

# Rush-Henrietta Board of Education Presentation

## Equity and Inclusion District Priority: Needs Assessment Recommendations



June 22, 2021  
R-H Equity and Inclusion Steering Committee

# Timeline of R-H's Equity Journey: Highlights (2015-2021)

## 2015-16:

- ❖ The Board of Education requests **workshops** on topics related to culturally responsive education. Three workshops are provided through collaborations with the MK Gandhi Institute and the Gay Alliance, focusing on ways to help ensure culturally responsive practices on the Board, addressing bias, and supporting all students.

## 2016-17:

- ❖ The Board of Education continues to learn about culturally responsive education through workshops. The BOE and district leadership identify a need for a more **coherent, intentional, district-wide focus** on issues related to diversity and equity.

## 2017-18:

- ❖ The BOE establishes “Welcoming Diversity” as a **District Priority**, with an emphasis on assessing current practices, becoming more culturally responsive, diversifying the workforce (especially the teaching staff), and celebrating diversity in R-H.

# Timeline of R-H's Equity Journey: Highlights (2015-2021)

## 2017-18 (cont'd):

- ❖ Per the District Priority, the BOE creates a community **Steering Committee** to conduct a comprehensive, two-year needs assessment of district systems and practices, and to identify bias and lack of access in district systems, programs, and procedures. The committee, with more than 30 staff, students, parents, and community members, meets for the first time in February 2018.
- ❖ Rush-Henrietta adopts a comprehensive five-year **Workforce Diversity Plan** - the first of its kind among school districts in the Rochester region.
- ❖ A **Restorative Practices** pilot program is implemented at the SHS and WLC.
- ❖ R-H offers **community forums** on the topics of equity, racism, and understanding poverty through an interactive experience.



# Timeline of R-H's Equity Journey: Highlights (2015-2021)

## 2018-19:

- ❖ The District Priority evolves from “Welcoming Diversity” to “**Equity and Inclusion**,” with a more targeted focus on culturally responsive systems and practices, implicit bias, inclusive excellence in curriculum and instruction, restorative practices, and workforce diversity.
- ❖ The Steering Committee contracts with **consultants** at the UR’s Center for Professional Development and Education Reform to conduct the needs assessment, working with the committee to design surveys and focus groups for data collection.
- ❖ The district expands the **Restorative Practices** initiative, providing extensive training district-wide.

## 2019-20:

- ❖ Rush-Henrietta establishes a new leadership position, **Director of Wellness and Equity** - the first of its kind in a suburban Monroe County district.



# Timeline of R-H's Equity Journey: Highlights (2015-2021)

## 2020-21:

- ❖ The Equity and Inclusion priority is further refined to add language reflecting a **commitment to anti-racism**, and establishing Equity and Inclusion as Rush-Henrietta's "**umbrella priority**," connecting to and supporting the work addressing students' Mental Wellness and Academic Achievement.
- ❖ Due to the pandemic, the needs assessment is **extended to a third year**.
- ❖ The Steering Committee grows to **50** staff, parents, students, and community members.
- ❖ The Steering Committee reviews the results of the Needs Assessment, making specific **recommendations** to the Board of Education in four critical areas **aligned with the NYS Culturally Responsive-Sustaining (CR-S) Framework**.



# Workforce Diversity Plan: Updates

## Highlights:

- ❖ Expanded recruitment, outreach and promotion strategies (i.e. social media)
- ❖ Minimizing bias in the hiring process
- ❖ 19% of new teacher hires in 2020-21 are individuals of color
- ❖ Partnerships: HBCU-Atlanta Consortium, Teacher Opportunity Corps, SUNY Geneseo, Teacher Internship Fellows Program (TIF), City of Rochester
- ❖ Teachers of Tomorrow at SHS - “Grow our own” initiative

## Future Focus:

- ❖ Strengthen our systems for mentoring and retaining new hires, as well as identify and develop teacher leaders and future administrators
- ❖ Expand recruitment and outreach to further diversify candidate pool
- ❖ Strengthen and expand community partnerships and outreach



# District Priority



## I. EQUITY AND INCLUSION

The Rush-Henrietta Central School District **stands united** against racism and discrimination. Recognizing the many kinds of diversity that exist within our school community, we are **committed** to strengthening the **connection** among culture, teaching, learning, achievement, and transformation. We must ensure that our programs, curriculum, and learning environments are **culturally responsive** and **safeguard equity and inclusion**.



