



Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Committee
of the Valley Stream 24 Board of Education

Progress Report 1

June 4, 2021

LOOK FOR THE AWESOME
valleystreamschooldistrict24.org

Introduction

We are pleased to have this opportunity to provide a progress report of the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee’s work to the Valley Stream 24 Board of Education. Committee members are proud to be involved in this important effort and appreciative of the Board’s long-term commitment to ensuring that the principles of diversity, equity and inclusion remain meaningful both in and out of the classroom.

One of the rewarding aspects of this work to date has been the reception of our fellow community members. Our informal conversations with friends, neighbors and others makes it clear to us that the community believes there is an imperative to do this work. Simply put, they recognize its value to the mission of our schools and to the tenor of our diverse community.

1. Who We Are and How We Are Organized

The committee is currently composed of 15 individuals who have either formal or informal connections to the school district.

Donna LaRocco	Board Member
Melissa Herrera	Board Member
Markus Wilson	Board Member
Don Sturz	Superintendent
Lisa Conte	Administration/Assistant Superintendent
Jack Mitchell	Administration/Assistant Superintendent
Scott Comis	Administration/Principal
Robin Davson	Community Member
Garry Johnson	Community Member
Anthony Cruz	Community Member
Valeria Weiland	BAS PTA
Lisa Weiner	WLB PTA
Carol Wright	BAS Staff
Shira Greenblatt	RWC Staff
Jessica Wolfsdorf	WLB Staff

The group is facilitated by consultant **Tracy Gray, M.S. Ed.**, an education professional with more than 20 years of experience as a classroom teacher and school leader who has designed programs creating and directing diversity, multiculturalism, and science, technology, engineering, art, and mathematics (S.T.E.A.M.) projects. In her commitment to advance 21st century teaching and learning competency skills, Ms. Gray has established international partnerships to expand student educational, cultural, and global awareness. Tracy coordinates workshops, conferences, and professional development to assist

communities in finding and designing pathways to careers in the S.T.E.A.M. fields through her venture, The Sankofa Global Project.

Ms. Gray has been a vibrant, engaged leader of our group who has used her skills to make our inquiries and dialogue efficient and outcome oriented. We are also assisted by a communications professional who has helped us document our work and convey messages to our residents.

Our committee plan design was to meet twice each month beginning in February 2021. Owing to the ongoing impact of the pandemic, these meetings were held virtually and supplemented by ongoing emails and informal conversations among committee members.

Our work over these first few months focused on committee organization and data gathering. One of our first tasks was to define an identity for the group and its efforts, which was completed through the establishment of a Mission Statement. Specifically, we sought to frame the following questions: *Why is DEI (Diversity, Equity & Inclusion) important and what does it mean for our district?*

Our dialogues resulted in the following powerful condensed sentiments, those that we believe are the driving forces of the DEI effort:

Diversity is who we are: our students, staff, and families come from an extraordinary number of backgrounds. Therefore, it is important to appreciate that representation matters in our school classrooms, our curriculum and among our education professionals.

Equity is the state we achieve when we ensure that all students, staff, and families can equitably access everything they need to fully realize their potential.

Inclusion is the important, intentional act of bringing diverse students, staff, and families together in a manner that celebrates and values all.

Having struck a consensus on the driving forces, we then created a mission for the committee.

The mission of the Valley Stream 24 Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee is to ensure the equitable education of each and every student without regard to race, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, first language, religion, national origin, age, disability or neurodiversity. We treasure the richness of our diverse community, and value each child's experience and contributions to the learning environment. This committee will identify any fairness gaps and make recommendations to the Board of Education to mitigate them. To accomplish this the committee will:

LISTEN to the experiences of all who are part of the Valley Stream 24 community

IDENTIFY institutional obstacles to fully valuing the high regard we have for:

- the rich contributions of our diverse population

- the necessity of equal opportunity
- the inclusion of all members of our community

ADOPT substantive ways to:

- craft policies/practices that celebrate the power of our diversity, equity and inclusion
- improve our hiring processes to prioritize DEI commitments

MEASURE our progress through formal evaluation and by continuing to listen

Telling Our Story: At this juncture we established a commitment to ongoing communication to the residents of our community and staff of the district. Our intent was simple: to ensure that all constituency groups understand the work that is under way and to have opportunities to provide individual perspectives to the committee at any time. To be clear, our committee members firmly believe that at its core, our work is about the harmonious advancement of the learning interests of the community's children. That should be meaningful to all who call our district home.

