

Norwood Public Schools

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Norwood Schools Shares Information Regarding Ongoing Training in Culturally Proficient Teaching Practices

Training Programs Include World Savvy, Universal Design for Learning, AdaptiveX, Anti-Defamation League

NORWOOD -- Through a series of features over the coming weeks and months, 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.

Teachers and staff in schools across the district are working to implement culturally responsive teaching (CRT) practices into their classrooms and curriculum. Through a range of training programs, speaker series, workshops and breakout sessions,

educators are learning and practicing how to ensure their lessons, teaching strategies and materials are equitable and inclusive of all students' backgrounds and abilities.

"We are proud to have instituted a range of training programs for our staff across the district that aim to create culturally responsive, interdisciplinary and engaging teaching methods," Superintendent Thomson said. "These programs also align with our district and individual school improvement goals to expand and improve upon our diversity, equity and inclusion practices, as well as our social-emotional learning approaches. We want to ensure our schools are safe and inclusive learning environments where students of all ages feel that they are in a classroom that respects and values their abilities, background and experiences."

In the secondary level in Norwood, staff 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 initiative, staff look at moving educational experiences from direct instruction to interdisciplinary project-based learning that's done in a way that provides a global perspective on real, critical issues. Students complete projects that help them to look at the world around them and identify and solve global issues. Students are able to apply global competency and problem solving skills, and practice empathy and respect for the different cultures and perspectives around them.

Seven teachers across grade levels and subjects at the Coakley Middle School have been part of a pilot group learning about and implementing World Savvy principles this year. Through voluntary training during the summer of 2020, teachers learned about the program and reviewed exemplar interdisciplinary projects before developing their own to use with their students in topic areas such as school waste, homelessness, food deserts and more.

At Norwood High School, approximately 20 teachers and administrators have participated in World Savvy training. Teachers of different subjects are using projects to address issues such as immigration and the school to prison pipeline, along with the statistics around these issues and the cultural pieces that play into them.

At the high school, World Savvy programming connects to the Five C's or the Portrait of the Norwood Graduate -- communication, collaboration, creativity, critical thinking and citizenship -- which are skills the school works to instill into its students.

Educators have also begun learning how to implement the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) framework into their classrooms. The UDL framework aims to create teaching strategies and practices in classrooms that recognize that all learners are different. With varied backgrounds and experiences among students that affect how they learn, through UDL training, educators learn the necessity of creating firm goals and flexible pathways to get students engaged in their learning no matter their background or learning styles.

UDL training has thus far been incorporated into professional development training at the secondary level. In the fall of 2020, consultant [Katie Novak](#) spoke to staff of grades 6-12 about the UDL framework. Secondary staff completed a follow-up training with Novak in December 2020 after spending several weeks working to implement UDL principles into their classrooms.

At Callahan Elementary, teachers are training on CRT practices through the [AdaptiveX](#) program, which offers school leader training, virtual coaching, vision setting and strategic planning, and more. The school was accepted over the summer into the [Multi-Tiered Systems of Support \(MTSS\) Culturally Responsive Teaching Academy](#) program by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE). Through workshops, mentoring sessions and module work, the program focuses on building school-level leadership, knowledge and expertise in culturally responsive teaching.

Though the program is in its infancy at Callahan Elementary, multiple staff members at the school, including classroom teachers, special education staff and adjustment counselors have already participated in several full-day workshops to learn about what CRT looks like when it's implemented in the classroom. Callahan participants have learned about inherent biases, the educational impact of race and culture and how to develop a curriculum that reflects these differences in students, with the overall goal of developing culturally responsive teaching strategies that will ensure equitable outcomes in learning.

Callahan participants are in the process of creating a vision statement and collaborating with educators across the country. They will then begin more in-depth training and coaching in CRT practices before beginning a peer-to-peer learning program where they will share training principles with staff throughout the school as well as model the principles in their classrooms.

In conjunction with the multi-year program, the school is in the process of applying for a grant through DESE to be used for instructional materials and supplies, purchasing

"Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain" by Zaretta Hammond for staff and expanding the student library.

Additionally at Callahan Elementary, staff worked with consultant [Ariel Nelson](#) in November 2020 on a program about working with marginalized students and families through CRT. Nelson will conduct a follow-up training session with staff this month.

Another major cultural proficiency program at Norwood High School is its ongoing partnership with the Anti-Defamation League (ADL). During trainings with the ADL, staff members are learning to identify and address implicit biases and other issues surrounding diversity, equity and inclusion. Through these trainings, staff are also learning how to work with each other and with their students to recognize and respond to or correct issues when they occur.

In addition to these ongoing programs, staff members for grades 6-12 will participate in Massachusetts Partnerships for Youth (MPY) training on establishing an anti-racist classroom in the spring. [Dena Simmons](#) of Yale University will also be speaking to staff district-wide and conducting breakout sessions on her work in CRT practices, understanding racial bias and the implications of racial bias this month.

To see an introduction to the ongoing district-wide training and initiatives, [click here](#).

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