"Do you agree that governments and corporations should favor hiring certain racial and ethnic groups if doing so will create more equity?"	27	52	33	9
"The Virginia Department of Education may eliminate accelerated math courses prior to 11th grade in order to promote greater racial equity in student performance. Do you agree with this plan?"	11	19	10	3
"Do you agree that diversity training makes people have more compassion toward others?"	50	67	60	34
"In America, there are gaps across racial groups in average levels of educational achievement, employment, and wealth. Do you agree that differences in outcomes across racial groups are convincing evidence of racism?"	40	74	50	14

SOURCE: Ipsos nationally representative survey of 1,632 adults ages 18 and older conducted over a two-week period during summer 2021.

BG3672 ■ heritage.org

9 Verdant Labs. (2016). Democrat v. Republican occupations. http://verdantlabs.com/politics_of_professions/.
10 Yettick, Holly, Sterling Lloyd, Alexandra Darwin, and Michael Osher. (2017, December). Educator Political Perceptions: A National Survey. Education Week Research Center. <https://epe.brightspotcdn.com/be/2b/1bc98850470e9fecf8f8085a3284/educator-political-perceptions-education-week-12-12-2017.pdf>.
11 Greene, Ph.D., Jay and James Paul. (2021, November 16). Political Opinions of K-12 Teachers: Results from a Nationally Representative Survey. The Heritage Foundation. <https://www.heritage.org/education/report/political-opinions-k-12-teachers-results-nationally-representative-survey>.

Even if most teachers don't hold radical political views, with districts pledging allegiance to controversial ideologies like DEI and seeking out teachers who agree, that pattern may shift. A kind of social engineering is at play when public schools limit their teaching force to those who share the same social or political views—or feel like they can't disclose their opposition to controversial ideologies. One applicant who is penalized for challenging controversial doctrines is one too many. This is as much a problem if the ideologies are from the right, instead of the left.

Public school districts run the risk of violating a candidate's civil rights should the person have reason to believe his/her religious, political, or social views played a significant role in denying employment.

It's one thing to say no applicant will face discrimination based on certain characteristics. It's another thing altogether to assert that a belief in one political point of view makes for better teachers or enhances student learning. Intentional or not, a concerted effort to find teachers dedicated to a district's ideological rubric potentially discourages or filters out applicants with moderate or conservative viewpoints. It begs the question: Do such practices withstand legal scrutiny?

Considering the Supreme Court's recent decision outlawing affirmative action, maintaining and expanding these employment policies may land school districts in federal court even if they don't seem like obvious discrimination. Racial discrimination is, of course, straightforwardly unconstitutional. Yet trying to sneak discrimination through code words like "equity" is still problematic: "What cannot be done directly cannot be done indirectly. The Constitution deals with substance, not shadows."¹²

If nothing else, seeking out devotees to a single political or social perspective may constitute de facto discrimination by creed—especially if an applicant's aversion to a perspective is rooted in his/her religious convictions. Public school districts run the risk of violating a candidate's civil rights should the person have reason to believe his/her religious, political, or social views played a significant role in denying employment.

Because politically-driven teacher hiring flows from school boards' missional commitments to specific ideologies, it's not surprising that applicants are asked questions and evaluated for the degree to which they conform to the activist *raison d'être*. The root of the problem, really, is having adopted a contentious ideology at all. Adhering to or espousing one political or social point of view is neither the chief responsibility of teachers, nor what taxpayers fund public schools to do.

Finally, that some districts were willing to supply all records related to the teaching hiring process, and others were not, raises questions about what taxpayers are entitled to know. There's certainly no justification for keeping an application to a public position secret. Regarding required and optional interview questions, those are often developed or selected by other public employees, then distributed among and used by public employees. At minimum, the extent to which a teacher-hiring process funded by public dollars can be kept private is subject to debate and scrutiny.

¹² *Cummings v. Missouri*. 71 U.S. 277. 1867. as quoted in *Students for Fair Admissions, Inc. v. Presidents and Fellows of Harvard College*, 600 U.S. _____. 2023.



What to do

If certain political and social activists and allies are privileged in the teacher hiring process—and skeptics discouraged from applying, or from disclosing views that don’t conform—students are being robbed of diverse viewpoints, skilled teachers, and a quality education.

Local scrutiny and resistance to teacher-hiring practices that put applicants at an ideological disadvantage is crucial. Specifically:

- ★ All hiring practices should be transparent and subject to public feedback.
- ★ School board policies must be revised, if necessary, to prevent potential ideological or identity bias in the teacher hiring process.
- ★ Only research-based qualifications and skills most relevant to impactful teaching should be emphasized and sought.
- ★ Policies should be re-evaluated to ensure they stand up to legal scrutiny in the face of recent court decisions outlawing discrimination.

School boards and administrators must also be held accountable for the impact of hiring practices on teacher quality and student achievement. Do politically-oriented questions and criteria yield teacher hires that end up having a positive impact on what and how much students learn? Do “identity quotas” for interview panel members result in hiring teachers who teach all students well? Unless such hiring goals and practices at least achieve their educational goals, they fail to pass their own test.