# **Definitions of Equity, Inclusion, and Diversity**

(Developed by the Steering Committee)

## **Equity:**

Equal access to opportunities for all, with the understanding that fair is not always equal and barriers are removed.

## **Inclusion:**

The practice of valuing differences in order to foster a sense of belonging and empowerment.

## **Diversity:**

A representation of our uniqueness, cultural, and lived experiences that make up our community.



# Participatory Needs Assessment

## Purpose of Project:

1. Create, build capacity, and implement a **needs assessment** related to diversity, equity, & inclusion
2. Facilitate **dialogue and discussion** of needs assessment results with Steering Committee
3. Use findings to inform further data collection and planning, and to facilitate development of **recommendations**



# Needs Assessment: Equity and Inclusion Lens

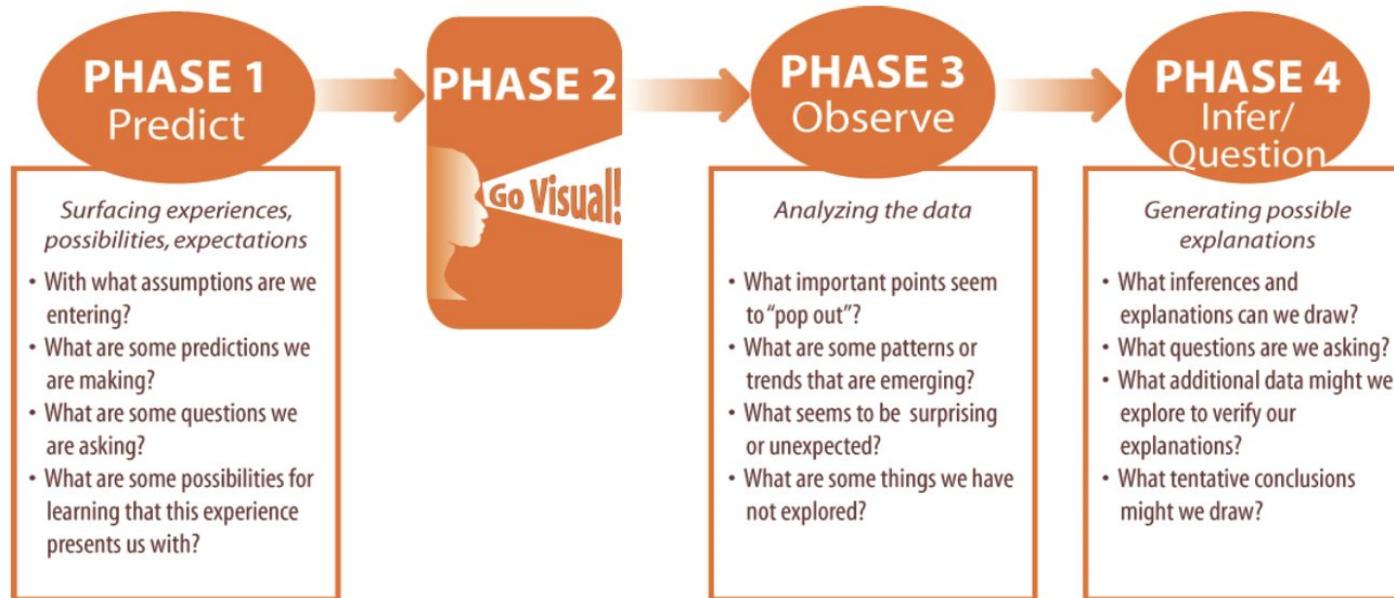
## Needs Assessment Questions

- **Diversity** (1)
- **Cultural Proficiency** (7)
- **Equity** (3)
- **Inclusion** (10)
- **Bias** (3)

