

Canandaigua City School District
Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Plan
Submitted June 2021

District Vision Statement: One Community, Transforming Lives

The Canandaigua City School District believes in building a **community rooted in inclusion and love**, where everyone recognizes the **active role they play** in educating our children and helping them find a sense of purpose in life.

District Mission Statement: Explore - Enrich - Empower

The Canandaigua City School District is dedicated to creating **enriched, world-class educational experiences** that engage **all learners**, foster meaningful exploration, and empower our school community to have their **voices heard**.

INTRODUCTION

Time for Change

The past year has been a difficult one. As individuals and as a community, we have dealt with the challenges of a global pandemic and its impact upon our families, our livelihoods, our community, our schools, and our children. To different degrees, we have all faced uncertainty, change, worry, and loss. We have also watched as our country has become increasingly polarized, with common ground and shared care for our community becoming harder to identify.

The Covid-19 global pandemic has brought out the best impulses of individuals in our community and, at the same time, revealed stark differences and divisions in our society. We have seen neighbors and members of our school family reach out and to and support each other in ways that ranged from checking in on neighbors or family members who were isolated to providing gift cards to help make dinner easier to provide for families in need. We have also seen the way that the effects of the pandemic - including illness, unemployment, child care challenges, and more - have affected members of our community differently, often in part based on factors such as socioeconomic status, racial or ethnical identity, gender and gender identity, and more.

At the same time as we have all carried the burden of these challenges, we as a nation have lived through events that have brought into stark relief our nation's long history of racism, bigotry, and bias. We have become increasingly aware of the ways in which we, as a school community, can (and unknowingly do) perpetuate inequality, divisiveness, and hurt, or actively work to create a school community in which all

students feel loved, valued, and included. We know that as a community we are not exempt from this troubling history, and to ignore it is to deny our students a true understanding of the world they live in and the opportunity to learn to use their voices to create the world they wish to see.

The New York State Board of Regents has recently spoken to the need for all school districts in New York State to acknowledge these realities and their effect on our students, and to work to create more inclusive school environments:

“A growing body of research finds that all students benefit when their schools implement strong Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) policies and practices – including academic, cognitive, civic, social-emotional, and economic benefits. Strong DEI policies, in partnership with parents and families, empower students from all backgrounds to visualize successful futures for themselves and provide them with a sense of belonging and self-worth. These benefits can lead to improved student achievement, which in turn can lead to better outcomes in other areas of their lives, including work and civic engagement. This is true regardless of a school’s geographic location or the demographic composition of its students and faculty.

We recognize that the decision to adopt a DEI policy, as well as the contents of such a policy, are ultimately matters of local discretion. However, the Regents believe strongly that there is a moral and an economic imperative to remove the inequities that stand in the way of success for whole segments of New York’s student population. *Accordingly, the Board expects that all school districts and institutions of higher education will develop and implement policies and practices that advance diversity, equity and inclusion – and that they will implement such policies and practices with fidelity and urgency.*” (New York State Board of Regents Policy on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, May 2021)

We know, unequivocally, that Canandaigua staff and community members believe in educating all students equally. We need look no further than our district’s mission and vision statements to realize the value we place on this idea.

First and foremost, we need to ensure all students know they belong here; in our classrooms, school buildings and community. This is paramount to not only student academic success but also to their social-emotional, civic and economic success and building a strong feeling of self worth. The same can be said for our staff. Studies have long shown the important role that personal connections play in personal achievement. How could making people feel valued ever not be the right choice?

Furthermore, we must prepare students for a broader, more diverse community outside of Canandaigua's borders. Communities tend to exist, to a certain extent, in a vacuum based on their population. While this is not a new phenomenon, it is one which we have the power to shift. To send our students into the world with limits on their understanding and appreciation of people unlike them is irresponsible and limiting in their ability to participate in a diverse world and contribute to a more equitable society.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Goals

Over the course of the 2020-2021 school year, a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Task Force of approximately 55 members from across the district met to discuss the ways in which (and the extent to which) the diversity, equity, inclusion are prioritized or, in some cases, not prioritized, in our district and develop a plan for addressing these issues in the coming years. The Task Force identified three main goals of our work around Diversity, Equality, and Inclusion:

- Affirm the dignity and humanity of all people
- Embrace historical truths of all people in order to develop perspective
- Recognize and confront bias, inequity, and discrimination in our community

The Advisory Group, with the support of the Task Force, also identified five “pillars” of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion that we believe the district must focus on in order to become the type of school community we wish to be:

- **Student Experiences**
For all students to achieve, they must encounter a welcoming and affirming environment, see themselves as valued and valuable, and encounter a rigorous and inclusive curriculum.
- **Teaching & Learning**
The classroom should be a place free from explicit and implicit bias, and the curriculum should reflect a broad range of voices, stories, and ways of knowing.
- **Leadership & Staff**
Work to proactively hire and retain a diverse, highly qualified faculty and staff while also providing meaningful, ongoing professional development opportunities for all educators to learn more about issues connected to diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- **Policy and Procedures**
Review all district policies and procedures through an equity lens.

- **Family & Community**

Work to ensure that all families are engaged in meaningful and accessible ways with the school community, and that our community partnerships are culturally (and otherwise) inclusive and enriching.

MOVING FORWARD

2021-2022 School Year

The work of creating a more inclusive and equitable community must take place over multiple years. For 2021-2022, focus should be on three initial steps:

- **Complete an Equity Audit**

- The audit should be multifaceted, and should include:
 - A review of curriculum, resources, and instructional strategies
 - A review of student data, disaggregated according to a variety of identity markers
 - Surveys of and focus groups with faculty and staff
 - Surveys of and focus with former and current students and families
 - Focus groups of community members
- After the audit is completed and results shared with the Board of Education and District and School Leadership, the District's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Plan should be updated by the DEI Advisory group to reflect the audit's findings and again presented to the Board of Education and District Leadership.

- **Professional Learning Communities**

- Create opportunities for groups of staff (District Leadership, School level leadership, Curriculum area teams, grade level teams, etc.) to engage in professional learning communities with a focus on personal and professional learning around issues related to diversity, equity, and inclusion
- The DEI Advisory Group can serve as a resource to these learning communities, offering curated resources

- **Bias Incident Response**

- Creation of clear structures and guidance for students, families, faculty, and staff regarding how to respond to and report incidents of bias or hate.

Committee Structure

- **DEI Advisory Group**

The DEI Advisory Group, established during the 2020-2021 school year, will continue to meet throughout 2021-2022 and likely beyond (unless a change in structure is indicated in the equity audit) to guide the district's diversity work. The Advisory Group will liaise with the building level DEI committees, District and Building Leadership, and the Board of Education.

- **Building Based DEI Committees**

Each building will have its own DEI committee, led by the Advisory Committee member in that building, and reporting to the building's SIPT team. These committees should have administrative, teacher, staff, parent, and (when appropriate) student representation, and they will address school specific issues (or broader issues in developmentally and pedagogically appropriate ways) in the context of the district and school's strategic plans.

- **DEI Task Force**

The larger DEI Task Force will not continue to meet on a regular basis (many of its members may serve on building level committees) but may gather infrequently to reflect on the year's progress and provide feedback to the Advisory Group.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: GLOSSARY OF TERMINOLOGY

From NYSED's Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Education Framework

Asset-based Perspective is a transformational perspective that recognizes and values the rich cultural practices embedded in all communities. Asset-based teaching is a strengths-based approach that leverages students' knowledge, experiences, skills, values, and perspectives as assets for learning. Asset-based educators see cultural differences as assets, create caring learning communities in which social, cultural, and linguistic diversities are valued, use the cultural knowledges of diverse cultures, families, and communities to guide curriculum development, classroom climates, instructional strategies, and relationships with students, and challenge racial, linguistic, and cultural stereotypes, prejudices, racism, and other forms of intolerance, injustice, and oppression.

Culturally Responsive-Sustaining (CR-S) Education is grounded in a cultural view of learning and human development in which multiple expressions of diversity (e.g., race, social class, gender, language, sexual orientation, nationality, religion, ability) are recognized and regarded as assets for teaching and learning. (*Not to be confused with Critical Race Theory*).

Deficit-based Perspective implies that students are flawed or deficient and that the role of the school is to fix the student. Deficit-based teaching seeks to teach to students' weaknesses instead of teaching to their strengths. It views students as needing to be fixed or remediated, and often attributes their school failures to perceived deficits that lie within the student, their family, community or culture.

