

RSU 26

EQUITY ACTION PLAN

RSU 26 will meet each individual where they are by providing the support and resources they need to succeed.

RSU 26 recognizes the work of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion is both a process and commitment that never ends.

The implementation of each action strategy for each Key Priority will address barriers so that each individual has the opportunity to develop their potential for the passions and possibilities they choose.

FOUNDATIONAL EQUITY PRINCIPLES

SAFETY AND BELONGING FOR EACH INDIVIDUAL

Co-create an atmosphere where each individual feels comfortable being their entire self.

CONTINUOUS GROWTH MINDSET

Embrace a growth mindset through vulnerability around Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion exploration and practice cultural humility.

IDENTITY AND CULTURAL RESPONSIVENESS

Ensure the culture of our schools reflects and honors the evolving cultural identities of all members of our community.

CULTURE REPRESENTS the shared values, norms, traditions, customs, history, and beliefs of a group of people. Cultural diversity includes a multitude of aspects including age, disability, education, ethnicity, family, gender, gender expression, geography, language, occupation, race, religion, sexual orientation, and socio-economic status. Each individual's cultural identities bring diversity to our community.

KEY PRIORITIES AND ACTION STRATEGIES



COMMUNITY

- Communicate the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion plan to all stakeholders.
- Develop an approach to engage new students that is inclusive of the family unit, and emphasizes awareness of current student's developing cultural identity.
- Rigorously explore our school culture, what we are projecting to the community, and barriers to access in order to create thoughtful change driven by findings.



CULTURAL CONSCIOUSNESS AND COMPETENCY

- Grow through the exploration and celebration of diversity in our community (schools, town, country, globe).
- Increase engagement for all stakeholders through exploration of our individual and collective cultures, identities, and biases in order to grow and develop their cultural knowledge and cultural competency skills.



CURRICULUM, INSTRUCTION AND ASSESSMENT

- Review curriculum for cultural inclusiveness, representation and accuracy.
- Develop a Student Success Plan (SSP) for each student that identifies their individual definition of success and maps each student's education to their passions and possibilities. Empower students & families to take an active role in charting their own futures.
- Know, understand, and apply culturally competent instruction & assessment.

Regional School Unit (RSU) 26 EQUITY ACTION PLAN

RSU 26 Mission:

Cultivating a community of responsible, respectful, and passionate learners

RSU 26 Board Statement on Racism & Social Justice, June 2020

The RSU 26 board believes that systemic racism in our country is a pressing issue. RSU 26 is a district full of talented and caring people who can accomplish much when we all work together. We believe that addressing systemic racism requires this kind of focused, collaborative attention as a district.

Towards this end, the board reiterates our strong commitment to enforcement of existing policies prohibiting discrimination (AC policies) against students, employees and community members. However, we also recognize that no institution is perfect and every institution has room for improvement. Towards this end, the board embraces its role as leaders of the district in listening and learning about areas needing improvement. We further commit to take actions on what is learned, including updating policies and ensuring suitable staff training as necessary where policies are not working.

The board also recognizes that racial and economic injustice are intertwined, and recommits to delivering maximal economic opportunities to all of our students through an excellent education directed toward individual needs and supported by food security, technology access, and other necessary prerequisites for education.

The board additionally recognizes that as an educational institution we have an important role in preparing future generations to be civically engaged adults. To this end, it is important to teach our full history as a nation, including our failures to live up to our founding ideals and how those failures continue into the present day. We also emphasize teaching students how they can participate in improving our country going forward.

The board encourages ongoing discussion within its students, staff and community on this topic and specifically welcomes further feedback to the board on areas where the board or the district can improve.

Education is one of the greatest equalizers and removers of injustice in this country, which is why many employees and board members choose to devote time and energy to this district. This makes it especially important that every person regardless of race, creed, ethnicity, ability, socioeconomic background, sex, sexual orientation or gender identity feel not just safe but welcome and valued in our schools.