## Data Sources

- **District data:** attendance, achievement, discipline, professional development, information from district website
- **Focus groups** with students & teachers
- **Surveys** of parents/community, staff, & students
- **Work group discussion notes**

# Data-Driven Dialogue



Adapted from B. Wellman and L. Lipton, *Data-Driven Dialogue: A Facilitator's Guide to Collaborative Inquiry*, Sherman, CT: MiraVia LLC, 2004. As found in N. Love, K.E. Stiles, S. Mundry, and K. DiRanna, *The Data Coach's Guide to Improving Learning for All Students*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, 2008. All rights reserved.



## Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Education Framework

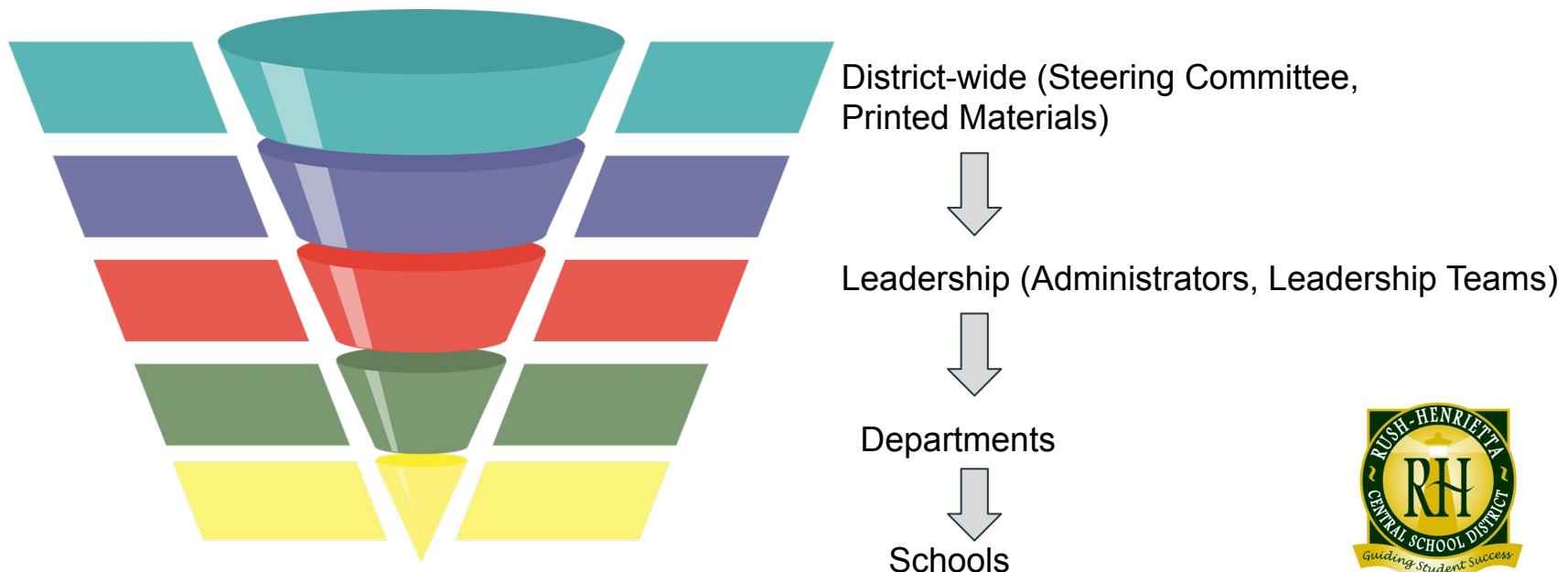


“The Framework represents an opportunity for stakeholders to continue to work together and plan for the unique needs of their communities.”  
(NYSED.gov)

