

Office of the Superintendent
Oyster River School District
36 Coe Drive, Durham, NH 03824

INTEROFFICE MEMORANDUM

TO: School Board
FROM: Dr. Jim Morse
DATE: November 18, 2021

RE: DEIJ Discussion

Ten years ago, the district had no coordinated Technology plan. Ten years ago, early adopting teachers and principals who were into technology supported and taught it. It was a “hit or miss” approach, some classes used and taught technology while others did not. It was not until the district supported a comprehensive and systemic approach, inclusive of tech support and tech integration, that we could guarantee the skills students were taught at each grade level.

The issue of discrimination is historical, and it is present in our everyday lives. To grow as a society, we must understand who we have been and who we are today.

We are at the same place with Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Justice work that we were with technology ten years ago. To date, we have relied on teachers, administrators, and community members to move this work forward. Although DEIJ is part of our district’s strategic plan, we do not have one dedicated to this work, and therefore, it is a hit or miss affair. This work cannot rely on whatever time is available on already busy plates of SAU administrators, it cannot be done comprehensively when there is no systemic support, and we cannot expect the kind of active and rigorous support we have received from the community to sustain forever.

We need to mimic the model chosen for technology and have a person in charge of this work who: has expertise in DEIJ; who can assist and collaborate with our teachers daily in their classrooms or on committees; can meet with our students and advocate for them; lead community discussion from the voice of experience and expertise; and can bring their expertise in DEIJ to ORCSD to implement and support sustained coordinated efforts. Without dedicated leadership, we will continue to do this work, but it will be a throwback to our technology efforts of ten years ago, a hit or miss affair.

A leader in DEIJ work would facilitate the implementation of the adopted strategic plan. Here are some examples of how the DEIJ leader can support the ORCSD Strategic Plan.

What could a DEIJ Leader do to Support Curriculum & Instruction?

- Create, in collaboration with our teachers K-12-equity and inclusion competencies.
- Provide guidance as to what are appropriate practices.
- Provide a lived experience to guide this work in real life.
- Co-teach with staff on critical historical events.
- Work with staff on how to facilitate difficult discussions.

How would the DEIJ person support Professional Development?

- At the basic level, teach a common vocabulary.
- Provide time for and guidance for DEIJ workshops and support faculty PLC's.
- Provide time for and guidance for appropriate transition language between grades and schools.
- Create PD opportunities that are meaningful to all staff.

What Could a DEIJ Leader do to facilitate District Communication?

- Develop a web page dedicated to DEIJ with frequently asked questions, important links to resources. (see Exeter's new web page)
- Regular outreach to the community is essential via newsletters or fast facts.
- Arrange both large group and small group presentations and community discussions and build bridges across the spectrum.

How could a DEIJ leader be a support for students?

- The DEIJ leader can offer students a lived experience and/or expertise.
- Support the building level DEIJ student committees and affinity groups.
- Offer resources that are relevant to the experiences of students.
- Provide individual support for students who have specific concerns.

How could the DEIJ leader support the district?

- Actively engage in the hiring of a more diverse staff.
- Provide systemic guidance to the SAU on implementing the Strategic Plan.
- Review & Update Policies and Procedures.
- Ensure the Mission and Vision are lived documents.

Options

Option 1 ~ As presented the DEIJ Position would be an administrator.

Option 2 ~ Create the new position as a DEIJ mentor teacher, similar to how we do math at the elementary school, where the DEIJ Coordinator could work as a peer and as an advisor to all schools.

Option 3 ~ Start the position in January 2023. This would cut the cost of implementation in half and move to full time in August of 2024.

Option 4 ~ Combine the DEIJ Position with another position for 2022-23, then separate them in 2023-24.

In closing

We have a strategic plan that exceeds the capacity and time of present administration. The work is incredibly important. It requires an individual to guide this work, someone with a lived experience, with strong communications skills and expertise in diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice. Although we are all dedicated to this work, we cannot accomplish the Strategic Plan, without a dedicated leader responsible for its implantation.