Tom Gray, Superintendent of Schools
Kelly Wentworth, Director of Finance & Human Resources
Erica Mazzeo, Assistant Superintendent of Schools
Elisha Morris, Director of Instructional Support

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging Committee
April 2, 2026
Meeting via Google Meet
Minutes

Committee Members: Ashley Schumacher (Absent), Valerie Williams (Present), Malik Farlow (Absent), Erica Mazzeo (Present), Jen Gulko (Late), Tom Gray (Present),
Guests Present: Lexie Triggiani (DCS Staff), Pam Crosby (FMS Principal), 8th Grade Students: Hadly (DCS), Shelby (DCS), Noah (FMS)

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

DEI[B] Committee Charge: The DEI[B] 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 (Guiding Definitions HERE) 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.

Agenda Focus

The committee discussed ways to focus the work of the DEIB Committee on actionable steps and student-centered initiatives that promote belonging, inclusion, awareness, and equity across the district.

Student Feedback and Discussion

Freeport Middle School

Students shared several suggestions and concerns from students at FMS, including:

- increasing awareness and celebration of different cultures;
- providing more visibility and publicity regarding civil rights and the GSA;
- reducing gendered spaces where possible;
- increasing signage regarding pronouns.

Students also noted that topics related to recent statutory requirements around African American studies, genocide/Holocaust education, and Wabanaki studies are not discussed frequently in classes.

Durham Community School

Students shared similar feedback from DCS students, including:

- increased signage regarding pronouns;
- greater awareness and discussion of stereotypes, particularly as students grow older.

Students noted that Wabanaki studies had only been discussed briefly approximately one year ago.

Committee Discussion

Valerie Williams affirmed many of the student comments and emphasized:

- celebrating differences;
- fostering belonging;
- recognizing cultural diversity and diverse abilities;
- supporting recognition and inclusion of pronouns and LGBTQIA+ identities.

Superintendent Gray highlighted several relatively recent statutory requirements related to curriculum and instruction, including:

- African American Studies requirements under PL 2021, c. 247;
- instruction regarding the history of genocide, including the Holocaust;
- updated Wabanaki terminology and instructional requirements under PL 2023, c. 537.

The committee discussed the importance of ensuring these topics are meaningfully incorporated into curriculum, instruction, and classroom conversations.

Erica noted the importance of establishing structures and agreements around instruction and assessment practices to support consistency and inclusion.

Proposed Actions and Initiatives

Principal Gulko and committee members collaborated on several proposed next steps:

- Invite up to five 8th grade students from each middle school to participate in the Maine Human Rights Commission Active Bystander Workshop at Freeport High School on April 15 from 9:00–11:15 a.m.
- Promote the afternoon Active Bystander Workshop session for staff participation.
- Organize a Student Leadership Teams Summit at Freeport High School in mid-May for middle and high school student leadership teams.
    - Up to five students from each middle school would participate.
    - This year's theme will focus on "Subtle Acts of Exclusion (Microaggressions)."
    - Freeport High School students will facilitate student-led conversations and activities.

Collective Action Agreements

The committee identified the following shared priorities for continued work:

- Increase signage and awareness efforts across schools;
- Develop a centralized hub for stakeholder resources;
- Establish joint meetings of school-based student leadership teams beginning in Spring 2026;
- Explore future opportunities for student-led groups in grades 6–12 to collaborate with upper elementary student leaders.

The committee agreed that future work should continue emphasizing actionable steps, student voice, and opportunities for collaboration across schools.

Next meeting: Thursday, June 4th