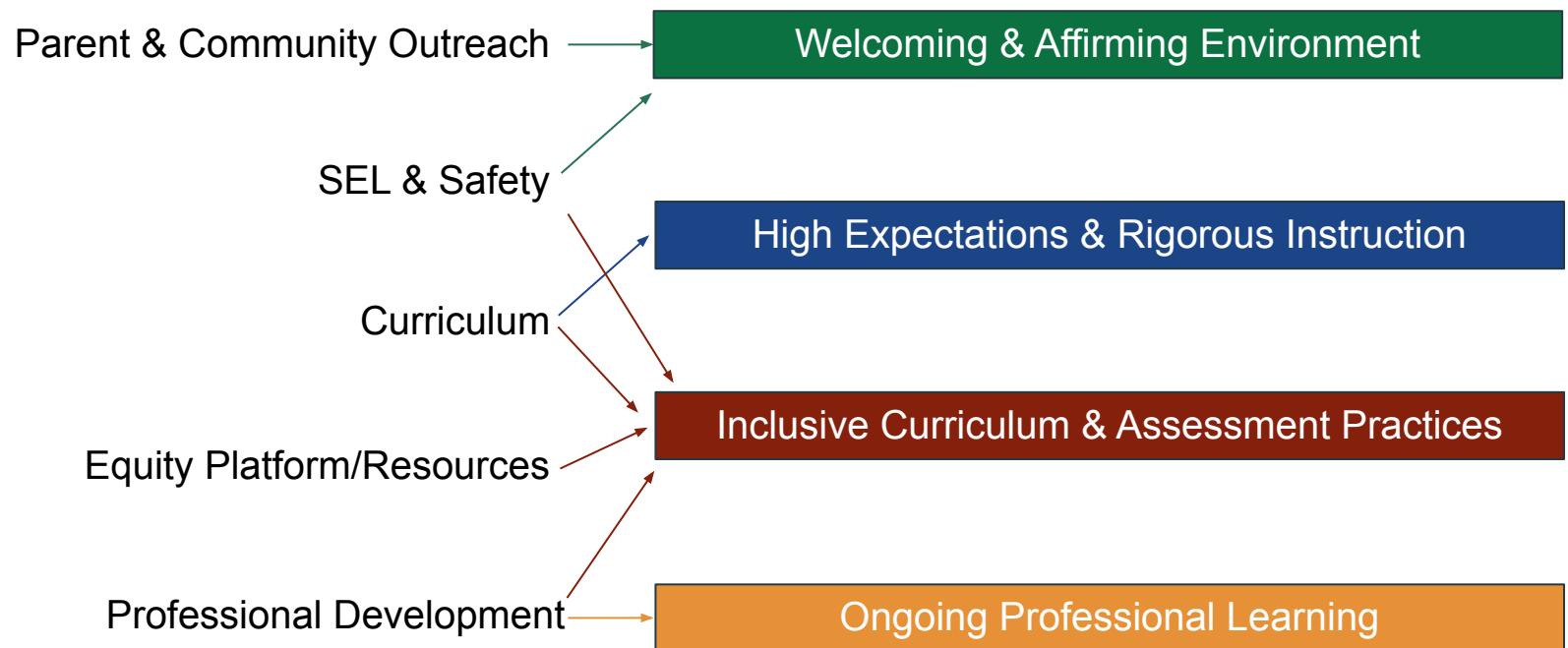
**CULTURALLY  
RESPONSIVE-  
SUSTAINING  
EDUCATION**



# Systemic Approach to Addressing Equity & Inclusion



# R-H's Equity Priority: Ahead of the Curve



The CR-S framework helps educators create student-centered learning environments that: affirm racial, linguistic and cultural identities; prepare students for rigor and independent learning; develop students' abilities to connect across lines of difference; elevate historically marginalized voices; and empower students as agents of social change.

