



Somerville Public Schools

Equity Update

School Committee Meeting 3/21/2022

Director for Equity and Excellence, Dr. Jessica Boston Davis

Vision

The vision for equity in the Somerville Public Schools is an educational environment where all students are **affirmed** and can **thrive** - **academically, emotionally,** and **socially**.

Equity Policy (Adopted 2019)

Somerville Public Schools (SPS) students have the right to respectful learning environments in which all of their identities, especially their racial and ethnic diversity, are valued and contribute to successful academic outcomes. This includes the embracing of intersectionality, the complexity of each unique student, and the convergence of their overlapping identities (such as race, ethnicity, gender identity, ability, sexual orientation, religion, nationality, language acquisition status, and socio-economic status)

.... [E]ach and every student matters, and in particular, that educational outcomes should never be predictable by any individual's actual or perceived personal identity, and that equity demands intensive focus and attention to eliminate all gaps in student achievement correlated with demographic characteristics.

2021 - 2022 Priorities

- **Create systems which elevate and amplify student voice**
- Continue to build systems and structures
- Curricular work
- Build Partnerships
- Continue school support (Equity Specialists)
- Continue to build district initiatives (Advancing Equity Task Force)

Department Overview

**Director For
Equity and
Excellence**

**Equity
Specialists**

Equity Teams

**Partnership
with
Stakeholders
/ District
Groups**

Department Overview (Cont.)

Communicating
with community
members

Teaching and
Learning -
Curriculum
Support

Professional
Development

Recruitment and
Retention of a
Diverse Staff

Collaboration
with Departments
(Data, Special Ed,
MLE, etc)

School
Supports &
Equity
Plans

Collaboration



Harvard
Graduate School
of Education



**Massachusetts
Transgender
Political
Coalition**

HGSE Equity Fellows

- Two Equity Fellows who are masters students at Harvard Graduate School of Education
- Currently working reciprocal communication strategy
 - Website development
 - Engagement strategy
 - Sharing of resources for students, staff, families, and community



Development

Examples of PD Offerings

- Anti-Racism: An Indigenous Perspective
- Native Voices in Children's Literature
- Schooling for Critical Consciousness PLC
- Supporting Trans and Non-Binary Youth
- Creating Queer-Inclusive and Gender-Expansive Schools
- Examining Practices through a Racial Equity Lens: Defining a Collective Classroom Culture
- Investigating Equity and Inclusion in Our Schools: A Critical Participatory Action Research Project
- Equitable, Systematic Training Strategies for Special Educators
- Community Healing through Circle Practice
- Representation Matters: History and Culture of Central and South America

Development (Cont.)

Feedback from educators...

“I think there is so much to learn about representation and diversity in history. It's challenging and exciting to continuously find more things to learn about and ways to apply it to my practice and life. “

“Claudia helped me make connections between different things that I hadn't put together before, and made it really easy to take abstract theory and turn it into routines, behaviors, and lessons.”

“I will have a growth mindset as I confront things I don't know or feel comfortable with. I will also be mindful of cultural appropriation as I develop curriculum.”

Development (Cont.)

Admin learning to create more inclusive spaces for students and staff in the LGBTQ+ community

Description from a recent Administrator Learning Session:

Partnership with Safe Schools MA

This session will provide a thorough overview of policies, resources, and best practices related to supporting LGBTQ+ students. We will begin with a review of the most recent YRBS data. Through interactive discussion and activities, administrators will explore key issues impacting students and staff. Participants will leave with ideas for how to support LGBTQ+ youth as well as skills to navigate conversations with students, educators, and families.

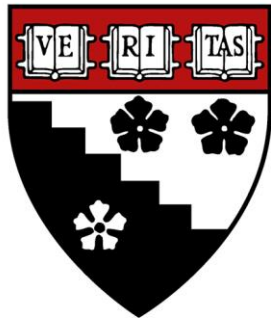
Objectives:

Review most recent Somerville YRBS data (see attached slides)

- Understand the responsibilities of MA schools to provide safe and supportive schools to all students, including LGBTQ+ students
- Build confidence supporting LGBTQ+ students, educators, and families around complex issues
- Explore institutional policies and practices proven to improve school climate



Partnerships



Harvard
Graduate School
of Education





Student Advisory Council

- Partnership with YPAR class
- 18 Students from SHS and Full Circle
- Students can receive credit and each student is compensated
- Students are using data from a survey to determine priority areas and will make recommendations for policy and practice in SPS



Curriculum Review

- Revising the Social Studies Curriculum in grades k-8 to the new updated DESE SS Standards
- Using Learning for Justice's Social Justice Standards as references
- Will get feedback from community members through planned meetings and school site councils
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Social Studies

Somerville Public Schools is currently in the process of revising social studies curriculum to be aligned with the 2018 Department of Elementary and Secondary Education revised state History and Social Science Curriculum Framework. This process is educator led and aims to meet DESE's call for districts to create an inclusive, critical, and responsive curriculum for history and social studies instruction. Our goal is to create a social studies curriculum that does justice to the remarkable diversity of our country and Somerville community, by telling the histories of individuals and groups, and honoring a plurality of life stories; while also acknowledging our ongoing struggle to achieve a more perfect union (Guiding Principle 2 for DESE's History and Social Science Curriculum Framework). We believe that in order for students to be thoughtful and active participants and leaders in our diverse democratic society, they must develop essential civic knowledge, skills, and dispositions. For more questions about the Social Studies Curriculum, please visit <https://www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/current.html> .

Coming Soon

- Second Annual SPS Diversity Recruitment Fair on April 6 from 5:00pm - 7:00pm on zoom



Equity Specialists

- One specialist at each school that works closely with the Director for Equity and Excellence and the School Administration to create a school-wide equity plan with concrete, measurable goals.
- Partner with Dr. Wang from EDC to go through a continuous improvement cycle as it relates to our goals.
- Each specialist is also a member of their school's Instructional Leadership Team to provide support for school based professional development

Equity Specialists

- Office Hours
- Resource Sharing
- Supporting teachers in response to local and national moments of racism and violence
- Community Conversations
- Planning/ facilitating PD
- Thought-Partnership with Admin and Educators
- Reviewing/Supporting Creation of Anti-Bias Curriculum/Materials

Equity Specialists

- Amber Jackson, Somerville High School
 - Partnership with Winter Hill
- Daphnee Balan, West Somerville Neighborhood School
 - Leading an Equity Team
- Kara Dodd, Winter Hill Community Innovation School
 - Partnership with SHS

Looking Ahead

- 2022 - 2023 Full Time Equity Coach Position



Thank You

Questions?