



OFFICE OF DIVERSITY, EQUITY, &
ACCESSIBILITY

ENTRY FINDING REPORT

2023 - 2024



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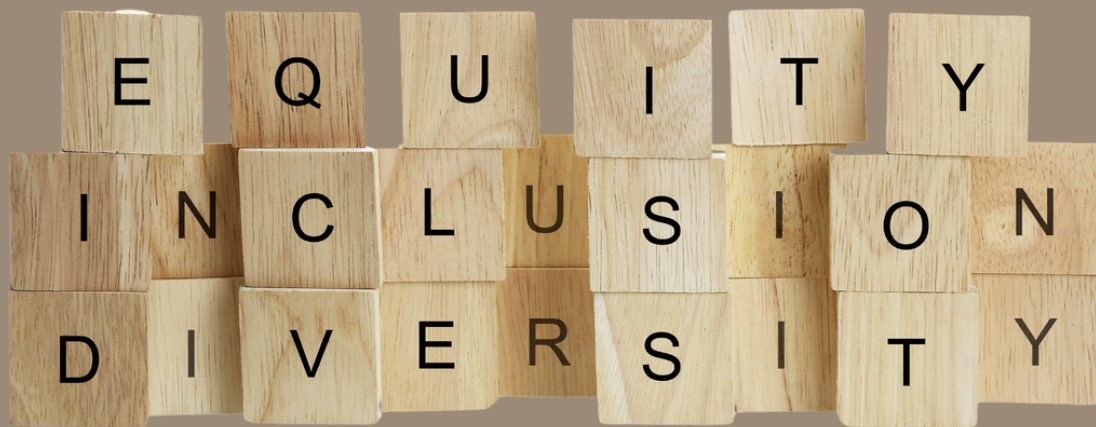
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DEIA ENTRY FINDING REPORT

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INTRODUCTION

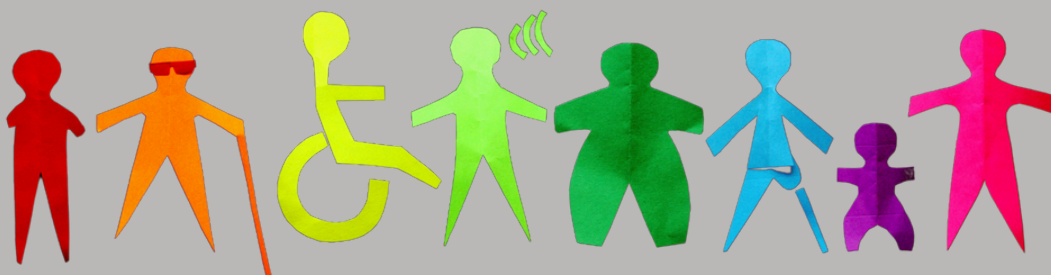
DEIA ENTRY FINDING REPORT

ABOUT US

The Department of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, & Accessibility (created in May 2023) works closely with all members of the school community to identify strengths and opportunity gaps within the EPS system through a lens of equity, social justice and accessibility. With the support of school leaders, colleagues, students, caregivers and equity partners, the Office of DEIA expanded its reach throughout the district with a deepened understanding and implementation of culturally-responsive instruction, investment in diversifying our educator and leadership workforce and reinforced our unwavering commitment to building a school community that is welcoming to each stakeholder.

This ongoing effort is reflected in the creation of numerous initiatives and programs designed to foster a more inclusive environment. Professional development sessions for teachers will emphasize culturally-responsive pedagogy, ensuring that classroom practices honor and reflect the diverse backgrounds of all students.

Furthermore, the department sees an in-depth attendance and conduct review which will help to identify and eliminate biases for our students day to day and increasing student engagement. Educational materials need to be inclusive and representative of all cultures and identities. By continuously evaluating the impact of the other initiatives, the department strives to create an educational environment where every student feels valued, respected, and empowered to succeed.






STRENGTH

EASTON VOICES


District's commitment

Easton Public Schools is deeply committed to creating an inclusive and accessible environment for all students, staff, and families. As our student population continues to grow and diversify, we have witnessed a natural increase in cultural exchanges across various settings, from classroom discussions to school assemblies. The creation of the Office of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility reflects the strong commitment of our broader community. This new position, supported by teachers, leadership, town officials, and voters, was incorporated into the budget to ensure that our schools remain a welcoming space for everyone. A visible commitment to accessibility for all individuals is exemplified in the design of our new Pre-K to 2 building and the inclusive playground, which is thoughtfully designed to accommodate students in both our Blanche Ames and Richardson Olmsted buildings. Additionally, the recent addition of School Committee goals and of them being dedicated to supporting this office highlights our district's ongoing commitment to fostering equity and inclusion for all members of our community.



