



# Dobbs Ferry School District Race Matters Committee Recommendations to Board of Education

June 22, 2021

Dr. Lisa Brady  
Superintendent

# Dobbs Ferry School District Mission Statement

The Dobbs Ferry School District strives to develop independent, curious, and open-minded learners who think critically, work collaboratively, act ethically and are knowledgeable about the world around them. In support of our mission, we are committed to:

- Providing a high-quality and challenging curriculum with the depth, breadth and relevance appropriate to each learner.
- Respecting the unique abilities and learning styles of each student.
- Utilizing the most effective and innovative instructional approaches and technological advances.
- Encouraging students to meet their challenges – whether academic, athletic, or artistic – with openness, enthusiasm, and a willingness to take risks.
- Recruiting, retaining, and developing high quality teachers and staff.
- Celebrating and learning from the diversity of our students and the greater Dobbs Ferry community.

# Dobbs Ferry School District Vision Statement

Independent Thinkers Prepared to Change the World

# Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Is Aligned with our Mission

- The Mission Statement that was adopted by the District in 2013 included several important commitments to our students, staff and community, and we have worked continuously to meet those commitments.
- The District's current focus and reflection on issues related to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (“**DEI**”) is **aligned** with the **District's Mission** and **2018-2023 Strategic Plan** and is consistent with the New York State Education Department's Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Education Framework (“**NYSED CR-S Education Framework**”).

# Long Range Strategic Plan 2018 - 2023

STRAND	Instruction	Curriculum	High Performing Workforce	Local and Global Partnerships	Health & Wellness / The Whole Child
<b>AREAS OF FOCUS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Support use of effective, engaging differentiation strategies.</li> <li>- Authentic/ Experiential learning experiences.</li> <li>- Support the use of instructional strategies that aid in the development of 21st century skills.</li> <li>- Explore current and potential schedule options to ensure they are supportive of teaching and learning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Options for expansion of IB program.</li> <li>- Support curriculum redesign across grade levels. Emphasis in interdisciplinary lessons and horizontal/vertical alignment.</li> <li>- Monitor and revise homework/grading/ assessment practices to better support learning.</li> <li>- Increase student input into curricular decisions.</li> <li>- Embed opportunities for students to develop the necessary Digital Citizenship Skills</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Continue to Provide learning opportunities to support staff professional growth</li> <li>- Continue to include stakeholder representation on hiring committees</li> <li>- Ensure that staff represent a variety of cultures, ethnicities, perspectives, and life experiences</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Educate, Community, parents and students about all District initiatives</li> <li>- Maximize opportunities for collaboration with professional regional organizations and associations</li> <li>- Expand Community partnerships with the Village of Dobbs Ferry and other Community groups</li> <li>- Support and encourage partnerships with local businesses and/or organizations that could enhance our curricular program</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Develop programs that support students' Social and Emotional and Physical Health</li> <li>- Reflect on the Culture/Climate present in each school and district-wide to ensure that the learning environment is supportive of students social, emotional and physical needs.</li> </ul>

# Our Mission is Supported by the NYSED Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Education Framework

The NYSED CR-S Education Framework serves as a guide to the District in engaging our DEI work. Its direct alignment with our Mission Statement and Strategic Plan affirms that we are on the right path in our goal of developing “Independent Thinkers Prepared to Change the World.”

The NYSED CR-S Education Framework was designed to support school districts in these efforts and is grounded in four principles:

- **Welcoming and Affirming Environment**
- **Inclusive Curriculum and Assessment**
- **High Expectations and Rigorous Instruction**
- **Ongoing Professional Learning and Support**

# Our Goal: To Advance our Strategic Goals and the District Mission and Vision

Our goal is to maintain progress toward our Strategic Plan and to advance the Mission and Vision of the District.

In support of this goal, the District's DEI work seeks to ensure that all students experience a **welcoming school environment** that is reflective of the diversity present in the larger community.

- all students feel included in what they encounter at school, including:
  - in their classroom resources,
  - in differing historical perspectives that they learn about,
  - in equitable opportunities for engagement, advancement and achievement,
  - and the adults they interact with each day.

