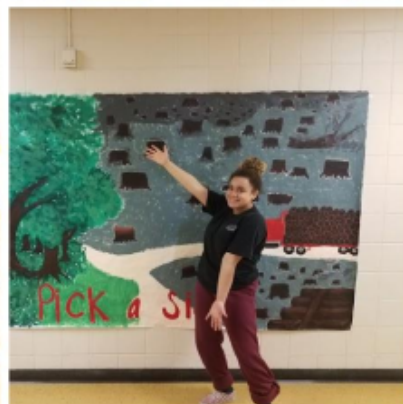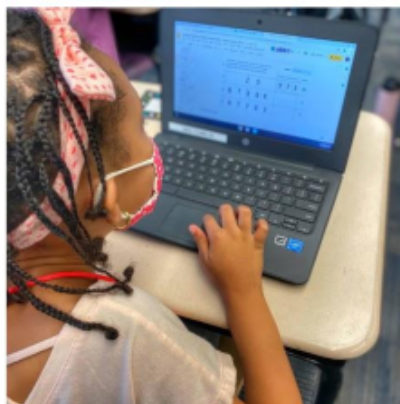# Middlebury & Southbury
Equity & Inclusion Council
Action Plan

Updated January 2022

Fostering welcoming and inclusive communities through positive impact

The Communities of Middlebury, Southbury & Region 15 Schools Together

Members of the communities of Middlebury, Southbury, and Region 15 Schools serve on this council with the purpose of honoring diversity, fostering inclusiveness, and advancing equity, the fair and just treatment of all. Region 15 Schools play an important role in this work as our communities' public education system, committed to supporting and valuing all students and families. The communities of Middlebury and Southbury play an equally important role, as towns where all residents need to experience a sense of belonging, where all are and feel respected and welcome.

Regional School District 15 Mission Statement

The mission of Region 15, a collaborative community committee to excellence, is to educate every student to be productive, ethical, and engaged in a global society through proven and innovative learning experiences supported by its strong community whose decision-making is based on the best interests of all students.

Region 15 Theories of Action

In Region 15, the district's work is focused around four Theories of Action. While all the theories of action are critical to the diversity, equity, and cultural competency plan, this plan is particularly rooted in the first and third theories of actions.

1. **If we foster schools that are welcoming and inclusive to all students, then students will feel valued and they will be better able to access their learning.**
2. If we improve our ability to align assessments to curriculum, improve our data culture, and increase our analysis of student learning, then we will be more equipped to provide meaningful student engagement and increased achievement.
3. **If we embrace communication, transparency, and collaborative relationships within ourselves and the community then we will improve trust and participation in supporting our students**.
4. If we increase and promote access to career pathways, curriculum, and shared instructional experiences then our district will prepare students for the world they will enter after their time with us.

Background for the Work

Education creates the voice through which human rights can be claimed and protected.
-Universal Declaration of Human Rights

During the 2017- 2018, Region 15 established the Advisory Committee for Global Citizenship and Character to further the district's focus on two of the six learner expectations in particular as shown in Figure 1. This group has been composed of a variety of stakeholders, including students, families, staff members, and community members.

Figure 1
Global Citizenship & Character Learner Expectations

Global Citizenship	Character
The Region 15 student recognizes the rapidly changing nature of the global landscape and demonstrates the capacity and disposition to understand and act on issues of global significance while honoring the dignity, cultures, and rights of all people. The student makes thoughtful decisions based on multiple perspectives and responds to the needs of the local and global community.	The Region 15 student displays the core values of honesty, responsibility, respect, and caring. The student honors the unique qualities of each individual and recognizes how these differences contribute to the tapestry of our community. The student accepts responsibility for his or her own actions and demonstrates leadership when needed.

The committee continued to meet during the subsequent school years. Over the course of the following school years, the committee membership increased from the original twenty members to more than 100. The majority of the increase in members was due to an increase in community involvement; according to the National Association of Elementary School Principals, about 87% of a student's waking hours from birth to high school are spent at outside of school (Wherry, 2004) and therefore, it was important to have more of members of the community present at the meetings.

