

**Newtown Board of Education
Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Subcommittee
February 7, 2024, 5:00pm**

**Central Office
BoE Conference Room
3 Primrose St., Newtown, CT 06470**

AGENDA

- Item 1 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION
- Item 2 SUPERINTENDENT'S OVERVIEW AND UPDATE
- Item 3 UPDATE ON PROGRESS TOWARDS DEI WORKPLAN
 - Nixon & Co, Consulting
- Item 4 DISCUSSION AND STATUS UPDATE OF DISTRICT PLAN FOR DIVERSE HIRING
 - Policy 4111.3/4211.3 Plan for Minority Recruitment and Selection and 0523 Equity and Diversity
- Item 5 NEW BUSINESS
 - Approval of minutes for January 10th, 2024 meeting
 - Motion to update Subcommittee identification to "DEAI, Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, and Inclusion Subcommittee"
- Item 6 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION
- Item 7 ADJOURNMENT

**Newtown Board of Education
Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Subcommittee**

Proposed Motions February 6th, 2024

- Move that the Board of Education DEI Subcommittee approve the minutes from January 10th, 2024
- Move that the Board of Education DEI Subcommittee approve the change of the subcommittee title to “DEAI, Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, and Inclusion Subcommittee”.

**Board of Education
Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Subcommittee**

Minutes of the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Subcommittee meeting held on January 10, 2024 in the Board of Education conference room, 3 Primrose Street.

C. Gilson, Chair
D. Ramsey (absent)
D. Linnetz

C. Melillo, Superintendent
A. Uberti, Assistant Superintendent
J. Briggs
2 Public

Mr. Gilson called the meeting to order at 6:01 p.m.

Item 1 – Public Participation – None

Item 2 – Superintendent's Overview and Update

Mr. Melillo provided a history of the DEI committee. They developed the following five tenets of DEI:

- We want to make sure all of our spaces are supportive for students;
- We want to make sure our curriculum is infused with diverse materials;
- We want to make sure that when we study topics our students will learn through multiple lenses and multiple points of view;
- We want to ensure that harassment and bullying will never be tolerated;
- We want to ensure that as educators, we need to provide students with multiple sides of all topics so they can make their own decisions on whatever they are studying.

We defined the goals of the districts DEI efforts. When Wes Johnson, our DEI Coordinator resigned, we hoped to fill the position with a teacher but were unable to do so. He called Kellen and Jana at Nixon & Company because he worked with them in Hamden. They developed a three-year plan on how they could support DEI. A proposal was presented to the Board after they met with various groups. We've begun work in groups engaging in professional learning and started modeling best practices in our schools. We've spent hours crafting this program looking at it as educators. DEI will be part of curriculum and instruction. We have been very happy with Nixon and Co and their work in the district.

Mr. Gilson asked about curriculum and the two reading programs and how DEI is imbedded in them.

Mrs. Uberti said a lot of programs being developed now include reading about different cultures. Both reading programs do that to a degree. Some issues in the past were due to outdated resources.

Ms. Briggs added that it is about how they are seeing people who are different from them and we are trying to build awareness to allow every student to be comfortable. Our main goal is to ensure teachers welcome all students so everyone should feel comfortable here. The idea is to coexist together.

Mrs. Uberti reported that we have gotten new materials but we also have to educate teachers and understand what we are trying to do and understand we are all different. We want them to feel comfortable with all the various topics that come up.

Mr. Gilson asked about collecting data points to see where this is making a difference.

Mr. Melillo said we can collect data from attendance, or around students taking AP courses, or looking student achievement subgroups to name a few. We could also provide a climate survey for our students to see their experiences in the schools and where they are comfortable.

Mrs. Linnetz asked when Nixon began, to which Mr. Melillo said January of 2023.

Mrs. Linnetz asked if this diversity work is also around staff.

Mr. Melillo said by State statute we need to create a committee to look at our hiring practices to make sure we have a more diverse workforce.

Mrs. Linnetz noted that by March 14 the State requires us to submit a plan regarding the diversity of our employment population.

Ms. Briggs provided an overview of their work in the district which is attached. This year is focused on district messaging and how we want this work to play out. We have equity leaders in each school and will address operationalizing the work. We will provide a full update of the work so far at the February 22 Board meeting.

