

## **DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION POLICY**

### **Purpose and Goals of this Policy**

The Croton-Harmon Board of Education believes in the value of diversity and believes that excellence in education must include a commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion in the entirety of the educational process. All children deserve to have equal access to educational opportunities, regardless of the color of one's skin, gender, sexual orientation or gender identity, abilities/disabilities, citizenship or immigration status, or ethnic, racial, or socioeconomic status. This right is fundamental to our educational program in all grades and is extended to everyone without exception. The Board of Education is committed to creating and maintaining a positive and inclusive learning environment where all students, especially those currently and/or historically marginalized, feel safe, included and welcomed. We affirm that creating, implementing and improving equity policies is key to supporting our students in engaging in the pursuit of inspiration and experiencing a sense of connectedness and academic success, and to become productive citizens. We also affirm that maintaining robust equity policies is integral to the social-emotional health and wellbeing of all our students.

The goals of this policy are to (1) identify and eliminate all barriers to student access to courses and programs, learning opportunities, and experiences based on race, ethnicity, culture, language, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, religion, abilities/disabilities, weight, citizenship, immigration status, and socioeconomic status so that each student has the opportunity to achieve to their fullest potential, and (2) affirm the Board's commitment of ensuring that the district is an inclusive and welcoming environment where all students, families, staff, board members, and community members know they are safe, respected, and valued. Racism, bigotry, discrimination, and marginalization of any person or group, whether intentional or not, have no place in our schools, district, or community; harassment of any member of the school community is similarly unacceptable. Such actions have a negative impact on the individual and/or group against whom such conduct is addressed, and such conduct has a detrimental effect on the district and community as a whole. The Board of Education recognizes the diversity of the students of our district, its staff, and the Croton community as one of our greatest strengths and the Board is committed to eliminating inequities and ensuring that each and every student can thrive and build a better society.

This policy provides a framework for how the district will implement diversity, equity and inclusion ("DEI") policies, initiatives and practices in its schools in all aspects of its operations, including but not limited to teaching, learning and curriculum, professional learning, workforce hiring and diversity, social and emotional health of all community members, and family and

community engagement. In implementing this framework, the Board of Education recognizes the necessity for all community members to reflect on conscious and unconscious biases that exist within the district, and that community members engage in self-reflection in this respect. In furtherance of this fundamental objective, the district will apply an equity lens when making any decisions that will have an impact on students, staff, parents/guardians (“parents”), and the community by answering the following questions:

1. What is the action or policy in existence or under consideration?
2. What does the data (both quantitative and qualitative) show about the impact of the action or policy on student achievement, opportunity, and climate?
3. If the data show that the action or policy has or may result in disparities, why do they exist?
4. Are these disparities a consequence of express or implicit bias, either current or resulting from historic factors?
5. Which individuals should be included in the discussion concerning the identified disparities and identification of the actions that can be taken to address the identified disparities?
6. What actions will be taken to address and mitigate or eliminate the identified disparities in a manner that will be consistent with the district’s commitment articulated in this policy to establish and maintain a positive and inclusive learning environment where all students feel safe, included and welcomed?

This commitment extends to the Board of Education. As such, the Board commits to implementing a systematic process to ensure inclusion and equity across all aspects of the education system; to take proactive measures to recognize their own biases; and to make unbiased choices in all aspects of the Board’s work, which shall include the Board’s interactions with students, parents, staff, community members, and other Board members; as well as modeling the expectations set forth in this policy.

Nothing contained in this policy should be deemed to direct or encourage any administrator, teacher or staff member to engage in conduct or take actions violative of the United State Constitution, the New York State Constitution, or federal or New York state law or regulations.

## **Definitions**

For the purposes of this policy, the following definitions will apply:

***Accessibility*** is giving access and opportunity to everyone along the continuum of human ability and experience, even if the provision of such access requires the provision of special accommodations. Provision of accessibility calls for the elimination of barriers that contribute to inequities relating to resources made available to students and staff, including courses and

programs, professional and support staff, funding, technology and educational materials, facilities, and extracurricular activities.