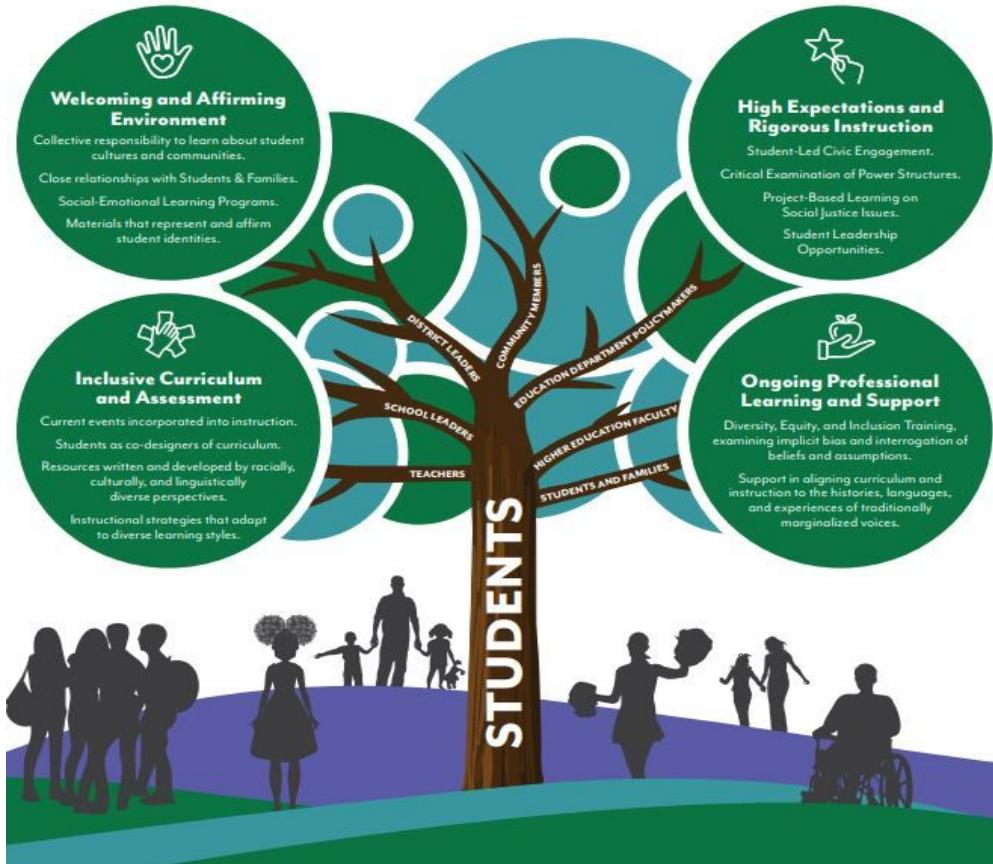
## 4 Main Principles:

Create a Welcoming & Affirming Environment

Foster High Expectations & Rigorous Instruction for All

Ensure Inclusive Curriculum & Assessment Practices

Engage in Ongoing Professional Learning & Support



# **Equity & Inclusion Steering Committee**

**Needs Assessment  
Recommendations**

# Focus Area 1: Create a Welcoming & Affirming Environment

## NEED:

**Welcoming environments reflected in our schools and district buildings:** Help ensure school and district buildings are welcoming and affirming physical environments to the diverse students, families, and staff who make up our community

## RECOMMENDATION:

Assess the physical environment of all district buildings and classrooms to determine whether diverse cultures, languages, and backgrounds are reflected and valued

## WHAT IT MIGHT LOOK LIKE:

- Conduct walkthroughs to determine areas of buildings where celebrating our diverse community can be made more evident
- Utilize teams to make recommendations to ensure our environments reflect all cultural identities and languages (race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, religion, etc.).
- Help ensure that classrooms have signage, language, and visuals reflecting our diverse families and cultures
- Discuss measures of school climate and obtain student and parent feedback about progress in this area
- Broadly publicize opportunities for parents from diverse backgrounds to participate on district committees

# Focus Area 1: Create a Welcoming & Affirming Environment

## NEED:

**Inclusion of student voices from our diverse community:** Ensure student voice and input in decision-making and recognize the cultural backgrounds, insights, and strengths of our diverse student population