In recent years, the nation, state, and district have had an increase in incidents involving racial and religious slurs and negative behaviors associated with race, ethnicity, gender, social class, ability, religion, appearance, sexual orientation, etc. Additionally, the demographic makeup of the Region 15 community has grown in racial and ethnic diversity as shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2
Region 15 Demographic Makeup, October 2007 vs. October 2021

	October 2007	**October 2021**
American Indian/Alaska Native	0.24%	0.11%
Asian	3.2%	4.9%
Black/African American	1.72%	2.5%
Hispanic/Latinx	2.4%	7.7%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander		0.11%
2 or More Races		3.4%
Total	**7.56%**	**18.72%**

	October 2007	October 2021
English Language Learners	0.8%	1.3%
Free/Reduced Lunch	2%	12.2%
Special Education	13.7%	20%

The following three goals and associated objectives were set by the Advisory Committee in the spring of 2018 and have guided the district's work in these areas until 2020:

Goal 1
- To nurture, in students, lifelong respect and compassion for themselves and other human beings regardless of race, ethnic origin, gender, social class, disability, religion, appearance, or sexual orientation
  - Objective 1: To develop school based programs that foster a sense of belonging, safety, and wellness
  - Objective 2: To develop community partners that will address multicultural priorities and values within their range of activities for students outside of school

Goal 2

- To nurture, in staff, lifelong respect and compassion for themselves and other human beings regardless of race, ethnic origin, gender, social class, disability, religion, or sexual orientation to revise
  - Objective 1: Staff will develop an awareness related to valuing differences among staff and students
  - Objective 2: Staff will demonstrate an appreciation and depth of knowledge related to valuing differences among staff and students

Goal 3

- Revise curriculum to reflect a broad range of knowledge and information which illustrates varied and diverse contributions to history, the arts, science, mathematics, and literature

A review of work related to these goals is provided here.

On October 7, 2020, the committee met to review and discuss the original goals and objectives. Members met in small groups to suggest revisions and additions so that the work could not only continue but move forward. The members who attended the meeting also voted to determine a new name for the committee that encompasses the entire membership. The new name for the advisory committee is the Equity & Inclusion Council.

The following is the revised action plan based on the feedback and suggestions of the members of the committee. This plan builds upon the foundation of previous work and initiatives and

includes revised goals, commitments, action steps, and accountability members which are designed to increase participation amongst and beyond the committee.