**Bias** is a belief, opinion, preference, attitude or inclination without reasonable justification that affects our understanding, decisions, and actions. It is a systematic error in thinking that occurs when people are processing and interpreting information in the world around them and affects the decisions and judgments that they make.

**Bigotry** is the conscious expression or intolerance, bias or prejudice against groups of people, especially racial, ethnic, or religious groups.

School **Climate** refers to the individual experience of students, teachers, staff, parents and staff about the school, how positively or negatively the school and the people associated with it are perceived, and the character and quality of school life.

School **Culture** refers to the guiding beliefs and values, teaching and learning approaches, behaviors, and relationships among individuals over time.

**Culturally Responsive Education** means the deliberate recognition and inclusion of all forms of student diversity as a pool of resources from which curriculum, instruction, and school policy should be designed and with which they should align in order to maximize engagement, participation, growth, and achievement for all students in their educational settings and broader communities.

**Curriculum** refers to the content and methodology of teaching and learning, including the texts and materials that teachers use in the classroom, the content and understandings that are centered in such teaching, and the means (lessons, materials, assessments) for enabling students to achieve proficiency in terms of skills and knowledge.

**Diversity** is a reality created by individuals and groups from a broad spectrum of demographic and philosophical differences, which incorporates differences among dimensions of race; culture; language; ethnicity; color; religion; national origin; mental and physical ability; sexual orientation; gender identity or expression; weight; economic status; and learning styles.

**Educational equity** means raising the achievement of all students while narrowing the gaps between the lowest and highest performing students, and eliminating the racial or cultural predictability and disproportionality of which student groups occupy the highest and lowest achievement categories including rates of graduation. The principle of educational equity goes beyond formal *equality* (where students are treated similarly). Instead, educational equity fosters a *barrier-free* environment in which all students have the *opportunity to benefit* equally. For

example, equality would mean that all students are provided the opportunity to attend a field trip costing thirty dollars. Equity would mean ensuring that all students could attend the field trip regardless of whether their families could afford the cost.

**Equity** is the concept of being just, impartial, and fair that is found, achieved and sustained in society.

**Equity lens** means an intentional focus on ensuring equity by analyzing or diagnosing the impact of the design and implementation of policies on underserved and marginalized individuals and groups, and to identify and potentially eliminate barriers.

**Historically marginalized** refers to individuals, groups and communities that historically have been denied access to services, resources, and power relationships, which has resulted in social inequities resulting in their inability to compete fairly in society.

**Implicit bias** means a form of bias that affects one's understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner or affects a system in a manner that was not consciously intended.

**Inclusion** is authentic and empowered participation and a sense of belonging, by which all feel valued, respected, appreciated, and involved. This term incorporates, but is not limited to, ensuring that everyone has fair, balanced and equal access to the processes, activities, and decision making processes that will ensure opportunities and resources are available to all.

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

**Racism** means, with respect to an individual, the private beliefs about race held by individuals. Racism with respect to an institution, including our schools, means racial inequity existing in our institutions connoting a system of power that produces racial disparities, which may include unfair policies and practices, discriminatory treatment, or inequitable opportunities and outcomes.

**Socioeconomic status** is the social standing or class of an individual or group, measured by factors including education, income, and occupation.

**Stereotype** means a widely held but fixed and oversimplified image or idea of a particular type of person or group, which occurs when someone groups individuals together based on some factor and makes a judgment from them without knowing them.

