DEI at CRES – Winter 2022 Update

**School Culture**

As we navigate the COVID-19 pandemic, we continue to implement robust, multi-layered health and safety protocols to keep safe, in-person learning a viable option for students. This effort is also a significant benefit to families.

We continue to focus on Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) opportunities for students. The need for these skills has only risen in recent years. CRES is a Responsive Classroom school, and we continue to engage in ongoing professional development (see below) to ensure a climate and tone of warmth and safety for all. Additionally, we began teaching the Second Step SEL curriculum in grades K-4 during the 2020-2021 school year. Students receive explicit instruction through 19 distinct lessons over the course of the school year. This instruction continues into the current school year.

All of the combined efforts help CRES to provide a welcoming and safe learning environment for all students.

**Professional Development**

In the fall of 2021, CRES staff participated in a school-wide book study of *The First Six Weeks of School* to implement the Responsive Classroom (RC) approach to teaching and learning. Responsive Classroom emphasizes the process (structures and routines) classrooms use as they engage with the content (social/emotional and academic instruction). The four core intentions in the first six weeks curriculum are as follows:

1. Create a climate and tone of warmth and safety.
2. Teacher the schedule and routines of the school day and our expectations for behavior in each of them.
3. Introduce students to the physical environment and materials of the classroom and the school, and teach students how to use and care for them.
4. Establish expectations about ways we will learn together in the year ahead.

The staff met in groups to discuss the readings, use the common RC language and share examples of how best to begin a school year with students.

CRES staff and administration are represented as part of the PreK-12 Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Task Force. This group leads the planning and implementation of our school-based and district-wide DEI goals. The Task Force joined with the staff who participated in the Cultural Competence Institute (CCI) training in the fall of 2020. The two groups combined in the fall of 2021 to streamline and better coordinate our efforts around DEI.

The district contracted with an independent firm to conduct an equity audit in the spring of 2021 in all district schools. We will receive feedback about the entire school experience including: Professional Development, Curriculum, Student Experience and Policies. The information we glean from the audit will help inform our next steps as a Task Force.

Staff from The Maine Children’s Home provided *Trauma Informed School and Trust Based Relational Intervention* training for PreK-8 staff on a September 2021 workshop day. The group shared and modeled several ideas that benefit all students in our schools and are especially important for students who have experienced trauma. Providing equitable access to learning at school was a powerful rationale for implementing these practices.

**Curriculum**

The Hurricane Island Center for Science and Leadership led a two-day training in August 2021 to support CRES staff adapt existing curriculum as we spend more instructional time with students in nature. Teachers engaged in outdoor experiences that were set up to model best instructional practices outdoors while also planning in teams with the support of Hurricane Island staff. We identified 20+ outdoor learning spaces at CRES so teachers have ample opportunities to increase the amount of outside time with students this year. Providing outdoor learning experiences for all students is an important aspect of equitable learning opportunities.

Our work with an outdoor education consultant continued through the 2021-2022 school year with a blend of grade level specific trainings and professional development for the faculty in March of 2022.

We opened the first public nature-based PreK program in the State of Maine in the fall of 2021. This is another integral step in our effort to provide our students with equitable access to outdoor learning.

CRES was also the recipient of a significant award through a RREV (Rethinking Responsive Education Ventures) grant. The funds will enable each teacher to engage in an outdoor residency partnership with local experts in their respective fields. Significantly, this means each student will engage in a meaningful outdoor learning experience during the 2021-2022 school year.

Teachers have begun the process of reviewing classroom libraries through the lens of DEI and have focused purchases to intentionally diversify classroom collections.

The CRES Library has analyzed its collection and continues to add to the collection. The intention is to increase the diversity of books in each genre to reflect the diversity that exists, on a percentage basis, of the US population. We have requested an additional $2,000 in the 2022-2023 budget to expedite that shift.

**Support Systems**

CRES has developed a robust Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) that strives to meet student academic, behavioral and social/emotional needs. Our process includes: a team driven approach, data-based problem solving, a layered continuum of supports, evidence-based practices, and partnership among the family, school, and community. These systems feature intervention team and grade level collaboration for both academics and behavior, a Behavior Specialist/Coach, a Social Worker, Guidance Counselor, School Psychologist and the Pause Place that responds to student SEL/Behavior needs in real time.