Diversity is a reality created by individuals and groups from a broad spectrum of demographic and philosophical differences. These differences can exist along dimensions of race, ethnicity, gender, language heritage, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, age, physical abilities, religious beliefs, political beliefs, or other ideologies. It is the exploration of these differences in a safe, positive, and nurturing environment. It is about understanding each other and moving beyond simple tolerance to embracing and celebrating the rich dimensions of difference contained within everyone. Finally, we acknowledge that categories of difference are not always fixed but can be fluid, and we respect individual rights to self-identification, as no one culture is intrinsically superior to another.

Equity is the state, quality, or ideal of being just, impartial, and fair. The concept of equity is synonymous with fairness and justice. To be achieved and sustained, equity needs to be thought of as a structural and systemic concept, and not as idealistic. Equity is a robust system and dynamic process that reinforces and replicates equitable ideas, power, resources, strategies, conditions, habits, and outcomes.

Systematic Equity is a complex combination of interrelated elements designed to create, support and sustain social justice.

Gender implies a non-binary association of characteristics within the broad spectrum between masculinities and femininities. In New York State, gender is identified by the student. In the case of very young transgender students not yet able to advocate for themselves, gender may be identified by the parent or guardian.

Inclusive more than simply diversity and numerical representation, being inclusive involves authentic and empowered participation and a true sense of belonging. In an inclusive school, the social and instructional space is designed such that all students have access to the curriculum and there are many opportunities for students to be successful.

Internalized Racism describes the private racial beliefs held by and within individuals. The way we absorb social messages about race and adopt them as personal beliefs, biases, and prejudices are all within the realm of internalized racism. For people of color, internalized oppression can involve believing in negative messages about oneself or one's racial group. For Whites, internalized privilege can involve feeling a sense of superiority and entitlement or holding negative beliefs about people of color.

Interpersonal Racism is how our private beliefs about race become public when we interact with others. When we act upon our prejudices or unconscious bias — whether intentionally, visibly, verbally — we engage in interpersonal racism. Interpersonal racism also can be willful and overt, taking the form of bigotry, hate speech or racial violence.

Institutional Racism is racial inequity baked into our institutions, connoting a system of power that produces racial disparities in domains such as law, health, employment, education, and so on. It can take the form of unfair policies and practices, discriminatory treatment and inequitable opportunities and outcomes. A school system that concentrates people of color in the most overcrowded and under-resourced schools with the least qualified teachers, compared to the educational opportunities of more advantaged students, is an example of institutional racism.

Microaggressions are the everyday verbal, nonverbal, and environmental slights, snubs, or insults, whether intentional or unintentional, which communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative messages to target persons based solely upon their marginalized group membership. In many cases, these hidden messages may invalidate the group identity or experiential reality of targeted persons, demean them on a personal or group level, communicate the perception that they are lesser human beings, suggest they do not belong with the majority group, threaten and intimidate, or relegate them to inferior status and treatment.

Multilingual Learners (MLs) are students who, by reason of foreign birth or ancestry, speak or understand languages other than English, speak or little or no English, require support in order to become proficient in English, and are identified pursuant to Section 154.3 of New York State's Commissioner's Regulations.

Pluralism is a socially constructed system in which members of an identity group maintain participation in this group even as they belong to a larger cultural group. Educational pluralism is when students can leverage aspects of their cultural background as assets for learning and sustain those assets throughout their schooling. They are not required to minimize their unique cultural strengths in order to experience social and academic success or acceptance because no one culture is not valued as standard or dominant.

Race is a socially constructed system of categorizing humans largely based on observable physical features (phenotypes) such as skin color and ancestry. There is no scientific basis for or discernible distinction between racial categories. The ideology of race has become embedded in our identities, institutions, and culture and is used as a basis for discrimination and domination.

Racial Justice is the systematic fair treatment of people of all races that results in equitable opportunities and outcomes for everyone. All people are able to achieve their full potential in life, regardless of race, ethnicity or the community in which they live. Racial justice — or racial equity — goes beyond “anti-racism.” It’s not just about what we are against, but also what we are for. A CR-S education framework should move us from a reactive posture to a more powerful, proactive and even preventative approach.