Equity & Inclusion Council
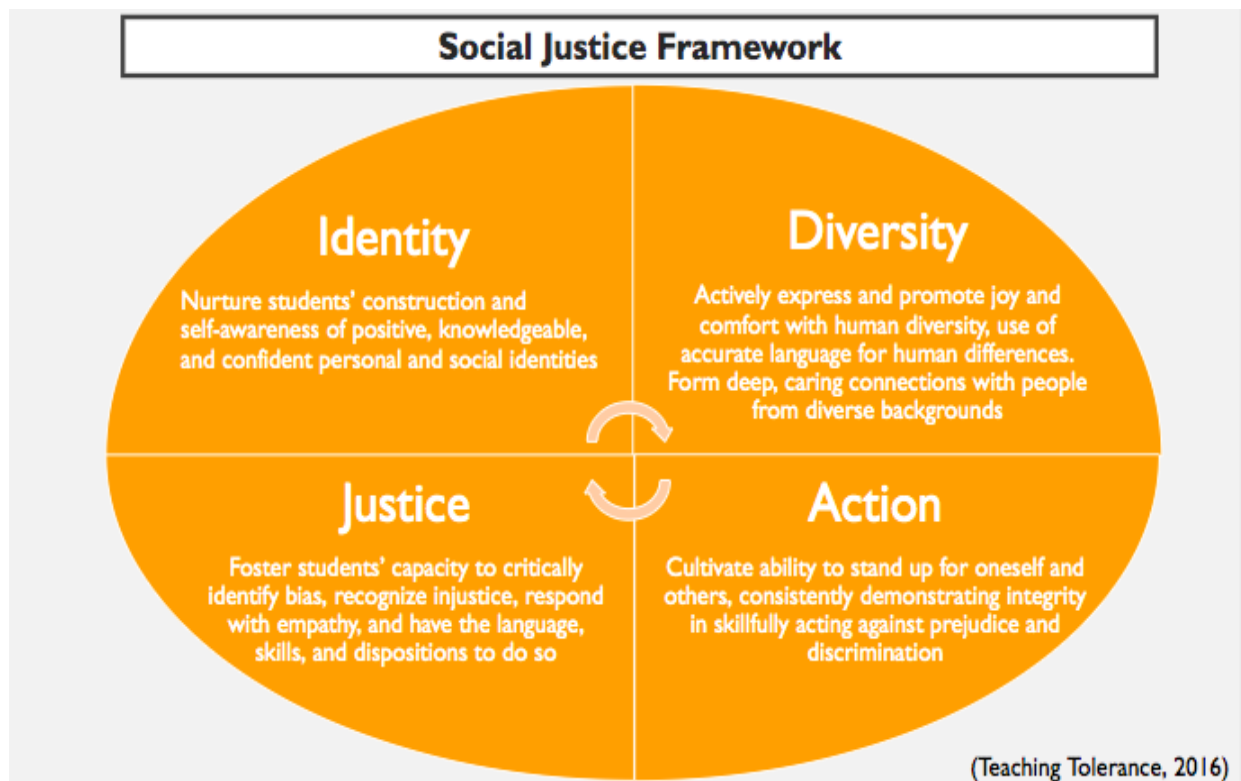## October 2020

Framework

The following framework serves as an important guiding paradigm for the collective action of this work.

Social Justice Framework

In 2016, the Social Justice Standards were published by Teaching Tolerance, which grew out of their 2014 anti-bias education framework as well as from the work of the National Association of the Education of Young Children. These anchor standards and age-appropriate learning outcomes are arranged into four domains: identity, diversity, justice, and action as shown in Figure 3. Note that the areas of Identity, Diversity, Justice and Action are enduring across the lifespan and are applicable to adult learning as well as PreK-12 learning. They also may be applied to inform curriculum writing and revision. When used as a lens applied to teaching and learning in general, this framework is helpful in examining and altering instructional practices. This framework will be used as a roadmap for the work that will be done with Region 15 students and staff, and the communities of Middlebury and Southbury.

Figure 3
Social Justice Standards: A Roadmap for Anti-Bias Education

Social Justice Framework

Identity
Nurture students' construction and self-awareness of positive, knowledgeable, and confident personal and social identities

Diversity
Actively express and promote joy and comfort with human diversity, use of accurate language for human differences. Form deep, caring connections with people from diverse backgrounds

Justice
Foster students' capacity to critically identify bias, recognize injustice, respond with empathy, and have the language, skills, and dispositions to do so

Action
Cultivate ability to stand up for oneself and others, consistently demonstrating integrity in skillfully acting against prejudice and discrimination

(Teaching Tolerance, 2016)

Expectations of the Equity & Inclusion Council Members

There are expectations for members of the Equity & Inclusion Council. These expectations include the following:

1. Members should regularly attend the Equity & Inclusion Council meetings
   a. At these meetings, subcommittee members will be expected to share the work they have completed to date and to explain their next steps to the rest of the council.
   b. Additionally, there may be time for the subcommittees to meet in their groups to continue their work/planning during council meetings.
2. Some subcommittee assignments will likely need to be worked on outside of full Equity & Inclusion Council meetings
   a. The almost monthly meetings of the Equity & Inclusion Council will probably not be enough time for the subcommittees to meet, plan, and carry out their action steps related to the goals and commitments. Therefore, subcommittees may need to schedule their own meetings throughout the year.
3. There are three goals for the Equity & Inclusion Council with multiple commitments (objectives) and action steps.
   a. Two of the goals focus on the work that will occur within and spearheaded by the school system and one of the goals focuses on the work that will occur within the communities of Middlebury and Southbury and will be spearheaded by members of the communities.
   b. At each of the Equity & Inclusion Council meetings, time will be provided for a member of each subcommittee group to share out about the status of their group's work and to receive feedback from others in the council.
4. Members of the Equity & Inclusion Council have the belief that all members are working together towards the goals set forth in the plan.
   a. Working together means that there is open communication and positive relationships between members where everyone feels valued and respected, and where there is support and trust for one another.

Goals, Commitments, and Action Steps

Goal 1: For *Region 15 students* to respect and have compassion for all aspects of diversity: race, ethnicity, gender, social class, ability, religion, appearance, and sexual orientation.

> A) Commitment: Ensure opportunities for students to regularly share their voices, needs, and aspirations.

Action Steps	Timeline	Person(s) Involved
High School Clubs (ex: Student Affinity groups, Gender & Sexuality Alliance, etc.)	**Meetings as scheduled**	**PHS Teachers, PHS Admin, PHS students**
High School Freshmen meetings for BIPOC	**Annually**	**HS Admin, Parents, TIR, Students**
Middle School: Various trainings from ADL (Ally training, No Place for Hate)	**Annually, scheduled meetings/training/assemblies TBD**	**ADL, Middle School Admin, MS counselors, TIR**
HS students Semester 1 projects from Conversations on Race, Contemporary Issues, Human Rights classes with elementary & middle school students	**Annually at end of semester 1**	**Teachers, Department Chair for Humanities, Building admins**
Regional Day of Discussion at Quinnipiac University	**Annually each spring, Pending school & university decisions related to pandemic**	**PHS teachers, Department Chair for Humanities**
High school mentor program with elementary school students	**Annually**	**Elementary Teacher(s), Director of Guidance, School Counselor**

B) Commitment: Attend to Region 15 students' wellbeing and inclusivity

Action Steps	Timeline	Person(s) Involved
Continue to implement components of R.U.L.E.R & Restorative Practices	**Annually**	**Building Admins, School Counselors, Teachers, Director of Guidance, Director of Students Services, Assistant Director of Student Services**
Revised Health/Development Guidance Curriculum for students in PK-12	**Annually**	**Teachers, Director of PE/Health, Director of Guidance, Assistant Superintendent, School Counselors**
Gender & Sexuality Alliance club at MMS, RMS & PHS	**Meetings TBD by group**	**Teachers, Club Advisors, Admin**
Updated school handbooks to include GLSEN K-12 recommendations on inclusivity of transgender and gender nonconforming students	**2021-2023**	**Building Admins**

D) Commitment: Students will have multiple opportunities to learn about diverse perspectives across the PK-12 curriculum

Action Steps	Timeline	Person(s) Involved
[Black and Latinx history course](#) at PHS	**Offered Annually**	**PHS teachers, Department Chair for Humanities, TIR**
Seal of Biliteracy for high school students who are literate in at least 2 languages	**Annually**	**PHS principal, Director of Guidance, HS World Language Instructional Teacher Leader (ITL)**
School and district-based opportunities for students to learn about and experience other cultures (ex: May 21st U.N World Day for Cultural Diversity & Dialogue & Development, etc.)	**Ongoing**	**R15 staff, students, R15 families, R15 community**

Revised curriculum for students (based on the curriculum and instruction audit)	Ongoing starting in 2022-2023	Asst Sup, Department Chairs/Directors, Teachers, TIR

Accountability Measures:
- **School climate surveys will show an increase in students feeling welcomed and included in schools**
- **Feedback from high school students in affinity clubs about their experiences**
- **Track number of high school students obtaining the state Certificate in Global Competency and Seal of Biliteracy**
- **Feedback from elementary and middle schools student about their work with HS students after semester 1**
- **Revised documents for PE**
- **Revised K-12 Handbooks**

Goal 2: For *Region 15 staff* to respect and have compassion for all aspects of diversity: race, ethnicity, gender, social class, ability, religion, appearance, and sexual orientation.

