

Norwood Public Schools

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Norwood Schools Shares Information Regarding Ongoing District-wide Cultural Proficiency Initiatives, Trainings

NORWOOD -- Through a series of features over the coming weeks, Superintendent David Thomson would like to share with the community information regarding some of the training and initiatives Norwood Public Schools has undertaken to help further cultural proficiency and inclusion within the district.

“Many of these programs are in their very initial phases, which is for us to build realization to know where we are as a district and where we can make changes for the better,” Superintendent Thomson said. “The initiatives we have begun pursuing span schools across the district, with some also involving students, all with the goal of ensuring that the Norwood Public Schools is a welcoming and safe environment that gives all students the opportunity to learn at a high level regardless of their individual

backgrounds or experiences.”

Teachers and administrators across the secondary grade levels have begun working with [World Savvy](#), an organization that works with schools to help build global competence among students through interdisciplinary and active learning. As part of the kickoff of the partnership with the World Savvy program, World Savvy Co-Founder and CEO Dana Mortensen spoke at the district's staff convocation this year about global and cultural competency and how to get students involved in talking about and solving critical issues important to various local and global communities. In addition, a group of educators from all departments participated in a pilot program where they reviewed exemplar interdisciplinary projects and then developed their own to use with their students this year.

Educators have also begun learning how to implement the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) framework into their classrooms. The UDL framework aims to create culturally responsive practices in the schools and classrooms that recognizes that all learners are different and have different backgrounds and experiences that affect how they learn. Given large differences among students, educators learned the necessity of creating firm goals and flexible pathways to get students engaged in their learning.

As part of each initiative, educators hear from speakers who are experts in the field, as well as participate in workshops that help them work through how they can implement these initiatives in their classrooms.

Last month, the district's administration team participated in anti-racist pedagogy training led by Malika Ali of the [Highlander Institute](#), which works with districts to design, create and implement innovative teaching methods that lead to more equitable, relevant and effective schools. The pedagogy training began in November and is a six-part series for all members of the district's administration team.

In addition to work within the classroom, the district will be evaluating and updating policies as needed, looking at curriculum to ensure equal representation, as well as analyzing discipline data, test score data and more to see if there are disparities and to determine where improvements can be made.

Each of these programs is a multi-year commitment with an overall goal to provide inclusive classrooms that help teachers, staff and students develop awareness and that actively engage students in their learning and success.

These initiatives are also aligned with several of the focus points of the district's [2019-24 Strategic Plan](#), which include ensuring equity in instructional programming, developing and implementing inclusive practices that meet the diverse learning needs of students, identifying programs and resources that support continued social-emotional learning work and strengthening culturally responsive practices across the district.

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