Educators that are eager to learn

Our staff is eager to embrace culturally responsive instruction, recognizing the importance of meeting the diverse needs of our students. As the year progressed, with continued professional development and education on equity practices, we have seen stakeholders across the district take intentional steps to engage not only students but also their families. Whether addressing barriers related to language, scheduling, or financial constraints, our educators and staff have worked diligently to create meaningful connections and foster a supportive community for all. This collective effort reflects our unwavering dedication to ensuring every family feels valued and included.





STRENGTH

CONTINUED

Community Partnerships

Easton Public Schools is proud to benefit from the incredible strength of our community partnerships. The collaborative relationships we have built with local organizations and stakeholders play a critical role in enhancing the educational experience for our students. These partnerships have allowed us to expand vital resources, including the construction of a new elementary school and the development of on-site childcare for our staff. These initiatives directly reflect the shared commitment of our partners in supporting the growth and success of our district.

Additionally, our strong and supportive parent community is an invaluable asset. Their engagement and active participation have helped drive the creation of important initiatives such as affinity spaces designed to foster a greater sense of belonging for our families. The collective strength of our stakeholders—parents, educators, community members, and leaders—has allowed us to move forward with initiatives that prioritize the well-being and success of our entire school community.



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OPPORTUNITIES


EASTON VOICES

OUR FOCUS

Over the past year, through a combination of stakeholder feedback, data analysis, and anecdotal information, it has become increasingly clear that while progress has been made, there is still significant work to be done in cultivating a truly authentic environment of "Belonging" at Easton Public Schools. Our review of stakeholder feedback highlighted that many students, families, and staff feel that although strides have been taken to promote inclusivity, not all members of our community feel fully embraced or valued or are able to have access to all curriculum and/or public spaces. This has prompted us to take a deeper look at the structural and cultural aspects of our district that may still unintentionally contribute to feelings of exclusion.

The data supports these sentiments, revealing disparities in student engagement, participation, and achievement across different demographics. While we have made efforts to address equity, the feedback and data indicate that a sense of belonging is not yet universal. Some groups still face barriers to full inclusion, which impacts their ability to thrive both academically and socially. This feedback has underscored the need for more intentional efforts to create spaces and opportunities where every individual feels seen, heard, and respected.

Additionally, anecdotal information from educators, families, and students has brought to light instances where our practices and policies may inadvertently hinder the development of a culture of belonging. Whether through communication gaps, lack of representation, unintentional biases in curriculum, or gaps in our physical access to spaces and activities, these insights have reinforced the necessity for us to dig deeper into our efforts. Moving forward, we are committed to leveraging this valuable information to create more intentional, inclusive spaces that foster a genuine sense of belonging for all members of our school community.



OPPORTUNITIES

BELONGING ACROSS OUR DISTRICT

Opportunity Gap

Historically, Easton Public Schools has focused its efforts on serving the middle of its stakeholder community. While this approach has ensured that a significant portion of our students and families have their needs met, it has also revealed gaps in reaching those on the margins. A clear indicator of this is our achievement gap, which demonstrates that we are primarily succeeding in reaching the middle of our student population, while students who may need more tailored support are not receiving the same level of engagement and resources. By primarily focusing on the middle of our student population, we risk under-serving our underrepresented students, which can lead to reduced academic engagement, social-emotional challenges, and limited participation in student activities and extracurriculars. This gap underscores the need for more inclusive strategies that address the diverse academic and social needs of all students.

Professional Development to meet all students needs:

There is a strong, positive connection between consistent, targeted professional development for staff, the implementation of culturally responsive instruction, and ensuring that our curriculum reflects the diverse backgrounds of our student body. These efforts are critical to narrowing the opportunity gap for underrepresented students. By equipping our educators with the tools and knowledge to deliver inclusive and culturally relevant teaching, we foster an educational environment where all students feel seen, valued, and supported. This alignment of professional development with responsive teaching practices directly contributes to improving outcomes and promoting equity for all learners.