A) Commitment: Capacity building of Region 15 staff on diversity, cultural competency, equity, anti-bias education, anti-racist education, and social justice

Action Steps	Timeline	Person(s) Involved
Introduction to the work of the E&I Council for new hires	Annually	Assistant Superintendent with support from TIR and others
Continued work throughout school year with new teachers on diversity, cultural competency, equity, anti-bias education, and social justice	Various sessions throughout school year	TIR, teachers
Support PK-12 staff in implementing instruction and practices that support diversity, cultural competency, equity, anti-bias education, and social justice	Throughout school year	TIR, Outside consultants, Various online opportunities, Outside facilitators/consultants
Continued professional learning for R15 teachers and administrators on diversity, cultural competency, equity, anti-bias education, and social justice	Throughout school year	TIR, Outside organizations, Outside facilitators/consultants, Various online opportunities, etc.
Training for paraprofessionals/instructional assistants and school secretaries on diversity, cultural competency, equity, anti-bias education, and social justice	Throughout school year	TIR, paraprofessional/instructional assistant, outside consultant
Training for substitute staff on diversity, cultural competency, equity, anti-bias education, and social justice	Throughout school year	TIR, Human Resources Coordinator, Assistant to the Assistant Superintendent

B) Commitment: Increase diversity of Region 15 workforce

Action Steps	Timeline	Person(s) Involved
Create/implement district plan to increase diversity of R15 workforce following state guidelines	Ongoing staring in 2020-2021	District Administrators, TIR, HR Coordinator, Assistant Superintendent, Superintendent
Establish new/continue current partnerships with preservice programs at universities, colleges, etc. to support diversifying staff	Annually	HR coordinator, Assistant Superintendent, Administrators, TIR
Continued participation in TEACH CT	Annually	TIR, Teacher(s), HR Coordinator, Home/Community Liaison, Assistant to the Assistant Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent
Region participation in the Teacher Residency Program (TRP) to attract and retain teachers of color	Annually	Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent, principals, teachers, TIR

C) Commitment: Ensure inclusivity of diverse perspectives across the PK-12 curriculum

Action Steps	Timeline	Person(s) Involved
Develop Cultural Competency Graduation Requirements for all PHS students	2022-2023	PHS Principal, Department Chair for Humanities, TIR, Assistant Superintendent, Superintendent, BOE
Develop and implement timeline/plan to curriculum based on curriculum audit	Ongoing starting in 2022-2023	Department Chairs, Assistant Superintendent, MS/HS Instructional Teacher Leaders (ITLs), Teachers, coaches, Reading Consultants, TIR

D) Commitment: Establish Equity, Anti-Bias, Anti-Racism, and Gender Inclusivity Policies and Practices

Action Steps	Timeline	Person(s) Involved
Analyze data and determine/implement plan regarding tracking practices at the middle school and high school levels	2020-2024	Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent, Building Administration, Department Chairs

Determine/implement action steps regarding grading practices for equity at all levels	**2021-2024**	**Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent, Administrators, Teachers**
Revise/Develop Region 15 policies to ensure equity, anti-bias/anti-racism, inclusivity	**2020-2023**	**Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent, BOE**
Assess current school registration processes and structures	**2020-2021**	**PowerSchool Admin/Registrar, Assistant Director of Student Services, School Home Community Liaison, Assistant to the Assistant Superintendent**