## Teaching and Learning

In order to promote a welcoming and supportive environment that celebrates and values diversity and respect for all students, families, employees, and community members, the district will provide equitable, inclusive and diverse opportunities for all students to reach their highest potential. To achieve educational equity and inclusive education, the district will enable actions for students to find relevant connections among themselves and the subject matter and the tasks that 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 achievement for students and employees from all groups. In pursuing this goal, the district will:

- Embrace a holistic definition of student success that includes a focus on the well-being of the “whole child” by considering and addressing the full range of child developmental pathways and providing social and emotional supports for all students equitably.
- Create multiple pathways to success in order to meet the needs of students, and encourage and expect high academic achievement for students from all student groups. The district will not let explicit or implicit biases impede any student from graduating ready to succeed in a diverse society.
- Foster an environment where the diverse talents and unique skills of all students will be acknowledged, cultivated, and celebrated.
- Foster a learning culture that sets high expectations for all students and offers multiple pathways to college and career readiness.
- Adopt a culturally responsive framework that embeds the ideals of diversity, equity, and inclusion by creating learning environments that affirm cultural identities; supports positive academic outcomes; develops students’ abilities to connect across lines of difference; and contributes to individual student engagement, learning, growth, and achievement through the cultivation of critical thinking.
- Design instructional activities and cocurricular programs to provide opportunities for cross-cultural and cross-racial interactions that foster respect for diversity.
- Promote opportunities for students to examine materials critically with the knowledge of the concepts of power and privilege, and to help students to appreciate content-area concepts from multiple points of view and experiences and to identify stereotypes and biases.

- Ensure that curriculum, books, and instructional materials for all grades reflect diversity and include a range of perspectives and experiences, particularly those of historically marginalized groups, and that such materials do not perpetuate stereotypes or biases; take appropriate measures and that such materials are presented and considered in accordance with this policy and policies on instructional materials and teaching about controversial issues.
- Promote student voice in curriculum; support students in becoming active and engaged participants in their academic experience; and engage students of all ages in relevant and authentic learning opportunities including local history, community engagement, and current events.

The district will also analyze expenditures and allocate financial and human resources in a manner that provides all students with equitable access to district programs, support services, and opportunities for success. Such resources include access to high-quality administrators, teachers and other school personnel; technology, equipment, textbooks and other instructional materials; and facilities.

### **District Climate and Culture**

In furtherance of the district's commitment to an environment free of racism, bigotry, discrimination and bias, the district will:

- Commit to culturally responsive education and the creation, development, modeling and ongoing training and implementation of culturally responsive educational practices.
- Employ programs and practices that enhance all students' self-confidence and self-esteem.
- Take appropriate actions to interrupt and discourage hate speech, bigotry, discrimination, and harassment of any kind.
- Establish mechanisms to ensure that students are empowered to report incidents of hate speech, discrimination, or harassment, or other inequities in confidence, and to ensure that such reports are investigated and addressed as appropriate in a timely manner.
- Gather data on a periodic basis from students and staff to assess school climate, in order to identify concerns related to the implementation of the goals and objectives of this policy and to help inform needs for professional development for administrators, faculty, and staff.

- Conduct an annual review of school rules and disciplinary practices (e.g. district Code of Conduct, school codes of conduct, dress codes) to ensure that such rules and practices support the goals of this policy and to incorporate best practices such as restorative justice, positive behavior interventions and supports.
- Equip staff, students, parents/guardians, and community members with the skills, knowledge, and resources to create a safe, supportive, and inclusive school environment.

### **Family and Community Engagement**

The district will promote meaningful connection and engagement with all members of the school community and nurture a supportive environment that actively works through an equity lens.

The district will identify and implement effective processes to ensure connection and engagement with the district's families, so that the district may best support the education of their children. It will remove barriers that impede participation, including for those whose preferred language is other than English. These measures include, but are not limited to, providing interpretation services at family meetings (e.g. at parent organization meetings and community events, during the enrollment process, during the provision of special education services). Ensuring family engagement supports meaningful two-way communication and offers families the opportunity to share (not just receive) information in their preferred language.

The district will invite parents, families and the community to share traditions and cultural assets with teachers in support of the integration of these materials within curriculum; and invite them to participate in decision-making related to programs, policies, and learning activities that affect the school community.

The district will engage parents and other community members with the district concerning the district's diversity, equity and inclusion efforts, to make recommendations, and to help implement elements of this policy.