Rationale:

We believe all students should be able to say, “I feel safe, and I belong here” in RSU 26 schools. To this end, beginning in 2020, RSU 26 undertook work on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI). District staff spent the 2020-21 school year learning about DEI and Cultural Competence through which we learned of equity audits. RSU 26 decided to undertake an equity audit to learn more about our district’s strengths and growth areas around DEI. Equity Alliance Minnesota partnered with the district to conduct an equity review in the fall of 2021 from which an Equity Review Report was received in January 2022. The review report can be found [here](#).

The Equity Review report led to district work around the development of an Equity Action Plan. This plan will help us determine next steps for the ongoing work to achieve educational equity for all students. The resulting plan follows in this document and was developed by a representative stakeholder team, the RSU 26 Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Leadership Team. The DEI Team developed this plan based on a review of the equity review report, feedback from stakeholders, and consultation with Equity Alliance Minnesota. Throughout this process we came to understand best practices for moving this important work forward. Though this work will be ongoing, and doesn’t have a finish line, we will know we have an equitable school system when every individual can say “I feel safe, and I belong here.”

Equity:

Equity is meeting each individual where they are by providing the support and resources they need to succeed. Equity is addressing barriers so that each individual has the opportunity to develop their potential for the passion and path they choose.

Equity Statement:

RSU 26 will meet each individual where they are by providing the support and resources they need to succeed. The implementation of each action strategy for each Key Priority will address barriers so that each individual has the opportunity to develop their potential for the passions and possibilities they choose.

Our Foundational Equity Principles:

Safety & Belonging for Each Individual	Continuous Growth Mindset	Identity & Cultural Responsiveness
Co-create an atmosphere where each individual feels comfortable being their entire self.	Embrace a growth mindset through vulnerability around Diversity, Equity & Inclusion exploration and practice cultural humility.	Ensure the culture of our schools reflects and honors the evolving cultural identities of all members of our district community.

These foundational principles apply to all RSU 26 programming in our classrooms, as well as co-curricular and extracurricular activities.

Culture:

Culture represents the shared values, norms, traditions, customs, history, and beliefs of a group of people. Cultural diversity includes a multitude of aspects including age, disability, education, ethnicity, family, geography, gender, gender expression, language, occupation, race, religion, sexual orientation, and socio-economic status. Each individual’s cultural identities bring diversity to our community.

Key Priorities:

Community	Cultural Consciousness & Competency	Curriculum, Instruction & Assessment
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Members of the Equity Action Plan Team:

Peter Buehner, Orono Middle School (OMS), School Counselor	Cami Carter, Orono High School (OHS) Teacher	Meredith Diamond, OHS Co-Principal	Tyler DuBois, Parent
Lisa Erhardt, Asa Adams School (Asa), School Counselor	Ben Francis, Student	Richard Glencross, OMS Principal	Shana Goodall, OHS Teacher
Meredith Higgins, Superintendent	Akouvi Komedja, Student	Brian J. McGill, Board Member	Lissa Pelletier, OMS Teacher
Kevin Roberge, Board Member/Parent	Sam Runco, OHS Co-Principal	José Alicea-Santiago, Parent	Troy Wagstaff, OHS School Counselor
Susan Smith, Director of Learning	Maddy West, Asa Assistant Principal	Allison Woodard, Asa Literacy Coach	Kerri Wyman, Asa Principal

KEY PRIORITY A: COMMUNITY

RSU 26 will create a plan of action which clearly communicates the purpose and function of the DEI plan to all stakeholders. With an emphasis on safety and belonging within our schools, the plan of action will provide an ongoing dialogue where every individual involved understands their role and responsibility in working towards a more inclusive culture within the community.

Action Strategy (The work that will be done to bring the Key Priority to life)

A.1. Communicate the Diversity, Equity & Inclusion plan to all stakeholders.

What are the key steps?

