



CULTURAL COMPETENCE COMMITTEE

Recommendations for the Road Map
to Cultural Competence
District Strategic Plan

June 2021

“Inspiring a Standard of Excellence for All Students”

INTRODUCTION:

The Administration of the Pelham Public Schools, in partnership with the District Cultural Competence Committee (CCC) undertook to unpack the recommendations of the recent equity audit in light of the District's Strategic Plan, and to set forth a roadmap to further the Cultural Competence goal. The CCC, comprised of 55 stakeholders representing students, teachers, administrators, parents, community members, and the Board of Education, worked in sub committees to define recommendations that would further the work of the District toward the goal of developing empowered, adaptable, well-balanced individuals who are equipped to meaningfully contribute to our local, national and global society.

The work, led by administrators and assisted by representatives from the NYU Metropolitan Center for Research on Equity and the Transformation of Schools, is represented in this report and offered to the Board of Education for their consideration and direction.

As stated in the [New York State Culturally Responsive and Sustaining Education Framework](#), "Learning is rooted in the lives and experiences of people and cultivated through activities that people find meaningful. When teaching is not rooted in students' lives, student learning suffers." As such, it is the desire of the District to assure that all students find meaning and purpose in their learning as it is relevant, and rooted in their authentic identities and cultural experiences.

Special thanks are extended to CampbellJones & Associates and NYU for their guidance and facilitation as we built our understanding of Culturally Responsive and Sustaining Education (CR-SE) and capacity regarding Cultural Competence and the New York State CR-SE Framework. Thank you to the members of the Administrative team who led this work at the district level and who facilitated each sub committee. Thank you to our students, who gave voice to their lived experience within our classrooms and hallways, and who are the north star for our work as educators. And thank you to the many parents and community members who were invested in this effort and who brought tremendous expertise and passion to this work, all for the purpose of making the education of the children of our community accessible, rigorous, culturally responsive, and rooted in empathy, civility and mutual respect.

Short-term Recommendations (1-2 years):

Equity Policy and Hiring Practices:

- Develop and approve a Board Policy on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion
- Expand searches beyond OLAS to broaden the candidate pool
- Participate in regional diverse candidate recruitment fairs,
- Continue to engage in leadership professional development in culturally proficient candidate review, interview questioning, and recruitment practices
- Diversify hiring committee representation with stakeholders (family, students, staff) and community members
- Require bias training for hiring committee participants to mitigate bias and promote equity in candidate review.

Data Analysis:

- Unify strategic planning to support coherent implementation of District goals across each

school.

- Unify our approach to academic progress monitoring across K-12
- Unify the district and school approach to measuring school climate and culture

Curriculum and Professional Learning:

- Develop a rubric to be used for curriculum review
- Use rubric to review the curriculum across all disciplines and courses K-12
- Use rubric to assess the texts used in the classroom and present in school libraries as well as recommendations for new additions and acquisitions
- Develop PLCs (Professional Learning Communities) around CR-SE practices so that teachers can commit their time during two-hour PLC days to professional development opportunities and curriculum review relating to this work
- Continue training with [CampbellJones & Associates](#), with the additional focus of building agency in motivated participants to conduct turn-key training of their colleagues, including the onboarding of new hires
- Develop a CR-SE resource page for the District website, encouraging independent learning and exploration by teachers, students, and members of the community
- Define and pilot a Director of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Wellness position to ensure continued leadership and oversight of our diversity and inclusion efforts, curriculum development, professional development of staff, collection of quantitative and qualitative evidence, fostering student voice, and communication with the CCC and Board of Education

Family and Community Engagement:

- Share a summary of the work done by the CCC during the 2020-2021 school year with the community and an update on next steps
- Utilize accessible communication about events and the ongoing work of the CCC
- Hold an event(s) to discuss how the NYS Board of Regents Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion call to action relates to the work of the CCC
- Collaborate with SE/PTAs, school-based and district-wide committees, and Pelham Together on planned events and community programming
- Implement a list of Diversity and Inclusion questions to assess programming to ensure it is inclusive and uplifts student and family voices
- Develop a CCC communications plan and schedule. Decide what will be communicated to the community, where/how it will be communicated, and how often

Student Equity Leadership Empowerment:

- Support the work of the A.C.E. (Access Creates Equity) Club at the middle school, including ensuring that BIPOC students feel valued and connected in their school
- Support the work of the G.S.A. (Gender and Sexuality Alliance) at the middle school and high school, including improving student and staff understanding regarding the use of personal pronouns and celebration of LGBTQ+ pride
- Support the work of the Black Empowerment Club at the high school, including providing a forum for students to discuss Black history and important current events
- Develop mentoring programs connecting middle school students with elementary students and high school students with middle school students to assist in transitions,

improve access to honors/AP/dual enrollment courses, and build relationships between students who identify as allies

- Work with Rosalind Wiseman and Cultures of Dignity to continue the Student Ambassador Program to develop students' leadership and advocacy skills at the middle school
- Support Student Ambassadors in the development of events (e.g., a "Friday Night Live") to better integrate students from the four elementary schools before they reach middle school
- Support high school student equity leaders in the development of activities and improvements in the school for the benefit of BIPOC students

Long-Term Recommendations (3-5 years):

Equity Policy and Hiring Practices:

- Oversee the implementation of the Equity Policy, to monitor and report on the implementation of this policy to ensure it meets the needs of our school community, and to review relevant existing Board of Education policies to ensure alignment with the Equity Policy
- Continue to promote a commitment to hiring highly effective educators who reflect the diversity of our school community
- Inaugurate a district-wide diverse candidate recruitment fair personalized to Pelham Public Schools (Winter/Spring 2022)
- Expand professional learning for school leaders in diverse hiring practices
- Initiate a practice of collecting feedback from recent hires on their experiences with the process and onboarding in the district
- Explore ways to foster an professional environment attractive to an array of candidates