### **Workforce Diversity**

The district will strive to create a workforce that is both diverse and inclusive, and that is conversant in the historical injustices and inequalities that have shaped our society and that recognizes the institutional barriers and biases that contribute to pervasive, disparate educational outcomes. As part of this effort, the district will:

- Seek to recruit and retain a diverse workforce in all areas and at all levels.
- Identify and remove biases and structural barriers as they pertain to recruiting, hiring, compensation, benefits, professional development, and retaining a diverse workforce.
- Implement and maintain a mentoring program for new staff members to help facilitate growth and ensure professional and personal support.
- Provide staff with opportunities for professional development on diversity, equity and inclusion.

## **Training**

The district believes that learning about issues of diversity, equity and inclusion is a lifelong process and that this learning should be part of the overall educational and teaching experience. With this in mind, consistent training will be established throughout the educational experience for students, teachers and district employees to raise awareness of the issues surrounding cultural responsiveness, diversity, equity and inclusion and to implement preventative and remedial measures to help counteract biases and practices that perpetuate achievement disparities and lead to disproportionate levels of student success. Training programs, including professional development relevant to culturally responsive education and on the issues of bias, bigotry, and racism, will be provided to administrators, teachers and staff. Such training programs will be reviewed and updated as necessary to address issues and concerns in the district and in the community.

## **Accountability, Transparency and Review**

The Superintendent of Schools, or designee, will adopt goals and corresponding metrics related to this policy. The district will identify the multiple indicators 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; to reduce variability in outcomes; and to ensure that academic outcomes will not be predictable by actual or perceived personal characteristics and can be assessed and reported transparently to the public. Such indicators may include, but are not limited to, standardized test scores; suspension and expulsion reports; the percentage of students placed in dual-language or English as a New Language (ENL), Advanced Placement, and intervention and special education services; district community feedback; student need, and school climate; as well as employee, parent and student perceptions about school.

The Superintendent will establish a District-Wide Equity Committee. The Committee will include representation from faculty, staff, administration, students, and parents as selected by the Superintendent. The Committee will assist the administration in developing and implementing specific priorities and action plans identified by the Superintendent, or designee.



With the assistance and input of the District-Wide Equity Committee, the Superintendent will monitor and review the district's metrics and equity activities to determine the extent to which the goals and objectives of this policy are being implemented, the progress made toward attaining the goals and objectives 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, and whether revisions to this policy should be considered. The Superintendent will report twice annually on progress on attaining the goals and objectives of this policy.

### **Equity 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 diverse, unique and individual differences.

The Superintendent, or designee(s), is directed to ensure that this policy is communicated to students, staff, and the community. This policy will be posted prominently on the district's website, and will also be published in student registration materials, students, parent and employee handbooks, and other appropriate school publications. In each school, the district will communicate the contents of this policy to students in wording that is developmentally appropriate. Key DEI implementation efforts will be communicated to students, staff and the community via official district communications and social media channels.

### **Policy Enforcement**

The Board directs the Superintendent or designee(s) to enforce this policy and establish procedures and practices to implement this policy. The Board will twice annually review the district's implementation of this policy and take appropriate action to ensure compliance with and enforcement of this policy.

Cross-ref:     0000, Mission Statement and Vision  
                  0110, Sex Discrimination and Sexual Harassment  
                  0110-R, Sexual Harassment  
                  0115, Dignity for All Students: Prohibiting Bullying, Discrimination and  
                  Harassment of Students  
                  0115-R, Student Harassment and Bullying Prevention and Intervention  
                  Regulation  
                  0350, Evaluation of Instructional Programs  
                  1000, Community Relations Goals  
                  1000-R, Community Relations Goals Regulation  
                  4000, Goals for Instructional Programs

4200, Curriculum Development  
4510, Instructional Materials  
4513, Library Materials Selection  
4810, Teaching About Controversial Issues  
5000, Student Policies Goals  
5153, Student Assignment to Schools and Classes  
5200, Cocurricular and Extracurricular Programs  
5300, Code of Conduct  
9230, Recruiting and Hiring  
9700, Professional Learning

Adoption date:

***FOR COMMUNITY COMMENT 4-16-24 [NEW POLICY]***