REAL Coalition
Report to School Committee

June 18, 2019

Eq.ui.ty ˈe-kwə-tē noun

Just and fair access, inclusion, and participation; the practice of nurturing a learning environment in which all children are empowered to grow, create, and achieve; freedom from bias and discrimination; an understanding that each student possesses personal gifts and attributes and brings these to the classroom which strengthen learning for all; a process by which we ensure justice, engender respect, and inspire hope.

RACE EQUITY ACCESS LEADERSHIP

The REAL Coalition provides leadership and guidance on eliminating barriers to racial equity and supporting the advancement of all learners in the Needham Public Schools. Recognizing that full community engagement is essential to access and racial equity, we are committed to engaging staff, students, families, and community members in conversations and actions that promote equitable practices for all in our community.

Essential Questions

❏ *How do we engage and educate the community, staff, students and families on the importance of developing and supporting educational practices that provide equity and excellence for all students?*

❏ *What do we need to do in order to have an interdisciplinary approach to race and equity that becomes part of the fabric of who we are as a school system?*

❏ *How do we create a safe environment for having difficult conversations?*

Communications & Community Engagement

Goals

- Engage staff, students, families, and community members to promote equitable & inclusive practices for students, families, faculty with sensitivity to needs of traditionally marginalized youth.
- Build an inclusive parent engagement model where everyone is welcomed including Needham residents, Boston resident parents/guardians, parents/guardians of English learners, and newcomers.
- Clearly communicate vision, goals, actions for equitable & inclusive NPS educational experience

Actions Steps

- Define "equity" – importance of language and a common understanding to support this work
- Explore and define what it means to be a METCO district
- Strengthen relationship w/ marginalized families; e.g., ease of student registration/enrollment process for all families
- Ensure language on website and written communications is inclusive
- Update staff, students, families after REAL Coalition meetings on progress toward goals
- Contact Needham Times and Needham Channel to expand reach of our communications

Communications & Community Engagement

Implementation

- Information included in 2018 NPS Performance Report mailed to all Needham households; plan for PR 2019 update
- Equity Audit video filmed March 2018 in NHS TV Studio; available on Needham Spotlight
- Portrait of a Needham Graduate with framework of equity in education
- District webpage (accessible from district homepage) dedicated to equity plan w/ goals, actions, successes, challenges, resources - *updated regularly*
- Update to School Committee Feb 5 *and June 18, 2019*
- A community forum held April 24 in partnership with Human Rights Committee, Citizens for Needham Schools, and Needham Diversity Initiative; approximately 100 participants; reviewed District progress since Equity Audit
- Partnership with Metrowest Health Foundation - team looking at social and academic inequality in the school experience and providing a safe and healthier environment for all our students; Supported by $20,000 MetroWest grant for interventions to decrease students' psychological & biological distress associated with racial discrimination
- Preliminary discussion on communicating what it means to be a METCO District (website updates in development)
- Superintendent's Updates to faculty including steps being taken to ensure an equitable and enriching learning experience for all students (*ongoing series of Superintendent's communications to staff*)
- SAFE (Students Advocating for Equity) video on Needham Spotlight

Communications & Community Engagement

Next Steps

- Expand REAL Coalition and REAL Steering Committee to include additional school leader, district leaders, students
- Continue to support REAL Subcommittees implementation of action plans
- Continue communicating clearly and often through different modalities our vision, plans, progress, and challenges and how members of the district and community can strengthen engagement
- Collaborate with community organizations, family organizations, and all members of the community to engage in conversations and actions that promote equitable practices for all in our community
- Align Equity Plan with District Goals and the Portrait

Culture and Climate

Goals

- Build a system-wide culture of equity where all students and staff feel safe and respected, know that they matter, and that they add value.

