



June 17, 2021

Board Members:

**RE: DISTRICT 211 EQUITY PLAN**

The Township High School District 211 Equity Team believes that equity is a fundamental concept central to student access, opportunity, and achievement. We are grateful to serve students, families and our surrounding community, which represent a large diversity of cultures and backgrounds.

District 211 has a strong history as a school community where concepts of equity are valued and integrated into the mindset, actions, and daily interactions of every student, staff member and parent. The District 211 Equity Team was formed to ensure that we understand and respond to the ever-changing needs within our school community and our broader world. We strive to identify, implement and strengthen equitable practices, equitable curriculum and equitable achievement, while engaging our community to ensure a school environment that is free of discrimination and racism.

The District 211 Equity Team believes that equity is intrinsic to the values and beliefs of our school community. We strive for comprehensive educational equity practices, procedures and policies that are culturally sensitive and that provide all students with access, opportunity, support and resources. We believe that equity is most effectively demonstrated as a mindset toward every facet of the educational experience in District 211 and seek to empower our community to use equity as a lens through which all decisions are made. To guide this, we have created a series of value statements that correspond to our work. These statements describe the school environment through the experience of students, staff and our organization as a whole.

Students:

- All students can learn at the highest levels when all staff ensure access, opportunity and support.
- All students must receive individualized support that is both encouraging and empowering.
- All students deserve to feel safe, welcomed and valued in our schools, both individually and collectively.

Staff:

- All staff are aware of the potential effect of their background, mindsets and biases in the classroom.
- All staff approach educational equity with a growth mindset and are open to participating in crucial conversations regarding equity.
- All staff are empowered to identify and eliminate inequities, barriers and past practices that potentially lead to opportunity or achievement gaps.

## Organization:

- We strive to intentionally develop systems that ensure access, opportunity and individualized support for all students.
- We strive to foster school environments where students feel a connection and a sense of belonging.
- We strive to implement ongoing analysis, assessment and evaluation of our systems for the purpose of continual improvement.

Our equity work in District 211 is consistent with efforts of education organizations and our State. The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) released their 2020-2023 strategic plan earlier this year. Their plan is built around three goals that focus on student learning, learning conditions and elevating educators. These goals are held together by four principles that guide the work of the ISBE – equity, quality, collaboration and community. In their plan, they state the following: “Illinois has an urgent and collective responsibility to achieve educational equity by ensuring that all policies, programs, and practices affirm the strengths that each and every child brings within their diverse backgrounds and life experience, and by delivering the comprehensive supports, programs and educational opportunities they need to succeed” (p. 7).

While our District 211 equity journey began prior to August 2020, the District 211 Equity Team was formed to ensure collaboration and connection between the equity work that was being accomplished at each of our District 211 schools. The team began with a charge to:

- Include and affirm the voices of students, staff and families.
- Define the organizational priorities and practices that contribute to equity.
- Analyze qualitative and quantitative data to identify goals, metrics and accountability measures.
- Create an equity plan that will drive systematic short-term and long-term change.

The team – consisting of students, parents and District 211 staff members – worked together through four phases, including:

Phase 1: Stakeholder Engagement

Phase 2: Research and Community Input

Phase 3: Data Analysis and Application

Phase 4: Development of the District 211 Equity Plan

Through monthly large group meetings paired with regular committee meetings, the team learned together through dialogue, understanding each other’s experiences and perspectives, and exploring the feedback from our community. The foundation’s assumptions of the District 211 Equity Team work include:

- Equity is not an initiative, but rather a mindset that we integrate into our lives and school communities.
- We will focus on a strengths-based approach, which focuses on the inherent strengths of individuals, families, groups and organizations within our community.

- We seek to use research, evidence and data to create short-term and long-term strategies.
- We will acknowledge that equity work is sometimes difficult work, but we will tend toward growth mindset and persistence in our efforts.

The team was organized into four committees, which each focused on a particular area pertaining to equity. The committees and their focus, are:

#### School, Family, & Community Partnerships Committee

*Focus:* Ensure high levels of communication, engagement and relationships with all stakeholders

*Focus:* Enhance the authenticity and effectiveness of our family educational opportunities and community partnerships.

#### Equitable Practices & Mindsets Committee

*Focus:* Ensure that current and future practices and procedures are culturally relevant and equitable.

*Focus:* Ensure that the diversity of our staff reflects the diversity of our community.

#### Equitable Curriculum & Instruction

*Focus:* Ensure that curricular decisions are made with equity as the driving force.

*Focus:* Ensure that all staff understand bias and implement culturally responsive instructional strategies.