Data Analysis:

- Enhance the district's capacity to collect and analyze data to inform professional practice

Curriculum and Professional Learning:

- As our curricula continue to evolve, lead teachers / supervisors should maintain a focus on creating work that is inclusive, reflective of our students, relevant, connected to current realities, and grounded in historical context. Curricular materials should be developed in a manner that embraces and values all students' cultural and racial identities, genders and sexual orientations, as well as their academic and individual uniqueness. As new texts and materials are introduced into the curriculum and our school and classroom libraries, teachers and supervisors will maintain a focus on providing students with "[mirrors and windows](#)" (stories that reflect their own experiences as well as those that provide insight into the experiences of others). As texts are added, teachers and supervisors should be sure to introduce texts at a variety of reading levels.
- The District should continue to ensure that teachers are prepared to navigate challenging themes and topics that will arise by providing in-house or external professional development
- Research and investigate potential professional development opportunities and vendors relating to CR-SE for our staff

- Motivated staff members who have experienced training and are committed to moving this work forward can be designated as “Champions of Equity and Excellence.” These staff members would work with the Director of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Wellness to provide training and resources for their colleagues, including opportunities for classroom visitations and debriefing. Staff members could advance along levels of CR-SE certification and receive recognition for their achievements.
- A committee of the Champions, led by the Director, could develop a rubric for teachers’ self-assessment and reflection regarding classroom practices that promote and support CR-SE

Family and Community Engagement:

- Develop and maintain a new area of the district website to provide CCC-related content: updates on the work of the CCC, educational resources, links to partner organizations, and information on how to get involved
- Engage the community through ongoing forums to solicit feedback and answer questions
- Partner with the student equity leaders and Pelham United to share students’ experiences and have their voices be heard. Work with Pelham United to see if there are ways for students to share their thoughts possibly on their website- in article / essay form or through more artistic outlets such as short stories / poems / visual art.
- Have all schools hold regularly scheduled interest group meetings giving caregivers and students an opportunity to connect with the building principal in a safe and welcoming environment
- Collaborate with community groups to plan a series of educational and fun programming for families

Student Equity Leader Empowerment:

- Use data collected via student and faculty climate surveys to develop additional action items
- Plan assemblies by members of our BIPOC communities to serve as role models in order to showcase their success and inspire students to achieve
- Improve student outcomes regarding their feeling of integration in the schools
- Increase BIPOC students’ enrollment in honors/AP/dual enrollment classes

CONCLUSION:

The members of the CCC and the District Administration support these recommendations and accept the responsibility for implementation of this roadmap in support of our goal of developing empowered, adaptable, well-balanced individuals who are equipped to meaningfully contribute to our local, national and global society. This is the heart of our work as public educators as we prepare our students to be the next generation of educated citizenry, prepared to function effectively and in support of and for the strengthening of our democracy.

E pluribus unum et Excelsior,

The District Cultural Competence Committee



Pelham Public Schools
Cultural Competence Committee Members 2020-2021:

Administration Representatives:

Dr. Cheryl Champ, Superintendent of Schools
Dr. Steven Garcia, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum, Instruction & Personnel
Dr. Maria Thompson, Director of Humanities
Mark Berkowitz, Principal, PMHS
Bethany Antonelli, Assistant Principal, PMHS
Lynn Sabia, Principal, PMS
Sean Llewellyn, Assistant Principal, PMS
Tricia Fitzgerald, Principal, Hutchinson Elementary School
Farid Johnson, Principal, Siwanoy Elementary School
Alex Wolff, Public Information Officer

Faculty Representatives:

Maria Abeshouse
Lori Amer
Scott Brown
Cristina Camacho
Rosemarie Cipollone
Katelin Cuccia
Devon Fallon
Adriene Flynn
Tricia Joseph
Micky Katz
Christine Lavin
Christina Levi
Kathleen Lieggi
Ashley Miranda
Michele O'Neil
Andrea Pellicane
Sara Pinsker
Mary Preston

Kristin Quintano
Emlyn Taveras

Student Representatives:

Anderson Brady
Gabrielle Chavez
Dylan DeJesus
Liam Ginsburg
Nadine Leesang
Sophia Leung
Julian Raspberry

Board of Education Trustee:

Eileen Miller

Community Members:

Dennisa Angrisani
Estee Cross
Jeannie Crowley
Lauren Dehler
Annemarie Garcia
Jeffrey Ginsburg
Maria Ines Raij
Shakira Kennedy
Erin Larkin-Maguire
Cynthia Morgan Jenkins
Noreen Naroo-Pucci
Peter Romaniuk
Amanda Rosa
Debra Stern
M. Valentina

Cultural Competence Sub Committees

Subcommittee:	Members:
Equity Policy and Hiring Practices	Bethany Antonelli, PMHS AP (Chair), Dr. Steve Garcia, Assistant Superintendent Eileen Miller, BOE Trustee Peter Romaniuk, Parent Cynthia Jenkins, Parent
Data Analysis	Mark Berkowitz, PMHS Principal (Chair) Jeannie Crowley, Teacher Erin Larkin-Maguire, Parent Michele O’Neill, Elementary Teacher Andrea Pellicane, PMHS Counselor Debra Stern, Parent
Curriculum and Professional Learning	Sean A. Llewellyn, PMS AP (Chair) Trisha Fitzgerald, Principal Dr. Maria Thompson, Director of Humanities Christina Camacho, Elementary Teacher Sara Pinsker, PMS Teacher Kathy Lieggi, PMS Teacher Adriene Flynn, Speech Pathologist Lori Amer, TA/Art Teacher Shakira Kennedy, Parent Jeff Ginsburg, Parent Sophia Leung, Student Nadine Leesang, Student
Family and Community Engagement	Farid Johnson, Principal, (Chair) Annemarie Garcia, Parent Lauren Dehler, Parent Kristin Quintano, Social Worker Scott Brown, PMS Counselor Alex Wolff, Public Information Officer
Student Equity Leader Empowerment	Lynn M. Sabia. PMS Principal (Chair) Maria Abeshouse, Music Coordinator Anderson Brady, Student Katelin Cuccia, PMHS Counselor Devon Fallon, Art Coordinator Liam Ginsburg, Student Maria Ines, Teacher Tricia Joseph, PMS School Psychologist Christina Levi, Art Teacher

