

Shenendehowa Committee on Equity, Diversity and Inclusivity

It is our conviction that education of and for all children is a moral mandate for a civil society (Dewey, 1944). Further, as advanced technologies and communications bring the world's communities closer, our students must be prepared to thrive in a global marketplace with a true multi-cultural context and understanding. The District is committed to preserve equity and foster diverse and inclusive environments where every student feels connected, ensuring the provision of an anti-bias and anti-racist education. Professional learning with similar salient focus shall be prioritized.

Charge

We are at this pivotal point in history. Not only are we reimagining the practical provision of education, we are also transforming the fundamental structures that have validated privilege and perpetuated discriminatory and racist practices, and ultimately pervasive uneven outcomes for generations of young people. This work is not at all about blame or shame, it is about acknowledgement and change.

The ultimate goal of the *Committee* will be to identify new and exciting ways to include and engender diverse participation in supporting Shenendehowa today and building the district's future. The multi-dimensional efforts of the *Committee* will be the key to Shenendehowa's ability to remain a dynamic and rewarding place to learn, where challenging questions about diversity and multiculturalism are met with an attitude of enthusiastic possibility.

There must be an unwavering commitment by all to make equity a central element of the very structure and fabric of the district, embedded into its mission, and daily operations. The duality of education must be acknowledged and reconciled:

- ❑ what it **does to** some - disenfranchised, disengaged, and ultimately disparaged with labels of failure
- ❑ what it **does for** others - perpetuation of privilege, the facilitation of opportunities, the catalyst for agency and self-actualization.

Our work is not only to uphold diversity at Shenendehowa this year, but to ensure that it remains a fundamental value in years to come. The provision of education must be able to engage race and social difference as intrinsic to the identities and lived experiences of learners; insisting on race, gender, class, sexuality, (dis)ability, ethnicity, language, religion, and spirituality, as part of our identities in terms of who we are as persons.

Each school, department, employee must be committed to creating and sustaining learning and working environments that ensure equity in opportunities, promote personal excellence in achievement and foster social justice. The efforts and actions of all shall allow a multiplicity of backgrounds and perspectives to flourish at Shenendehowa.

Membership

The *Committee* is an inclusive district-wide body of employees, students, and community residents representing various aspects of diversity, cultures, backgrounds, and viewpoints that are ever-present and growing within our school community. The Committee will encourage open discussions and promote programs to inform, understand and assertively work to eradicate all forms of bias, bigotry and harassment (discrimination against creed, race, class, sexual orientation and/or gender).

Deliverables

There are a myriad of ways, approaches, and initiatives to realize the charge. Concrete actions and events shall be planned to raise the level of consciousness and sensitivity of those in our schools and our community to the matters of equity, diversity & inclusion.

With this in mind, at least three critical areas of focus must be closely addressed:

1. Curriculum and Instruction - Content, Pedagogy and Relationships, measures of success
2. Personnel and Professionalism - Recruitment, Hiring and Professional Development
3. Organizational Culture - Social protocols, cultural relevance, and provision of a platform for honest discourse

The committee shall make at least two (2) recommendations each year to the Board of Education to develop a more equity filled environment for the Shenendehowa Central School District.

In the area of **Curriculum and Instruction**, the objective will be to facilitate and foster more “culturally relevant” teachers and teaching...teachers who build upon students’ culture and experiential strengths to help inform and enhance the learning process. Curriculum and instructional materials for all grades shall reflect diversity and include a range of perspectives and experiences, particularly those of historically underrepresented groups. All curriculum materials shall be examined for bias and opportunities for the integration of social and emotional learning. Class instructional activities and extracurricular programs shall be designed to provide opportunities for cross-cultural and cross-racial interactions that foster respect for diversity.

The Committee is tasked with formulating and executing a process for bi-annual (every 2 years) gathering of information about what teachers are doing in classes or at grade levels. The purpose of gathering this information is to better understand the variety of subjects which are taught within the school and to share this information in order to create a better understanding. Specific actions of the Committee as it pertains to **Curriculum and Instruction** may include, but are not limited to:

- Implement a multicultural curriculum with educational events/activities that highlight the contributions of all peoples on an ongoing basis.
- Encourage the development of various educational activities that will provide opportunities to acknowledge and respect individual differences and similarities, such as inter-cultural awareness and sensitivity training.
- Provide training classes/workshops on the topic of cultural competency/diversity & inclusion for educators, students, and parents.
- Review grading practices to insure equity.

In the area of **Personnel and Professionalism**, the fundamental purpose is to ascertain and ensure the benefits to students gained by the presence of and interaction with a faculty and staff from diverse backgrounds. Ample evidence exists to suggest that the educational playing field is far from level, and the disconnection between teacher and student demographics is widening. Here at Shenendehowa our population is becoming increasingly diverse, while the diversity of the teaching force remains largely unchanged. A culturally diverse learning community adds depth to the teaching and learning experience and provides a vital component of a quality education. There must be recognition of the absolute inseparability of quality and diversity.

The Committee is tasked with formulating and executing a process for annually assessing to what degree the District's staff profile can be broadened to reflect the cultural profile of a global society and provide students with an increased exposure to and experience with a diverse staff. Beyond issues of race, ethnicity, color, national origin, immigration status, language, culture and socioeconomic status (SES), other variables including disability, age, sex, sexual orientation and religion are also aspects of the increasing complexity of America's classrooms. It is within this context that the diversity profile, experience, and training of our teachers are critical to fulfilling our responsibility of effectively teaching all children.

Specific actions of the Committee as it pertains to **Personnel and Professionalism** may include, but are not limited to:

- Review and revision of the Profile of a Shenendehowa Employee.
- Develop a recruitment and retention agenda that recognizes the absolute inseparability of equality and diversity.
- Advise and support efforts to recruit and retain the racial and cultural diversity of the District's staff.
- Curate and provide access to training and resources that promotes the tenets of equity, diversity, and inclusivity.

In the area of **Organizational Culture**, the essential focus is on cultivating and sustaining an environment that supports the conditions and protocols for infusing the varied cultural ethos into a shared set of values and beliefs. Organizational diversity provides better ideas, facilitates cultural "decoding" of direct and indirect messages, and sends the message that the district is committed to cultural congruence. Subsequently, cultural relevance is validated and enhanced, meaning that school personnel would seek to further build upon the culture and experiential strengths of others versus seeing those differences as deficits.

Specific actions of the Committee as it pertains to **Organizational Culture** may include, but are not limited to:

- Providing a forum for students and staff members to address the many unique needs that arise within the school community.
- Discussing and articulating a clear definition of diversity. What does it look like? What does it mean? Is this district "diversity challenged?"
- Serving as an advisory group that meets on a regular basis throughout the school year to provide feedback on district activities that relate to cultural diversity, with a focus on increasing knowledge in the area of multiculturalism throughout the school community.
- Developing social events that promote diversity and cross-cultural understanding (i.e., movie nights featuring films that highlight experiences of people in a variety of countries, cultural groups, identities; diverse book drives, music festivals, potluck-food festivals, speaker series, inter-generational mix luncheons, etc.)
- Create a more visually welcoming environment for diversity/inclusion through the use of multicultural posters, signs, signs translated into other languages, translated versions of documents accessible on the District website, pictures, reading materials, etc., throughout the entire school. (i.e., poster in office of High School West: DIVERSITY Different Individuals Valuing Each other and Respecting...)