The Board of Education of the Somers Central School District is committed to creating and maintaining a positive and inclusive learning environment where all students feel safe, included and respected, and experience a sense of belonging and academic success. To accomplish this for everybody, the Board of Education must pay particular attention to the needs of historically underserved (marginalized) groups.

Generally Accepted Beliefs and Agreements

All children deserve to have equal access to opportunity regardless of their race, gender identity, religion, sexual orientation, the languages they speak, learning differences, background or any other difference. This freedom is fundamental to our K-12 education program and is extended to everyone without exception. Racism, discrimination, and marginalization of any people or groups of people, whether intentional or not, have no place in our schools, our district or our community. Such actions damage not only those individuals and groups toward whom they are directed, but also our community as a whole. We are committed to addressing these inequities and helping each and every student to equitably access learning opportunities in school to enable them all to thrive and to build a better society.

Goals

The mission of the Somers Central School District is to ignite a passion in each student by engaging all students at a personal level to ensure success in a global society. Our goal is to provide equitable, inclusive and diverse opportunities for all students to reach their highest potential. To achieve educational equity and inclusive education, the district will recognize the presence of physically and culturally diverse students and the need for students to find relevant connections among themselves, the subject matter and the tasks teachers ask them to perform. The district will develop the individual and organizational knowledge, attitudes, skills, and practices to create culturally responsive learning and working environments that expect and support high academic achievement for all students and all employees. Differences will not just be seen as strengths, but they will be nourished, celebrated, and welcomed because they are what make students and families unique and contribute to the diversity of our school community.

It is imperative that the Board, its officers, and employees, be fully committed to eliminating the institutional barriers, including racism and biases, that can contribute to disparate educational outcomes within our schools. Equitable and inclusive education aims to understand, identify, address, and eliminate the biases, barriers, and disparities that limit a student’s chance to thrive and to graduate high school prepared to choose and succeed in academic career, and for life pursuits.

The Superintendent and/or designee(s) will ensure that curriculum and instructional materials reflect the Board’s commitment to educational equity. Curriculum and instructional materials for all grades shall reflect diversity and include a range of perspectives and experiences, particularly those of historically underrepresented groups. All curriculum materials shall be examined for bias. Class instructional activities and extracurricular programs shall be designed to provide opportunities for cross-cultural and cross-racial interactions that foster respect for diversity.
The pursuit of an equitable and inclusive education is an ongoing process that requires shared commitment and leadership if a district is to meet the ever-evolving societal needs, the unique learning needs of all students, and the diverse backgrounds of our communities and schools. The Board understands that equitable and inclusive education is achieved when each adult welcomes and affirms each student by creating a respectful learning environment inclusive of actual or perceived personal characteristics.

Educational equity is based on the principles of fairness and ensuring that every student has access to the resources and educational rigor they need at the right moment in their education, despite any individual’s actual or perceived personal characteristics, not to be used interchangeably with principles of equality, treating all students the same.

Inclusive education is based on the principles of affirmation and inclusion of all students. Students see themselves reflected in their curriculum, their physical surroundings and the broader environment, in which diversity is honored and all individuals are respected.

Diversity in education means students, staff, families and community are our greatest strength and diversity is viewed as an asset. Diversity means the condition of being different or having differences, including, but not limited to, sex, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity/expressions, age, socioeconomic class, religion, ability, and other physical and cultural differences. Embracing these diversities and moving beyond tolerance and celebration to inclusivity and respect will help the district reach our goal of creating a community that ensures that each and every voice is heard and valued.

**Accountability, Transparency and Review**

The Board, its officers and employees, accept responsibility and will hold themselves and each other accountable for every student having full access to quality education, qualified teachers, challenging curriculum, full opportunity to learn, and sufficient, individually-tailored support for learning so they can achieve at excellent levels in academic and other student outcomes. The district also accepts its responsibility for moving forward on this journey and to committing time, energy and resources to develop a more equitable, inclusive, and diverse welcoming environment for all students, parents and staff. To this end, the Superintendent will establish a SCSD-wide Educational Equity Advisory Team (SEEAT). SEEAT will include representation from staff, administration, students and parents and will assist the administration in developing and implementing specific prevention initiatives, including the adoption and revision of policies and implementation of practices designed to promote diversity, prevent discrimination, assure equitable access to high-quality educational staff, facilities and materials, and to maximize student achievement for all students.

The Superintendent of Schools, and designees will adopt goals and corresponding metrics related to this policy. Multiple indicators are necessary to monitor student outcomes, engagement, and school climate, and specific data that will be used to ensure accountability for student, school, and district-wide performance. Transparent reporting of this data to the public will take place on an annual basis. In addition, reports that include but are not limited to, standardized test scores; discipline or programmatic referrals; suspension and expulsion reports; the percentage of students placed in English as a New Language (ENL), Advanced Placement and remedial classes; as well as employee, parent and student perceptions about school will be provided on a regular basis.

With committee input, the Superintendent of Schools is directed to develop and implement a plan for ensuring that equitable educational opportunities are being provided to all students. In addition, the
Board directs that targeted and ongoing learning experiences be established for students and employees to raise awareness of the issues surrounding cultural responsiveness, equity and inclusion and to implement preventative measures to help counteract biases and practices that perpetuate achievement disparities and lead to disproportionate levels of student success. Age-appropriate instructional materials will be incorporated into the curriculum so students can learn from a diverse range of experiences and points of view. Curricular materials and staffing decisions will support these efforts.

The Board of Education and the Superintendent will monitor and review the district’s metrics and equity activities to determine the extent to which district schools are complying with this policy, the progress made toward attaining the goals of this policy, whether this policy is having a positive effect on improving academic opportunities for all students and increasing family engagement and reducing achievement gaps. The Superintendent will regularly report progress on the equity, inclusivity, and diversity plan and outcomes. Based on those results, this policy, and the specific objectives set to meet its goals, may be revised as needed.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Policy Communication

To be successful in this endeavor, it is imperative that all members of the school community are aware of this policy, its purpose, procedures and the district’s commitment to equity and inclusion by fostering a positive learning environment that embraces all differences.

The Superintendent, and/or designee(s), s directed to ensure that this policy is communicated to students, staff, and the community. This policy will be posted on the district’s website, and will also be published in student registration materials, student, parent and employee handbooks, and other appropriate school publications.

Policy Enforcement

The Board directs the Superintendent and designees to enforce this policy and create regulations and practices to implement this policy. The Board will annually review the district’s implementation of this policy and take appropriate action to ensure compliance with and enforcement of this policy.

Cross-ref: 4000, Goals for Instructional Programs
           4511, Textbook Selection and Adoption
           5300, Code of Conduct
           9240, Recruiting and Hiring
           9700, Professional Development

Adoption date: June 8, 2021