	Noreen Pucci, Parent Mary Preston, Art Teacher Micky Katz, Elementary Teacher
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Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in the Pelham Public Schools

A focus on diversity and social justice is not new in the Pelham Public Schools. A significant part of our history, and a source of community pride, is the legacy of Michael Schwerner, a Freedom Rider, who was a graduate of Pelham Memorial High School, and who fought valiantly for civil rights and died for the cause in 1964. Generations of Pelham students have been inspired by his legacy and motivated by his activism.

Our student demographics as of the 2019-2020 school year, as shown in Table 1, reflect a somewhat more diverse student body than many peer districts in the Southern Westchester area. This diversity is what draws many families to our community, recognizing the value of living in a diverse and pluralistic community, and desiring for their children to benefit from the rich blend of cultures both within our schools and in the greater community as a whole.

Table 1(<https://data.nysed.gov/enrollment.php?year=2020&instid=800000034999>)

Demographic Group	Student Population
White	65%
Hispanic	16%
Multi-racial	7%
Asian American/ Pacific Islander	6%
Black/African American	5%
Students with Disabilities	10%
English Language Learners	1%
Economically Disadvantaged	11%

As stated in the District's [Diversity Task Force Report](#) produced in 2014,

During the 2011-2012 academic year, a Diversity Task Force was formed by the former Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Dennis R. Lauro, Jr. The charge of the Task Force was to study the root causes surrounding the achievement gap that seemed to pervade various subgroups of students at the secondary level. The Task Force also explored the role that demographics played in student achievement as well as college and career readiness.

In the fall of 2013, the Diversity Task Force was reconstituted. Changes in the demographic composition of our school population facilitated the need for focused dialogue and action. The Mission of the Pelham Public Schools is, "*Inspiring a Standard of Excellence for All Students.*" In order to be more responsive to the needs of all

learners, it became increasingly important for our schools to proactively address issues pertaining to diversity.

Membership on the committee was comprised of 34 members and was chaired by Superintendent of Schools, Peter Giarrizzo. Board of Education Trustee, Ms. Peggy O'Leary served as the liaison to the Pelham Board of Education. Four sub-committees explored the extent to which the Pelham Public Schools meets the needs of its diverse student body and community through the lenses of Curriculum, Cultural Responsiveness, Parent Communication and Engagement, and Student Achievement.

The work of the Diversity Task Force became embedded within the District's 2014-2019 Strategic plan, with a variety of key initiatives implemented over the course of those five years. The Diversity Task Force transitioned their mission into one of oversight of the Task Force plan, and served as the consistent body for self reflection and accountability as the district carried out plans and transitioned leadership at both the Board and District level.

A key initiative achieved by the work of the task force included implementation of an Open Enrollment Policy at the secondary level, which allowed any student to opt into higher level course work. The goal of this policy was to open doors of academic opportunity to students who were traditionally underserved. District wide showcases and speaker series were held to highlight the achievements and creativity of diverse individuals within and outside of the district. Additionally, opportunities to build relationships across our four elementary schools were put into place to eliminate relational barriers caused by structural separation within the district at the elementary level.

During the 2018-2019 School year the Board and District initiated the next iteration of strategic planning. As stated in the [final report from the Strategic Planning](#) Process conducted during the 2018-2019 school year,

The Superintendent...and Board of Education embarked on a process to set strategic goals for the years 2019-2024. With sharp intent, they chose a process of deep inclusivity and voice for all stakeholders within the school community as well as external stakeholders across the greater Pelham community. The process of data collection and analysis included:

- Community forums (agenda pages 13-14)
- Group forums with high school and middle school students
- Individual interviews with Board of Education members
- Individual interviews with district administrators and Association leaders
- Group forum for faculty
- Electronic surveys for all faculty; all parents of students; students in grades 4-12; support staff; and community members without children in the schools - Total responses: 2,970
- Analysis of disaggregated state standardized test results; AP and SAT results

A highly engaged and representative core team of teachers, parents, Board members, administrators and students met for two days on March 13 and 14 to review all data,

distill all input and work through a facilitated process to determine what goals would matter most, have the highest leverage and the greatest impact for the students of Pelham in the next five years.

The data and input from educators, matched with the research base on the needs of contemporary, world class learners as well as the work recently accomplished and currently underway in the district led to the conclusion that the Pelham educational community's focus on three main bodies of work would matter significantly in the learning and lives of Pelham students. Those three target areas are: Authentic Learning; Cultural Proficiency; and Whole Child.

The [2019-2024 District Strategic Plan](#) contains the following goals:

Cultural Competence

Cultivate an empathetic, inclusive and equitable school community that values and encourages respect, voice and agency for all students.

Authentic Learning

Develop innovative problem solvers, critical and creative thinkers, effective communicators and strong collaborators who can apply their knowledge and skills to navigate real world challenges.

Whole Child

Deepen our systemic academic and social-emotional supports for the health, safety, and well-being of the whole child, recognizing that our learners need to balance academic, physical, social, and emotional demands.