1. Develop Communication Plan to share the DEI action plan and ongoing updates of DEI work
 - Social media - engage students to help with this
 - Student “takeover” of social media each month (for given scheduled timeframe) to promote DEI
 - Webpage - create a page dedicated to DEI and keep updated with ongoing work
 - Board meeting updates
 - Seek opportunities to present DEI plan at Town meetings
 - Calendar of events, opportunities for learning, conversations, meetings to share with stakeholders
 - Share information with students through meetings, classes, advisories, forums (face-to-face sessions during school day would be most effective)
 - Newsletters/district-wide email communications ~~feature section~~ highlighting DEI work/updates
 - Targeted communication to co-curricular and extracurricular program staff
2. Pursue collaborations to grow partnerships with town(s)/community partners/stakeholders
 - Work with towns to partner with us for community outreach of DEI work (sign, newsletter, websites)
 - Work with partnering organizations within school community to bridge DEI work (Parent Teacher Organization, Boosters, Orono Schools Coalition for the Arts - OSCARr, etc)
 - Research community partners for potential partnerships/collaborations for DEI work
 - University of Maine, Orono (UMaine) - Office of Diversity & Inclusion, Rainbow Resource Center, Multicultural Resource Center, Intersectional Feminist Resource Center, etc
 - Orono PRIDE - local 501c3 nonprofit
 - And more!

Who needs to be involved?

1. Communication Plan - Director of Learning will collect information from Superintendent, Central Office Administrative Assistant, DEI Leadership Team, and any others involved in DEI activities

Director of Learning to provide information to the Social Media Coordinator to update RSU accounts

Director of Learning to provide information to the Administrative Assistant in Central Office to update Website & Newsletter, Calendar of Events

Director of Learning, Social Media Coordinator, and DEI Leadership Team student representatives will coordinate the social media takeover initiative

School-based DEI Leadership Members to develop and implement plan for student information sharing initiative

2. Stakeholders are invited to recommend partnerships and connect these individuals with Director of Learning or Superintendent

What are the measures of success?

1. Completion of outlined key steps

Survey data reveals increased awareness of DEI work

Engagement with DEI activities

Social Media and website analytics to determine engagement with content

Self-assessment of action plan by DEI Leadership Team annually

2. Survey collaborative community partners regarding effectiveness of partnerships

Self-assessment to include reflection on value and effectiveness of community partnerships

Other Considerations (Related to Timeline and Resources)

Begin as soon as possible (ASAP)/Ongoing - beginning with communication of action plan on various mediums

In-person engagement to begin in fall 2022 (October/November)

Human Resources required

KEY PRIORITY A: COMMUNITY

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Action Strategies (The work that will be done to bring the Key Priority to life)

A.2. Develop an approach to engaging new students that is inclusive of the family unit, and emphasizes awareness of student's developing cultural identities.

What are the key steps?

1. Ambassador/guide program - students and staff would be ambassadors to meet and support prospective & new students
 - Student ambassador/guide tour student & family around school & provide an overview of offerings/programs
 - Give new students an Orono shirt/merchandise upon enrollment
 - Develop interest & introductory surveys (or other tools) for new students & families to complete to share information about the student with school counselor to help connect them with others & programs in school
 - Student ambassador/guide & Classroom Teacher (Asa)/Advisory teacher(OMS/OHS) find out student's background, identity, and interests in order to help connect them with relevant programs, other students/faculty, etc
 - Student ambassador/guide connects with student weekly for first month of school (check-ins, lunch, etc)
 - Classroom Teacher (Asa)/Advisory teacher (OMS/OHS) connects with student and family weekly during first month of school
 - Intersection with Student Success Plan (SSP) process - connection with student & family
 - K-12 New Family evening session (bi-monthly) led by Student ambassadors/guide and Counselors/Advisor to share information about school community, help new families connect with others, and to help us get to know new families

Who needs to be involved?

School Counselors, Student ambassadors/guides (3rd/4th - 12th grade), Faculty Advisors, Administrators, DEI Leadership Team members

What are the measures of success?

Survey new families & students level of connectedness, belonging & needs at intervals (after 1st month, 3rd month, 6th month, year)
Assessment of student ambassador/guide program activities/results

Other Considerations (Related to Timeline and Resources)

Fall 2022 - begin forming student ambassador/guide program

Funds to hold events for new students & families

Funds for Orono merchandise

KEY PRIORITY A: COMMUNITY

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Action Strategies (The work that will be done to bring the Key Priority to life)

A.3. Rigorously explore our school culture, what we are projecting to the community, and barriers to access in order to create thoughtful change driven by findings.

