Regional School Unit 5
Durham · Freeport · Pownal

"To inspire and support every learner by challenging minds, building character, sparking creativity, and nurturing passions."

Jean Skorapa, Superintendent of Schools
Kelly Wentworth, Director of Finance & Human Resources
Cynthia Alexander, Assistant Superintendent of Schools
Elisha Morris, Director of Instructional Support

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee
January 14, 2025
7:00 a.m.
https://networkmaine.zoom.us/j/83955767193
Meeting ID: 839 5576 7193

Committee Members: Allie Edwards, Ashley Schumacher, Cheyenne Farrell, Malik Farlow, Cynthia Alexander, Jen Gulko, Jean Skorapa

Agreed upon Norms

- *Trust collective wisdom and give some time and thought to ideas before passing judgment.*
- *Be conscious of your own and others' assumptions, and always go to the source to seek accurate information.*
- *Assume good intentions, especially during the busiest and most stressful times. Intentions do not negate impact.*
- *Maintain confidentiality concerning students, educators, and families with whom we work.*
- *Express a Growth Mindset. We have to support our learning by accepting and encouraging each other to learn from mistakes as well as from success. Do not try and avoid the discomfort around difficult conversations.*
- *Seek out and center the participation or experiences of those most impacted by the topic at hand.*

Adopted 11/14/23

RSU 5 Strategic Plan Goal: *Strengthen diversity, equity, and inclusion practices.*

DEI Committee Charge: *Create a culture in RSU 5 where diversity, equity, and inclusion are respected and celebrated through the implementation of thoughtful, iterative, and innovative strategies that inspire an inclusive mindset in RSU5 employees, students, and community members.*

Agenda Items and Discussion:

1. Agreed upon definitions for diversity, equity, inclusion and belong - making them front facing for the committee
2. Strategic Planning Process - Identifying marginalized groups

Definitions for Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging
RSU No. 5 DEI Committee
(Developed 2024)

The DEI Committee is charged with creating a culture in RSU No. 5 where diversity, equity, and inclusion are respected and celebrated through the implementation of thoughtful, iterative, and innovative strategies that inspire an inclusive mindset in RSU No. 5 employees, students, and community members.

To better execute this charge, the Committee had adopted the following definitions of the terms core to our work. These definitions have been adapted from resources developed by a range of secondary and higher education institutions who have researched these domains..

A Note on Integration and Evolution:

Equity and *Belonging* cannot be achieved without the foundation of *Diversity* and the actions of *Inclusion*. The four are intimately linked and necessary for a full realization of the potential of any group and organization. Each is in relation to individuals, small and large groups, informal and formal collectives, organizations and institutions. The four are also in constant flux as society and the academy discover and learn from our history and our complex present. Definitions will continue to evolve while the motivation for a just and humane society will remain unchanged.[1]

Diversity

Diversity refers to the variety of personal experiences, values, and worldviews that arise from differences of culture and circumstance. Such differences include race, ethnicity, gender and gender identity, age, religion, language, disability status, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, geographic region, and more.[2]

Equity

Equity refers to actively working to identify and eliminate barriers that have prevented full participation across differences in culture and circumstance, specifically redressing the exclusion of historically underrepresented groups in higher education.[3] Equitable environments

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[1] Massachusetts Institute of Technology (“Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Resources,” https://hr.mit.edu/diversity-equity-inclusion/resources)
[2] Rutgers College (“DEI Committee Good Start Guide,” https://nbdiversity.rutgers.edu/dei-committee-good-start-guide)
[3] Rutgers

address disparities and strive to eliminate unique and systemic barriers that have prevented the full participation of marginalized groups. Such environments are free from discrimination, harassment and bias.[4]

Inclusion

Inclusion refers to the act of creating environments in which individuals and groups feel welcomed, respected, supported, and valued, by eliminating practices and behaviors that marginalize. An inclusive climate embraces differences and offers respect in words and actions so that all people can fully participate in the university's opportunities.[5] Such actions involve intentional and ongoing engagement with the diversity in and across various social, cultural, and intellectual groups. Inclusive environments increase productivity, awareness, knowledge, and empathic understanding of the complex ways individuals interact within groups. *Inclusion* is distinct from belonging and strives for belonging.[6]

Belonging

Belonging refers to the emotional and experiential outcome of inclusion.[7] *Belonging* is the feeling individuals, particularly those from historically underrepresented groups who have experienced exclusion in the past, have in places that have intentionally actionized diversity, equity, and inclusion to create a culture that supports the feeling of security, acceptance, and value.[8] *Belonging* is the sense that you can bring your full and authentic self to a group.[9] *Belonging* gives people a voice in a community, and encourages and enables them to contribute to it and to expect support from it as well.[10]

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[4] MIT
[5] Rutgers
[6] MIT
[7] National Association of Independent Schools ("Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging," https://www.nais.org/articles/pages/diversity-equity-inclusion-and-belonging/)
[8] Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities, ("APLU's Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, & Belonging (DEIB) Definitions," https://www.aplu.org/wp-content/uploads/aplu-deib-definitions.pdf)
[9] MIT
[10] NAIS