

Director of Pupil Personnel Services
Report to the Board of Education
March 2016
Submitted by: Edward F. Murphy

Each year, the Woodbury Board of Education appoints the Director of PPS to serve as the Affirmative Action Officer (AAO) and Title IX coordinator for the district. The responsibilities associated with the roles include ensuring that the district adheres to mandated policies to ensure a safe and equitable school environment for students and staff. When either is in question, an investigation is conducted to reveal if a violation of the board policy occurred and an effort is made to satisfy the relief sought and document a corrective action plan to address the future. In addition to this responsibility, the AAO is required to file federal and state reports to ensure that the district is providing an education that provides equal opportunities for all students. This report to the Board of Education provides an overview of the two most recent reports filed on behalf of the district – one to the U.S. Department of Education’s Office for Civil Rights and the other to the New Jersey Department of Education.

Federal Government: Civil Rights Data Collection

The U.S. Department of Education instituted a biennial Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC) survey to obtain data related to the nation’s public school districts’ obligation to provide equal educational opportunity. To fulfill this goal, the CRDC collects a variety of information, including student enrollment and educational programs and services data that are disaggregated by race/ethnicity, sex, limited English proficiency, socio-economic status and disability.

All students Pre-Kindergarten through grade 12 are included and the data consists of everything from suspension rates to AP participation to athletic opportunities for males and females. Formal business operations are also reported to examine experience of teachers, salaries, full-time status, etc. to ensure that these matters are equally represented among schools and by classifications of students.

In August 2015, Woodbury submitted data reflective of the 2013-2014 school year. The submission was delayed 12 months due to the redesign of the government website and the enormity of the data required for each district to compile, analyze, confirm and submit. The report included hundreds of data elements that were extracted from the student information system, administrative records, and business operations reports. This submission was the second Civil Rights Data Collection that was required; the first effort was focused on 2011-2012 school year data. This federal submission only required that all information reconciled; other than receiving an acknowledgement that the data was successfully submitted, there was no other follow-up from outside entities and no obligation for districts to address any areas of concern.

State Government: Comprehensive Equity Plan

The New Jersey Department of Education notified districts in December 2015 of the requirement to complete a Comprehensive Equity Plan (CEP) to be submitted to the County Office of Education by April 1, 2016. Last submitted in May of 2007, that CEP was extended through 2012, but other than a cursory review during QSAC, the plan remained relatively dormant. Although districts continued to appoint an Affirmative Action Team (AAT) annually, the AAT existed in name only until this year .

The outline of steps to follow for the district as it appears in the CEP is as follows:

Step 1: Establish the Affirmation Action Team, N.J.A.C. 6A:7-1.5

Each district, charter school and renaissance school project shall annually designate a member of its staff as the affirmative action officer (AAO) and provide a resolution approving the AAO. The district, charter school and renaissance school project shall form an affirmative action team (AAT) – a minimum of three individuals – of whom the AAO is a member, to conduct a needs assessment and to develop the CEP. The Department encourages districts, charter schools and renaissance school projects to ensure a diverse stakeholder group and to invite a member of the community as part of the team. The members of the AAT must be identified on the form provided in this manual—Affirmative Action Team Membership Form.

Step 2: Conduct Needs Assessment

Each school district, charter school and renaissance school project board shall use the Appendix B entitled, “*Comprehensive Equity Plan Needs Assessment Checklist*,” to conduct a needs assessment of each school. This document is intended to be used as a checklist to help the AAO and the AAT identify problem areas. It must be submitted to the county office as part of the documentation that accompanies the Comprehensive Equity Plan. When citing documentation, you must include the document title, date of board of education or board of trustees adoption or page number in the document being provided. In conducting the needs assessment, the AAT will ascertain whether the school district (and each school within the district), each charter school or each renaissance school project is in compliance with each requirement in the checklist and whether there are internal monitoring procedures in place to ensure continuing compliance. Those items that need correction, or require an internal monitoring procedure or system will form the basis for the improvement strategies that will be proposed in the CEP.