## RECOMMENDATION:

Empower and amplify student voices in decision-making and planning through multiple opportunities in order to build an inclusive, respectful school environment that acknowledges and appreciates the diversity of our community

## WHAT IT MIGHT LOOK LIKE:

- Schedule conference days for staff and students to plan and participate in Day of Sharing, Day of Caring, United We Stand Days, Roc2Change, and other opportunities to highlight student voice and diversity
- Provide student forums (“safe spaces”) and community-building circles to amplify student voice
- Educate staff on the elements of culturally responsive teaching by using student voices to share messages with staff
- Consider building and district committees where student voice is absent and develop a plan for increasing student membership and engagement

# Focus Area 1: Create a Welcoming & Affirming Environment

## NEED:

**Opportunities for increased diverse family engagement and collaboration:** Ensure that families feel connected to our school communities and their voices are welcomed and affirmed as district partners

## RECOMMENDATION:

Develop a variety of opportunities for families to connect with our district in order to ensure that our schools are welcoming and affirming places

## WHAT IT MIGHT LOOK LIKE:

- Create parent forums to build relationships and obtain input
- Consider building and district committees where opportunities for increased parent voice and diversity can be leveraged
- Broadly publicize opportunities for parents from diverse backgrounds to participate in district committees, events, and volunteer opportunities
- Develop and distribute a menu of options for families at each school that may include: staff introduction videos, Bitmoji rooms, videos provided by departments or grade level teams, increased use of social media, etc.
- Provide community-building circles for parents to connect with others

## Focus Area 2: Foster High Expectations and Rigorous Instruction for All

### NEED:

**Equitable academic enrichment and access to opportunities:** Help ensure equitable access to enrichment opportunities and resources for success

### RECOMMENDATION:

Increase communication to students and families regarding academic enrichment resources & address potential biases in recommendations for advanced/honors/AP courses

### WHAT IT MIGHT LOOK LIKE:

- Consider conducting equity audits to identify disproportionate achievement outcomes on state tests, graduation and student dropout rates, AP and Honors Courses enrollment, etc. and identify ways to mitigate inequities
- Provide a range of engagement approaches for courses
- Encourage students' academic interests early on through expanded career exploration opportunities at the elementary level
- Develop culturally responsive and engaging family communication specific to academic enrichment opportunities for all students
- Consider opportunities for students to have flexibility with work and family time, respecting cultural practices while continuing to have high expectations

## Focus Area 2: Foster High Expectations and Rigorous Instruction for All

### NEED:

**Academic rigor embedded throughout the school day:** Help ensure instructional rigor throughout all K-12 classes

### RECOMMENDATION:

Use school-based teams and parent partnerships to explore ways to ensure instructional rigor at all grade levels and classes

### WHAT IT MIGHT LOOK LIKE:

- Consider a range of instructional strategies to increase rigor and embed effective culturally responsive teaching practices
- Explore ways to support students in becoming independent and critical thinkers
- Provide ongoing opportunities for students to apply learning to real-world situations and contexts
- Consider opportunities to partner with experts in various career fields for students to engage in learning from community partners
- Consider ways to encourage students to take academic risks in safe and supportive learning environments
- Explore grants to provide students with additional rigorous opportunities
- Discuss the importance of high expectations in social-emotional learning areas as well as areas of achievement

## Focus Area 2: Foster High Expectations and Rigorous Instruction for All

### NEED:

**Engagement of all students in the learning process:** Help ensure full student engagement from all students from diverse backgrounds in all classes

### RECOMMENDATION:

Provide ongoing and creative student engagement strategies to ensure a range of strategies to engage a diverse student population

### WHAT IT MIGHT LOOK LIKE:

- Utilize teams to explore ways to adapt teaching strategies to promote increased student engagement and collaboration
- Support students in identifying their learning style, individual strengths, and needs
- Review discipline data and ways to address disproportionate student discipline and its impact on engagement and student success
- Consider ways to support growth mindsets in students (learning from mistakes)
- Brainstorm ways to increase student engagement for students with a range of backgrounds including social-emotional, medical, or mental health challenges
- Continue to help ensure that students from various backgrounds hold leadership positions within the district
- Consider barriers to student engagement and ways to remove those barriers

