

Milton Public Schools

February, 2021

Behaving Equitably

MPS VISION STATEMENT!

We, the Milton Public Schools, envision a district with excellent instruction in every classroom, where learning experiences are aligned with students' individual strengths and needs, and where attention to academic and social emotional growth are balanced so that every child achieves at high levels and develops a strong sense of self. We see a district of intellectual discourse and professional learning at all levels- students, faculty, and administration- in which there are structures and processes for continual reflection, innovation, and data driven decision-making. We know that such a district is achievable if: we facilitate instruction that instills a passion for learning, curiosity, and critical thinking skills; we are committed to cultural competency; we foster a positive approach to the behavioral health of children; and we build strong partnerships with families and the community.

Quality Review

The planning for the Quality Review from an Equity Lens has been underway. Cambridge Education and the District have been working to ensure the process to undergo the quality review is equitable. Part of the process requires us to recruit, select, and onboard a Steering Committee. The purpose of the Steering Committee is to be a **working committee** to guide the development and implementation of the District Quality Review and Action Planning Process for the DISTRICT.

The objectives of the committee are:

- Analyze equity audit results
- Identify root causes of equity challenges that are within the district's sphere of influence
- Identify goals and objectives for equity planning that lead to increased equity at all levels of the organization
- Focus on five key areas – Awareness, Staff Development, Voice, Student Supports, and Analysis – to drive excellent and equitable outcomes for all students.

Some questions you may have:

1. **How will we determine who gets onto the Steering Committee?**
 - There will be nine members on the steering committee. We expect there will be a lot of interest from stakeholders to be part of this group.
 - There is an application process for potential committee members. Community input will be considered when creating the process for evaluation and selection.
2. **What will the process look like?**

- The district has partnered with Cambridge Education, community partners, parents, educators, and students to develop an equitable process to recruit, select, and onboard committee members.
 - We are currently building the Steering Committee criteria to ensure transparency in “whom” and “what” we are looking for.
 - We will require all interested parties to fill out an application and undergo an interview process.
 - The selection committee will be made up of community partners, parents, educators, and students.
3. **When will this process begin?**
- We hope to begin this process in February
4. **Who is overseeing the process and is the point of contact if I have any questions and/or concerns?**
- Somaly Prak-Martins is leading the recruiting, selection and training processes for the Steering Committee. She can be reached at sprak-martins@miltonps.org or (617)696-4809 ext 5246

Current Events!

Black History Months and Black Lives Matter!

I would like to thank [Carter G. Woodson](#) for being the father of Black History and the author of [The Mis-Education of the Negro](#). Because of his dedication, Black History is now a national focus during the month of February. However, **students need and are entitled to Black History all year round!** American History, simply, is inaccurate without the inclusion of Black History. [Nikole Hannah-Jones](#) stated, “But it would be historically inaccurate to reduce the contributions of black people to the vast material wealth created by our bondage. Black Americans have also been, and continue to be, foundational to the idea of American freedom. More than any other group in this country’s history, we have served, generation after generation, in an overlooked but vital role: It is we who have been the perfecters of this democracy.” Black History is more than slavery, Malcolm X and Martin Luther King Jr. Black History is American/US History.

During this year’s presidential inauguration, America watched [Joe Biden](#) and [Amanda Gorman](#) send a message about hope and democracy. Joe Biden stated, “We’ve learned again that democracy is precious. Democracy is fragile. At this hour, my friends, democracy has prevailed.” Black Americans have lived this statement. Black Americans have been at the forefront of the fight to hold America accountable for living up to the words written in the Constitution. Without the perseverance, resilience and sacrifices of BLACK LIVES in [the fight that has lasted \(and still continues\) for 5 centuries](#), America would not be where it is today. Black History is the storyline that constructed democracy!

So I ask: How can U.S History and/or American History exclude Black History and still be considered “History”? And do **ALL** American Lives Matter if Black Lives do not Matter?

William Durant stated, “Education is a progressive discovery of our own ignorance.”

One of the major contributions to creating systemic change was the work Black legislators undertook to push for a system that gave all learners access to education - another bit of history that I never learned during my k-12 educational journey. “The white elite sent their children to private schools, while poor white children went without an education. But newly freed black people, who had been prohibited from learning to read and write during slavery, were desperate for an education. So black legislators successfully pushed for a universal, state-funded system of schools — not just for their own children but for white children, too.

Black legislators also helped pass the first compulsory education laws in the region. Southern children, Black and white, were now required to attend schools like their Northern counterparts. Just five years into [Reconstruction](#), every Southern state had enshrined the right to a public education for all children into its constitution. In some states, like Louisiana and South Carolina, small numbers of black and white children, briefly, attended schools together ([Nikole Hannah-Jones](#)).” Massachusetts was the first state to pass the [Compulsory Education Laws](#) that required children to attend public and state accredited schools. This allowed all of us to access the education needed to better understand, push, and demand change! Change for ourselves, our communities, our country, and for some of us, the world. Without this, America would not be the land for opportunity or the land of the free!

So I ask: How can U.S History and American History exclude Black History and still be considered “History”? And do **ALL** American Lives Matter if Black Lives do not Matter?