Actions Steps

- **Students will**- Be in culturally responsive classrooms, have the ability to share cultures/holidays, engage in an SEL curriculum and high school specific- lead conversations, programs and activities (training in courageous conversations with student assemblies on specific topics on race and equity).
- **Faculty will**- Post signs of safety and visuals of cultures, greet all students, ensure all cultures are celebrated, implement culturally responsive teaching, be mindful of literature, be culturally sensitive toward families, participate in recommended IDEAS courses, assist with various clubs in helping students advocate for equity.
- **Each building will give parents the opportunity to**- participate in various activities, visit schools during events (community meeting to hear from students regarding work in areas of racial equity). Participate in events in which PTCs considered equity and culture in their event and budget planning, participate in events after thoughtful setup (possible survey at beginning of the year), participate in ALL School Read Activities, communicate efficiently with staff and students (email, phone etc.)
- **Administrators in each building will**- Establish a culture and climate committee, ensure PD related to equity is in place in an ongoing manner, provide transparency and common language for parents to use at home (conversations/training), provide support to staff to purchase culturally responsive materials, evaluate staff equitably,cultural sensitivity toward families, join the conversation

Culture and Climate

Implementation
- Communicated purpose of subcommittee: *Provide supports to school leaders to Build a system-wide culture of equity where all students and staff feel safe and respected, know that they matter, and that they add value.*
- Surveyed and interviewed principals to gather information about culture and climate as well as practices that support equity
- Recommendations shared with principals

Next Steps
- Strengthen cohesion of Culture and Climate Committees across each school
- Use DATA analysis to intentionally drive actions that address the needs of marginalized students
  - District Survey and Adolescent Health Risk Surveys
  - Student discipline, Over-identification of Special education, Attendance
- Provide support to school leaders on building a culture of equity using existing leverage points and developing "look fors" and other resources/tools
- Members of REAL Coalition and SEL Committee will develop guidance on Culturally Responsive SEL
- Continue to support student led efforts on equity

Teaching & Learning: Curriculum

Goals

- Ensure our students receive a culturally responsive curriculum in all schools from grades PreK-12.
- Build our capacity for curriculum development and instructional practices through the lense of equity and culturally responsiveness.

Actions Steps

- Adopt the three tiered structure: "Know Yourself, Know Your Students, and Know Your Practice" to establish a common understanding of Culturally Responsive Teaching.
- Develop a "Roadmap to Becoming a Culturally Responsive Educator" that provides teachers and leaders with a common set of resources.
  - Enlist feedback from K-12 Curriculum Cabinet and School Leadership Team
- Continue to facilitate communication between the REAL Sub-committee, the K-12 Curriculum Cabinet and the SLT to ensure a thoughtful and coordinated approach.

Teaching & Learning: Curriculum

Implementation

- Working draft of the "Roadmap to Becoming a Culturally Responsive Educator" developed and shared with K-12 Curriculum Leaders, REAL Steering Committee, and School Leadership Team for feedback; meetings and discussion have been robust and valuable to strengthening understanding and cohesion of practices
- Use our _Lens for Instruction_ document to guide our focus on the instructional core.
  - Identify a handful of key domains for educators to consider to increase the academic performance of underperforming students.
  - Compile strategies and practices that best bridge the gaps in content specific literacy skills .

Next Steps

- Complete Road Map and prepare to share with district leadership team; focus on building understanding and establishing "look fors" in culturally responsive teaching
- Align Road Map to larger district framework for integrative teaching and learning
- Add a committee member from Special Education to the Curriculum Sub-committee (2019-2020)
- Learn more about the _Performance Matters_ data management system and explore ways it may support our work.

Professional Learning & Growth

Goals

- Create a model of PD related to race, equity, and access that is sustainable and impactful, linked to evaluation and expectations, and addresses all district employees, differentiating as appropriate
- Provide professional development to all faculty members to directly overcome implicit and explicit bias that allows staff to engage consistently in difficult conversations, for example, about race, ethnicity, religion, sexual identity, gender identity, sexual orientation, language proficiency, and other matters of diversity

Actions Steps

- Develop and implement a system-wide, evidence-based professional learning program that encompasses culturally responsive teaching, cultural proficiency, and courageous conversations
- Developing professional resources of support for staff of color (e.g. affinity groups, mentoring, etc)
- Differentiating PD offerings by interest and readiness and coordinating those efforts with building-based and district-wide PD