## Focus Area 3: Identify & Ensure Inclusive Curriculum & Assessment Practices

### NEED:

**Culturally relevant and inclusive curriculum:** Help ensure curriculum includes racially, culturally, and linguistically diverse perspectives and inclusion of current local and national events

### RECOMMENDATION:

Develop teams including a range of stakeholders (teachers, parents, students, community members, administrators) to review curricular components and identify areas of cultural relevance and gaps

### WHAT IT MIGHT LOOK LIKE:

- Consider ways to increase proficiency in culturally responsive instructional strategies that help eradicate bias and adapt to diverse student needs
- Develop a framework and guiding principles for discussing current events using restorative practices/community-building circles
- Discuss ways to ensure representation of all of our diverse students in texts
- Identify a process to contribute to and access a bank of resources for discussion of current events within the curriculum
- Consider student surveys to engage student voice on diverse curriculum and instruction strategies

## Focus Area 3: Identify & Ensure Inclusive Curriculum & Assessment Practices

### NEED:

**Social-emotional learning embedded into instruction:** Ensure that social-emotional learning (SEL) is embedded into the school day and aligned with equity, inclusion, and diversity topics

### RECOMMENDATION:

Evaluate the alignment between social-emotional learning and practices promoting equity, and consider the ways to ensure the development of SEL competencies among both staff and students at all grade levels

### WHAT IT MIGHT LOOK LIKE:

- Utilize SEL Leadership teams in each building to ensure alignment of SEL and equitable practices
- Consider ways to expand SEL throughout the school day
- Offer additional opportunities for staff to learn about SEL strategies
- Utilize student leaders to support the building of relationships/connections at the 7-12 level (Link Crew, WEB, community-building circle facilitators, etc.)
- Expand the use of community-building circles focused on SEL competencies
- Embed concepts from CASEL's (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning) focus on transformative SEL and equity

## Focus Area 3: Identify & Ensure Inclusive Curriculum & Assessment Practices

### NEED:

**Inclusive Assessment Practices:** Help ensure multiple equitable ways of assessing in-classroom learning including a range of modalities and opportunities

### RECOMMENDATION:

Develop a process for school or district teams to determine multiple assessment methods and opportunities that will allow students to demonstrate knowledge and growth over time

### WHAT IT MIGHT LOOK LIKE:

- Consider ways to align academic and social-emotional assessment practices with diverse student learning styles and needs
- Revisit district-wide retesting policies to ensure consistency of implementation and respect for diverse student backgrounds
- Utilize multiple modalities to allow students to demonstrate proficiency of standards
- Help ensure collaboration between the office of instruction and building teams on developing and implementing an equitable assessment plan

## Focus Area 4: Engage in Ongoing Professional Learning & Support

### NEED:

**Common professional learning opportunities for our district community:** Enhance staff awareness and critical thinking about how to recognize and address inequities, and develop staff awareness and advocacy skills related to social justice issues

### RECOMMENDATION:

Develop a timeline of professional learning topics to cover at each school building and department within each school year

### WHAT IT MIGHT LOOK LIKE:

- Map out topics to be covered related to the district priority of equity and inclusion (implicit bias, culturally responsive education, diversity, systemic inequities, etc.) and a suggested timeline to ensure consistent implementation
- Consider developing a committee of stakeholders to develop a plan of essential topics to be covered and suggestions for PD opportunities (faculty meetings, community-building circles, etc.)
- Embed the NYS Culturally Responsive-Sustaining (CR-S) Framework in professional development opportunities to raise awareness and implementation
- Expand Google platform online opportunities for self-directed learning
- Develop additional R-H “Equity Journeys” to support learning

