The Office of Equity, Inclusion and Belonging
Impact Report

February 2026

CAMBRIDGE PUBLIC SCHOOLS
EMPOWERING STUDENT EXCELLENCE

Introduction

> “The dynamism of any diverse community depends not only on the diversity itself but on promoting a sense of belonging among those who formerly would have been considered and felt themselves outsiders.”
>
> - Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor

We have come to understand that the word equity has little meaning if efforts purportedly centered on equity do not yield transformative outcomes. Namely, equity must be viewed as a verb. To have meaning, it must be actionable. When one experiences an inequity, especially an inequitable act targeting their identity, it is often deeply felt and affects one’s emotions, thoughts, and actions. It touches you; it can hurt, it can make you angry, or make you sad. It moves you. It cannot be responded to with performative platitudes or expressions of empathy alone. Inequities are actionable; they affect and often change lives. One must feel expressions of equity with the same intensity that the inequity triggered, for them to believe that inclusion and belonging are truly valued in a group or community.

We have learned from our “Fix Injustice, Not Kids” book study that, as educators, our responses to inequity have, at best, been mitigative, focusing on remedying the inequitable act while leaving the systems, structures, and practices that underpin the conditions in place. When we do this, we continue to sustain an aura of otherness for those whom society has underserved, maligned, and considered outsiders.

Beginning in 2021, the Office of Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging introduced several initiatives to center our district’s underserved community members. Much of what we introduced can be described as performative. We have often reflected on the work we have led and have endeavored to support initiatives throughout the district that transform conditions and experiences.

This impact report highlights the many OEIB initiatives we’ve facilitated or sponsored since the fall of 2021. Some are performative, many are mitigative, and proudly some are transformative. As we move into the next five years, we are excited about the many educator-, student-, and caregiver-led initiatives that, if executed collaboratively, have the potential to transform our district and address the opportunity gaps that persist.

OEIB will continue to reflect on our mission, recalibrate, and advance initiatives to support individual educators, schools, departments, and the community toward authentic, equitable outcomes that are transformative for all its scholars, educators, and caregivers. We encourage everyone to embrace a lens that places equity, inclusion, and belonging within every aspect of your work. Whether developing a lesson plan, a behavioral intervention, a caregiver relationship, or leading a school, department, or team, equity must be at the center of every decision, and every interaction must matter, especially to those who have felt left out. Thank you for your support!

Peace,

Manuel J Fernandez
Assistant Superintendent
Chief Equity Officer

Mission

The primary mission of the Office of Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (OEIB) is to support the district's efforts to eliminate racial, cultural, and socioeconomic opportunity gaps for our students and their families and align our efforts with the Cambridge Public Schools (CPS) District Strategic Plan.

