



Haddonfield Public Schools

Growing in Excellence

District Forms Equity Council

Haddonfield School District created its Mission Statement and Strategic Goals in early 2019 as an important part of its Long-Range Strategic Planning process. One of the three goals was Cultural Competency:

We will inspire learners to advance their understanding of our interconnectedness in order to engage meaningfully and respectfully with people of diverse identities, experiences, and points of view.

During the summer of 2020, the committee, led by our new Director of Special Education, Dr. Carmen Henderson, made two significant changes; the goal was renamed “Cultural Responsiveness,” and the language was expanded to say:

We will adopt culturally responsive and sustaining practices throughout the district that are equitable, inclusive, radically transformative and deviate from western perspectives. We will inspire learners to advance their understanding of our interconnectedness in order to engage meaningfully and respectfully with people of diverse identities, experiences, and points of view.

“As we learn and grow, it is our responsibility to re-examine our values and reshape our goals,” said Henderson. “I am excited to move forward with culturally responsive action steps.”

One of the first ideas the committee discussed was the formation of an Equity Council. The Equity Council will make decisions that encourage the district to adopt culturally responsive and sustaining practices. Members are expected to lead professional learning and assist with curriculum development and other activities outlined in the equity plan.

The Equity Council is currently made up of 34 individuals who are committed to work on issues related to diversity, equity, and justice. They represent all aspects of education in Haddonfield and include faculty, staff, parents, community leaders, and board members.

“We are fortunate to have Dr. Shelley Zion, professor of Urban Education and director of PEER (Partnership for Education, Equity and Research) at Rowan University, as a leader and partner for the Equity Council,” said Henderson. “She will assist us to work toward understanding the experiences and perceptions of others, to develop a common knowledge base, and to develop, implement and evaluate our strategic plan. Dr. Zion has been working effectively with our district administration and staff on issues of diversity and equity for about two years, and this new initiative will continue to strengthen our efforts in these areas.”

The Equity Council held its first meeting on November 10th.