Within the Cultural Competence goal, the District identified the following action items, around which District Administration implemented various initiatives and activities during the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 school years:

- Increase student voice/agency within the K-12 system;
- Examine curriculum, instruction, resources, and assessments to ensure that they reflect principles, values and lessons of inclusivity and equity;
- Increase partnerships with community stakeholders;
- Teachers/admin/ staff/ students routinely exercise an awareness and understanding of culturally responsive theory and practice; and
- Align recruitment, hiring and on-boarding practices to build a more diverse and culturally proficient staff.

Given the activities that had been implemented in 2019-2020 and the District's ongoing desire to improve, the District contracted with the NYU Metropolitan Research Center for Equity and the Transformation of Schools in July 2020 for the purposes of conducting a third party equity audit as well as facilitation of work with the CCC and student equity leaders.

The [Equity Audit](#) Process included the following goals:

- Identify the students, by category, who are not receiving an equitable education;
- Identify the key functions that produce inequitable educational opportunities and

disparate student outcomes;

- Incorporate the voices and lived experiences of parents/guardians/community members;
- Analyze how the implementation of those core functions produce inequitable opportunities and outcomes; and
- Propose strategies and interventions to improve how a school implements its core functions so that all students receive an equitable education.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic that swept the globe in March of 2020, the District's continued work in this area had to be managed primarily through virtual means as COVID restrictions and safety protocols required limited gathering sizes and minimizing unnecessary personal contact. As a result, during the summer of 2020, representatives from NYU facilitated a series of virtual Town Halls with the dual purpose of helping the district and community process the racial reckoning surrounding the killing of George Floyd as well as obtain crucial qualitative data for the audit. The data analyzed for the audit included but is not limited to:

- Leadership communication practices
- Cultural Competence Committee background
- Training materials from the Cultural Proficiency cohorts
- Strategic Plan materials
- Student demographic and enrollment data
- Suspension data
- Achievement data
- AP/honors course enrollment data
- District code of conduct and student handbooks
- Special education identification and classification data
- Welcoming policies

As a result of the audit, the following two sets of recommendations were provided to the district:

To operationalise our commitment to equity and justice:

- A clear roadmap is needed to prioritize and define the trajectory of manifesting these recommendations and the NYU Metro Center will support the BOE, district leadership, and building leadership in that process.
- An equity policy should be developed to clearly articulate the commitments that this Board of Education is making to operationalize practices that will foster and sustain inclusivity and a sense of belonging.
- Access networks of local districts who are engaged in similar commitments like the Putnam|Northern Westchester BOCES ACTION Network.
- Examine professional learning plans based on what was learned and continues to be learned with CampbellJones and now as a result of this audit to make plans for all staff who have contact and influence on children (direct and indirect) to be engaged in capacity-building, equity, inclusivity, and racial justice.
- Leverage the brilliance of young people in every imaginable way with representation on the CCC, with a dedicated student equity leader activist space at the high school and

middle school, and as essential participants in the curriculum audit.

- Manifest ways to hear from more of the community through a climate survey, additional town halls and community conversations, affinity spaces, focus groups, and interviews so that their voices are not just always at the table, but are powerful guides in the efforts to manifest necessary changes in Pelham schools.

Further the District should:

- Repair community harm through positive relationship building. Pelham leadership must methodically work to repair community harms and build a positive relationship and climate amongst leadership, staff, students and the larger Pelham community. A focus is needed on relational trust, an interrelated set of mutual dependencies embedded within the social exchanges in a school community.
- Address race-based patterns of disparity and their intersections with other student identities.
- Diversify hiring and strengthen retention practices with the intention of growing and fostering affinity spaces available to BIPOC students, staff, and families.
- Streamline data collection systems to illuminate disparities that - if gone unrecognized - will continue to perpetuate negative narratives about and lived experiences of different student groups.
- Ensure equity and access to school resources.

The District's Cultural Competence Committee along with District Administration were then tasked with unpacking these recommendations within the context of the Strategic Plan, student outcome data, and the effects of the pandemic, to determine a roadmap for moving forward in the area of Cultural Competence.

On April 12, 2021, the New York State Board of Regents issued a [call to action](#) to advance diversity, equity and inclusion in schools across New York State. As part of this effort, the Board released a draft [CR-SE framework](#) and call for all schools in New York State to develop policies that advance diversity, equity and inclusion as a priority in their schools.

Through this framework, the Board of Regents is expressing its expectation that all school districts will develop policies that advance diversity, equity and inclusion – and that they implement such policies with fidelity and urgency. The framework outlines a comprehensive approach to advance diversity, equity and inclusion in New York's schools including highlighting:

- the dangers of teaching courses of study through only one perspective;
- the impact of systemic racism on students and society;
- the importance of looking beyond the data to discover and address the root causes of societal issues;
- the myriad benefits that accrue from providing students with school environments that are diverse, equitable, and inclusive;

- the role of the Board of Regents, the Department, and local schools and districts in promoting greater diversity, equity and inclusion; and
- the suggested elements of a district's diversity, equity and inclusion policy.

Specifically, the framework suggests that schools adopt and implement policies that take a comprehensive approach and considers the entirety of the schooling process, from governance, teaching and learning and family and community engagement to workforce diversity (including practices and policies to recruit and retain a diverse workforce in all areas and levels), diverse schools and learning opportunities (even where the district's student population is relatively homogeneous) and student supports, discipline and wellness.

As part of the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Initiative, the Board and Department will:

- Adopt a policy statement on diversity, equity and inclusion based on the principles detailed in the framework;
- Establish a Workgroup on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion to provide policy direction and recommendations to the full Board on matters related to diversity, equity and inclusion within the Department. The Workgroup will be representative of SED and the University of the State of New York (USNY); and
- Provide resources for educators to adopt Culturally Responsive and Sustaining education practices in their schools.