With the help of committee member Dr. Don Sturz, we utilized the district's communication resources to convey our messages through Superintendent Coffee Hours, PTA Meetings, a special 'Diversity' tab on the district website, staff meetings, and social media channels of the district. At all times we welcome comments and questions about the DEI effort and the work of the committee.

Through these past several months, the committee has taken special note of the efforts of our educators to celebrate the racial, cultural and neuro diversity of our students in an authentic and meaningful manner. These dedicated professionals naturally underscore the importance of the DEI effort and make us proud to be part of this diverse and interesting community.

2. Mining Information for Analysis

With the purpose clearly defined, the committee moved on to the data gathering and analytical phase of our work. This is critical work. The context of demographic change within the community and the schools, particularly over the past 10 years, is a meaningful part of the DEI effort, as understanding *who* we are as a community allows us to better address the needs presented in our schools.

The District: Valley Stream 24 serves approximately 1,043 students in the villages of Valley Stream and a portion of Lynbrook in Nassau County, with a staff of 126 professional staff members and 92 civil service personnel. The EEOC-5 Data Report indicated the following counts based on ethnicity, race, and gender: 2 Hispanic males, 14 Hispanic females, 27 White males, 129 White females, 3 Black Males, 2 Black Females, 0 Asian males, 13 Asian females, 0 American Indian males, 2 American Indian females. The district includes three elementary school buildings, grades K–6 only. Our oldest school, Brooklyn Avenue School, is 112

years old. The William L. Buck School is 66 years old, and the Robert W. Carbonaro School is 65 years old. Our district is one of three Valley Stream Districts (the others are Elementary Districts 13 and 30) whose students graduate to a separately managed district, Valley Stream Central High School District, for grades 7 through 12. The average class size is about 22 students (all grades).

The Community and School Spending: Approximately, 3,771 residents make their home in Valley Stream UFSD #24. The median value of owner-occupied housing units (defined as the midpoint value, meaning half the homes are higher and half the homes are lower) is \$427,100. The average resident's taxes last year were \$6,872.00. Last year, the average tax increase was 3.59%. According to the NYSED School Report Card Data for Valley Stream District 24, our general education per pupil expenditure for 2018-19, the last year for which data was available, was \$15,178 and our district's special education expenditure per pupil was \$45,087.

Resident Demographic Data: The following data reflects all the residents in the Valley Stream Village, not just Valley Stream District 24 residents. Specific information reflecting Valley Stream District 24 data will be highlighted later in this report.

Most of the current demographic data was reported from the United States Census Bureau Report of 2020 (Quick Facts). In this report it was concluded that there were 37,431 people with 11,804 households residing in the Village. The racial composition of the village as of this report was:

2020 Community Racial Compositions

28.4% White (not Hispanic or Latino)

26.9% African American

25.5% Hispanic or Latino

14.4% Asian

5.4% from two or more races

0.0% Native American

The percentage of foreign-born persons was 35.3% and 41.9% of persons aged five and above have a language other than English spoken at home.

Median household income for the village was \$110,189. About 4.2% of the population were in poverty. Cited from Data USA, it was reported that the most common racial or ethnic group living below the poverty line in Valley Stream is White, followed by Hispanic. According to the United States Census Report, about 4.7% of the population are children under the age of 5 years, 21.7% are under the age of 18, and 14.6% are persons 65 years or over. The average household size was 3.18 persons. Households with a computer were 94.7%, and households with a broadband Internet subscription were 90.7%.

