

Teacher Diversification Project
Barbara A. Malone, Executive Director of Human Resources
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Overview:

We discussed our efforts to diversify our staff during the annual Personnel Report at the October 6, 2021 school committee meeting. At that meeting we announced that we had found a new website for attracting diverse candidates. We also shared that across all categories of employees, 17% of our new hires for the 2021-2022 school year self-reported in diverse federal categories July 1-September 1, 2021, as compared to 5.3% just three years before. We also indicated that during the 2022-2023 school year we would be participating in The Department of Education Diversity in Education Professional Learning Community, which we have referred to internally as the Teacher Diversification Project. Tonight we are here to provide a report on the Teacher Diversification Project.

We solicited volunteers from across the district which resulted in the following team members:

Maura Egan, English Teacher, Oak Middle School
Chris Girardi, Principal, Major Howard W. Beal School (K-4)
Nga Huynh, Assistant Principal, Shrewsbury High School
Barb Malone, Executive Director of Human Resources
Kara Richardson, School Adjustment Counselor, Walter J. Paton School
Denise Satterfield, Mathematics Teacher, Shrewsbury High School
Tiffany Vega, School Counselor, Shrewsbury High School
Patricia Waterhouse, Director of Middle School Special Education

The Teacher Diversification Project was sponsored by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, led by Sylvia Lam, Strategic Initiatives Specialist at the department and Shay Edmond, Associate Commissioner and was specifically focused on diversification in teaching and other professional roles. The Department also engaged the New Teacher Project Reimagine Teaching as facilitators and to help with design and execution of the program. Shrewsbury Public Schools participated with 102 other Massachusetts district or charter school teams and each team had 5-8 participants. Some activities were across districts so that we could learn from each other, and other activities were group activities or district-specific activities. The goal of the project was to give districts the development and the tools to envision their own path to diversification of their teacher workforce.

The District invested significant time and resources to this project, which was focused on learning ways to increase the diversity of our teachers and professional staff. The District's team met across the course of the 2021-2022 school year from October through June to participate in a total of 8 three-hour sessions, dedicated 8-12 hours of time to Shrewsbury-only team meetings, and engaged in personal preparation time of 8 hours. The guiding workbook for the series was [*Promising Recruitment, Selection, and Retention for a Diverse Massachusetts Teacher Workforce*](#) and included multiple resources for participating districts. Major topics included:

- Understand why teacher racial and ethnic diversity matters to your students and district
- Audit your current talent management processes, understand the experience of your stakeholders, and set goals
- Adjust your talent practices
- Create a long-term diversification strategy

Data

Data doesn't always tell the whole story when it comes to issues of diversity in employees and students. For example, sometimes families or employees don't self-report their diversity. Some may find the federal categories to be out-of-date or offensive, and others report, but the reporting categories don't reflect the unique diversity of the student or staff member. For example, Portuguese-speaking Brazilian immigrants will likely self-report as "white", while providing rich diversity to our community. In addition, there are some areas of diversity that are not captured by federal reporting categories, such as GLBTQ faculty or students, or faculty whose children are diverse, even if they themselves are not considered so. Another excellent example is the category of "Asian" covering numerous different countries of origin and the respective cultures both within and between those countries. In addition, the statistical data does not reflect the diversity of religious beliefs that exist in our community.

With the above caveats in mind, here is some important data about Shrewsbury Public Schools:

**Massachusetts School and District Profiles
Shrewsbury**

Enrollment Data

Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity (2021-22)		
Race	% of District	% of State
African American	3.4	9.3
Asian	33.6	7.2
Hispanic	9.5	23.1
Native American	0.6	0.2
White	48.2	55.7
Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander	0.0	0.1
Multi-Race, Non-Hispanic	4.6	4.3

Enrollment by Gender (2021-22)		
	District	State
Female	2,928	442,763
Male	2,956	467,772
Non-Binary	1	994
Total	5,885	911,529

As you can see in the charts above, Shrewsbury students self-report as 48.2% white, 33.6% Asian, 9.5% Hispanic, and 3.4% African American.

Massachusetts School and District Profiles Shrewsbury

Staffing Data by Race, Ethnicity, Gender by Full-time Equivalents (2021-22)

	District	State
African American	10.0	6,775.0
Asian	39.8	2,560.3
Hispanic	21.6	7,601.1
White	792.2	122,811.6
Native American	1.0	143.5
Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander	2.0	96.2
Multi-Race, Non-Hispanic	7.0	813.1
Males	125.0	28,888.7
Females	747.6	111,867.1
FTE Count	873.6	140,800.7

In this chart the Department reports by Full Time Equivalent positions to provide the public information on our staff, across all roles. **This report excludes day-to-day substitutes, extended day program staff, and our cafeteria workers.** In this report our staff is 90.74% white, 4.6% Asian, 2.47% Hispanic, 1.1% African American.