The CR-SE Framework is based in the following four principles:

- Welcoming and affirming environment;
- High expectations and rigorous instruction;
- Inclusive curriculum and assessment; and
- Ongoing professional learning,

and lays out goals for the work of students, teachers, school leaders, and district leaders. This framework demonstrates great coherence when overlaid with the District's strategic plan as well as the recommendations from the NYU Equity Audit. It is through these multiple lenses that the CCC approached their work resulting in the roadmap recommendations contained within this report.

As a final note, much debate has centered around the theoretical lens through which much work in the area of diversity, equity and inclusion is rooted. As with all things in education, no singular theory or lens is used to drive all of what we do. There are various theoretical and conceptual lenses that serve different purposes at different times and assist in understanding and conceptualizing how one comes to their work as an educator and/or what is the right approach to leadership, change management, human development, and/or pedagogy at any given moment or in any given situation.

Institution theory is one lens that may offer an apolitical and practical approach in this arena, as understanding the culture of our educational institution, the regulations, norms, and beliefs that define the institution of education, and the drivers of change will inform any strategic plan and accompanying road map.

According to the CR-SE Framework,

The New York State Education Department understands culture as the multiple components of one's identity, including but not limited to: race, economic background, gender, language, sexual orientation, nationality, religion, and ability. Culture far transcends practices such as cuisines, art, music, and celebrations to also include ways of thinking, values, and forms of expression. These ways and forms are in constant flux, renegotiation, and evolution. Schools then become a meeting point for cultures, containing children and adults who bring with them multiple facets of their identity, along with unique experiences and perspectives.

Additionally,

Research suggests that many students whose cultures are more closely aligned with the "cultural fabric" of schools experience praise and are viewed as more dedicated than those whose home cultures differ...Learning is rooted in the lives and experiences of people and cultivated through activities that people find meaningful. When teaching is not rooted in students' lives, student learning suffers.

As such, it is important that we recognize the culture of the Pelham Public Schools is reflective of the contexts of our community and the institution of public schooling, which tend to conform to traditionally dominant cultures (i.e. white, middle class, abled, heteronormative, etc.). In understanding our culture, and then listening to the voices of those who are not reflective of the dominant culture, we are able to identify pathways to building greater understanding, belongingness, community, and cultural competence.

This report lays out those action items that the District CCC believes will lead us down the road toward achieving those goals for all students. Upon completion of this report and presentation to the Board of Education, the CCC will shift their work and role to serve as the oversight body, holding District administration accountable for completion of the recommendations and ongoing review and revision as we strive to carry out the goals of the District Strategic Plan.

EQUITY POLICY AND HIRING PRACTICES

Charge:

The charge to the Equity Policy and Hiring Practices Committee was to focus on drafting an equity policy for the PUFSD and explore ways to strengthen the District's hiring practices. As a sub-committee, we reviewed relevant equity policies from peers' districts, as well as emerging guidance from the NYS Board of Regents. Our short-term goal was to develop a draft Equity Policy for PUFSD as the main lens through which all other equity work should be viewed. This draft Equity Policy has now been reviewed by the Policy Committee and brought forward to the full Board of Education for review and approval. The draft policy is stated below:

DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION

The Pelham United Free School District values diversity, equity and inclusion.

In line with our strategic goals, the Pelham School Community will develop empowered, adaptable, well-balanced individuals who are equipped to meaningfully contribute to our local, national and global society. We will cultivate an empathetic, inclusive, and equitable school community that values and encourages respect, voice, and agency for all students, regardless of race, ethnicity, country of origin, language, religion, social economic status, gender, sexuality, ability, and size. We acknowledge recent statements on diversity, equity and inclusion by the New York State Board of Regents;¹ In implementing these measures, we aim to educate and inspire all students to learn continually, think critically, pursue their aspirations, and contribute to a diverse and dynamic world; our goal is to increase access, decrease opportunity gaps, and eliminate equity gaps for our students and in our community.

In order to promote educational equity across Pelham, the Board of Education commits to:

1. Developing and providing high quality, culturally relevant and responsive curricula and resources for all students and teachers while creating the conditions to support the delivery of instructional content, pedagogical techniques, and assessment that are culturally responsive to Pelham students;
2. Identifying and removing barriers to accessing a safe and rigorous learning environment based on diverse student identities, as well as barriers to opportunities, social emotional wellness, academic achievement, personal goals, and overall outcomes for all students as early as possible in their education.
3. Ensuring that family and community engagement practices are based on mutual trust, confidence, and respect, including by encouraging participation in school and community fora, reducing language barriers, and fostering inclusivity through translated communications from our schools;

¹ New York State Board of Regents Policy Statement on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in New York State Schools, May 6, 2021; New York State Board of Regents Framework on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in New York's Schools: A Call to Action (Draft), April 12, 2021.

4. Developing the capacity of all staff who have direct and indirect contact and influence on students, to understand the impact of systemic inequities in education and to eliminate bias in their relationships and interactions;
5. Intentionally planning to attract, recruit, develop, and retain staff who are more reflective of our students, our community and our region;
6. Eliminating district and school-based policies, structures and practices that maintain inequities or contribute to disproportionate access and outcomes;
7. Employing programs and practices that enhance all students' self-identity, self-confidence, and self-esteem, including by implementing non-discriminatory discipline policies and practices, and focusing on the well-being of the "whole child," recognizing that our learners need to balance academic, physical, social, and emotional demands;
8. Building the capacity of our students to model the values of diversity, equity and inclusion in both their in-person and online interactions with fellow students, especially regarding their engagement with social media.
9. Maintaining and supporting a governance structure, inducing a dedicated committee, to advise, monitor and report on the implementation of this policy, and; ensuring that committee is representative of all stakeholders, including students.

The Board intends that existing policies that address diversity, equity and inclusion, including those listed below, and especially the Code of Conduct, be interpreted in line with this policy.

Long-Term Recommendations:

Our long-term goals are to oversee the implementation of the Equity Policy, to monitor and report on the implementation of this policy to ensure it meets the needs of our school community, and to review relevant existing Board of Education policies to ensure alignment with the Equity Policy.