E) Commitment: Communicate clearly with Region 15 community

Action Steps	Timeline	Person(s) Involved
Redesign new R15 website (with link to E&I site)	**December 2020**	**School Home Community Liaison**
Continued use of social media accounts for ongoing update	**Ongoing**	**School Home Community Liaison, Teachers, Administrators**
Update on E&I Council work to the Region 15 Board of Education	**Annually**	**Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent**
Newsletters to Region 15 community	**Weekly/Monthly**	**TIR, Administrators**

Accountability Measures:
● **Feedback collected from staff post-training sessions**
● **End of the year summary showing the percentage of staff that the TIR worked with**
● **Increase advertisement of openings/recruitment in more diverse companies including those outside of Connecticut**
● **Inclusion of curriculum and instruction audit in 2021-2022 proposed budget**
● **Implement suggestion of the the Curriculum and Instruction audit (timeline TBD)**
● **Development of curriculum revision timeline and plan**
● **Revision of curriculum and implementation according to plan**
● **Analytics for website**
● **Number of revised/new policies on inclusivity**
● **Establish cultural competency graduation requirements**

Goal 3: For *members of the Middlebury and Southbury communities* **to respect and have compassion for all aspects of diversity: race, ethnicity, gender, social class, ability, religion, appearance, and sexual orientation.**

A) Commitment: Provide community members opportunities to participate in activities around diversity, cultural competency, equity, anti-bias education, anti-racist education, and social justice

Action Steps	Timeline	Person(s) Involved
Develop list of businesses, industry leaders, community organizations, community members who can partner with specific projects	2020-2023	E&I Council subcommittee members, R15 Contact
Create a one-pager that encompasses the E&I Council's goals and R15's Mission to share with businesses, leaders, and community organizations	2022-2023	E&I Council members
Organize and host panel discussion, affinity groups, etc., for community	October 2020-ongoing	E&I Council subcommittee members, R15 Contact
Organize and host the *Tribury Reads Together (TRT)* book club (including R15 students, staff, and residents)	October 2020-ongoing	E&I Council subcommittee members (partnering w/Southbury's Town Conversations on Race group), R15 Contact
Professionals to share expertise and knowledge about particular fields and the importance and value of racial diversity visible across professions	Beginning 2020-2021, Ongoing	E&I Council subcommittee members (partnering w/Southbury's Town Conversations on Race group), R15 Contact
Continue the *Communities of Southbury Middlebury Intergenerational Chorus* (COSMIC)	Ongoing	E&I Council subcommittee members, R15 Contact
Establish affinity groups for adults including a GSA (Gender & Sexuality Alliance) for parents/families through church/synagogue	Ongoing	E&I Council subcommittee members, R15 Contact
Organize and host workshop series for families on inclusivity and diversity	Ongoing, beginning 2020-2021	E&I Council subcommittee members, Region 15 Family Members, Community members, R15 Contact

Establish group to connect families new to Middlebury/Southbury to the community & to build a structure for sharing and valuing their perspectives	Ongoing	E&I Council members

B) Commitment: Communicate clearly with the community

Action Steps	Timeline	Person(s) Involved
Create a logo for Equity & Inclusion Council	2020-2022	E&I Council subcommittee members, R15 Contact
Update E&I website (inked to R15 site) to include list of resources, etc.	Started in 2020, Ongoing	E&I Council subcommittee members, R15 Contact, School Home Community Liaison
Develop inclusivity guide for community	2022-2023	E&I Council subcommittee members, R15 Contact
Design, develop, hang posters with information on how/where to seek help on various topics	2020-2022	E&I Council subcommittee members, R15 Contact
Collaborate on press releases with Region 15 School Home Liaison	Ongoing	E&I Council subcommittee members, R15 Contact, School Home Community Liaison

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Accountability Measures:
- Development of Logo and placement in locations across both towns
- Development and analytics of E&I Council website
- Number of and attendance at community based presentations, panels, workshops, books reads, affinity groups, etc.
- Participation in and attendance at COSMIC
- Increase the number of businesses, industry leaders, community organizations, community members who can support, help out, participate in the various activities developed by the council
- Feedback from attendees at the various events

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