Appendix 1: K-12 Public School Districts Contacted and Responses

District	State	Sent responsive records	Denied and/or redacted records	Records provided flagged for ideological hiring bias
Los Angeles Unified	CA	X	X	
Milpitas Unified	CA	X		
San Jose Unified	CA	X		
Stockton	CA	X		
Denver	CO	X		X
Jefferson County Public Schools	CO	X		
Hartford Public Schools	CT	X		
Washington DC Public Schools	DC	X	X	X
Broward	FL	X	X	X
Duval	FL	X		
Hillborough	FL			
Miami-Dade	FL	X		
Palm Beach	FL	X		
Atlanta Public Schools	GA	X		X
Cobb County	GA	X		
Decatur	GA	X		X
DeKalb	GA	X		
Gwinnett	GA	X		X
CCSD 168	IL	X		
Champaign District 4	IL	X	X	
Chicago Public Schools	IL	X		X
Elmhurst 205	IL	X		
Evanston/Skokie School District 65	IL	X	X	
Evanston Township 202	IL	X	X	
Hinsdale 86	IL	X	X	X
Homewood-Flossmoor	IL	X		
Mundelein 120	IL	X		X
New Trier Township HS	IL	X		X
Niles Township 219	IL	X	X	X
North Shore 112	IL	X		X
Oak Park 97	IL	X	X	X
Oak Park River Forest 200	IL	X		X
Stevenson	IL	X		
Carmel Clay Schools	IN			
Indianapolis Public Schools	IN	X		
Washington Schools	IN	X		
Jefferson County Public Schools	KY	X	X	
Boston	MA	X		
Brookline	MA	X		
Wellesley Public Schools	MA			X
Baltimore City Schools	MD	X		
Baltimore County Schools	MD	X	X	

Appendix 1: K-12 Public School Districts Contacted and Responses (cont.)

District	State	Sent responsive records	Denied and/or redacted records	Records provided flagged for ideological hiring bias
Montgomery County Public Schools	MD	X	X	X
Prince George's County	MD	X		
Ann Arbor	MI	X		
Dearborn	MI	X		
Detroit Public Schools	MI	X		
Grand Rapids Public Schools	MI	X		
Edina	MN	X		X
Minneapolis	MN			
St Paul	MN			
Ferguson Florissant Public Schools	MO	X		
Ladue School District	MO	X	X	
The School District of Clayton	MO	X	X	X
Charlotte-Meck	NC	X		
Wake County	NC	X		
Clark County	NV	X		
Washoe County	NV	X		
New York City Public Schools	NY			
Columbus City	OH	X		
School District of Philadelphia	PA	X	X	
State College Area School District	PA	X		
Cypress-Fairbanks	TX	X		
Dallas ISD	TX	X		
Houston ISD	TX	X		
Albemarle County	VA	X		
Arlington Schools	VA	X	X	X
Fairfax County Public Schools	VA	X		X
Loudoun County Public Schools	VA	X	X	X
Virginia Beach	VA			
Spokane	WA	X		X
Elmwood Public Schools (Brookfield)	WI	X		
Madison	WI			
Milwaukee Public Schools	WI	X	X	X

ABOUT NATIONAL OPPORTUNITY PROJECT

The National Opportunity Project is a national, nonprofit government watchdog organization committed to protecting Americans' rights and holding the government accountable at all levels. [The National Opportunity Project's](#) mission is to transform liberty principles into public policies and improve the lives of American families. We aim to achieve our mission through our research, education, training, and issue advocacy work on behalf of liberty-based principles and public policy.

Jessica Hockett

Lead researcher and author

Senior Policy Analyst, National Opportunity Project

Jessica Hockett is a senior policy analyst at the National Opportunity Project. Jessica has a PhD in educational psychology from the University of Virginia. Jessica conducts research on government programs and policy responses for NOP, including the handling of Covid emergency relief funding.

Jessica's 20-year career in education included working with schools and agencies across the U.S. to improve curriculum, instruction, and programs. Her publications include numerous articles related to the education field, as well as three books: *Exam Schools: Inside America's Most Selective Public High Schools* (with Chester E. Finn, Jr.); and *Differentiation in Middle and High School: Strategies to Engage All Learners*; and *Differentiation in the Elementary Grades: Strategies to Engage and Equip All Learners* (with Kristina Doubet).

Kristen Williamson

Communications Director, National Opportunity Project

Kristen Williamson is the communications director for the National Opportunity Project. As an experienced communications and marketing professional, Kristen directs NOP's efforts to inform the public about government abuses and threats to Americans' constitutional rights. Before joining NOP, Kristen was communications and outreach director at the Liberty Justice Center. There she directed the public interest law firm's media, marketing, and client outreach strategies. [Contact Kristen](#) to schedule interviews.

Patrick Hughes

President and Co-Founder, National Opportunity Project

Patrick Hughes is the president and co-founder of the National Opportunity Project and a lead strategist of national policy initiatives and precedent-setting litigation.

Pat has a reputation for taking on the big fights. In his former role as the co-founder and president of the Liberty Justice Center, Pat led a team of attorneys to legal victories that touched the lives of over 100 million Americans. He spearheaded the legal challenge that stopped the federal vaccine mandate for private employers and was ultimately upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court. And, in 2018, his team successfully overturned a 40-year Supreme Court precedent in *Janus v. AFSCME*. His work is frequently featured in top-tier, national media outlets including Fox News, MSNBC, *The Hill*, *The Chicago Tribune*, *The Washington Post*, and *The New York Times*.

Pat founded the National Opportunity Project to act as a check on the expansion and abuse of government power. NOP is a watchdog using research to uncover government misconduct, and education and advocacy to advance issues of national importance. With Pat's experience as an attorney litigating complex cases in state and federal courts throughout the country, NOP identifies when and where litigation is necessary to protect Americans' rights as parents, taxpayers, voters, business owners, and citizens.