5 Year Impact Highlights (2021-2026*)

137
Professional Development Sessions Facilitated

53
Caregiver Workshops Presented

32
Mini-Grants Funded

44
School & District-Based Caregiver Affinity Groups Hosted

78
Equity Collaborative Projects Supported

44
Equity Academy Projects Launched

37
Caregiver Community Events Organized

* As of February 2026

History

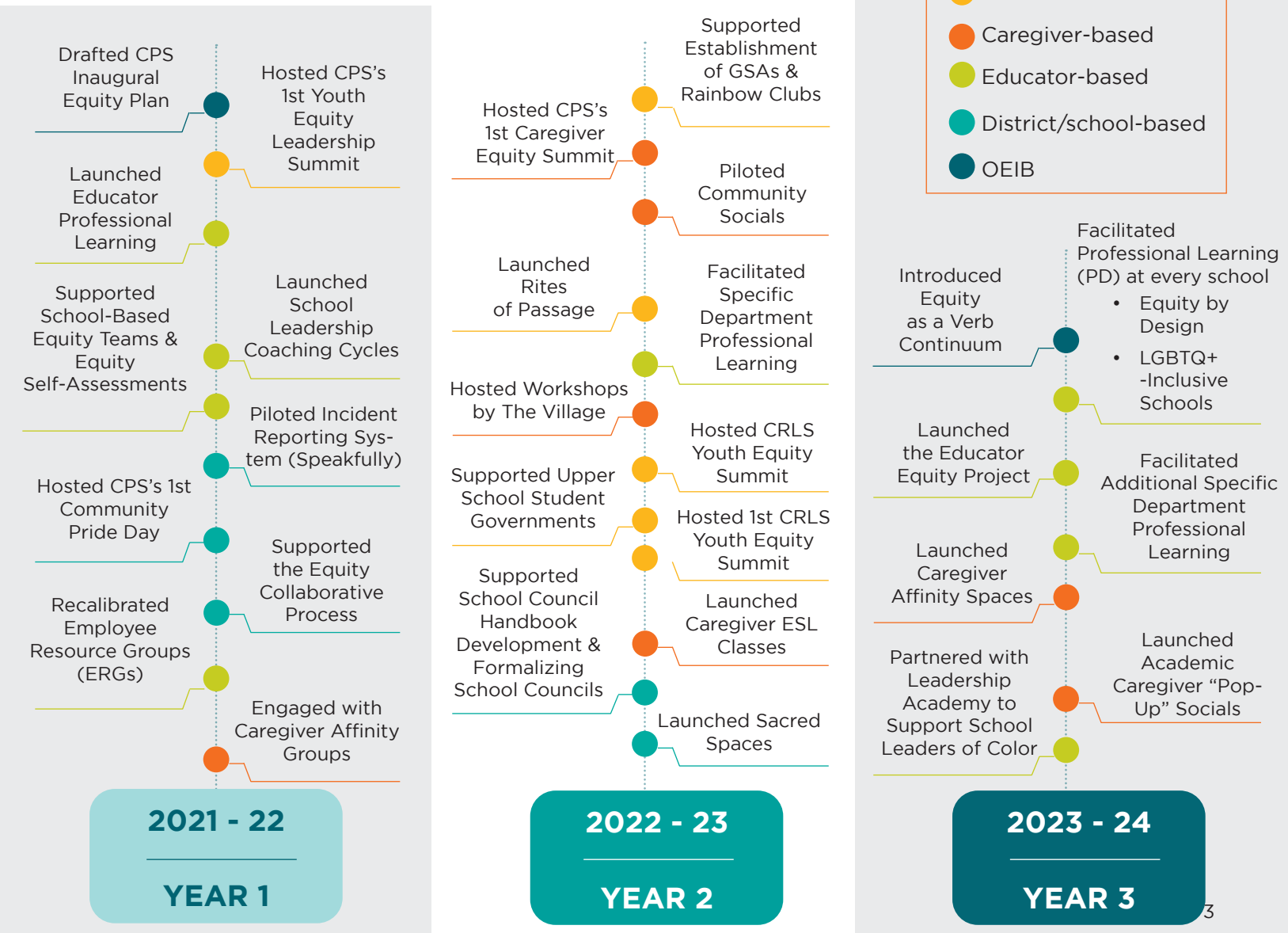
During its first 3 years (2021-2024) as a new department within the district, the OEIB focused on creating

leadership, professional development, student support, family engagement opportunities, and various resources

to mitigate or eliminate racial, cultural, and socio-economic opportunity gaps within our schools and district.

In response to the Building Equity Bridges Commitments of 2019, CPS launched the Office of Equity, Inclusion & Belonging (OEIB) in July 2021.

The OEIB consists of two divisions: Equity and Family and Community Engagement.



Over the past 2 school years (2024-2026), the OEIB shifted from creating lots of new programming, events, and initiatives to increasing their impact by sharpening their focus and goals, making them accessible to more people, and improving their quality.

- Launched the Inaugural Equity Academy Cohort
- Expanded the Equity Collaborative Process to include Mini-Grants
- Recalibrated Employee Resource Groups (ERGs)
- Relaunched District-Wide Book Study
- Hosted C.H.A.N.G.E. (Upper School Boys Group)

2024 - 25

YEAR 4

- Updated Incident Reporting System (Speakfully)
- Supported New Caregiver Affinity Groups
- Introduced Caregiver Academy
- Launched Blooming Colors Series (Upper School Girls Group)
- Supported School-Based Equity Teams & Equity Self-Assessments

2025 - 26

YEAR 5

Initiatives

Youth

- Supporting Affinity & Heritage Clubs at Upper Schools and CRLS
- Affirming LGBTQ+ Youth
- CRLS Youth Equity Summit

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Educator

- Equity Academy
- Professional Development
- Employee Resource Groups (ERGs)

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Caregiver & Community Engagement

- Community Socials
- Caregiver Affinity Groups
- The Village
- Services and Supports for Families