#### Equitable Opportunity & Achievement

*Focus:* Ensure that all students have access to rigorous and relevant educational opportunities.

*Focus:* Ensure that all teachers have access to continuous professional learning and development.

Each committee began their work by developing a series of commitments, working agreements and meeting norms. Throughout the course of their monthly meetings, each committee developed areas of focus and a series of belief statements regarding the views of students, parents and staff members. These belief statements form the framework of the District 211 Equity Plan.

As the full team and individual committees worked through the process of engaging our stakeholders and soliciting community input (Phase I and II), it became clear that we needed to partner with an outside organization in order to ensure that feedback from our community was unbiased and unfiltered. To that end, at the December 10, 2020 Board of Education Meeting, the Board authorized a contract with Bea Young Associates to conduct Part I of an Equity and Cultural Audit of Township High School District 211 by conducting student and parent focus groups. Associates from Bea Young Associates conducted these racially homogeneous focus groups during the months of February and March through Zoom. The homogeneous groups included black students and parents, Asian students and parents, Latinx students and parents, and white students and parents.

Bea Young Associates completed their analysis of the qualitative information gathered during the student and parent focus groups. This information was compiled in separate, school-based reports entitled “How Students & Parents/Families Experience High School: Through an Equity Lens.”

The reports include a description of overall themes that were identified through an analysis of the information, actual student and parent quotes from the focus groups, reflections on each theme, and “early recommendations.” The “early recommendations” are solely based on the student and parent information and are isolated from information from staff focus groups, which will be completed during Phase II. The “early recommendations” were specifically requested with the understanding that these would be compared and contrasted with qualitative information from staff focus groups to solidify the context of the shared school experience. The purpose of requesting the “early recommendations” was to provide the information to the District 211 Equity Team to match the timeline consistent with presenting the District 211 Equity Plan to the Board of Education during the June meeting. The school-specific information is included below; however, our staff has also conducted a separate analysis of the reports in order to identify early themes that are shared across schools. These themes include the following:

- Student and parent participants were excited that District 211 is focusing on equity and appreciated the opportunity to participate in the focus group to share their perceptions and experiences.
- Some students, particularly black, Asian, Latinx, and LGBTQ+ students, do not always perceive our schools as welcoming and inclusive. Furthermore, some students have reported that they do not feel safe or that they belong to the school culture.
- Parents and students believe that there are unfair disciplinary practices in our schools, including potential bias of school staff members affecting discipline outcomes, an unequal addressing of behavior in classrooms and hallways, and harsher discipline consequence for black and Latinx students.
- Black and Latinx students and parents report that their students face bias regarding the perceptions of their academic achievement, particularly as it relates to academic expectations of our staff, access to rigorous courses, and whether they have plans to pursue a college education or directly enter the workforce after graduation.
- Our curriculum needs to be updated to be more relevant to students’ cultural background and daily lives and to demonstrate representation of historical figures, authors and main characters of textual works. Additionally, our instructional methods could be more culturally appropriate and responsive in nature.
- Students feel an increased sense of belonging and worth when they see themselves represented in our staff. We should strive to increase the racial, cultural and linguistic diversity of our staff at all levels.
- There are a number of school practices and procedures that may be unconsciously racially or culturally insensitive. Including students and parents in a review of these practices and procedures would increase understanding and preventatively identify racial or culturally insensitivities.
- Students and parents believe that students need increased access to mental health professionals, including school counselors trained in culturally responsive support.
- There is a perception that school staff are uncomfortable having conversations about race and culture. Students desire to have these conversations to help make sense of their feelings and the world around them.

School-specific information from each report can be found below:

### **Conant High School Themes:**

Parents and students were appreciative of the opportunity to share their thoughts and experiences in focus groups.

1. Students of color, disabled students and LGBTQ+ students reported experiencing inappropriate behaviors with the perception that the behaviors go unchecked.
2. Students reported that they perceive that assumptions are made about their academic ability based on race or ethnicity.
3. There are perceptions that disciplinary consequences may be disproportionately applied based on race or culture.
4. There is a great desire to see courses which reflect the heritage and histories of the communities served by the school.
5. The need for diverse staff representation is shared by nearly all.
6. Parents reported that it is difficult to be involved in school events because of a perceived lack of effective communications.
7. White, Asian and Latinx students perceive a lack of follow-up on sexual harassment issues and concern that counselors are overworked.

