

Dear ORVA Community,

In the past weeks and months, we have faced extraordinary challenges together. We've worked hard to build on the strengths of our school while meeting the needs of young people during a global pandemic. Oregon's education professionals, including school board members, have pulled off heroic efforts to provide care, connection, and continuity of learning for our students. Families and caregivers are essential partners, and we understand that you need and deserve opportunities to provide input and a clear understanding of what the student experience will be in the classroom. The Oregon Virtual Academy is returning to this school year in that same spirit of care and connection.

Care and connection means making sure every student and every person in our school experiences a sense of belonging and has access to equitable, high-quality education. Every student benefits when we center equity for students of color, experiencing disability, tribal members, emerging multilingual, navigating poverty, houselessness, foster care, and non-dominant gender identities and sexual orientations.

Holding racial equity with special consideration is crucial in our school. To understand fully what racial equity means for our school, here's how we're ensuring that each and every student can reach their full potential. We are committed to:

- Implementing programs to enroll all students and regularly engage families, especially those who have not had access or have not been attending;
- Strengthening high-quality, culturally-sustaining and revitalizing instruction, leadership, and pathways to graduation and post-secondary transitions;
- Creating access to well-rounded education by centering student learning that builds on strengths, addresses needs, provides active engagement, and is culturally responsive and developmentally appropriate;
- Providing mental, social, & emotional health supports for students and staff with culturally responsive trauma-informed care, social emotional learning (SEL), racial equity and anti-racist approaches, and a strengths-focused multi-tiered system of support;
- Safeguarding student opportunity in recognition of the disproportionate and severe impact of the pandemic and our response on students and families; and
- Serving students in transition from one program to another (kindergarten, 6th, & 9th grades) so they feel a sense of support and belonging in order to overcome any fear and isolation.

What is Critical Race Theory?

We have received questions from the community about our school's anti-racism curriculum and whether Critical Race Theory is part of our curriculum. Critical Race Theory is the idea that racism isn't only the product of an individual's bias or prejudice but is actually embedded in systems, policies, and institutions, whether that be business, politics,

healthcare, housing, or even schools. Critical Race Theory is not a curriculum at the Oregon Virtual Academy. However, it can be a lens that our School Board, staff, or students may apply when discussing issues around race and racism.

What curriculum frameworks does the school use?

The school uses the practices found in Culturally Responsive Teaching, not to be confused with Critical Race Theory. Culturally Responsive Teaching is an approach that makes sure educators affirm students' cultural, linguistic, and racial backgrounds in order to ensure access to high levels of intellectual and social-emotional learning.

Curriculum Review and Updates

There are curriculum areas that our teachers and administrators review and update regularly with an equity lens. Some revisions and actions include:

- Examining and renewing texts in all of our courses so that we include more authors of color, more diverse perspectives and experiences, and celebrate inclusivity.
- Creating Social Studies units grounded in understanding racial equity and social justice through a revised analysis of historical and current events.
- Revising the fiction and nonfiction texts in language arts and social studies courses to include authors of color and avoiding stereotypes of ethnicities.
- Using current events and primary course documents in K-12 curriculum that include speeches, written laws, and Supreme Court Cases to deepen students' understanding of racism as described for each grade level in the Historical Knowledge and Multicultural Studies strands of the standards.

Leading Forward

Our district is committed to affording every student a full academic learning experience without restriction as they regain their learning stride. So, let's start the year together with understanding, grace, and patience, for everyone's sake as we continue to learn during these unprecedented times. If questions or concerns arise, we can bridge divides by reaching out directly to educators and other school leaders prior to other forms of escalation. We are here and happy to meet with you. It's also important that educators feel trusted to bring equity in the classroom with care for all of their students, and that students feel competent and prepared to discover and discuss the world around them.

Thank you for being a part of this community,



Jamie Stiles, EdS
Executive Director
Oregon Virtual Academy