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District-wide

- Equity Collaborative & Mini-Grants
- Supporting Diverse Religious & Cultural Observances
- Partnerships with other District Departments
- Speakfully Now: Incident Reporting Platform

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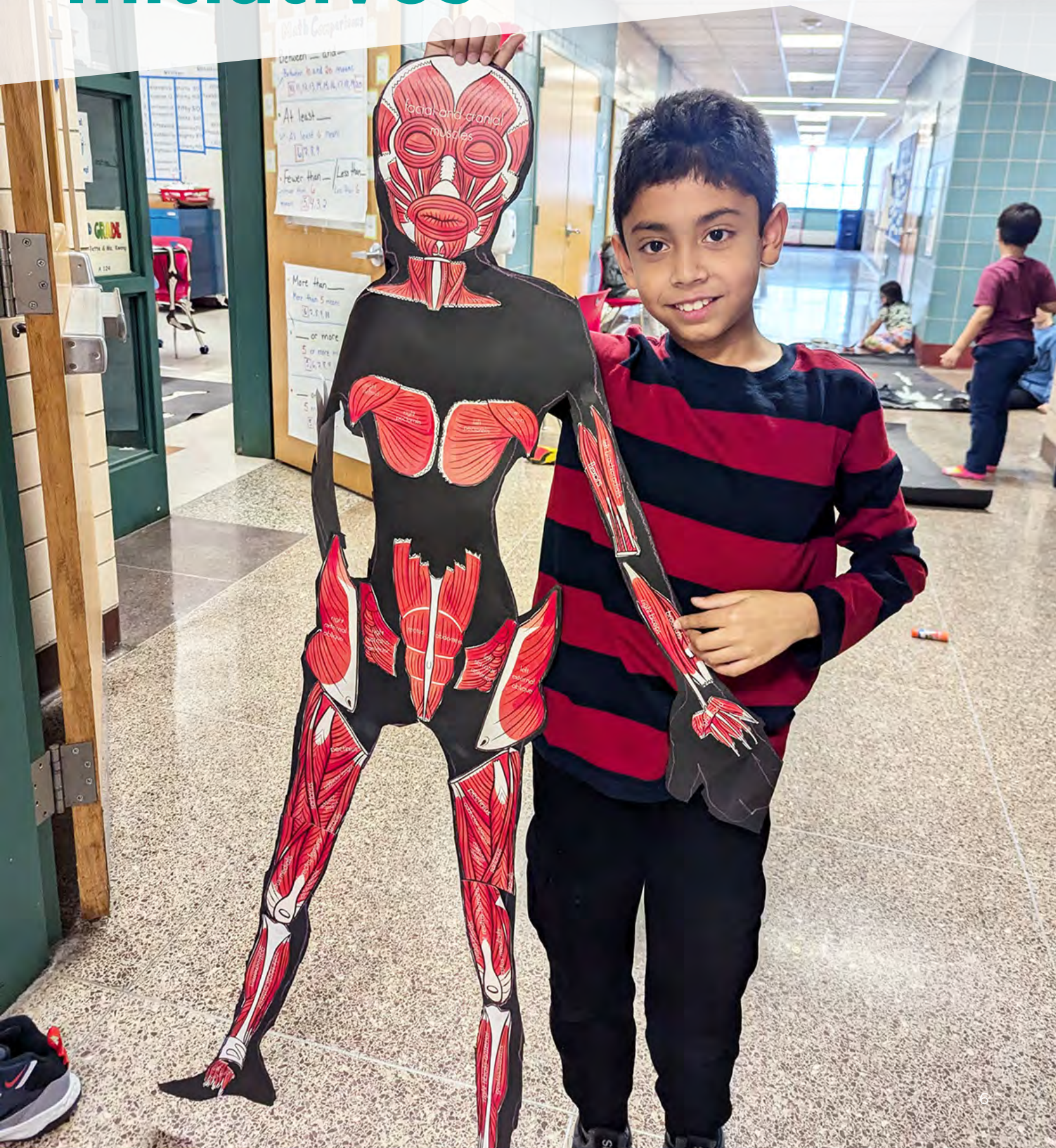
Youth Initiatives

OEIB believes in uplifting student voices and providing opportunities focused on building youth's academic and leadership skills, self-awareness, and healing.