### **Fremd High School Themes:**

1. Students and families are appreciative of the opportunity to participate in the Equity & Cultural Audit.
2. Students from diverse backgrounds do not report high levels of safety or belonging to the school community.
3. Students and parents reported that they perceive that assumptions are made about their academic ability based on race or ethnicity.
4. The absence of a culturally responsive curriculum impacts all students.
5. The need for diverse staff representation is shared by nearly all.
6. Parents of color report that they do not recognize opportunities to become involved with their student's education and school activities.

### **Hoffman Estates High School Themes:**

1. Participants were appreciative for the opportunity to share their thoughts in hopes of seeing positive changes.
2. Participants shared perspectives and concerns regarding undercurrents of the school's culture which are assumed to go unaddressed.
3. Every racial group expressed positive experiences in the Hoffman Estates High School environment.
4. There are perceptions that disciplinary consequences may be disproportionately applied based on race or culture.
5. The impact of race and stereotypes on students' academic abilities impacts the push for Advanced Placement classes.
6. Participants shared multiple concerns about the curriculum not being relevant to the culture of the many diverse students.

7. A racially, ethnically and linguistically diverse staff and administration is viewed as a benefit for all.
8. Some school practices and procedures are viewed as burdensome to students and families.
9. Mixed with some critical concerns, there are stories of teachers going the “extra mile” as well as community members helping newcomers access resources.

### **Schaumburg High School Themes:**

1. Students and families are appreciative of the opportunity to participate in the Equity & Cultural Audit.
2. For white and some Asian students, the culture is viewed as welcoming and inclusive. For those who feel excluded, there is disappointment regarding the lack of support they experience.
3. Black and Latinx students experience lower academic expectations and Asian students are held to higher standards stemming from spoken and unspoken bias, favoritism, stereotypes and assumptions.
4. There are perceptions that disciplinary consequences may be disproportionately applied based on race or culture.
5. All participant groups are asking for teaching and curriculum that is multicultural and relevant to the changing needs of students.
6. There is agreement among all groups that a racially diverse staff and administration will be a benefit for all.
7. Perceptions of culturally insensitive school/District practices vs. staff behaviors that have placed disproportionate burdens on students and families.
8. There is mixed reaction about parent involvement and feelings of being welcomed at this school.

### **Palatine High School Themes:**

1. Students and families are appreciative of the opportunity to participate in the Equity & Cultural Audit.
2. An overall view of the Palatine High School environment shares positive experiences voiced by each focus group with the diversity of the school as a focus.
3. Though students of color represent 60% of the population, assumptions and stereotypes continue to favor those who are white, and, indeed, white students and families are aware of this.
4. A desire by all for a multicultural curriculum with a global perspective and discussion of current events impacting students.
5. Developing a racially, ethnically, linguistically and disabled diverse staff and administration is viewed as a benefit for all.
6. Students perceive disproportionate discipline, offer their perspectives about ‘detention’ and suggest more counseling versus more discipline.

Based on the work of the full District 211 Equity Team, the individual committees and the analysis of the feedback gained during the Equity & Culture Audit, the District 211 Equity Team recommends the following framework for ensuring equity in District 211. This framework is

organized by committee and includes priority areas that are supported by belief statements developed from each committee.

### **Equitable Practices & Mindsets**

Priority #1: Ensure that school climate and school culture promote a safe and inclusive environment where students from diverse backgrounds can thrive academically, socially, emotionally and physically.

#### *Belief Statements:*

- We believe that every student, family, staff and community members should feel welcomed, empowered and proudly represented by their school and the broader District 211 community.
- We believe in the importance of recognizing and celebrating the diversity in our District 211 schools.
- We believe in identifying, analyzing and eliminating access, opportunity and achievement gaps that could cause inequity in our schools.

Priority #2: Improve our system of behavior interventions and supports by committing to continually re-evaluating our processes and procedures through a lens of equity.

#### *Belief Statements:*

- We believe in establishing trust and respect as the foundation for our school environment.
- We believe that there is a history of institutional and systematic racism in our educational systems and aim to restore trust between school staff and families of color.
- We believe in providing individualized social-emotional support to our students.
- We believe in providing behavior interventions and supports that meet the unique needs of diverse students.

Priority #3: Increase the capacity of students and school staff through leadership development efforts specifically focused on the application of an equity mindset to school experiences and decision-making.

#### *Belief Statements:*

- We believe that our students are agents of change within our schools and should be given a voice in school improvement efforts.
- We believe that our school staff are the most direct channel of influence on our students and should be knowledgeable about equity mindsets and practices.
- We believe in placing equity at the center of our decisions, actions and priorities.

Priority #4: Develop and implement recruitment and employment practices that build and foster a diverse workforce while establishing an equity mindset with all staff.

#### *Belief Statements:*

- We believe that equity mindsets develop the agency of the school community to build upon diversity and to enhance understanding.