Mrs. Linnetz asked who the equity leaders were and how they were chosen.

Mr. Melillo said we had opened these positions to teachers, our school climate committee members, and ensured our administrators were involved in this work.

Mrs. Uberti said we have two equity leaders in each school and a school climate specialist in each school who is either the lead teacher or an assistant principal. Every school has a team of three. The high school has a separate DEI team who reports to the school climate committee.

Mr. Melillo was pleased with the way things are going and wants to do this right instead of quickly. He wants to build a proactive approach to DEI and not a reactive approach and you do that by building an environment that does not have issues around exclusivity.

Mrs. Linnetz asked if security officers were involved in the DEI discussion regarding what they might be called upon to deal with especially in the high school.

Mr. Melillo said they haven't been part of the discussion yet but will be part of the work going forward although our security guards don't deal with discipline issues.

Mrs. Linnetz noted that as you introduce curricula and topics there could be difficult responses from students that might be insensitive to the content or to other students and that educators would need to know how to navigate those kinds of responses from students.

Mrs. Uberti said they have discussed having hard conversations with teachers in the classroom and that is being addressed.

Mr. Gilson asked how you help the members of the public that don't agree with DEI.

Mr. Melillo would refer to the five tenants and ask a parent to tell him which one they disagreed with. We are doing a disservice if we don't expose students to diverse materials and different cultures because they won't be ready to go out into society.

Mrs. Linnetz asked if part of this work is preparing our principals and educators who will be at the front line speaking to parents why this work is important.

Ms. Briggs said if teachers don't feel they won't be supported then they won't be behind the work. Our work this year is building the administrators capacity and to work alongside their

teachers so they all understand and feel comfortable communicating the same messages. As we start to engage parents, they will see the work. This is not about race at all but about every student being comfortable. What presents a problem is when there is no consistent messaging.

Mrs. Linnetz asked what was the best way this committee and the Board can support this work.

Ms. Briggs said it would just be allowing us to share the work at Board meetings and that you are continuing to advocate for this work, which speaks volumes.

Mr. Melillo said the Board's support in this work means the world to us. We believe we are moving the district in the right direction.

Mr. Gilson said this won't be easy but looks forward to supporting this.

Mrs. Linnetz said there's a lot to tackle and it would be important to share it with the Board and the public.

Ms. Briggs said they will continue to provide them with documentation and updates.

Mr. Gilson asked if there were plans about creating a safe space in the schools.

Mr. Melillo said we had discussions about having a parent forum in the spring with the equity leaders.

Mrs. Uberti said there's a lot of community support for this and there hasn't been a lot of pushback. People have been very receptive.

Item 4 – New Business

MOTION: Mrs. Linnetz moved that the BOE DEI Subcommittee approve the minutes of October 26, 2023. Mr. Gilson seconded. Motion passes unanimously.

MOTIO: Mrs. Linnetz moved that the BOE DEI Subcommittee moved to approve the 2024 meeting schedule. Mr. Gilson seconded. Motion passes unanimously.

Item 5 – Public Participation – None

MOTION: Mrs. Linnetz moved to adjourn. Mr. Gilson seconded. Motion passes unanimously.

Item 6 – Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 7:14 p.m.

Personnel - Certified/Non-Certified

Plan for Minority Recruitment and Selection

The Board of Education (Board) believes that a skillful and diverse staff contributes significantly to high quality, engaging learning environments, predicated on a climate of inclusion, and directs the Superintendent to enact a planning process that supports efforts to encourage, recruit, employ, and retain a qualified diverse staff.

In compliance with all applicable State statutes pertaining to a written plan for racially and ethnically diverse staff recruitment and retention, the District will:

1. Inform all recruiting sources of the Board's non-discrimination policy.
2. Develop contacts with community organizations and educational institutions, to publicize job openings within the school district and to solicit referrals of racially and ethnically diverse candidates.
3. Maintain or expand as appropriate the help-wanted advertising to include print and/or broadcast media that is targeted to diverse applicants.
4. Utilize the Connecticut Regional Education Service Centers (RESCs) and Connecticut Regional Educational Application Placement (CT REAP) websites to publicize available positions within the District.
5. Participate in local job fairs, including those that are sponsored by community organizations that embrace and celebrate diversity.
6. Annually review and report to the Board the plan and the efforts to employ and retain a qualified, racially and ethnically diverse staff.