Supporting Affinity & Heritage Clubs at Upper Schools and CRLS

Affinity and heritage clubs give students the opportunity to find community through shared identity. Creating spaces for students to be themselves and connect with peers is essential for uplifting student voice. These clubs usually balance social activities with activism or educational activities.

2025-26
5
Mini-Grants

LatinX Club, Hiking Club, Jewish Heritage Club, and two elementary Rainbow Clubs' supported programming serving at least 1000 people total

2025-26
4
Equity Collaborative Projects

Students coordinate the district-wide Multicultural Night and envision new programs to improve belonging and success for Multilingual English learners, CRLS math students, and middle schoolers at RAUC.

OEIB funds and supports many **student clubs** through the Equity Collaborative and Mini-Grants processes.

2024-25
11
Mini-Grants

Clubs including South Asian Club, Black Student Union, Women in STEM, Best Buddies, and more hosted events serving at least 400 students total

2024-25
7
Equity Collaborative Projects

Students coordinated district-wide events and clubs, including Multicultural Night and Students of Color Coalition

* Mini-Grants awarded so far. Application closes in April 2026.

* Thanks to a City of Cambridge Participatory Budgeting project, CRLS began awarding small grants to clubs this year using a similar application. The selection team for those grants includes the OEIB Youth Advocacy Specialist, as well as CRLS students, staff, and Assistant Principal.

"SO much joy, happiness, and smiles from this day! [We need] more celebrations like these where people have a space to highlight who they are and show the fullness of significant cultures they carry."
- student planner

"I am proud of accomplishing an event where I brought a community together."
- student club leader

Affirming LGBTQ+ Youth

Our LGBTQ+ middle and high school students report higher rates of anxiety, self-harm, and bullying than any other student population*. Access to a Genders and Sexualities Alliances (GSA) and similar clubs are consistently shown to improve school climate and mental health for LGBTQ+ students**. These spaces contribute to feelings of belonging, safety, and understanding.

Spaces that affirm our LGBTQ+ youth

School-based Rainbow Clubs
(3rd-5th) and GSAs (6th-12th)
- Every school has one
- All LGBTQ+ students and allies are welcome

Annual Community Pride Day
- Held every year since 2022
- Attended by 200+ students, staff, and care-givers

"[My child] had the time of his life. Said he felt his full self."
- caregiver of a young Pride Day attendee

*CPS Youth Risk Behavior Survey
** Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN)

Youth Equity Summit (YES) Week

Our LGBTQ+ middle and high school students report higher rates of anxiety, self-harm, and bullying than any other student population*, due to living in a world that does not always support their identities. This student-led summit evolved into a partnership with CRLS students and staff known as CRLS YES Day. Over time, CRLS has adopted the tradition with the ongoing support of OEIB. Last year, a diverse planning team of 20 10th-12th graders, CRLS staff
leaders, and the OEIB Youth Advocacy Specialist planned a full week of peer learning opportunities refocused on the original purpose: students learning from each other about equity-related topics that matter most to them. Planning is in progress for CRLS YES Week 2026.

2024-25 CRLS YES Day

10 student-designed and led workshops over 1 week

- Topics included disability justice, intersectional feminism, health equity, and an anti-racist, anti-bullying workshop called "The Impact of Our Words."

30 classes hosted a workshop, engaging about **600** students

72% of student respondents rated their workshop a 4 or 5 out of 5

"I learned that even if it seems impossible, doing anything about injustice can cause things to change for the better."
- student workshop participant

Educator Initiatives

OEIB seeks to support equitable teaching and learning throughout the district by providing professional development and opportunities for collaboration.

Equity Academy

The CPS Equity Academy was founded in the spring of 2024 with the goal of building on our district's equity work across three levels: individual, school, and district. Through the Equity Academy, Equity Advocates developed a cumulative project based on a data-driven problem of practice.

Goals of Equity Academy

Individual: Build each advocate's equity lens, collaboration, and leadership skills.

School: Develop strong systems and structures to support equity work at schools.

District: Align equity work across schools and collaborate towards a collective vision of equity

2024-25 Inaugural Cohort

34
Advocates from across **19** CPS schools and programs

21
projects

2025-26 Cohort

38
Advocates from across **20** CPS schools, departments and programs

23
projects

"The Equity Academy has pushed me in my practice by exposing me to fresh approaches to equity and helped me to build community with other equity partners as we do this important work together."
- Equity Advocate

Professional Development (PD)

Each year, OEIB facilitates anti-racist, anti-bias professional development across the district. Each PD is developed in collaboration with school and department leaders to meet the specific needs of the staff community.