Hiring Practices:

The district plans to address the goal of diversifying hiring and strengthening retention practices through the identification of short and long-term recommended actions. Although the goal above implies a deficit in the retention of employees, the district does not agree with such assumption. Nevertheless, there are always lessons to be learned by the practices and experiences hiring staff.

Short-term Recommendations:

The district will endeavor to expand searches beyond OLAS to broaden the candidate pool, such as NEMNET Minority Recruitment, The HBCU Career Center, and Hunter College Career Development Services. This will include participation in regional diverse candidate recruitment fairs, such as the *Lower Hudson Regional Association for School Personnel Administrators*. The district will continue to engage in leadership professional development in culturally proficient

candidate review, interview questioning, and recruitment practices, such as *Creating Diverse and Inclusive School Communities: A Focus on Millennial Educators of Color*, *Diversity Faculty Recruitment Training: Overcoming Obstacles to Recruiting Faculty of Color*. Another effort is to diversify hiring committee representation with stakeholders (family, students, staff) and community members. Furthermore, the district will continue to require bias training for hiring committee participants to mitigate bias and promote equity in candidate review.

Long Term Recommendations:

Over the next few years, the district will continue to promote a commitment to hiring highly effective educators who reflect the diversity of our school community. A key step will be to inaugurate a district-wide diverse candidate recruitment fair personalized to Pelham Public Schools (Winter/Spring 2022). Another component is to expand professional learning for school leaders in diverse hiring practices. The district will seek to initiate a practice of collecting feedback from recent hires on their experiences with the process and onboarding in the district. Additionally, the district will explore ways to foster an professional environment attractive to an array of candidates.

DATA ANALYSIS

Charge:

In the summer of 2019 the Pelham Public Schools Board of Education adopted a five-year Strategic Plan to guide the District's work through 2024. The Strategic Plan's three main goal areas are Cultural Competence, Authentic Learning and the Whole Child. As the opening to the Strategic Plan explains, "This plan was developed using a process of deep inclusivity and voice for all stakeholders within the school community as well as external stakeholders across the greater Pelham community." Systemic data collection and analysis are necessary so that we may track school and district level progress toward fulfilling the Strategic Plan's goals. Coherence will enhance impact. A clear process for data measurement will increase school and district level capacity to achieve the district's strategic goals for 2019-24.

The Data Analysis Subcommittee recommends the continued use of K-12 systems for collecting and analyzing quantitative and qualitative data aligned to the Strategic Plan. In addition, we recommend deliberate disaggregated data analysis to track student progress and support the instructional shifts necessary for meeting the needs of all learners.

Instructional Data Systems Already in Place:

English Language Arts

- Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessment System in Reading (K-5; Fall, Winter and Spring)
 - Identifies a student's independent and instructional reading levels
 - Teachers observe student reading behaviors, track fluency and engage in comprehensive conversations
 - Used to inform instruction and adjust strategy and Guided Reading groups

- Teachers College Running Records: Administered throughout the school year to identify a student’s fluency, accuracy and comprehension of nonfiction and fiction texts.

English Language Arts and Math:

- AIMSWebPlus (K-8, Fall, Winter, Spring)
 - Nationally normed referenced assessment, standards-aligned measures in mathematics, reading and phonemic awareness
 - ELA subtests measure discrete literacy skills necessary to be a proficient reader. Subtest scores are combined into one “composite score”

Kindergarten Screeners

NYS 3-8 Assessments

NYSESLAT

Regents Examinations

AP Exams

SAT/ACT

Performance Based Assessments

Marking Period and End of Year Grades

Credit Accrual

Classroom summative and formative assessments, adaptive technology assessments, small group work and conferring with students.

ELA Planning for September 2021:

- Continue to utilize AIMSweb, Benchmark Assessment System, and classroom assessment data to inform instruction
- Analyze Summer Stars student performance and growth
- Curriculum Writing in Tier 1 (classroom) interventions to strengthen support for all students
- Curriculum Writing to ensure vertical and horizontal alignment of skills in K-8
- Exploration of word study resources in grades 3-5
- Review of our current online resources (*NewsELA, RazKids, MyOn, IXL, Sora*)
- Continued professional development through *Teachers College Reading and Writing* program with a focus on conferring and small group work
- Review of curriculum in terms of cultural responsiveness and “windows and mirrors” to increase motivation to read

Math/Science Planning for September 2021:

- Establish a September Baseline assessment to inform practice and remediate gaps
- Adjust pacing to integrate components from previous grade levels into the curriculum as needed
- Utilize Science to enhance Next Generation Math measurement learning standards
- Expand the use of Dreambox as an adaptive Math Platform
- Reestablish Math in Focus Best Practices
- Additional Professional Development
 - Reaffirm the concrete, pictorial and abstract components of the program

- Reaffirm the Teach/Learn, Shared Practice and Independent Practice Pedagogical *Math in Focus* model

Short Term Recommendations:

Unify strategic planning to support coherent implementation of District goals across each school.

- To create coherence across the district, schools will benefit from using a common strategic planning document to guide school-based action steps and progress monitoring (Quarterly; Bi-Annually &/or Annually).

Unifying Approach to Academic Progress Monitoring K-12

- Academic progress monitoring by each school’s leadership team can be enhanced through quarterly data runs to analyze student performance by course to determine specific student needs and appropriate shifts of pedagogy to meet those needs.

Unifying Approach to Measuring School Climate and Culture

- To create coherence, the district should consider a common approach to measuring school climate and culture.
- School based “learning environment” questions should be asked each fall and spring
- Note: A unified approach to MTSS is already underway as the district pursues partnership with *Branching Minds*.

Long-Term Recommendations:

- Enhance the district’s human and technical capacity to collect and analyze data to then inform professional practice toward goals.