What are key steps:

1. Develop questions/list of data points to further explore & identify subgroups for targeted data collection (e.g. - examining sense of safety and inclusion for marginalized subgroups)
2. Develop surveys and/or other data collection methods (forums, focus groups) to gather deeper information from stakeholders (students, staff, parents, and community members) on questions/data points (ensure survey, forums, focus groups allow for open response to get as much information as possible)
3. Analyze results of data collected and share/discuss with relevant groups (DEI Committee, Administrative Team, School Counselors, faculty, etc)
4. Develop action strategies to address findings and to inform future data collection, as appropriate

Who needs to be involved?

DEI Subcommittee & select staff

What are the measures of success?

Surveys created & administered/focus groups/forums held

Actionable strategies developed as a result of data collected

Administer repeat surveys of all stakeholders to measure improvement over time (annually)

Other Considerations (Related to Timeline and Resources)

Begin developing questions Fall 2022 & create data collection strategies to be initiated by end of 2022

survey cost

KEY PRIORITY B: CULTURAL CONSCIOUSNESS & COMPETENCY

RSU 26 will ensure that the culture of our schools reflects and honors the evolving cultural identities of all members of our district community. We will provide professional learning opportunities to all stakeholders to grow and develop their cultural consciousness and cultural competency so that every individual feels safe and experiences a sense of belonging.

Action Strategy (The work that will be done to bring the Key Priority to life)

B.1. Grow through the exploration and celebration of diversity in our community (schools, town, country, globe).

What are key steps:

1. Working in parallel with the engagement process for new students & families, develop an engagement process for faculty, staff, students and families that is an introduction to our district's cultural diversity, values, and community and an invitation to share culture, build connections, and find belonging
 - Differentiate a faculty/staff onboarding process from a student/family engagement process and ensure that both are in dialogue with the key steps articulated in the other key priorities
2. Develop a process that creates the opportunity for school community members to share their culture, and ensure that celebration of our community's multiculturalism is institutionalized
3. Work as a district to develop a comprehensive and dynamic profile about our district's culture and identity—shared widely and updated annually
4. Identify and address barriers to participation and engagement for all stakeholders in the school community and bridge the community's access to resources and each other

Who needs to be involved?

School teams, students, their families, and the wider community.

What are the measures of success?

- A broadened definition of success that is truly reflective of our community's diversity (as indicated by SSP's, post-graduation interviews, and other measures) and a shift in practice that supports this updated definition of success
- Surveys created & administered/Focus groups/forums held
- Increase in opportunities for embedded, community-wide, and strengths-based celebrations of diversity

Other Considerations (Related to Timeline and Resources)

- Must be an ongoing process in need of perpetual revision
- Explore partnerships with UMaine and community partners

KEY PRIORITY B: CULTURAL CONSCIOUSNESS & COMPETENCY

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Action Strategy (The work that will be done to bring the Key Priority to life)

B.2. Increase engagement for all stakeholders through exploration of our individual and collective cultures, identities, and biases in order to grow and develop their cultural knowledge and cultural competency skills.

What are key steps:

1. Director of Learning in collaboration with DEI Leadership Team (and others) to articulate what they see as the steps necessary to build capacity for this exploration
2. Training for all staff (including co-curricular and extracurricular staff) on cultural competency
 - Normalize growth without shame through difficult conversations, mistake-making, and empathy.
 - Introduce, institutionalize, and educate about equity-oriented vocabulary that reflects a commitment to cultural knowledge and cultural competency.
3. Develop a strategy/protocol for dialogue about the need for cultural knowledge and competency—first among faculty.
4. Provide opportunities for community/family/parent engagement with cultural competence training.

Who needs to be involved?

- DEI Leadership Team and those recruited to continue this work long term
- All community stakeholders—district leadership, faculty, students, families, and community members

What are the measures of success?

- Data from follow-up equity surveys
- Data indicating increased frequency of, comfort with, and skill with conversations about culture, identity, and bias
- Community participation

Other Considerations (Related to Timeline and Resources)

- Changes may bring increased resistance
- Quantitative data may need to be partnered with qualitative for a full picture
- Timeline should be flexible and data collection/evaluation should be rolling
- Be aware of over relying on marginalized community members for the bulk of this work

KEY PRIORITY C: CURRICULUM, INSTRUCTION AND ASSESSMENT

RSU 26 will transform our curriculum, instruction and assessment practices so that every individual sees themselves reflected in their studies, and each person learns about and celebrates the cultures and challenges of our community.