District-Wide

- CPS Colloquium Breakout Sessions
- New to CPS Orientation
- Fix Injustice, Not Kids Book Study

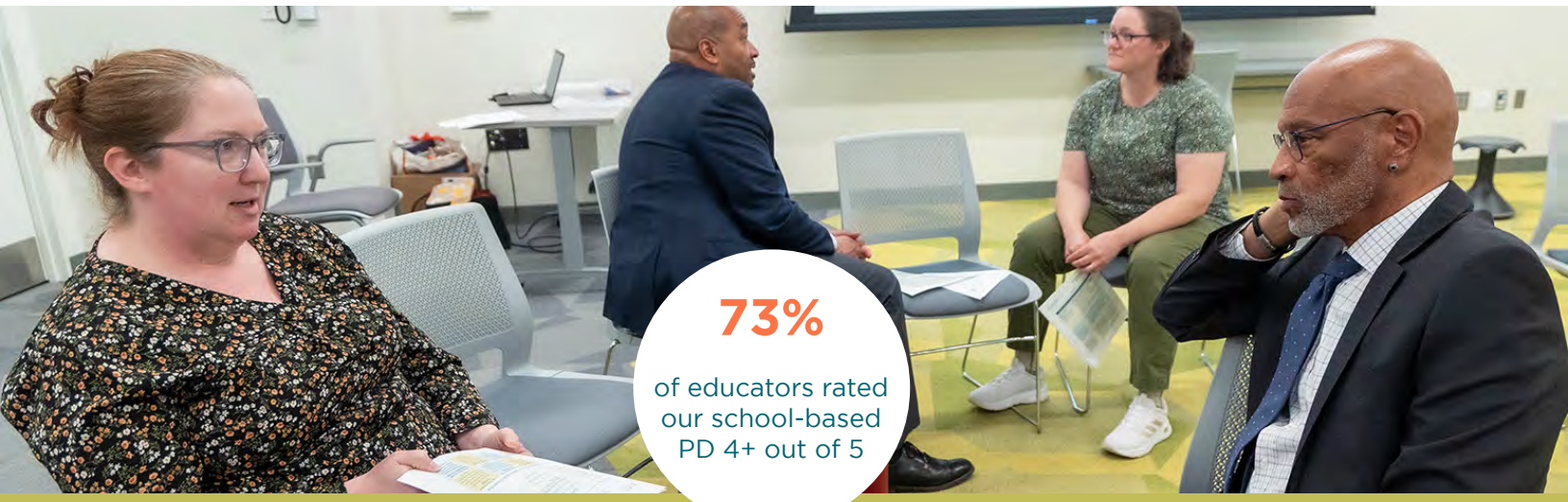
School-based

Topics have included:

- Equity by Design
- LGBTQ+ Inclusive Schools
- Academic Belonging

Department-based

- Finance
- Food Services
- Special Start
- Information, Communications and Technology Services (ICTS)



73%

of educators rated our school-based PD 4+ out of 5

"It was helpful to discuss different scenarios with colleagues with shared students to practice conversation framework skills; [I took away] the importance of being transparent, direct, and purposeful with interactions and language."
- CRLS staff

Employee Resource Groups (ERGs)

The ERGs are a collaborative effort between OEIB, Human Resources (HR) and the Cambridge Education Association (CEA). The district currently has 7 official ERGs, which were founded between 2020 and 2022 and serve to build community among staff who share a particular identity. ERGs host discussion groups, book clubs, social outings and events.

- Asian ERG
- Black Leaders in Academics and Culture (BLAC)
- Jewish ERG
- Latinx ERG
- Muslim Community of Cambridge Public Schools
- Queer Agenda
- White Educators Working Towards Anti-Racism (WEWTAR)

Caregiver & Community Engagement Initiatives

The purpose of caregiver initiatives is to remove barriers to access and provide connection and community building for all families, especially those who have been historically underserved.