(cf. 4111/4211 - Recruitment and Selection)

(cf. 4111.1/4211.1 - Equal Opportunity Employment: Affirmative Action)

Legal Reference: Connecticut General Statutes
4a-60 Nondiscrimination and affirmative action provisions in contracts of the state and political subdivisions rather than municipalities
4a-60a Contracts of the state and political subdivisions, other than municipalities, to contain provisions re nondiscrimination on the basis of sexual orientation
10-153 Discrimination on account of marital status
46a-60 Discriminatory employment practices prohibited
46a-81a Discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation
Title VII, Civil Rights Act U.S.C. 2000e, et. seq.
PA 16-41 An Act Concerning the Recommendations of the Minority Teacher Recruitment Task Force
PA 18-34 An Act Concerning Minority Teacher Recruitment and Retention
PA 19-74 An Act Concerning Minority Teacher Recruitment and Retention

Policy Adopted: April 5, 2022

Newtown Public Schools
Newtown, CT

Mission – Goals – Objectives

Equity and Diversity

The Board of Education (Board) is committed to the success of every student in each of our schools and to achieving the mission of ensuring that all students graduate ready for post-secondary education, career and life. The Board believes that the responsibility for student success is broadly shared by District staff, administrators, teachers, community and families. The Board believes that every student has the potential to achieve and it is the responsibility of the District to give each student the opportunity and support to meet their highest potential.

Definitions

For the purposes of this policy the following terms shall have these meanings:

- A. **“Diversity”** includes characteristics of persons including, but not limited to race, culture, color, creed or religion, ancestry, national origin, mental and physical ability, age, marital status, physical appearance, family structure, citizenship status, sexual orientation, gender expression or identity, economic status, veteran’s status, and any other protected class in conformance with federal, state and local laws.
- B. **“District staff”** includes all employees, consultants and contractors of the Newtown Public Schools.
- C. **“Educational equity”** means raising the achievement of all students while (1) narrowing the gaps between the lowest and highest performing students, and (2) eliminating the racial or cultural predictability and disproportionality of which student groups occupy the highest and lowest achievement categories including rates of graduation.
- D. **“Institutional racism”** means the collective failure of a public or private organization to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their race, color, culture or ethnic origin which can be seen or detected in practices, processes, systems, attitudes and behavior. It looks beyond individual acts of prejudice to the systemic biases that may be built into institutions. These systemic biases discriminate against and disadvantage people of color through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness or racial stereotyping.
- E. **“Upstander”** means someone who speaks or acts in support of an individual, particularly someone who intervenes on behalf of a person being attacked or bullied.

The concept of educational equity extends beyond formal equity, where all students are treated the same, to fostering a barrier-free environment where all students, regardless of their race, class, or other personal characteristics such as creed, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, age, economic status, sexual orientation, gender expression or identity, pregnancy status, marital status, physical appearance, or the presence of any sensory, mental or physical disability, have the opportunity to benefit equally. The District schools will continue to change/improve its practices in order to achieve and maintain racial equity in education.

Equity and Diversity (continued)

The responsibility for the disparities among our youth rests with adults, not the children. The Board is aware that student achievement data from across the country reveal similar patterns and those complex societal and historical factors contribute to the inequities faced by students. Rather than perpetuating such disparities, the Board believes the District must address and overcome this inequity and institutional racism, providing all students with the support and opportunity to succeed. This means differentiating resource allocation, within budgetary limitations, to meet the needs of students who need more supports and opportunities to succeed academically. The district will provide additional and differentiated resources to support the success of all diverse students, including those who are marginalized, disenfranchised, and students of color.

With these commitments in mind, the Newtown Public Schools shall:

- Provide every student with equitable access to high quality and culturally relevant instruction, curriculum, support, facilities and other educational resources, even when this means differentiating resources to accomplish this goal.
- Create multiple pathways to success in order to meet the needs of its diverse students, and shall actively encourage, support and expect high academic achievement from all racial groups, including those who are marginalized, disenfranchised, and students of color.
- Recruit, employ, support and retain a teacher, administrator, instructional and support workforce that is balanced and reflects the diversity of the student body.
- Provide professional development to strengthen employees' knowledge and skills for eliminating cultural, gender, racial and ethnic disparities in achievement.
- Ensure that each school creates a welcoming culture and inclusive environment that reflects and supports the diversity of the District's student population, their families and communities.
- Remedy the practices, including assessment, that lead to the over-representation of students of color in areas such as special education and discipline, and the under representation in programs such as talented and gifted and Advanced Placement.
- Review existing policies, programs, professional development and procedures to ensure the promotion of racial equality, and all applicable new policies, programs and procedures will be developed free of racial disparity.

