

SYOSSET CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

Diversity & Inclusivity Task Force



May 10, 2021

ACADEMICS PLUS SOCIAL COHESIVENESS

Board of Education Mission Statement

The mission of Syosset Central School District is to prepare students to thrive in both the future we imagine and one which may evolve in ways yet to be envisioned.

Instructional WHY

We have an obligation to prepare our students to be responsive to a continually changing world and take agency of themselves, their communities, and society as a whole.

Task Force Mission

The Task Force will explore opportunities to encourage and expand upon the socially cohesive climate within our schools and among the student body, staff, administration, and community.

OUR COLLECTIVE VISION

THE COMPOSITION OF OUR DIVERSE COMMUNITY CONTINUES TO EVOLVE. WE HAVE AN OPPORTUNITY TO VIEW OUR PRACTICES THROUGH THE LENS OF THESE CHANGES.

Build on the strength of the cultural diversity and competency that exists in the Syosset schools and community.

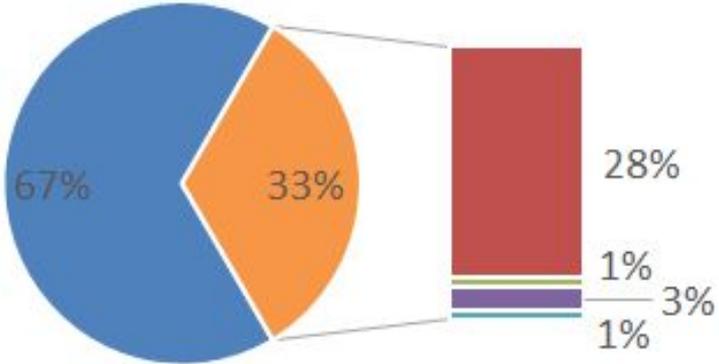
Examine cultural inclusivity in the curriculum and classroom.

Support equitable access and opportunity for all students.



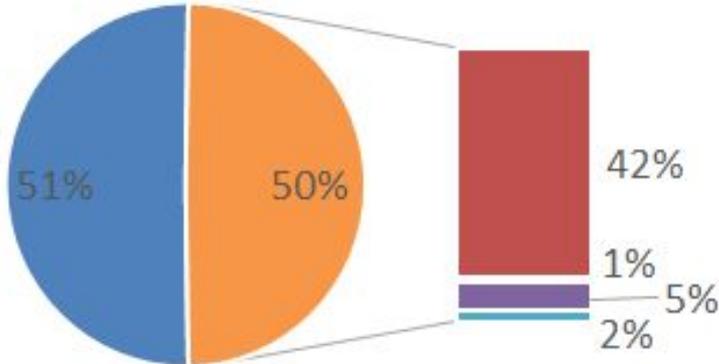
The Composition of Our Community is Shifting

All Students 2013-14



■ White ■ Asian ■ Black ■ Latino ■ Other

All Students 2020-21



■ White ■ Asian ■ Black ■ Latino ■ Other

OUR SYOSSET POINTS OF PRIDE

- PTA Cultural Unity Committee
- Highly Inclusive School Calendar
- National PTA's Jan Harp Domene Award
- Multicultural Festivals in Every Building
- LGBTQ Ed Camp
- Restorative Code of Conduct
- Restorative Practices Training
- Curriculum Writing Projects Reflective of NYSED Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Education Framework



Our Efforts to Promote Inclusivity and Tolerance

- Harmony SEL Program at elementary schools
- No Place for Hate Designation (HBT, SWMS & SHS)
 - Requires schools to develop and implement a series of programs for students around tolerance, empathy, and inclusivity.
- PRIDE Character Education Program: Patience, Respect, Integrity, Dignity and Empathy.
- See Something/ Say Something Anonymous Reporting App
- Choices and Consequences- The Nassau County District Attorney's presentation to 11th grade.
- "Breaking Borders" program in conjunction with Erase Racism
- Participation in Erase Racism Student Task Force
- Holocaust Remembrance Day at SHS
- "Book Day" selection chosen by students and featuring diverse authors and subject matter.



DIVERSITY & INCLUSIVITY TASK FORCE

SUB-COMMITTEES

STUDENT EXPERIENCE

This subcommittee will identify explicit strategies for the entire school community to foster understanding and improve the student experience in the hallways, classrooms, and school-life within the building; including interactions with one another, faculty, staff and leaders before, during and after school.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

This subcommittee will engage with the local community in a conversation relative to the diversity in our schools. In addition, the subcommittee will engage with state and national organizations to further support the learning, well-being and growth of each student, family, faculty, and community member.