2010 Community Racial Compositions

46.0% White (not Hispanic or Latino)

22.2% Hispanic or Latino

18.6% African American

11.4% Asian

3.5% from two or more races

0.0% Native American

Therefore, in just the 10-year period between 2010 and 2020, the White population of the community declined markedly, the African American population grew markedly, and the Hispanic or Latino population, Asian American population and multiracial population all grew modestly.

The Schools: As of 2020, the racial composition* of the students in Valley Stream District 24 is:

1.4% Asian/Hispanic

15% Asian/ Non-Hispanic

3.3% Black/African American/Hispanic

21.3% Black/African American/Non-Hispanic

3% Multiracial/Non-Hispanic

36.2% White/Hispanic

17.1% White/Non-Hispanic

** this does not add up to 100% based upon certain statistical considerations*

According to data for the 2020 school year, 36.9% of the students receive free lunch and 5.93% receive reduced lunch. This was similar to the year prior, where 36.39% received free lunch and 6.08% received reduced lunch.

The New York State Report Card provides information to the public on school/district staff, students, and measures of school and district performance as required by the 'Every Student Succeeds' Act (ESSA). ESSA

is about creating a set of interlocking strategies to promote educational equity by providing support to districts and schools as they work to ensure that every student succeeds and thrives in school no matter who they are, where they live, where they go to school, or where they come from.

Per the U.S. Department of Education, all students and all student subgroups of the Valley Stream District 24 (2019-20 and 2020-21) are in Good Standing. This includes Asian or Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander; Black or African American; Hispanic or Latino; Multiracial; White; English Language Learners; Economically Disadvantaged; Students with Disabilities - Targeted Support and Improvement (Brooklyn Avenue School).

School Climate surveys were administered in 2019 and 2020. School Climate surveys were administered to district K-6 staff in 2019, and to sixth grade students. Results can be found at the following link:

<https://sites.google.com/vs24gapps.org/2019-valley-stream-ufsd-24/home>

In 2020, School Climate surveys were administered to Parents K-6, Teachers K-6, Non-instructional Staff K-6, and to fifth and sixth grade students. ED School Climate Surveys from the Department of Education National Center for Education Statistics were administered. The district partnered with Nassau BOCES to administer these and receive results.

The DEI Committee created surveys to gather feedback from students, staff, and parents/guardians for the 2020-21 school year. The surveys are located on the DEI Website.

Other Data and Conclusion: The totality of the committee's data retrieval and review includes the following elements:

- Demographic Data Breakdown
- Tenured Staff Data
- Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) - 5 Reporting Data was reviewed.
- Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) District Subgroups Data Comparison Chart
- NWEA Fall Subgroup Data
- 2019 School Climate Survey and Results
- 2020 School Climate Survey and Results
- 2021 Student Survey and Results
- 2021 Staff Survey and Results
- 2021 Parent/Guardian Survey and Results

3. Post-Analysis Areas to Address

Our deep dive into data conclusively demonstrated the community's and school district's rapid demographic changes. While DEI strategies are recognized for their positive impacts in all school districts, the committee believes there is a particular urgency in our district given these changes.

Our review of the district's **recruitment practices** has surfaced great progress being made in the attempt to bring a more diverse candidate pool for positions that open. In the past, the district, as do most school districts on Long Island, only posted positions on OLAS. In the past year the Valley Stream 24 School District has embarked upon ambitious recruitment efforts to create greater diversity amongst staff. Recruitment actions thus far are:

- We have reached out and created partnerships with nearly two dozen colleges and universities in the metropolitan New York area. Through direct monthly outreach, these partnerships aim to encourage diverse teaching program students to consider Valley Stream 24 when seeking student teaching placements and observation practicums and when applying for substitute teaching positions and leave replacement positions. This creates a natural pipeline for future positions in the district.
 - We have participated in the Nassau BOCES Diversity Initiative through speaking at virtual meetings and workshops attended by diverse teaching candidates and presenting an introduction video to familiarize them with our district.
 - Anticipated position openings are posted on multiple education job search sites and sent directly to the colleges and universities with which we have partnered. We have also outreached to and sent postings to organizations serving diverse teachers such as the Long Island Latino Teachers Association, the Long Island Black Educators Association, and the NAACP.
- a. We are pleased to note the appointment of the district's first female African American principal, who will begin her service to the district in July. We strongly recommend that the district build upon this success with continued use of innovative recruitment practices and celebrate the growing diversity of our professional and support staff.
 - b. We applaud our educators who have already introduced the power of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in the classroom to the benefit of their students. On both a teaching and administrative level, the committee believes it is important to **expand instructional materials** to include those that reflect the diverse races, ethnicities, and cultural backgrounds and neuro diversities of our students. In a similar vein, we believe it is necessary for our educators and administrators to communicate **the importance of diverse cultural traditions** and **diverse family structures** of our students and their families.

- c. The committee believes that **culturally responsive teaching and learning** should be maintained as a priority in our district, not simply as a matter of an expanded embrace of diversity but as a practical matter of maintaining academic rigor.
- d. We are aware of the **professional development commitments** that have been made for teachers to promote DEI and Cultural Responsiveness and believe the district must maintain this momentum by continuing to fund (or even augment, as needed) these important in-service obligations.
- e. Finally, as noted earlier in this progress report, the committee has come away from its initial phase of work with tremendous positive feedback from the Valley Stream #24 staff and broader community. We believe that the district’s efforts to bring these good messages to our residents must continue, and the district must always **seek to enhance channels of communication** for parents/guardians that will provide optimal access and involvement in the interest of the education of students.

4. Implementation Plan

<i>What</i>	<i>How</i>		<i>Who</i>	<i>Timeline</i>	<i>Support</i>	<i>Responsibility</i>
Strategies	Major Tasks / Activities	Professional Development	Target Population	Dates	Funding Sources	Accountability
Continue practices that increase staff diversity	Recruitment (see Section 4)		Potential applicants	Ongoing	District	Central Administration Board of Education
Provide DEI Strategies	Professional Development	Workshop	All Teaching Staff	Fall 2021	District	Consultant
Maintain Academic Rigor, Cultural Responsiveness lessons and neurodiversity					District	

training and integrate in curriculum.						
Expand instructional materials that reflect students' culture, background, ethnicity, and identity and diverse needs.					District	
Communicate importance of cultural tradition and acceptance.					District	
Enhance parent/guardian communication, access, and Involvement					District	

5. Moving Forward: Monitoring and Evaluating Progress

As this committee's work is ongoing, we believe a continuous feedback loop to measure 'progress toward the promise' of DEI principles is required. The following efforts should be undertaken to allow this committee to continue reporting to the Board of Education on the progress we are making

- a. With benchmarked demographic and survey data complete, annual follow-up surveys should be conducted to measure perception change from year over year.
- b. Staff members should be asked to grade the value of their professional development resources to ensure value and applicability in the classroom. In addition,
- c. Results of NYSED assessments Grades 3 – 6 should be reviewed with a keen eye on maintaining academic rigor, as should the NWEA Measures of Academic Progress (Primary) K- Gr. 2, and NWEA Measures of Academic Progress (Grades 3-6).
- d. Annual 'new data' review by the committee will, if warranted, result in written strategy changes recommended to the Board.
- e. Implementation strategies will be reviewed by the committee for timeliness and efficacy, with recommendations to the board, if warranted.

- f. Subsequent communications with the broader public should focus on the committee's ongoing work, highlight specific success stories, and introduce changes that were inspired by the committee's ongoing analysis.

The committee's members remain grateful to the Board of Education for inspiring and supporting this work. We are proud to be part of the Valley Stream 24 school community!