Include other partners who have demonstrated culturally specific expertise, including families, government agencies, institutions of higher learning, early childhood education organizations, community-based organizations, businesses, and the community in general, in meeting the District's high goals for educational outcomes.

P0523(c)

Equity and Diversity (continued)

- Provide, consistent with state regulations and District policy and within budgetary considerations, materials and assessments that reflect the diversity of students and staff, and which are geared towards the understanding and appreciation of culture, class, language, ethnicity and other differences that contribute to the uniqueness of each student and staff member.
- Ensure staff and leaders set goals to promote and monitor the implementation of goals commitments outlined in the Diversity & Equity Resolution.
- Familiarize students and staff with clear expectations for being an “upstander” to maintain a safe, civil and respectful school community.

The Board recognizes that these are long-term goals that require significant work and resources to implement in all schools. All District employees are responsible for the success and achievement of all students. The Superintendent is authorized to develop procedures to implement this policy, including an action plan with clear responsibility. Annually, the Superintendent shall report to the Board on the progress towards achieving the goals outlined in this policy.

(cf. 0521 – Nondiscrimination)
(cf. 1110.1 – Parental Involvement)
(cf. 1110.3 – School Governance Council)
(cf. 1210 – Community Associations)
(cf. 1212 – Volunteers)
(cf. 1330 or 3515 – Use of School Facilities)
(cf. 1205 – Participation by the Public)
(cf. 4111 – Recruitment and Selection)
(cf. 4111.1/4211.1 – Affirmative Action)
(cf. 4118.11 – Nondiscrimination)
(cf. 4118.113/4218.113 – Harassment)
(cf. 4118.3 – District Minority Recruitment Plan)
(cf. 4131 – Staff Development)
(cf. 5118.1 – Homeless Students)
(cf. 5131.911 – Bullying/Safe School Climate Plans)
(cf. 5145.4 – Nondiscrimination)
(cf. 5145.5 – Sexual Harassment)
(cf. 5145.51 – Peer Sexual Harassment)
(cf. 5145.52 – Harassment)
(cf. 5145.53 – Transgender and Non-Conforming Youth)
(cf. 5145.6 – Student Grievance Procedure)
(cf. 6115 – Ceremonies and Observances)
(cf. 6121 – Nondiscrimination)
(cf. 6121.1 – Equal Educational Opportunity)

P0523(d)

Mission – Goals – Objectives

Equity and Diversity (continued)

(cf. 6141.21 – Religions in the Public Schools)
(cf. 6141.22 – Religious Accommodations)
(cf. 6141.311 – Programs for limited English Proficient Students)
(cf. 6171 – Special Education)
(cf. 9133 – Board of Education Advisory Committees)

Legal Reference: Connecticut General Statutes
46a-60 Discriminatory employment practices prohibited.
10-15c Discrimination in public schools prohibited. School attendance by five-year olds. (Amended by P.A. 97-247 to include “sexual orientation” and P.A. 11-55 to include “gender identity or expression”)
10-153 Discrimination on account of marital status.
17a-101 Protection of children from abuse.
Connecticut State Board of Education, “Position Statement on Culturally Responsive Education,” adopted May 4, 2011
Title VII, Civil Rights Act, 42 U.S.C. 2000e, et seq.
29 CFR 1604.11, EEOC Guidelines on Sex Discrimination.
Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972, 20 U.S.C. 1681 et seq.
34 CFR Section 106.8(b), OCR Guidelines for Title IX.
Definitions, OCR Guidelines on Sexual Harassment, Fed. Reg. Vol 62, #49, 29 CFR Sec. 1606.8 (a0 62 Fed Reg. 12033 (March 13, 1997) and 66 Fed. Reg. 5512 (January 19, 2001)
Section 8525, ESEA as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act
Meritor Savings Bank. FSB v. Vinson, 477 U.S. 57 (1986)