Community Socials

Community Socials began in the 2022-2023 school year. The first event was held at Fletcher Maynard Academy and featured over 70 attendees. Since then, we have hosted multiple community sessions throughout the school year. The themes for community socials have included:

academics, global diversity, joy, and advocacy

Other Community Events:

Community Fairs

Rolling Resources

AVERAGE ATTENDANCE

200-300

ATTENDEES AT EACH EVENT

Caregiver Affinity Groups

The purpose of caregiver affinity groups is to create spaces where diverse caregivers can connect, share, and advocate. These groups help bridge gaps between linguistically diverse families and school districts by fostering trust, promoting equity, and empowering caregivers to play an active role in their children's education. These caregiver groups are facilitated by District and School-Based Family Liaisons, CPS Staff, and caregivers, who provide information, guidance, and resources.

Affinity Groups

- American-born Black- launching next year!
- Caregivers with Pride
- Ethiopian
- Haitian-Creole
- Latinx
- Muslim - relaunching next year!

Meetings

MEET **5-8** TIMES PER YEAR

AVERAGE OF **70** ATTENDEES PER EVENT

Caregiver Partnerships

Caregiver Academy

Partnership between the OEIB and Cambridge Families of Color Coalition (CFCC) with the objective of finding ways to increase engagement with caregivers, particularly those furthest from the center, in order to create more positive student outcomes and experiences.

Caregiver Collaborative

Partnership between caregiver leaders and the Office of Out-of-School Time (OST) and the OEIB

- Cambridge Families of Color Coalition (CFCC)
- Cambridge Families of Asian Descent (CFAD)
- North Cambridge Courageous Conversations (NCCC)
- The Village (partnership between CFCC and CPS)

The Village

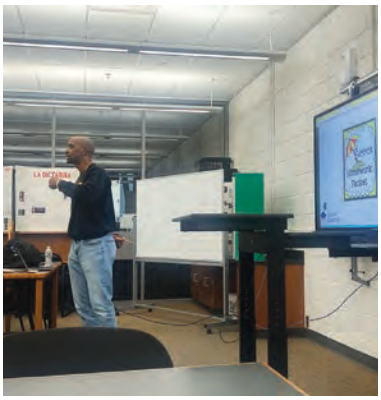
Our **Joy** is **Powerful**

The Village aims to support and empower caregivers of color in the district by providing resources, workshops, and a supportive community to better support their children's academic and personal success. Workshop sessions are held in a combination of in-person and virtual meetings and are advertised through The Village network and other community channels to ensure broad reach and engagement.

Workshop Series

- Financial Literacy
- College Preparedness

The Village is a partnership between the Cambridge Families of Color Coalition (CFCC) and Cambridge Public Schools.



THE VILLAGE

Services and Supports for Families

McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Act

The goal of program is to support the enrollment, attendance and success of homeless students through active collaboration with other state agencies and community providers.

As of February 2026, there are approximately 200 CPS students who are registered under McKinney-Vento.

Mind Matters - Harvard Ed Portal Partnership

Mind Matters: Families Make a Difference is a twenty-hour interactive and fully hands-on program developed by Harvard University that provides brain-science expertise to caregivers of children three to eight years of age. Many Family Liaisons were trained in 2017 and starting in 2018, CPS began offering the workshop series to families. The curriculum is available in Amharic, English, Haitian Creole and Spanish.

District-Wide Initiatives

There are no quick solutions to our challenges, but we believe that with collaborative and sustained efforts by all CPS stakeholders, none of the barriers to equity are insurmountable.

– 2021 CPS Inaugural Equity Plan

Equity Collaborative & Mini-Grants

Through the Equity Collaborative, the OEIB supports the launch of new equity-based initiatives and supports current successful projects in being institutionalized within CPS. In the 2024-25 school year, the OEIB introduced a Mini-Grant option, which allows groups the flexibility to apply for smaller amounts of funding on a rolling basis.

The goals of both the Equity Collaborative and the Mini-Grants are to improve equity, inclusion, and belonging for our students and their families – especially those furthest from success. This 2025-26 school year, we further focused Equity Collaborative projects on 3 goals: Youth Voice, Inclusive Communities, and Academic Success of Black Students.

Initiatives supported:

2024-25	2025-26
13 Equity Collaborative	**8** Equity Collaborative
16 Mini-Grants	**14** Mini-Grants

2025-26 grants include:

- Math workshops for caregivers
- Community-led cultural celebrations
- Leadership program for CRLS English learners

* Mini-Grants awarded so far. Application closes in April 2026.