Communication

Our communication is another area where historical practices have primarily served a portion of our stakeholders, creating unintended inequities. Traditional modes of communication were not accessible to all families, resulting in key information not reaching everyone. This limited access meant that some families were not fully informed of their roles and responsibilities in the educational process, leading to disengagement from the school community. When families are not provided with the necessary information in ways that are accessible to them, it exacerbates the opportunity gap for students who do not belong to the majority.

Possible Procedure

As a district, we recognize the impact this has had on fostering a truly equitable learning environment and are committed to addressing these disparities. By reevaluating our communication practices and focusing on more inclusive and accessible methods, we aim to engage all families, ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to participate fully in their child's education. Educators recognize the critical role that family support plays in fostering the whole child's development; however, it is essential to acknowledge that the nature of this support varies across different families. This shift is critical to closing the opportunity gap and ensuring that every student, regardless of their background, has the support they need to succeed.

OPPORTUNITIES

CONTINUED

Hiring and Retention of Diverse Staff

Easton Public Schools has made significant efforts to diversify its staff in order to better reflect the student population and provide a more inclusive learning environment. Through partnerships with educator affinity groups, such as MPDE (Massachusetts Partnership for Diversity in Education), we have sought to recruit candidates from diverse backgrounds. Despite these efforts, the diversity of our staff has yet to match that of our student body. This gap highlights the need for continued focus on not only hiring diverse educators but also addressing the underlying challenges that impact retention.

Work Space Free of Bias and Harassment

Retention of diverse staff members has been a particular area of struggle for the district. While we have made strides in recruitment, we must work to create a supportive environment where all staff, especially those from marginalized groups, feel heard and valued. This includes fostering spaces where staff can openly share their experiences and concerns, not just those from the majority. Additionally, it is imperative that we implement clear and accessible procedures for reporting any form of harassment or bullying, ensuring that staff who feel unsafe have a secure avenue for support. A district that prioritizes safety and inclusion is inherently more attractive to potential candidates from underrepresented populations, contributing to both the hiring and retention of a diverse workforce.







OPPORTUNITIES

Vertical Alignment and updates of Policies and Procedures

Through the vertical alignment of our district policies and procedures, Easton Public Schools aims to establish a consistent and cohesive framework that promotes transparency and curtails any potential distrust within the community. By ensuring that policies are aligned across all levels—district, school, and classroom—we create a clear, equitable standard that applies to both staff and students. This alignment fosters just treatment for all, ensuring that everyone is held to the same expectations and that decisions are made in a fair and transparent manner. In doing so, we strengthen trust within our community and build a more inclusive and supportive educational environment.

The Office of DEIA's request for action:

It is imperative for Easton Public Schools to stay current with School Committee policies and district handbooks, as the rights and responsibilities of both staff and students continually evolve within the legal framework governing public education. Regularly reviewing and updating these documents is critical to ensuring full compliance with state and federal laws, while clearly defining the expectations, protections, and obligations of all stakeholders. Aligning with these changes is not only necessary to safeguard the rights of our staff and students but also to uphold a transparent and equitable environment across the district.





OUR TARGET

Here are some of the targets we will achieve in 2024-2025:

1. Develop a comprehensive, wrap-around registration process that prioritizes family resources and well-being, ensuring a more supportive and accessible experience for all families.
2. Create an environment that effectively retains the underrepresented staff recruited by the district.
3. Implementation of vertically-aligned EPS Code of Conduct Pk-12.
4. Cultivate a school environment that fosters authentic student engagement, reflects the current student body in languages and abilities, and enhances their sense of belonging.

OUR STRATEGY

Here are some strategies we will use in 2024-2025:

1. Collaboration with the leadership team and the partners in the town prioritizes family resources and well-being, ensuring a more supportive and accessible experience for all families.
2. An affinity space for BIPOC educators will be created by facilitating regular meetings, providing access to resources, and offering opportunities for mentorship and collaboration. This space will serve as a dedicated platform for BIPOC staff to share experiences, address challenges, and receive support tailored to their specific needs, while also promoting a sense of belonging and professional growth.
3. The district's vertically-aligned EPS Code of Conduct PK-12 is implemented through a comprehensive approach that includes staff training, clear communication of expectations to students and families, and consistent enforcement across all schools. This process is supported by regular reviews and adjustments to ensure that the Code effectively promotes fairness, accountability, and a positive school culture district-wide.

ACCESSIBILITY

THANK YOU TO THE EPS EQUITY PARTNERS