CURRICULUM & PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

This subcommittee will address the learning needs of the professional staff and create an action plan for having content area, curriculum, teaching and learning practices, and the educational experience reflect the best practices of cultural responsiveness.

HUMAN RESOURCES & HIRING PRACTICES

When students see themselves in their teachers, coaches, advisors, and school leaders, they connect their own identity to the culture of the school and community in a truly meaningful way.



IMPORTANT DATES

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- October 2019:** Introduced the work at a Monthly BOE meeting
 - December 2019:** Planning team meetings
 - January 2020:** Task Force Kick-Off Meeting
 - Feb. - March 2020:** Subcommittee meetings (prior to the pandemic)
 - November 2020:** Restarted the Task Force work
 - December 2020:** Whole Task Force meeting
 - Jan. - May 2020:** Subcommittee meetings
 - May 2021:** Board of Education Update

Progress to Date:

ELEMENTARY/MIDDLE SCHOOL:

- Middle School Advisory and the Elementary Harmony Program.
- Elementary MTSS teams have reviewed all students not officially in ENL programs to ensure that the appropriate support is provided.
- Middle schools hosted author Kwame Alexander, a Newbery winner and person of color for a virtual meet about writing and provided students with a unique perspective.
- Middle School clubs, including the GSA, Mosaic, Thompson Pride and Multicultural Club have been created and have developed connections for a wide range of students of all backgrounds and orientations.
- The Middle School advisory programs have focused on diversity and inclusivity through the activities designed for students.

HIGH SCHOOL:

- The "Voices Amplified Committee", part of Student Government, continues to drive conversation about culturally responsive education/programming, literature, and the overall "student experience."
- Advisory has been implemented at SHS and will add components to the program related to diversity through Physical Education classes.
- Student Government amended its club/group application process to include representatives from each club/group joining Student Government meetings to make more connections.
- Celebrating the College Board AP Award for diversity and gender balance in our AP Computer Science, as well as our Coding classes.
- Connections made between sports programs in the fall through joint/merged team workouts.
- Students Combating Corona survey on the "student experience" during the pandemic.
- Expanding club/group lists related to culturally specific topics i.e. - Matters of the World.
- Increasing diversity in courses and clubs such as Virtual Enterprise, DECA, PAL, and coding/robotics..

STUDENT
EXPERIENCE



Opportunities for Action:

- Engage students to understand their experiences in our schools related to diversity and inclusivity.
- Identify and explore classes, clubs, and programs that do not reflect the diversity of the District as a whole.
- Make more connections between the many clubs/groups/teams as part of a single school community.
- Support students who are not officially in the ENL program, but who may be struggling to adjust.
- At the elementary level, emphasize kindness and acceptance of difference through programs like Elementary Harmony.
- At the secondary level, extend advisory to enable students to interact with a broader group of peers to break down stereotypes and engage discussions on differences.
- Ask students to describe the “student experience” to understand and address their perspectives with particular attention to microaggressions or other intolerance.
- Continue the “Student Diversity Cabinet” that has met 4 times with administration and with the Diversity and Inclusivity Task Force subcommittee leaders.



NYS Education Department Culturally Responsive Education (CRE) Framework:

- Welcoming and affirming environment
 - Collective responsibility to learn about student cultures and communities
 - Close relationships with Students & Families.
 - Social-Emotional Learning Programs
 - Materials that represent and affirm student identities
- High expectations and rigorous instruction
 - Student-Led Civic Engagement
 - Critical Examination of Inequities in School and Society
 - Participatory Action Research on Student-Identified Social Challenges
 - Student Leadership Opportunities
- Inclusive curriculum and assessment
 - Resources written and developed from racially, culturally, and linguistically diverse perspectives.
 - Instructional strategies that adapt to diverse learning styles
 - Current events incorporated into instruction
 - Histories that reflect the diversity of the District's population
- Ongoing professional learning
 - Set professional goals around CRE issues
 - Learn to identify and address implicit bias in school and self
 - Professional training for staff to improve cultural competency



Progress to Date:

- The elementary schools have made intentional shifts over the last few years to emphasize representation of culturally and racially diverse characters and authors in classroom library acquisitions.
- At the secondary level, in addition to the extensive resources already in the curriculum, books are intentionally chosen that address themes of race and racism for grade-wide reading and exploration in class.
- Syosset students are provided with opportunities to engage directly with culturally diverse authors (“Book Day” events at the secondary schools).
- Music & Art classes intentionally include the contributions of diverse artists and musicians.
- In World Language courses, students interpret authentic texts that emanate from the cultures being studied and are written for members of that culture.
- School-wide high school events reinforce lessons in the curriculum:
 - Junior Day provides students with the opportunity to realize similarities, remove stereotypes and show empathy to their classmates.
 - Holocaust Remembrance Day allows our students to interact with survivors of bias, prejudice, discriminatory acts, and genocide.
- Curriculum writing projects in Summer 2020 with more planned in 2021.