The “Comprehensive Equity Plan Needs Assessment” checklist contains four sections:

- I. **Board Responsibility** - This section sets forth the types of policies and resolutions that the Board must adopt (create if nonexistent, revise if existing but deficient) in order to comply with applicable law. This

section outlines specific areas that must be addressed in these policies and resolutions.

- II. **Staff Development** - Staff development and training on equity matters is required annually for all staff, certificated and non-certificated.
- III. **School and Classroom Practices** - This section sets forth the equity requirements for four categories: curriculum, student access, guidance and physical education/athletics.
- IV. **Employment/Contract Practices** - This section outlines the basic practices that must be observed to comply with equity requirements in employment contract regulations.

The Woodbury AAT approved for the 2015-2016 school year consists of Jeff Adams, Director of Special Education and Principal; Donna Lacovara, Student Assistance Coordinator; Maurice Hines, School Counselor; Crystal Ramirez, Social Worker; and Edward Murphy, Affirmative Action Officer.

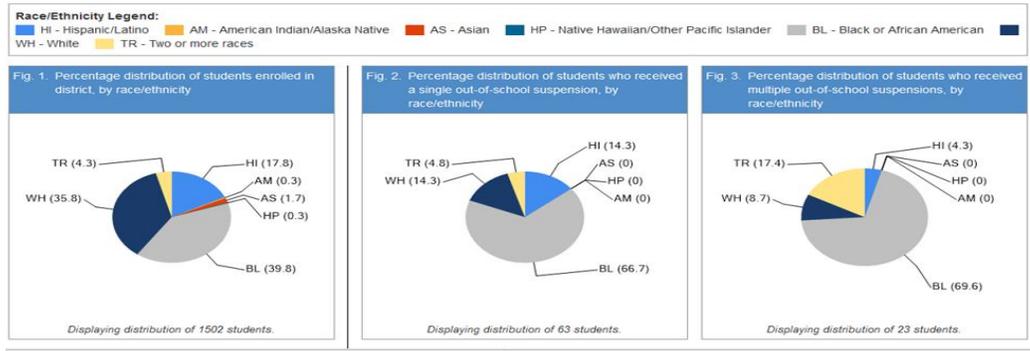
Certainly, the district has many programs and initiatives including the new Strategic Plan that enabled the AAT to indicate that the district met 53 of the 56 various elements contained with the “Needs Assessment.” The results of the assessment have revealed three areas of concern and a Corrective Action Plan was created to address each area. Two of the elements focus on curriculum. The first concern is to ensure the teaching of the Amistad in the study of the history of the United States and that it is addressed more extensively in our curriculum. The second concern is to ensure that the Holocaust is taught using developmentally appropriate methods at each level (elementary, junior high, high school).

The third area will require more focused and ongoing strategies to address the disproportionate number of African Americans being suspended in the City Schools. The effort will begin during the 2016-2017 school year by implementing a mechanism to better track student discipline so that administrators will have the ability to analyze data and make appropriate recommendations. In addition, professional development will include opportunities for staff to learn about teaching students from varied background and require training of all staff on cultural awareness.

Out-of-School Suspensions and Expulsions
 Woodbury City Public School District, NJ

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The entire CEP is being submitted for Board approval to coincide with this report. The report includes the entire Needs Assessment and the accompanying Corrective Action Plan developed to specifically address the three areas that the AAT found the district was currently not compliant.

Finally, it was interesting to see the cross-over and consistency between what the CRDC and the CEP reported on similar data. Although CRCD was successfully submitted over the last four years, the information did not become useful until the AAT turned to that federal report and was able to then analyze the data to complete the state CEP. Recognition that there is a dramatic difference in the suspension rates of African American students in comparison to their peers is a first step; the commitment of the board of education and the staff to carry out the measures outlined in the Corrective Action Plan will move the district toward compliance.

The members of the AAT clearly identified areas the district needs to address to better ensure that Woodbury delivers an education that is equitable for all students and the team was courageous to document it on the plan submitted for approval.