- We believe that equity provides the opportunity for each person to feel like a valued part of the learning community.
- We believe that District 211 should seek to diversity our staff so that our staff more closely represents the students we serve.
- We believe that representation is critical. Students and the school community benefit when they have opportunities to interact with diverse staff.

### **Equitable Opportunity & Achievement**

Priority #1: Empower students to take increased ownership through attendance, involvement and engagement in academics, activities, athletics and fine arts opportunities.

Belief Statements:

- We believe that consistent, daily attendance in our classrooms is the most effective preparation for college and careers.
- We believe that students who have a school community outside the classroom feel a stronger sense of connection and belonging.
- We believe in providing opportunities for diverse students to participate in extracurricular activities that are of interest to them.

Priority #2: Develop structures and institutional processes that provide all students the opportunity to select and succeed in rigorous coursework.

Belief Statements:

- We believe in the access to opportunities for all students.
- We believe in eliminating racial and socioeconomic predictability and giving students choice and opportunity.
- We believe in empowering all students to make informed decisions through processes which are equitable and tailored to diverse students.
- We believe in the power of personal agency and student voice.

Priority #3: Design and implement proactive systems of support and interventions to prepare, scaffold and respond to the diverse needs of all students.

Belief Statements:

- We believe that every student is important.
- We believe in providing every student the right amount of support at the right time.
- We believe in utilizing research, data and our shared experience to plan and implement school programs and initiatives.
- We believe in a process of continual analysis and improvement of our systems, programs and initiatives.

Priority #4: Provide educators with timely, consistent and collaborative opportunities to grow and develop through professional learning.



Belief Statements:

- We believe that the concept of equity should be the lens through which all professional learning takes place in District 211.
- We believe that equity-focused professional learning has the greatest impact when it is continuous, sustained and integrated into our school priorities.
- We believe that individual and collective reflection is critical to personal change.
- We believe that equity-focused professional learning must include topics related to bias, privilege and systematic injustice.

**Equitable Curriculum & Instruction**

Priority #1: Ensure that all curriculum, curricular materials, supplemental materials, activities and instructional and grading practices are reflective of our diverse student population.

Belief Statements:

- We believe that all students, inclusive of disability, ethnicity, gender, gender expression, gender identity, immigration status, language, nationality, family status, race, religion, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status or association with a person or group are entitled to culturally responsive teaching in an inclusive and identity-affirming environment with culturally relevant curriculum that fosters high levels of learning.
- We believe that our curriculum must infuse culturally responsive information into instructional approaches in order to prepare students to succeed in a diverse society.
- We believe that our curriculum should allow students to examine the perspectives and contributions of people of color, women and people with disabilities in every subject area.

Priority #2: Increase student engagement with culturally responsive instruction that leverages students' existing funds of knowledge and builds intellectual capacity toward independence.

Belief Statements:

- We believe that our curriculum content and instructional practices should utilize print and non-print materials that represent the diversity of our students and community.
- We believe that our instructional practices should include culturally relevant teaching practices that reflect the contributions and perspectives of all people.
- We believe that our staff should experience continuous professional learning related to diversity, equity and culturally responsive teaching.

Priority #3: Create processes and procedures for regular, systematic review of our course placement practices, acceleration practices and integration with our feeder school districts.

Belief Statements:

- We believe in eliminating racial and socioeconomic predictability and giving students choice and opportunity.
- We believe in the process of continuous improvement and analysis of our current processes and procedures related to course placement.
- We believe in providing acceleration and advancement opportunities for students coupled with strategic support options.

- We believe that the increased integration with our feeder school districts is necessary in order to fully support the student transition process.

Priority #4: Build safe and supportive learning spaces by applying social-emotional learning strategies into every classroom in District 211.

Belief Statements:

- We believe that continuous professional learning opportunities for staff to foster a growth mindset are necessary.
- We believe that all learning spaces in District 211 must be safe and supportive learning environments free from racism or discrimination.
- We believe that social-emotional learning strategies should be implemented in every classroom throughout our content areas.

### **School, Family, & Community Partnerships**

Priority #1: Strengthen the relationship between all school stakeholders (students, parents, staff, community) through increased opportunities to engage both inside and outside the school.

Belief Statements:

- We believe that students should have access to a diverse range of experiences and opportunities that allow them to celebrate different cultures.
- We believe that parents should have multiple opportunities to engage with school staff around topics that are meaningful to them.
- We believe that District 211 must actively seek to engage parents that represent the diversity of our student population.
- We believe that our parent and community engagement opportunities should not be limited to events held on our school grounds.
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Priority #2: Increase and improve partnerships with community agencies and organizations in an effort to coordinate resources and more effectively serve our families.