# DEI Has Always Been an Important District Goal

- District and Community-wide book reads:
  - Bullying
  - LGBTQIA+
  - Inequities in the Justice System
  - The Great Migration
- Guest speakers on Superintendent Conference days
- Building Bridges
- Diversity Career Fair
- Ongoing opportunities for professional learning
- IB for All
- “No Place for Hate” District



# Establishment of Race Matters Committee: Involving all Stakeholders

The Committee began to meet in December 2020 and continued to meet monthly through June 2021. Focus area groups also met independently as often as necessary to develop recommendations.

**The Committee was charged with the development of a series of recommendations** aligned with the NYSED CRS Education Framework that will move the District forward toward establishing a more diverse, equitable and inclusive school community and that is reflective of the diversity of the student body.

# Race Matters Committee Members Were Chosen to Represent all Stakeholders

- K-12 Alert sent out with the application in November 2020
- 75 people applied
- 40 members were selected by the Race Matters Core Team to represent a cross-section of our community
- Centering and elevating student and BIPOC voices was an important consideration

# Race Matters Committee Members

Students	Parents	Staff
<p>Isaac Aragon                      Jade Blatter                      Gigi Bragg                      Ana Diaz                      Rachel Diaz                      Jackeline Gregorio                      Paola Hernandez                      Fenna Laban                      Yenilda Liriano                      Martin Mashalov                      Ava Nunez                      Cristian Perdomo                      Vanshi Pithadia                      Jose-Luis Regalado                      Ava Solis                      Addison Valentin                      Maeve Van Engen                      Sofia Zamora</p>	<p>Craig Astreicher                      Sen Bodhisattava                      Justin Chao                      Daniel Fossner                      Abdoulaye Ngom                      Paulette Rivers                      Monica Shulman                      Clem Turner                      Darren Wood</p> <p>BOE Members:                      Tracy Baron                      Jean Lucasey</p>	<p>Lisa Brady                      Mallory Cairo                      Ray Cavallo                      Lynette Colon                      Tsha Gregory                      Elizabeth Hausman                      Laura Metrano                      Kenya Pattera                      Danielle Pecora                      Kevin Ridley                      Josh Rosen                      Michelle Yang-Kaczmarek</p>

# RMC Chose the Following Areas of Focus

Area of Focus	Presenters
Communications, Community Partnerships and Engagement	Clem Turner, Esq. (Parent)
Hiring and Retention	Josh Rosen and Lynette Colon (teaching staff)
Curriculum and Instruction	Ava Solis (Student)
Professional Learning	Michelle Yang-Kaczmarek (teaching staff) and Paulette Rivers (Parent)

# Communications, Community Partnerships and Engagement Recommendations

No school district can accomplish lasting equity changes without working in partnership with the broader coalition of residents, parents, and local businesses and institutions.

## Short-Term Goals (0-2 years)

- **Educate and communicate to the community the goals** and purpose of our DEI work and plan communications and engagement actions
  - Via Website and Social Media, Video of student/staff/alumni stories; Community Reads; Signs of support for businesses, homes, etc.
- Ensure that all committees, district-wide, **consider the impact** that their work may have on the District's DEI goals.
- Assess how **families** would prefer to receive **communications** (and in what language) and continually assess the effectiveness of such communications,
- Research funding that will enable the District to provide **translation, accessibility** and other **services**.

# Communications, Community Partnerships and Engagement Recommendations

## Long-Term Goals (3-5 years)

- Provide **bystander** and **upstander intervention** training (all staff, BOE, teachers, students)
- Establish a **Multilingual Parent Advisory Council** (M-PAC) comprised of parents, staff and administrators to meet the needs of non-English-speaking families
- Identify and bring in **BIPOC** (and other historically underrepresented) professionals to make **presentations** about their lives/careers.
- Identify **BIPOC organizations** that the school can **partner** with in order to improve DEI and to culturally enrich District Programs.
- Create Student **BIPOC Mentorship** programs from Elementary to High School.
- Offer **anti-bias training programs** used for district students and staff to other community groups that interact with our kids (e.g. youth athletic leagues, dance/karate/yoga studios)

# Hiring and Retention Practices Recommendations

We will focus our recruitment, hiring, and retention efforts on **increasing our most underrepresented populations** (with specific attention to BIPOC and LGBTQ+ staff) so young people see themselves and a spectrum of diversity reflected in the staff and leaders who serve them.