When we drill further into the data, and include key subgroups of employees we find the following:

Teachers and professional roles, such as nurses, adjustment counselors, and school psychologists (533 employees):

White	91.8%
Did not report	5.25%
Hispanic	.75%
African-American	.38%
Asian	.38%
American Indian	.38%

Paraprofessionals, including ABA Technicians, Instructional Assistants, Child Specific Assistants, Tutors, and similar roles (294 employees):

White	79.93%
Asian	9.86%
Did not report	6.46%
African-American	3.06%
American Indian	.68%

In our day-to-day substitute population, which is not included in the state's reports, but have been a focus for several years of increasing our diversity (307 periodic employees):

White	59.93%
Did not report	21.50%
Asian	17.26%
African-American	.65%
Hispanic	.65%

It is clear that when we focus our efforts on diversity, the diversity of our staff improves, as it has with our substitute population. The Teacher Diversification Project was designed to focus on bringing diversity to our faculty and professional roles, which is currently 91.8% white.

Lessons Learned:

As mentioned before, one of our biggest “takeaways” was that data does not tell the whole story of diversity and we would caution the community not to overly simplify the diversity of our staff based on reporting statistics.

Our second conclusion was that we acknowledge we have work to do as a district to improve the diversity of our professional staff in particular. Because of our work on The Teacher Diversification Project we now have models and tools to consider. We can make progress now if we stay focused on strategic recruitment and retention. It was a temptation within the group to start taking on broader issues of diversity, but we realized that by focusing on the core goal of diversifying our professional staff, we believe we can make significant progress. If we try to find an answer to every issue of diversity, inclusion, equity, or belonging facing us, we may not accomplish the core goal of diversifying our faculty.

A third conclusion was that there is no “end point” to this work. The work of diversity is ongoing and ever changing in response to the needs of our students. We believe that five year strategic goal-cycles for this work will be helpful in focusing the district with an eye to both short-term and long-term gains for our students.

Short-Term Goals:

The team made some initial recommendations to Dr. Sawyer that he decided to implement immediately, so that their impact could be felt during the current hiring season for the 2022-2023 school year. These short-term goals are reflected below:

- Recruit for diversity of experience, background and talent and help with licensure as a teacher if the person doesn't have it. Don't look for licensure first; rather look for diverse, talented individuals and help them attain licensure.
- Assemble hiring teams that are themselves diverse, which means relying on our diverse parent population since we have limited racial diversity in our faculty at this time.
- Orient all search teams by utilizing a specific exercise, 'The Circle of Trust', to explore in-group bias before the team begins interviewing candidates. Teams also read an article on confirmation bias and the legal "do's and don'ts" of hiring.
- Include interview questions for all candidates that include specific questions/scenarios that address issues of diversity, belonging, inclusion, and equity

In addition, the team envisions continuing our group and expanding our work into the 2022-2023 school year (and beyond), continuing to expand our postings and presence via relationships with diverse colleges and universities, improving diverse verbiage in our postings, utilizing diverse websites, and exploration of various job and career fairs. We also acknowledge the need for expanded and continuous professional development for our District Leadership Team and search teams, and revision of our Guide to Personnel Hiring, which has been in use by the District for more than 20 years and was last revised in 2018. In the new revision we would like to create a bank of diversity-related questions for interview teams, revise all of our language with an eye to diversity, inclusion, equity, and belonging, and create a bank of "activators" for search teams that are similar to the 'Circle of Trust' exercise.

Long-Term Strategic Staffing Planning:

Our team found a framework provided by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to be very helpful for long-term planning, including a cycle of Recruit, Revitalize, and Retain for diverse faculty. We have a fairly good idea of how to recruit for the long-term including "grow your own" programs, use of internships and pre-service training and many of the other recruiting ideas already discussed. To revitalize and energize our diverse staff we will need to consider ideas like mentorships between faculty of color and development for all of our faculty members, regardless of their identity, which will require partnership between human resources and curriculum, instruction, and assessment. In order to retain our faculty we have identified mental health and well-being as key, the inclusion of diverse thoughts and ideas as we seek to find ways to retain our faculty, and ways for our faculty to obtain support from others who may have had similar experiences to them in their career.

Conclusion

Our team universally found the ideas, tools, and learning of the Teacher Diversification Project to be helpful to our thinking. With the tools we have learned we have many avenues to explore with our district leadership team to create present, near future, and far future improvements to the diversity of our professional faculty.