Amanda Gorman stated,

When day comes we step out of the shade,
Aflame and unafraid,
The new dawn blooms as we free it.
For there is always light,
If only we're brave enough to see it.
If only we're brave enough to be it.

So, I ask: Are you brave enough to step out of the shadows of “His-Story” and shine the light on “Our-Story”?

**Thank you Nikol Hannah-Jones for the inspiration needed to push this conversation.*

Some additional resources:

[Why Our Students Need Black History](#)

[The Problem We All Live With Part 1](#)

[The Problem We All Live With Part 2](#)

[Black History Month Virtual Festival by ASALH](#)

Next Steps

Curriculum

Understanding the baseline is critical to moving our equity work forward. It will help us identify each school's individual's needs. Equity work is not a one size fit all; we have to practice, demonstrate, and model the process as we are doing the work.

In the spirit of Black History Month and identifying each school's curriculum needs, here is what the leadership team are working to uncover and will be responding to:

- The percentage of teachers who are incorporating Black Historical content into their lessons this month,
- The school's messaging around the celebrating and incorporating Black Historical content into the curriculum,

- What systems and structures are in place to ensure and track if all (in person, hybrid, and virtual) learners are being exposed to Black Historical content,
- What systems and structures are in place to track “what” the Black Historical content is being incorporated into the daily lessons,
- What systems and structures are in place to measure the impact of such efforts, and
- What percentage of educators in the building are equipped/feel equipped to implement Black Historical content with fidelity?

Alignment

Alignment is so important in our pursuit to work smarter and not just harder. We are all experiencing exhaustion at an unprecedented level. It is more important than ever to align our past, present, and future initiatives to purposefully move this work forward.

In the pursuit to sustain the systemic changes that the district wants to make to better serve ALL learners, we are building and planning the implementation of the Bias/Sexual Harassment Incident Reporting systems as well as a Restorative Practices Response system. There has been some work done to initiate this system change prior to my arrival. Although I have a lot of experience building such systems, I want to respect the work and groups that have put in time, effort, blood, sweat, and tears to drive this systemic change. There is a lot of expertise in this community and leveraging all of the expertise we can access is how we can collectively move forward to building sustainable change. Another example would be the development of building the Racial/Civil Unrest process and protocols. A major factor that this protocol will address is the Social-Emotional state of the community as these events occur in real time. Such work is aligned to the Social-Emotional Learning committee. Therefore, we are working to determine what systems and structures currently exist, and how can these systems and structures be realigned so we can cohesively move forward.

Mission, Vision and Purpose

This work is ongoing. The leadership team has determined that clearly articulating a mission, vision, and purpose for equity is a top priority. With the Quality Review through and Equity Lens underway and the push for EQUITY across all of our systems, policies, and practices, we are confident that the data from this process will provide us with more insight on our mission, vision, and purpose.

The essential questions:

- **Are the current mission, vision, and purpose responsive to the needs of ALL members of our community? If not, what should the mission, vision, and purpose be to ensure we are being responsive to the data, community needs, and what is best for ALL Learners? If yes, how are we living (or not living) our mission, vision, and purpose?**

Infrastructure

Equity work requires commitment from the entire community, and for it to have a positive impact, we have to approach, execute, and analyze the impact collectively. We are currently working to identify funds to start building an Equity Team. We are hoping to identify enough funds to get one Equity Ambassador for each Elementary school, two (one adult and one student) for the middle school, and two (one adult and one student) at the high school to support the work this year. We are hoping to grow this team next year.

In addition to building human capital that will be equipped to do this work, we are also looking at our data infrastructures. Data is a pillar used to better demonstrate and practice equity. Without a system that will

allow us to capture, retrieve, and analyze data in real time, we would not be effectively demonstrating and/or practicing equity.

Community Partnership

We would like to thank everyone who attended the forum for a More Equitable Milton hosted in partnership with Citizens for Diverse Milton. If you missed the event, please take a look at the [agenda](#). We witnessed honest, authentic, and passionate conversations from many participants. We also received positive feedback around providing safe space for everyone to discuss and share their thoughts. If you attended this event please take a moment to fill out the [feedback form](#).

In addition, we would like to invite anyone and everyone who would like to learn about, move, and implement diversity, equity and inclusion work to fill out this [registration form](#). This work has been moving at the school level. Each school has a DEI committee that meets once a month to celebrate and address diversity, equity and inclusion practices. The forum was used as a platform to engage and peek interest. We hope you continue this work and help us move this mission. We look forward to adding more insight and expertise to cultivating a More Equitable Milton. We invite **all**, especially students, to be part of this work.

Please feel free to reach out to each school directly. Here is the contact information for each school:

Tucker Elementary School	Elaine McNeil-Girmai	(617)696-4291 emcneilgirmai@miltonps.org
Collicot Elementary School	Holly Concannon	(617)696-4282 hconcannon@miltonps.org
Cunningham Elementary School	Jonathan Redden	(617)696-4285 jredden@miltonps.org
Glover Elementary School	Karen McDavitt	(617)696-4288 kmcdavitt@miltonps.org
Pierce Middle School	William Fish	(617)696-4568 wfish@miltonps.org
Milton Public High School	Karen Cahill	(617)696-4478 kcahill@miltonps.org

With warm regards,

Somaly Prak-Martins
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