Professional Learning & Growth

Implementation

- November 21st District Professional Development Day: Racial Equity in Action (Pilot model of differentiation)
- Ongoing opportunities for professional development including:
  - Initiatives for Developing Equity and Achievement for Students (**IDEAS**) courses, workshops, and school consultation, METCO Conference, SRI Leadership
  - Building based trainings from Teaching Tolerance: Interrupt, Question, Educate, Echo
- District Leadership Team: Focused on Leading for Learning Through the Lens of Equity & Inclusion
- Increase focus on most-engaged, most-skilled group
- Pilot model at the NHS - self
- Provided PD for newly formed MALANA (Multi-Race, Asian, Latinx, Native American) Group
- Plans underway for summer courses, summer reading, curriculum/instruction projects

Professional Learning & Growth

Next Steps

- Identify and align aspects of teacher rubric that pertain to culturally responsive teaching and provide explicit training for evaluators
- Continue to implement system-wide professional learning that encompasses culturally responsive practices, courageous conversations, and effective instructional and interventions
- Assess the district's current Professional Learning and plan for a cohesive program

Policy and Practice

Goals

- Review policies and practices through the lens of equity and inclusion and recommend revisions where necessary; collaborate with the School Committee to ensure transparency and accountability
- Develop a system-wide process for implementation, enforcement, and reporting of disciplinary matters.
- Review the District Curriculum Accommodation Plan (DCAP) through the lens of equity and make any necessary revisions

Actions Steps

- Update student placement procedures in student handbooks to ensure consistency
- Review student attendance, discipline, special education referrals, and related areas of concern to ensure inclusive and supportive policies and practices

Policy and Practice

Implementation

- Guidelines for Responding to Hate and Bias
- Guidelines for class placement and course selection
- Special education enrollment disaggregated by subgroup: ELL, raced, SES - next steps to analyze and identify trends (e.g. disproportionality of students identified into special education)
- Tiered Focus Monitoring Self Assessment completed and submitted to DESE for review.
- Draft Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between Police Chief and Superintendent that includes language around training (e.g., cultural proficiency training) for the School Resource Officer and interaction with all students on and off campus.

Next Steps

- Continue to review and update policies to ensure equitable practices
- Include student placement procedures in student handbooks to ensure consistency
- Review student attendance, discipline, special education referrals, and related areas of concern to ensure inclusive and supportive policies and practices

Employment Practices

Goals

- All students regardless of race, economic status, English language proficiency will have equitable access to diverse high quality educators and school leaders
- Leverage teacher evaluation system to clarify expectations and evaluate teacher competence with culturally proficiency and culturally responsive teaching practices

Action Steps

- Prioritize diversification of staff
- Review and Update Hiring Practices
- Develop Retention Practices
- Training for evaluators on what to look for
- Develop tools to support process of observation

Employment Practices

Implementation

- Prioritize diversification of staff
    - Participated in five (5) diversity job fairs.
    - Created new recruitment materials
    - Joined the Massachusetts Partnership for Diversity in Education organization
- Review and Update Hiring Practices
    - Consistently use questions in interview process to understand candidates and experience, skills, facility and work with diverse population
- Develop Retention Practices
    - Created a working group to assist in the formation of a MALANA (Multi-racial, African American, Latinx, Native American, Asian and Native American) group
    - Established a MALANA's professional learning opportunity with the support of Dr. Maureen Walker
- Training for evaluators on what to look for
    - During three District Leadership Team meetings, the team has begun a review of those aspects of their evaluation that are directly tied to our equity work. By working in small groups we shared a dilemmas and worked in teams to develop a new perspective on the work.
- Develop tools to support process of observation
    - Support for Goals and Action Steps
    - Resources have been included in the HR Newsletter to support this work

Employment Practices

Next Steps

- Continue prioritizing diversification of staff, updating hiring practices, and developing retention practices
- Continue to shape "look fors" based on Portrait and the district's evolving Roadmap for culturally and linguistically responsive instruction
- Provide support to evaluators of staff of color to build understanding and skills with culturally responsive feedback

Questions & Comments