CURRICULUM AND PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Charge:

The charge of this subcommittee was to review curriculum audit tools and frameworks and select the tools to analyze Pelham K-12 curriculum in stages, by grade level and content area, as well as recommend a professional learning trajectory for all faculty to deepen skills around CR-SE practices. This work will be conducted in alignment with our [District’s 2019-24 Strategic Plan](#) and the [New York State Education Department’s Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Initiative](#).

Guiding our work is our stated commitment to affirm racial, linguistic, and cultural identities; prepare students for rigor and independent learning; develop students’ abilities to connect across lines of difference; elevate historically marginalized voices; and empower students as agents of social change ([NYS Ed CR-SE Framework](#)).

Short-Term Recommendations:

- A Curriculum Evaluation Team will develop a rubric to be used for curriculum review. This rubric will be informed by the [NYS Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Education](#)

[Framework](#), [Harvard Graduate School of Education's RIDES Progress Assessment](#), and [CampbellJones Curriculum and Instruction Rubric](#).

- Teachers, led by curriculum coaches, principals and supervisors, will use this rubric to conduct a review of the curriculum across all disciplines K-5. For each secondary discipline, teachers of that subject will conduct a review of their curriculum, led by their department supervisors and building principals.
- This review will also extend to an assessment of the texts used in the classroom and present in school libraries as well as recommendations for new additions and acquisitions.
- Motivated teachers should develop PLCs (Professional Learning Communities) around CR-SE practices so that they can commit their time during two-hour PLC days to professional development opportunities and curriculum review relating to this work.
- A new cohort of administrators, teachers, and staff members who have not yet experienced training with [CampbellJones & Associates](#) should participate, with the additional focus of building agency in motivated participants to conduct turn-key training of their colleagues, including the onboarding of new hires.
- The District should develop a CR-SE resource page for the District website, encouraging independent learning and exploration by teachers, students, and members of the community.
- The district should consider designing and establishing a Director of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Wellness position, either full time or as a stipend paid to a teacher or administrator, to ensure continued leadership and oversight of our diversity and inclusion efforts, curriculum development, professional development of staff, collection of quantitative and qualitative evidence, and communication with the CCC and Board of Education.

Long-Term Recommendations:

- As our curricula continue to evolve, lead teachers/ supervisors should maintain a focus on creating work that is inclusive, reflective of our students, relevant, connected to current realities, and grounded in historical context. Curricular materials should be developed in a manner that embraces and values all students' cultural and racial identities, genders and sexual orientations, as well as their academic and individual uniqueness.
- As new texts and materials are introduced into the curriculum and our school and classroom libraries, teachers and supervisors will maintain a focus on providing students with "[mirrors and windows](#)" (stories that reflect their own experiences as well as those that provide insight into the experiences of others). As texts are added, teachers and supervisors should be sure to introduce texts at a variety of reading levels.
- The District should ensure that teachers are prepared to navigate challenging themes and topics that will arise by providing in-house or external professional development.
- The district should continue to research and investigate potential professional development opportunities and vendors relating to CR-SE for our staff.
- Motivated staff members who have experienced training and are committed to moving this work forward can be designated as "Champions of Equity and Excellence." These staff members would work with the Director of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Wellness to provide training and resources for their colleagues, including opportunities for

classroom visitations and debriefing. Staff members could advance along levels of CR-SE certification and receive recognition for their achievements.

- A committee of the Champions, led by the Director, could develop a rubric for teachers' self-assessment and reflection regarding classroom practices that promote and support CR-SE. This could be derived from the [Critical Practices for Anti-Bias Education](#) developed by [Learning for Justice](#), for example.

FAMILY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Charge:

The Pelham UFSD is committed to engaging the community to build cultural competence skills, and promote equity for (BIPOC), students with dis/abilities, LGBTQIA+ students and other traditionally underserved groups.

Short-Term Recommendations:

- Share a summary of the work done by the CCC during the 2020-2021 school year with the community and an update on next steps
- Utilize accessible communication about events and the ongoing work of the CCC
- Hold an event(s) to discuss how the NYS Board of Regents Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion call to action relates to the work of the CCC
- Collaborate with SE/PTAs, school-based and district-wide committees, and Pelham Together on planned events and community programming as described below
- Implement a list of Diversity and Inclusion questions to assess programming to ensure it is inclusive, and uplifts student and family voices
- Develop a CCC communications plan and schedule. Decide what will be communicated to the community, where/how it will be communicated, and how often. This includes developing a protocol to communicate about local/national events

With regard to planned events and programming, the District should seek to engage all segments of the community in regular events and programming that focus on work related to building Cultural Competence. This work can be done in conjunction with PTAs, school-based and district-wide committees, Pelham Together and other community groups and co-sponsoring and cross-promotional opportunities should be encouraged to ensure that the reach of the event is broad and inclusive.

Examples of possible events include:

- Fun, inclusive and engaging programming highlighting the diversity of Pelham, including cultures, ethnicity, genders, sexual orientation, disabilities, religions and other demographic groups.
- Video opportunities similar to the 2021 Hutchinson International Day
- Roundtables and town halls focusing on themes related to Cultural Competence

- Psychoeducation community events that focus on topics such as being a good upstander, violence against marginalized groups, and impact of discrimination on children, amongst others
- Collaboration with student equity leaders to lift the voices of Pelham's students

The Family and Community Engagement Subcommittee has compiled a list of guiding questions to ensure events are effective in their mission and accessible to all. These are questions we will ask ourselves to ensure all programming and events are inclusive. These questions are adapted from a document created by Portland Public Schools (<https://www.pps.net/cms/lib/OR01913224/Centricity/Domain/4/EquityLensJan2019.pdf> as well as questions provided by Pelham Together)

Diversity and Inclusion Guiding Questions

These questions should assess for many types of diversity, including but not limited to: racial, cultural, language, religious, age, gender, family structure, LGBTQ. Events and programs should also maintain political neutrality.