## Short-Term Goals (0-2 years)

- Update the **District's hiring manual** to reflect culturally responsive practices.
- Develop a training process for all **hiring committee** members.
- Ensure that underrepresented groups are included on **interview committees**.
- Foster a **connection** between new hires and the staff affinity groups.
- Seek **feedback** from recent hires on their experience with the hiring process and onboarding in the district.

# Hiring and Retention Practices Recommendations

## Long-Term Goals (3-5 years)

- Ensure **racial and/or ethnic affinity matching** between new staff and their mentors in formal mentoring partnerships.
- Increase the number of professional BIPOC staff who are awarded **tenure**.
- Create an **environment** where all staff are comfortable to report biased behavior.



# Curriculum and Instruction Recommendations

## Short-Term Goals (0 - 2 years)

- **Content-based training and resources** for teachers in alignment with the NYSED CR-S Education Framework and best teaching practices.
- Departments, teachers, students **assess the existing curriculum** for bright spots and places for improvement.
  - Create “best practices”, “discussion protocols” and “language norms” for each department/level that align with the NYSED CR-SE Framework.
- Host an **assembly** for high school students with a trained professional in race and equity to introduce a baseline of language and understanding to the school.

# Curriculum and Instruction Recommendations

## Long-Term (3 - 5 years)

- Provide **funding** for:
  - Creation of **curricular resources** that align with the NYSED CR-S Education Framework.
  - An **elective** that focuses on historically marginalized voices and the connections to current events.
  - Ongoing staff **trainings** in Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion Curriculum.
- Create a framework to promote discussion of **current events** at the elementary, middle, and high school levels.
- Include CR-S Education Framework in district **lesson** and **unit** plan **templates** and **observations**.

# Professional Learning Recommendations

Embed professional development opportunities for all District staff to develop an **equity lens** that they employ **daily** to identify and address the **impact of race and bias, ethnicity, language, country of origin, gender, sexuality, ability, religion, and socioeconomics** in all spaces in our District.

This work involves:

- articulating a vision that supports the development and sustainment of culturally responsive teaching.
- empowering teachers to recognize bias and discrimination.
- providing our educators with the right tools.
- offering meaningful professional development opportunities that will guide teachers in becoming confident culturally responsive educators.

# Professional Learning Recommendations

## Short-Term Goals (0-2 years)

- Unpacking the components of the CR-SE Framework so that teachers can employ **common language**
- Building demonstrable **cultural competencies/proficiencies** around **anti-bias, anti-racist lens** and be actionable: provide resources, teaching strategies, or units that can be implemented in the classroom the next day
- Provide opportunities for teachers to build their capacity in strategies for implementing CR-S framework competencies into **lessons** and **curriculum planning**

## Long-Term Goals (3-5 years)

- Identify a **DEI** professional development pathway prior to receiving **tenure** in the District
- Continue to develop **internal** professional development **capacity**
- Develop a consistent method of **evaluating** the **efficacy** of professional development work that will help ensure that the goals of the professional development are met, not merely professed.

# Committee Member Reflections

Laura Metrano - teacher

<https://ensemble.lhric.org/Watch/RaceMatters>

Justin Chao - parent

Sofia Zamora - student

# Next Steps

1. BOE adopts Policy 0105, Equity, Inclusivity and Diversity in Education
2. BOE directs District Administration to develop a DEI Plan to implement Policy 0105 in conjunction with recommendations from Race Matters Committee, to be presented to BOE in Fall 2021.
3. BOE and Race Matters Committee provide feedback to the DEI Plan

# Next Steps

4. As required by Policy 0105:
  - periodic meetings of the District-wide Race Matters Committee
  - establishment of building-level committees
  
5. Other Supports Include:
  - Continuation of staff and student affinity groups
  - Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum, Instruction and Equity
  - K-12 Teacher Leader position