Racism is widely thought of as simply personal prejudice, but, in fact, it is a complex system of racial hierarchies and inequities. At the micro level of racism, or individual level, are internalized and interpersonal systems of engrained bias. At the macro level of racism, we focus beyond individuals to the broader dynamics, including symbolic, ideological, institutional, and structural systems of racial hierarchies and inequities.

Socioeconomic Status is the social standing or class of an individual or group. It is often measured as a combination of education, income, and occupation. Examinations of socioeconomic status often reveal inequities in access to resources, as well as issues related to privilege, power, and control. In New York State, a student's socioeconomic status is determined by family participation in economic assistance programs, such as the Free or Reduced Price Lunch Programs; Social Security Insurance (SSI); Food Stamps; Foster Care; Refugee Assistance (cash or medical assistance); Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC); Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP); Safety Net Assistance (SNA); Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA); or Family Assistance: Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). If one student in a family is identified as low income, all students from that household or economic unit may be identified as low income.

Sociocultural Responsiveness involves the active sensitivity to what all students need to be successful academically, psychologically, emotionally, and socially. Such responsiveness recognizes that all students are different and must be uniquely responded to, challenged and stimulated, and strategies must be adapted to meet the needs of individuals and groups of students.

Socio-political consciousness involves an awareness to both the social and political factors at play in the workings of complex societal systems. This consciousness is necessary for navigating complex systems based on a unity of thought and performance, reflective practice and deliberative action, skills that are meaningful and necessary for participation in expanding global economies and democracies.

Structural Racism (or structural racialization) is the operation of racial bias across institutions and society. It describes the cumulative and compounding effects of an array of factors that systematically privilege one group over another. Since the word "racism" often is understood as a conscious belief, "racialization" may be a better way to describe a process that does not require intentionality. Race equity expert John A. Powell writes: "'Racialization' connotes a process rather than a static event. It underscores the fluid and dynamic nature of race... 'Structural racialization' is a set of processes that may generate disparities or depress life outcomes without any racist actors."

Systematic equity is a complex combination of interrelated elements consciously designed to create, support, and sustain social justice. It is a robust system and dynamic process that reinforces and replicates equitable ideas, power, resources, strategies, conditions, habits, and outcomes.

Systemic Racialization describes a dynamic system that produces and replicates racial ideologies, identities, and inequities. Systemic racialization is the deeply-institutionalized pattern of discrimination that cuts across major political, economic and social organizations in a society. Public attention to racism is generally focused on the symptoms (such as a racist slur by an individual) rather than the system of racial inequality. Like two sides of the same coin, racial privilege describes race-based advantages and preferential treatment based on skin color, while racial oppression refers to race-based disadvantages, discrimination and exploitation based on skin color.

APPENDIX 2: DEI TASK FORCE

Advisory Group Members

Casandra Musolino (Primary School)	Kathryn McFarland (CACC, Administrator)
Christopher Rodriguez (Academy)	Kelley Mariano (CMS)
Jamone Turner (Parent)	Melody Johnson (Parent)
Jennifer Kafka (Elementary School)	Vernon Tenney (Administrator)
Julianne Miller (Board of Education)	

Task Force Members

Amy Wade	Jamie Farr	Meghan Cabral
Angela Dana	JaMone Turner	Melanie Bishop
Anthony Kunecki	Jean MacKenzie	Melody Johnson
Bob Palumbo	Jennifer Cerne	Rachel Ludwig
Carla Williams	Jennifer Kafka	Reilly Figenscher
Carly Blanding	Jim Malone	Rebecca Turner
Caroline Chapman	John Rivera	Ruth Shields
Cary Burke	Julianne Miller	Sara Maser
Casandra Musolino	Julie Marie Smith	Sarah Hamlin
Connie Fredericks Malone	Karen Tricomi	Shauna Karley
Charity Knope	Kathryn McFarland	Shelby Ascroft
Christopher Rodriguez	Kelley Mariano	Sim Covington
Cynthia Vanderlee	Kristina Henry	Stephanie Knapp
Danielle Consaul	Leanne Ducharme	Tabitha Metz
Debra VanDeMortel	Leigh Havens	Teresa Keyes
Emily Bonadonna	Leslie Tomanovich	Tricia Tepedino
Eric Palumbo	Lynne Sigl	Vernon Tenney
Heidi Robb	Marie Windover	
Howard Johnson	Mary Cywinski	

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Advisory Group Meetings 2021-2022

Third Wednesday of the Month (unless otherwise noted)

Operations Center

3:45 - 5:00

September 22, 2021

October 20, 2021

November 17, 2021

December 15, 2021

January 19, 2022

February 16, 2022

March 16, 2022

April 20, 2022

May 18, 2022

June 15, 2022

The Advisory Group will provide a Mid-Year Report and End of Year Report to the Board of Education.