1. Describe the proposed event/program, desired results and outcomes, and connection to the district's strategic plan.
2. How have you intentionally involved diverse stakeholders in the program or event as participants, attendees and/or organizers?
3. Is there support or opposition to the program or event?
4. Have you reached out to diverse stakeholders (student, staff, and outside organizations) to promote the program or event using a variety of platforms or mediums (social media, email) to expand outreach?
5. How does the program or event expand opportunities for racial equity and social justice?
6. Are there any potential unintended consequences for specific groups/populations as a result of the program or event? Are there strategies in place to mitigate any negative impacts?
7. Does the proposed program or event address any barriers to entry (e.g., language, cost, dress code, travel)?
8. Are there any forms, applications or emails that need to be reviewed for diverse and inclusive language? Is the language gender inclusive?
9. Have you researched diverse experts to be brought in for programs or events?
10. Does the event conflict with any holidays or religious observances?

With regard to accessible communication about events and the ongoing work of the CCC, the District should make every effort to ensure that all programming and communication is accessible to the entire community. To do so, the District should utilize multiple mediums of communication and establish a dedicated area of the District website related to the goal of Cultural Competence. Additional considerations include partnering with community organizations to share information.

Consistent with Step 3 of the [District's Strategic Action Plan under the Goal of Cultural Competence](#), the Pelham Public Schools and Cultural Competence Committee should seek to leverage relationships with community organizations. This includes regular sharing of information about the work of the CCC, understanding the ongoing work of outside organizations, and collaborating to make existing and new initiatives more widely known in the community. Specifically, information should be shared directly with PTAs and their respective diversity committees and with other organizations such as:

- Pelham Together, including the Diversity and Inclusion Subcommittee
- The Pelham Civic Association
- Junior League of Pelham
- Bridges of Pelham
- Pelham United

The District's former Diversity Oversight Committee made important progress in fostering more inclusion by increasing translation efforts. This includes providing functionality on the District website to translate into many languages and making translation services available to families who do not speak English as their primary language. The District should continue this progress to ensure that emails, forms/surveys and other information are able to be translated. If necessary, the District should explore software that could make translation easier for families and District staff. Families must also be made aware of translation opportunities to ensure that they know how to receive information in their preferred language.

The District should continue to ensure information posted to the website and school websites is accessible to those with disabilities, including hearing, vision and physical. These recommendations are consistent with the [NYSED Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Framework](#) (pg. 33, 38, 41-43)

Start times of school events should be considered through the lens of having as many families participate as possible. This includes considering the schedules of working families, childcare, etc. To the extent possible, events should be held at varying times (evening, morning, etc.) to accommodate different schedules. If it is possible to hold multiple events (i.e., morning/evening sessions), that should also be considered.

Events/discussions can be recorded (dependent upon the nature of the event) and posted to the District's webpage. Links to the recordings should be widely disseminated to ensure those who could not attend are able to access the experience.

Accessibility for those with disabilities must be a key consideration in planning any in-person events.

Long-Term Recommendations:

- Develop a new area of the district website to provide CCC-related content: updates on the work of the CCC, educational resources, links to partner organizations, and information on how to get involved
- As the Cultural Competence Roadmap is being implemented, engage the community through ongoing forums to solicit feedback and answer questions.
- Partner with the student equity leaders and Pelham United to share students' experiences and have their voices be heard. Work with Pelham United to see if there are ways for students to share their thoughts possibly on their website- in article / essay form or through more artistic outlets such as short stories / poems / visual art.
- Have all schools hold regularly scheduled interest group meetings giving caregivers and students an opportunity to connect with the building principal in a safe and welcoming environment.
- Collaborate with community groups to plan a series of educational and fun programming for families. These can include brave space discussions, family recreation days, culturally diverse holiday celebrations and other DEI based educational topics

STUDENT EQUITY LEADER EMPOWERMENT

Charge:

The charge of this sub-committee was to recommend ways to leverage the brilliance of student equity leaders by providing them with the opportunity to share their ideas for promoting cultural competence and equity with the community, staff, and their peers. Our mission is to empower all students to have an equal and equitable voice for positive change that embraces true integration, involving students from all socioeconomic backgrounds, cultural and ethnic identities, and gender identities. When all students see themselves in the curriculum and have a space to discuss their authentic selves without feeling judged, everyone benefits.

Short-Term Recommendations:

- Support the work of the A.C.E. (Access Creates Equity) Club at the middle school, including ensuring that BIPOC students feel valued and connected in their school.
- Support the work of the G.S.A. (Gender and Sexuality Alliance) at the middle school and high school, including improving student and staff understanding regarding the use of personal pronouns and celebration of LGBTQ+ pride.
- Support the work of the Black Empowerment Club at the high school, including providing a forum for students to discuss Black history and important current events.
- Develop mentoring programs connecting middle school students with elementary students and high school students with middle school students to assist in transitions,

improve access to honors/AP/dual enrollment courses, and build relationships between students who identify as allies.

- Work with Rosalind Wiseman and Cultures of Dignity to continue the Student Ambassador Program to develop students' leadership and advocacy skills at the middle school.
- Support Student Ambassadors in the development of events (e.g., a "Friday Night Live") to better integrate students from the four elementary schools before they reach middle school.
- Support high school student equity leaders in the development of activities for the benefit of current BIPOC students and those who are new to the district.

Long-Term Recommendations:

- Use data collected via student and faculty climate surveys to develop additional action items.
- Plan assemblies by members of our BIPOC communities in order serve as role models and to showcase their success and inspire students to achieve.
- Improve student outcomes regarding their feeling of integration in the schools.
- Increase BIPOC students' enrollment in honors/AP/dual enrollment classes.