> "[We learned to] always advocate for yourself! You may not get a yes the first time, but it's important to find new ways to make things work."
> - Equity Collaborative recipient

Supporting Diverse Religious and Cultural Observances

To support the CPS mission to eliminate racial, cultural, and socio-economic opportunity gaps that exist throughout the school district, it is critical to engage in equitable practices that support inclusion and belonging. This includes providing appropriate accommodations and and hosting events that elevate the diverse religious and cultural traditions of students and staff.

Inclusive Efforts

2022-23:

- Collaborated with the Muslim Community of Cambridge Public Schools (MCCPS), a CPS Employee Resource Group (ERG), to establish sacred spaces and guidelines for students and staff of diverse faiths
- In partnership with the Jewish Heritage Club and Food & Nutrition Services Department, piloted lunch options at CRLS that meet Passover dietary guidelines.

2023-24

- Partnered with Former Mayor Siddiqui to organize the city-wide Annual Cambridge Community Iftar, which brought together over 700 people
- Funded Cambridge's first Community Seder, proposed by the Jewish Employee Resource Group, which brought together about 60 attendees of all ages, including Jews and non-Jews
- Funded CRLS Multicultural Night

2024-25:

- Shared Guidelines on Religious and Cultural Observances with all school leaders
- Continued to support the Community Iftar, Community Seder, and the CRLS Multicultural Night through the Equity Collaborative

Partnership with other District Departments

To support the district's efforts to eliminate racial, cultural and socioeconomic opportunity gaps for our students and their families, it is critical that people see equity as the throughline in all of the work that we do. Therefore, the OEIB has focused on building partnerships with other departments to ensure equity is a throughline not just in conversation but also in practice.

Collaborations with other Departments

Communications
Host ParentSquare training sessions and provide plain language training for new teachers

ELA/Literacy, Math, Multilingual Learner Education (MLE), and Office of Special Education (OSE)
Focus on Culturally Responsive Teaching

ELA/Literacy
Review the CKLA Curriculum and design unit supports

Math Department
Support Math Equity Project and provide language supports

Finance
Facilitate Community budget information/ feedback sessions

Health, PE and Wellness & Social Emotional Learning (SEL)
Review and respond to Youth Risk Behavior Survey data

Human Resources (HR) and CEA
Support Employee Resource Groups (ERGs)

Information, Communications and Technology Services (ICTS)
Pilot Digital Navigator and district web-site redesign

Multilingual Learner Education & Cambridge Learning Center
Coordinate English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes for caregivers

Out-of-School Time (OST)
Connect families with scholarships and supports for school, summer school and camp

SpeakfullyNow: Incident Reporting Platform

In May 2022, after months of thoughtful planning and extensive engagement, CPS launched an updated incident reporting system for students, families, and staff, which includes the platform SpeakfullyNow and new resources on Title IX. Any incident involving discrimination, harassment, sexual misconduct/ harassment (Title IX), retaliation, bullying, other civil rights violations or other areas of concern can be reported through Speakfully.

What is SpeakfullyNow?

1. Any student, caregiver, or staff member can submit an incident report through SpeakfullyNow, including anonymously.
2. After answering a few questions, the incident report goes directly to the OEIB, who will assign an investigator to the case.
3. **Want to submit an incident?** Please visit cps.speakfullynow.com

SPEAKFULLY™
POWERED BY HRACUITY

Thank You

Equity work is long-term, multi-generational, and complex.

It cannot be done alone.

Thank you to our youth, educators, caregivers and community members for helping advance our commitment to becoming an anti-racist and anti-bias school district.

OEIB Team

Manuel J Fernandez
Assistant Superintendent / Chief Equity Officer

Dr. Leslie Jiménez
Director of Equity

Sam Musher
Youth Advocacy Specialist

Ailene Orr
Curriculum and Training Specialist

Mia Ferej
Special Assistant

Debbie Bonilla
Family Engagement Specialist and McKinney Vento Liaison

Manny Jeudy
Assistant Program Manager for The Village

Aboma Dirbaba
Bilingual Family Liaison for Ethiopian Languages

Diecline Bazile-Dorvil
Bilingual Family Liaison for Haitian Creole

Toyba Abdie
Bilingual Family Liaison for Amharic

https://bit.ly/oeib