Opportunities for Action:

- Give students voice and choice in selection of materials.
- Continue to promote equitable participation in courses and programs.
- Increase breadth of authors and characters, so students have “mirrors” to see themselves in the curriculum and “windows” into the history and experiences of others.
- Provide staff awareness training:
 - Understanding the cultures of the students we teach - understand that “culture” also includes gender and identity, not just ethnicity
 - Best practices for creating a culturally responsive school culture.
 - Making sure lessons and assessments are inclusive
- Review curriculum materials through a research-based CRE framework
 - Identify gaps where diversity is not represented
 - Identify opportunities where curriculum can reinforce themes of inclusivity.



Progress to Date:

- Syosset Council of PTAs' Cultural Unity Buddy Program.
- Translating important communications, including the Parents Bill of Rights, the Code of Character, Conduct and Support, and the PTA Buddy Program forms.
- Strong relationships with tolerance organizations like the Facing History and Ourselves, Erase Racism, and the Holocaust Memorial and Tolerance Center.
- Supportive partnerships with community organizations such as CAAS
- Dedicated page of the website to highlight the updated Code of Character, Conduct and Support that incorporates the Dignity for All Students Act (DASA) to provide students an educational environment free of discrimination, bullying and harassment.
- Partnerships with local organizations who can share information with their members.



Opportunities for Action:

- Share the Syosset “Why”, the NYS Guidelines on Culturally Responsive Education, and reflect on changing community dynamics.
- Enhance existing partnerships with the Holocaust Memorial & Tolerance Center and Erase Racism.
- Identify new partnerships with equity organizations working with Asian-American and Pacific Islander communities.
- Don't rely on students to communicate the diversity and inclusivity work being done in the classroom.
- Continue to deepen the active collaboration with all components of the PTA.
- Grow a network/develop a systematic way to bring in community cultural expertise to student and teacher (i.e. parents, leaders, organizations).
- Strengthen and revise the cultural outreach/buddy program for families new to the country to help with adjusting and becoming embraced by the community.
- Help newly-arrived families connect and form meaningful school-community friendships.
- Continue with signage/informational memos/letters in the home language.
- Community partnerships with other districts.



Reporting and Investigating Incidents

- Student Right to Privacy
 - Constitutional Right to Privacy
 - Federal FERPA Statute
 - State Dignity for All Students Act (DASA)
- [Anti-Bullying/Anti-Discrimination Policy](#) (DASA)
 - [Complaint form](#) in 6 languages
 - Each building has a trained [DASA coordinator](#)
 - Complaints are investigated at the building level
- [Say Something](#) Anonymous Tip Reporting App
 - All secondary students (middle school and high school) are provided with training
- Investigation process
 - Conducted by DASA Coordinators and building Principal
 - Supported by central administration and school attorneys
 - Due process and confidentiality
- Off-campus behavior and “nexus” determinations
 - Currently before the US Supreme Court

COMMUNITY
OUTREACH



Rationale:

- A number of [studies](#) have indicated potential benefits from having same-race/ethnicity teachers in diverse student populations
- USDOE has [concluded](#) that a more diverse teaching force is desirable
- Students see diverse persons represented in positions of leadership and authority.

Challenges:

- US [DOE Study \(2016\)](#):
 - “Bachelor’s degree students are less diverse than high school graduates.”
 - “A large majority of education majors and, more specifically, students enrolled in teacher preparation programs, are white”
 - “bachelor’s degree completion rates for students who major in education are lower for black and Hispanic students than for white students”
 - The USDOE indicates that education program enrollment is (2012): 12% Black, 11% Hispanic, 4% “other”.
- AACTE Study (2018)
 - “education is one of the least diverse large master’s degree fields”



Opportunities for Action:

- Ensure high quality applicants of diverse backgrounds are alerted to our opportunities and broaden our applicant pools. Progress:
 - Networks with CUNY/BOCES Diversity Hiring Initiative.
 - Increased distribution of advertising.
 - Distribution of openings through educator affinity networks
- Support new teachers' success and retention. Progress:
 - Created a mentoring program with mentor coordinators at the elementary, middle and high school levels.
 - Expand Mentor/Mentee Program to a two year program to focus on strengthening and reinforcing resources to ensure retention of candidates.
- Diversity, Inclusivity, and Equity Training, Professional Development for all Educators, Administrators, and staff. Progress:
 - Working to eliminate implicit biases in hiring processes.
 - Identifying training resources for staff.