Action Strategy (The work that will be done to bring the Key Priority to life)

C.1. Review curriculum for cultural inclusiveness, representation, and accuracy.

What are key steps:

1. Start a more immediate DEI focused curriculum review process
 - Coordinate with curriculum committee process but don't wait for 5 year cycle
 - Work by subject areas (math, science, english, social studies, visual & performing arts, health & physical ed, world languages, cte)
 - Focus on current curriculum documents, instructional materials, current teaching
 - Report opportunities to increase topic coverage, representation, and inclusiveness of examples, people, ideas
2. Develop a standardized tool to assess curriculum and ensure fidelity of application across content areas and grade levels, consider piloting tool with one content area initially
3. Add DEI criteria to the rubric for standing 5 year revolving curriculum review

Who needs to be involved?

- Director of Learning
- Curriculum Committee (Vertical content areas and district committee)
- Teachers by subject area & departments and grade level teams

What are the measures of success?

- Changes to what is taught in the classroom across all grade levels
- Surveys of stakeholders

Other Considerations (Related to Timeline and Resources)

- One content area could take 12-18 months to complete
- Begin with pilot content area(s) in 2022-23 and remaining content areas in 2023-24

KEY PRIORITY C: CURRICULUM, INSTRUCTION AND ASSESSMENT

RSU 26 will transform our curriculum, instruction and assessment practices so that every individual sees themselves reflected in their studies, and each person learns about and celebrates the cultures and challenges of our community.

Action Strategy (The work that will be done to bring the Key Priority to life)

C.2. Develop a Student Success Plan (SSP) for each student that identifies their individual definition of success and maps each student's education to their passions and possibilities. Empower students and families to take an active role in charting their own futures.

What are key steps:

1. Each school devotes staff meeting time to discussing incorporation of asking students their goals and seeing how their education maps to these goals
2. Cross-school committee develops a PreKindergarten-Grade 12 shared vision
3. Implement infrastructure to maintain an SSP for each student
4. Pilot with cohort in each school, then reflect and expand to all grade levels
5. Develop framework & expectations for updating SSP's

Who needs to be involved?

- Director of Learning, building administrators, school counselors
- All teachers and staff
- Students and families
- Community and partner organizations

What are the measures of success?

- Graduating OHS seniors with a SSP that tracked them for 12 years (and four years for partner school students) that informed their education throughout
- Evaluate student engagement (behavior data, attendance data, assessment data)
- Survey students and families regularly to check in on connectedness of education experiences to students' passions/needs.
- Postgraduate follow-up.

Other Considerations (Related to Timeline and Resources)

KEY PRIORITY C: CURRICULUM, INSTRUCTION AND ASSESSMENT

RSU 26 will transform our curriculum, instruction and assessment practices so that every individual sees themselves reflected in their studies, and each person learns about and celebrates the cultures and challenges of our community.

Action Strategy (The work that will be done to bring the Key Priority to life)

C.3. Know, understand, and apply culturally competent instruction & assessment.

What are key steps:

1. Research best practices and assemble materials and prioritize
2. On-going professional development time to communicate, train, and discuss - including time for reflection and assessment at grade level breakout discussion groups on implementation
3. Review and update communications (outward facing communications: social media, websites, handbooks, syllabi, curriculum documents, etc.) to reflect the commitment to culturally competent instruction & assessment

Who needs to be involved?

- Director of Learning in collaboration with DEI Leadership Team subcommittee
- All teachers and staff
- Supervision and Evaluation Group ~~Team~~ & administrators

What are the measures of success?

- Incorporate into DEI elements into evaluation
- Student survey
- Evaluate Professional Development (retrospective assessment of time spent, staff Professional Development evaluation questionnaires)

Other Considerations (Related to Timeline and Resources)

- Consider developing statements illustrating inclusiveness & purposeful consideration of cultural competence in school curriculum documents