Belief Statements:

- We believe that our schools are a safe place in the community for students and families to access resources and support.
- We believe that communication of our partnership with community agencies and information about local resources are imperative to effectively serve our families.
- We believe that we need to continue to identify and collaborate with local community agencies in order to provide support to District 211 families.
- We believe that providing students the opportunity to experience career experiences, including internships and employment, is necessary for college and career readiness.

Priority #3: Design and implement additional systems of social-emotional support for students and families.

Belief Statements:

- We believe that social-emotional learning is an important component of our curriculum and part of the systematic supports that we provide students.

- We believe that we must continue to increase and improve our knowledge of and access to supports for students.
- We believe that our District 211 staff needs to participate in professional learning experiences related to social-emotional learning in schools.
- We believe that it is necessary to develop a systematic way to organize and track our social-emotional supports across District 211.

Priority #4: Improve our communication practices – including types of media, languages and content – in order to reach diverse members of our community.

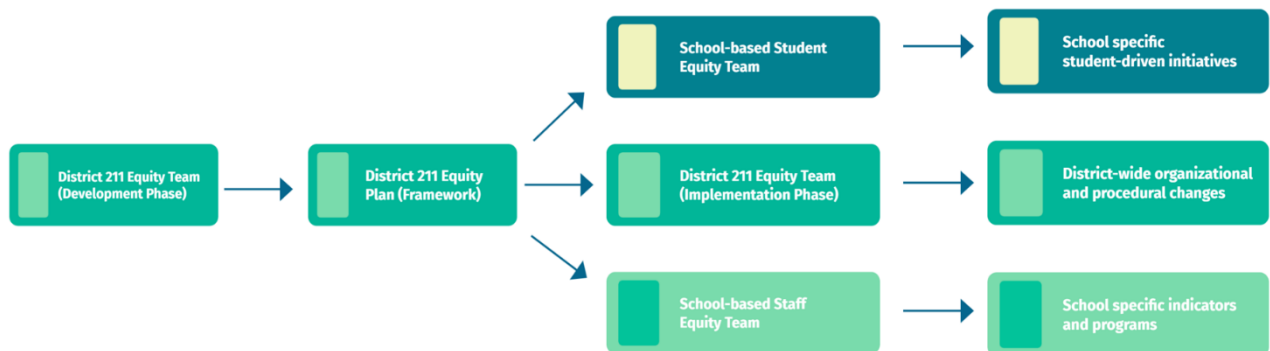
Belief Statements:

- We believe that clear, consistent and continuous communication is necessary in order to ensure effective collaboration between District 211 stakeholders.
- We believe that our communications must be readily available and accessible in many languages.
- We believe that our parents and students should receive our communications in ways that are meaningful and effective to them.
- We believe that our communications must include information and media that represent the diverse community that is District 211.

The 16 priorities, with corresponding belief statements, form the framework that will guide our equity work and ensure that we increase equity throughout District 211 programs, processes and procedures throughout the course of the next months and years.

Next Steps:

The District 211 Equity Team was formed during the 2020-2021 school year to develop this plan. The members of the Team will have the opportunity to continue to be on the team as it transitions from overseeing the development of the plan to guiding the implementation of the plan. New members, specifically school staff and students, will be added to ensure that each school is fully represented on the District Team. Additionally, each school will have a staff-based and student-based implementation team that will use this plan as the framework to move school-based equity efforts forward. The diagram below shows a graphic representation of the current and future structure for the implementation of this framework:



As originally presented at the December 10, 2020 Board of Education Meeting, we seek to move forward with Phase II of our Equity & Cultural Audit, which is facilitated by Bea Young Associates. Phase II includes staff focus groups, which will be organized to allow additional staff voice about equity in District 211 as well as to identify specific implementation efforts based on the 16 priorities identified in this plan. Phase II also includes individual interviews for District-based administrators, School Board members, and the formalization on the final recommendations based on the full Equity & Cultural Audit. We seek to begin Phase II in July 2021, with a target date of completion in September 2021.

Implementation of the 16 priorities identified in this plan will begin in August with both District-level areas of focus and school-based areas of focus. We will provide a mid-year update to the Board of Education related to the specific programs, initiatives and data analysis that has been accomplished during the first semester. Additionally, another report will be provided at the end of the 2021-2022 school year that will focus on the progress toward improving equity and plans for the 2022-2023 school year.

**SUGGESTED MOTION:**

That the District 211 Equity Plan be approved as presented.

Lisa Small  
Superintendent