Mission – Goals – Objectives

Equity and Diversity

Legal Reference: Connecticut General Statutes (continued)
Faragher v. City of Boca Raton, No. 97-282 (U.S. Supreme Court, June 26, 1998)
Gebbser v. Lago Vista Indiana School District, No. 99-1866, (U.S. Supreme Court, June 26, 1998)
Davis v. Monro County Board of Education, No. 97-843, (U.S. Supreme Court, May 24, 1999.)
The Vietnam Era Veterans' Readjustment Act of 1974, as amended, 38U.S.C. §4212
Title II of the Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act of 2008
The Americans with Disabilities Act as amended by the ADA Amendments Act of 2008
Public Law 111-256
Meacham v. Knolls Atomic Power Laboratory 128 S.Ct. 2395, 76 U.S.L.W. 4488 (2008)
Federal Express Corporation v. Holowecki 128 S.Ct. 1147, 76 U.S.L.W. 4110 (2008)
Kentucky Retirement Systems v. EEOC 128 S.Ct. 2361, 76 U.S.L.W. 4503 (2008)
Sprint/United Management Co. v. Mendelsohn 128 S.Ct. 1140, 76 U.S.L.W. 4107 (2008)

Substitute Senate Bill No. 1

Public Act No. 23-167

AN ACT CONCERNING TRANSPARENCY IN EDUCATION.

Sec. 10. (NEW) (*Effective July 1, 2023*) (a) Not later than March 15, 2024, each local and regional board of education shall submit the increasing educator diversity plan described in subsection (a) of section 10-220 of the general statutes, as amended by this act, to the Commissioner of Education for review and approval.

(b) The Commissioner of Education shall review each increasing educator diversity plan submitted pursuant to subsection (a) of this section. The commissioner may approve such plan or may return such plan to the local or regional board of education that submitted such plan with instructions to revise such plan. Not later than May 15, 2024, any such board shall revise such plan in accordance with such instructions and submit such revised plan to the commissioner for approval.

(c) For the school year commencing July 1, 2024, and each school year thereafter, each local and regional board of education shall implement the increasing educator diversity plan approved by the commissioner pursuant to subsection (b) of this section. Each such board shall make such plan available on the Internet web site of such board.

(d) The Department of Education shall make each increasing educator diversity plan available on the Internet web site of the department.

Sec. 10-220a. In-service training. Professional development and evaluation committees.

Institutes for educators. Cooperating teacher program, regulations. (a) Each local or regional board of education shall provide an in-service training program for its teachers, administrators and pupil personnel who hold the initial educator, provisional educator or professional educator certificate. Such program shall provide such teachers, administrators and pupil personnel with information on (1) the nature and the relationship of alcohol and drugs, as defined in subdivision (17) of section [21a-240](#), to health and personality development, and procedures for discouraging their abuse, (2) health and mental health risk reduction education that includes, but need not be limited to, the prevention of risk-taking behavior by children and the relationship of such behavior to substance abuse, pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV-infection and AIDS, as defined in section [19a-581](#), violence, teen dating violence, domestic violence and child abuse, (3) school violence prevention, conflict resolution, the prevention of and response to youth suicide and the identification and prevention of and response to bullying, as defined in subsection (a) of section [10-222d](#), except that those boards of education that implement any evidence-based model approach that is approved by the Department of Education and is consistent with subsection (c) of section [10-145a](#), sections [10-222d](#), [10-222g](#) and [10-222h](#), subsection (g) of section [10-233c](#) and sections 1 and 3 of public act 08-160*, shall not be required to provide in-service training on the identification and prevention of and response to bullying, (4) cardiopulmonary resuscitation and other emergency life saving procedures, (5) the requirements and obligations of a mandated reporter, (6) the detection and recognition of, and evidence-based structured literacy interventions for, students with dyslexia, as defined in section [10-3d](#), (7) culturally responsive pedagogy and practice, including, but not limited to, the video training module relating to implicit bias and anti-bias in the hiring process in accordance with the provisions of section [10-156hh](#), and (8) the principles and practices of social-emotional learning and restorative practices. Each local or regional board of education may allow any paraprofessional or noncertified employee to participate, on a voluntary basis, in any in-service training program provided pursuant to this section.