## Focus Area 4: Engage in Ongoing Professional Learning & Support

### NEED:

**Opportunities for strong culturally responsive practices to be shared:** Ensure opportunities for teachers to share effective culturally responsive teaching practices with colleagues and the broader district community in order to replicate these practices throughout the district

### RECOMMENDATION:

Use data and input to identify teachers using effective culturally responsive teaching practices and racial literacy skills, and determine ways in which these practices can be shared with colleagues

### WHAT IT MIGHT LOOK LIKE:

- Consider opportunities for peer coaching and collaboration
- Have teachers present at faculty meetings/district PD
- Develop videos of teachers engaging in effective teaching practices to post on Google platform as part of a learning series
- Conduct feedback surveys/community-building circles with students on ways to further support the creation of culturally responsive classrooms
- Develop a resource platform for teachers to share effective practices
- Provide additional opportunities for staff book study groups to explore and share effective culturally responsive practices

## Focus Area 4: Engage in Ongoing Professional Learning & Support

### NEED:

**Family engagement/partnerships with parents in learning together as a community:** Promote learning among parents and families around culturally responsive education, and continue to build collaboration between the district and the community regarding equitable and inclusive practices

### RECOMMENDATION:

Provide learning opportunities for district families and community members that are aligned with professional development being provided to district staff in the areas of equity and inclusion

### WHAT IT MIGHT LOOK LIKE:

- Consider forming a committee of district staff along with community and family stakeholders to develop and implement a three-year plan for professional learning aligned with the district's Equity and Inclusion priority
- Embed topics from district meetings into family professional learning opportunities (understanding implicit bias, strategies to move along the cultural competence continuum, etc.)
- Explore ways to engage families and the community through strategies identified in the NYS CR-S Framework
- Offer community-building circles focused on equity and inclusion to parents

# Themes, Goals, and Recommendations

- ❖ Celebrate R-H diversity (school environments, curriculum, equity & access)
- ❖ Collaborate with each other to help foster a more equitable community
- ❖ Increase partnerships with students and families about equity and inclusion
- ❖ Learn and grow as individuals and together as a district and as a community



## Next Steps/Closing

- ❖ Engage stakeholders to determine action steps aligned with recommendations
- ❖ Determine areas of focus of each year for 3-year plan
- ❖ Determine how R-H will measure progress and help ensure accountability
- ❖ Share this presentation and results of the Needs Assessment with community

**“Though I am one person, I have a voice that's been heard, and I know my thoughts and views will help shape the direction R-H moves toward to be a truly inclusive district.”**

-shared by a member of the Equity and Inclusion Steering Committee



# **Members of the R-H Steering Committee (past 3 years):**

Mai Abdullah	Lisa Clar	Judith Hager	Marcy Mooney	Jeanne Schwasman
Christine Allen	Kaci Cresswell	Jennifer Haines	Rhonda Morien	Muhammad Shafiq
Nerlande Anselme	Roland Delardge	William Hall	James Nunez	Alicia Shippy
Jessica Bailey	Kim Delardge	Rob Hathaway	Sadiya Omar	Jada Smith
Simeon Banister	Lisa Farina	Brian Hill	Zach Paley	Rehana Suleman
Chris Barker	Thomas Felton	Renee Long	Emily Pearce	Jennifer Tomalty
Dave Baumgartner	Rachel Fisken	Melissa Luckey	Dominic Piacentini	Geraldo Torres
Mary Bloss	Ryland Frost	Kerry Macko	Donna Plain	Diantha Watts
Laura Borate	Joanne Fusare-White	Mark MacMillan	Marissa Privitere	Shane Wiegand
Travis Briggs	Meg Gehman	Suzanne Maxim	Qianna Reaves-Campbell	Marvin Wingate
Sheila Buck	Leda Gibbs	Diane McBride	Sylvene Reiser-Goggin	Lawrence Bo Wright
Melanie Byrne	Maura Gilsinan	Pat McCue	Amanda Roth	Diane Wynne
Jeanette Cannioto	Jeffrey Green	John Mcfadden	Todd Russo	Angela Zhangi