APPENDIX 3: 5 PILLARS OF DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION

Potential Areas for Growth

The DEI Advisory Committee and Task Force identified five areas in which action needs to be taken to create a more inclusive, equitable, and educationally enriching environment for students, staff, and families. In each area, the task force brainstormed potential areas to address, with the understanding that a plan should be fully developed only after we have analyzed the results of the Equity Audit.

- **Student Experiences**

For all students to achieve, they must encounter a welcoming and affirming environment, see themselves as valued and valuable, and encounter a rigorous and inclusive curriculum.

- Increase supports for BIPOC, LGBTQ, and other students from marginalized or underrepresented groups, including formal and informal mentorship programs and affinity groups
- Examine discipline policy, procedures, and implementation to ensure equity
- Provide equitable and inclusive access to college, career, and workforce advisement to students and families
- Increase use of restorative justice practices
- Evaluate and address the representation of diverse groups in our school spaces - in murals, in other artwork, in student work displayed on the walls
- Incorporate student voices into DEI committees in each building, as developmentally appropriate
- Provide age appropriate training to students to help them identify microaggressions and other biased actions, change their own actions, and stand up for themselves and each other
- Establish clear and accessible processes for students to report incidents of bias in a supportive atmosphere
- Examine school-based activities, including field trips, sports, and playgrounds, through a lens of equity and accessibility

- **Teaching & Learning**

- Use NYSED's *Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Education Framework* to inform curricular, assessment and instruction.
- Decolonize the curriculum by increasing the representation of diverse voices and communities (especially those that have historically been marginalized) across the curriculum, in all subject areas

- Create a plan for regular review of curriculum and curricular changes through the lens of equity and inclusivity
 - Move beyond “months” as a way to incorporate the histories of traditionally underrepresented or marginalized groups and individuals
 - Develop (or utilize current) coaching structure and network to support the use and implementation of culturally responsive learning and instruction, potentially along the lines of the Technology Integrator structure
 - Examine and address the presence of bias, implicit bias, and microaggressions in all educational spaces
- **Leadership & Staff**
 - Work proactively to hire and retain a diverse, highly qualified faculty and staff
 - Provide ongoing, meaningful professional development to address the role and presence of bias (including implicit bias), prejudice, privilege and racism
 - Create on-boarding training sessions for all new staff that address the need to create safe, inclusive, affirming learning and working spaces through an examination of equity, the history of marginalized peoples in our community and our society, and explicit and implicit bias
 - Provide clear guidance and support for faculty and staff that addresses what to do when witnessing or experiencing any form of hate or bias
- **Policy & Procedures**
 - Complete an Equity Audit, and adapt Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion plan based on the audit’s findings
 - Review all existing and new policies, procedures, and practices through an equity lens
 - Create clear reporting and investigative structure for incidents of hate or bias
 - Create administrative and committee structures that support and advance DEI work
 - Review the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Plan on a biannual basis, tracking progress and adjusting the plan based on new data and realities
 - Reexamine district and school logos, images, and names, including the use of “Braves”

- **Family & Community**

- Engage families in ways that are meaningful and accessible to them and respect variations in culture and language
- Consider multiple modalities of communication and partnerships with a variety of local community leaders to reach families
- Build partnerships with local (regional) partners and cultural organizations (including, but not limited to, Ganondagan) that can provide opportunities for faculty, staff, and students to learn more about the diverse history and culture in our area
- Enrich student experiences by bringing in speakers and scheduling field trips that introduce students to and reflect a diversity of voices and experiences
- Increase community awareness and representation of the celebrations of multiple cultures in educational spaces and in event scheduling