

Letter to Our CHRHS Community

Update On Our Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Efforts

As the CHRHS school year is in its final phase, we want to update our community on the diversity, equity and inclusion work is part of our commitment to being an anti-racist school district and a community that advances social justice. This work has remained a priority alongside our ongoing commitment to preparing our students academically, personally, socially and with their career development, while keeping them safe during the ongoing pandemic. This DEI work is challenging and necessary and we thank the team of students, teachers, parents, community members and administrators for the important work they've completed and their ongoing commitment to this process.

School Culture

At CHRHS, we continue to look for ways to foster an environment where *all* students feel welcome, comfortable, and safe at school, so they are ready to learn and see themselves succeeding while helping others achieve the same goal.

- The 2020-2021 academic year continues to push us to look at how we can keep students in school and learning safely during a pandemic. We continue to work systematically to offer safe school operations for in-person learning while also expanding our capacity for remote learning and understanding the student experience while learning at home.
- Equal access for all students to opportunities, support, and tools is key. This year at CHRHS, all students are provided one-to-one technology and free wi-fi access, nutritional support with free breakfast and lunch, and therapeutic support with the addition of two new social workers on campus.
- A safe and nurturing school culture is also fostered through clubs and activities, including the Gay, Straight, Transgender Alliance (GSTA), Civil Rights Club and newly formed BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) Affinity Group. All are established to create safe spaces for underrepresented student populations and help elevate voices to support action and change when desired.
- A advisory program is being incorporated into the homeroom periods on a monthly basis that aims to build strong relationships with peers and a trusted adult advisor. The program, in its third year, uses lessons around (SEL) social-emotional learning, self-care, healthy relationships and post-secondary education planning. This effort is tailored to each grade, includes DEI themes, and supports students' individual growth and their ability to help others do the same.

- Making connections with students is a top priority at CHRHS. We continue to support students learning how to develop strong, authentic relationships with peers and teachers. We engage in yearly relationship mapping and student-teacher relationship building in our ongoing commitment to making classrooms a safe space.
- While we emphasize a mindset around prevention, when needed, we focus on resolving conflict, reducing and preventing harmful behaviors with an emphasis on repairing and restoring positive relationships through Restorative Practices.
- We are continuing to create spaces where students can voice concerns around bullying and harassment in a way that they feel safe and heard. In 2021, an anonymous bullying/harassment online reporting form will go live, the student data will be reviewed, and action taken when needed.

Professional Development

Through ongoing training, committee work, and discussions, we are continuing to focus on how we can be more diverse, equitable, and inclusive at all levels of the school community.

- We have established a district level Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Task Force and school-based DEI teams. Teams meet monthly to discuss district and school-level issues around equity and inclusion and to develop the DEI professional development road map for 2021-2022.
- We have adopted a DEI policy, strategy and workplan that outlines our commitment to this ongoing work. We are building out the DEI workplan to outline action steps under the categories of Professional Development, Curriculum, Student Experience, and Policies.
- We plan to engage in an independent equity audit focusing on the entire school including curriculum, culture, professional development, classroom instruction, and assessments during the 2021-22 school year.
- A district-wide DEI workshop series was created by teachers for teachers, entitled Antiracism for Educators, in 2020 and is ongoing to create a shared understanding of DEI and culturally responsive teaching practices.
- CHRHS administration and teachers recognize the need to address DEI issues today while planning more comprehensively for the next school year. One way we are supporting teachers is through their Professional Learning Community where they review and reflect on articles with topics such as holding conversations with

students on difficult DEI topics. Additionally, teachers and administration districtwide are participating in a variety of ongoing DEI book study groups.

Curriculum

At CHRHS we are committed to listening and learning from our students and the community on DEI issues and incorporating pressing needs into our curriculum.

- As mentioned above, we are engaging an external audit of our entire curriculum from a DEI lens next year and will evaluate recommendations when complete as we seek to take a holistic approach to change.
- Currently our Civics, Geography, Economics, and History learning standards explicitly address DEI through the study of Unity and Diversity in American History, World History and all elective seminar courses. In addition to the Civics, Geography and History specific learning targets, our English Language Arts (ELA) curricula are beginning to support students in constructive conversations around race, identity, and equity. We understand things are changing in our world rapidly. We want students to come to school feeling comfortable and supported to have conversations about these changes.
- In response to current events and students' need for greater understand and awareness of DEI, entire courses are offered around topics of race, identity, and equity, including Active Citizenship, Race and Identity, and Maine History.
- The ELA department is conducting curriculum resource audits in order to bring in more representative texts.
- The Edna St. Vincent Millay (ESVM) Library and Humanities departments are also currently focused on purchasing representative texts.
 - ◆ The ESVM Library recently invested \$7,000 in a digital collection of audio- and e-books representing fiction and nonfiction works that relate to DEI themes.
 - ◆ The ESVM Library has been building a robust, contemporary collection of fiction and nonfiction print resources that relate to race and racism, as well as diverse representations of sexuality and gender, class, and religion.
 - ◆ As a member of the Maine Schools Shared Digital Collection, the CHRHS library has fiction and nonfiction books available to students 24/7 for their reading needs, whether at-home or in our building.
 - ◆ The library promotes these new resources students through book placement, featuring on the library Facebook and Website pages, and through student book groups.

Academic Supports (Support Systems)

Through multi-tiered supports we are working to meet the unique needs of all students. We continue to use data driven approaches to create equitable access to learning. The following supports are in place and help students reach their potential.

- At the heart of our intervention structure is a comprehensive, grades 9-12 multi-tiered system of support (MTSS) that uses student data to guide collaborative problem-solving and intentional interventions. Part of the tiered structure includes small group settings (tier II) to help tailor the instruction to the needs of the students, such as Math Directed Study, English Directed Study, Literacy Lab and a student advocate program.
- To assist all students in attaining their diploma, multiple credit-recovery options are provided during the school year and over the summer. One system involves online courseware, called Odysseyware, which allows students to work at their own pace, master concepts, and earn credit. Additional in-person learning options include summer-school academic recovery, mathematics and English credit recovery during the school year, and Personalized Education Plans.
- We strive to provide flexible pathways to graduation by offering a combination of individualized support, career-based learning, dual enrollment, advocacy for students identified with a disability, gifted and talented services, alternative education (Zenith) ,and courses in partnership with MidCoast School of Technology.

Feedback and Ongoing Work

- We are continuing to support existing forums like the GSTA (Gay, Straight, Transgender Alliance) and establish new affinity groups to give students spaces where they can be themselves. A byproduct of these open group conversations is to uncover their needs and address them as we promote a safe space and welcoming environment for all students.
- In 2021, we established a student led BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) Affinity group to promote a sense of belonging and feeling of community by ensuring a safe space for these students with support from the DEI Task Force when needed.
- We are currently researching DEI student culture surveys to allow students to share their perspectives and experiences in a confidential manner.