

A Teacher's Guide to Recent Attacks on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Schools



What to Know and Resources to Share

Why is diversity, equity, and inclusion in schools making headlines?

Since taking office, the Trump administration has escalated efforts to dismantle diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives in K-12 schools by threatening to withhold federal funding from districts that use "race as a factor in hiring, staff training, student services, or other institutional programming." This could include everything from workforce diversity initiatives to student clubs.

In February, the administration distributed a [Dear Colleague letter](#) that directed states and districts to terminate any such programs. Then, in April, the U.S. Department of Education (USDE) [sent letters](#) to state agencies requiring them to certify that their schools do not use federal funds to support activities perceived as "DEI" or risk those funds being eliminated. These actions are part of a broader political agenda aimed at framing initiatives that aim to address systemic inequities among staff or students as violations of federal civil rights law that are "discriminatory" or "ideological" in nature.

[Twenty-five states refused to sign the letters](#), and federal judges in three states have ruled that the administration overstepped its authority with this directive. The courts found that the administration's actions threatened to erode foundational principles such as academic freedom and exposure to diverse viewpoints. The rulings emphasized that the administration did not follow the required legal procedures in creating and implementing its policies. As a result, the USDE is currently barred from enforcing threats to cut federal funding to schools over diversity, equity, and inclusion programs.

What does this mean for schools?



- **Maintain Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Programs:** Unfortunately, [many districts and states are already changing their policies in an effort to avoid legal issues](#). However, given the legal injunctions, schools can and should continue their diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives without immediate fear of losing federal funding.
- **Stay Informed:** Monitor ongoing legal developments in partnership with legal counsel, as the situation may evolve with further court decisions or policy changes.

What does this mean for educators?



- **Continue Inclusive Programming:** Educators should feel empowered to continue encouraging, engaging in, and running programming that talks about race, ethnicity, or identity.
- **Stay Informed:** Pay close attention to and abide by any changes to district or state policy. While these federal directives aren't currently in effect, state and district policies implemented in response to them are.

Instead of targeting diversity, equity, and inclusion programs, the federal government should:



- **Support Underserved Communities:** Enhance funding and resources for schools serving low-income and marginalized populations.
- **Promote Educational Equity:** Develop policies that address systemic inequalities and ensure all students have access to a quality education.
- **Build a Diverse Workforce:** Invest in and incentivize the creation of educator pipelines that build a workforce reflective of the students it serves.