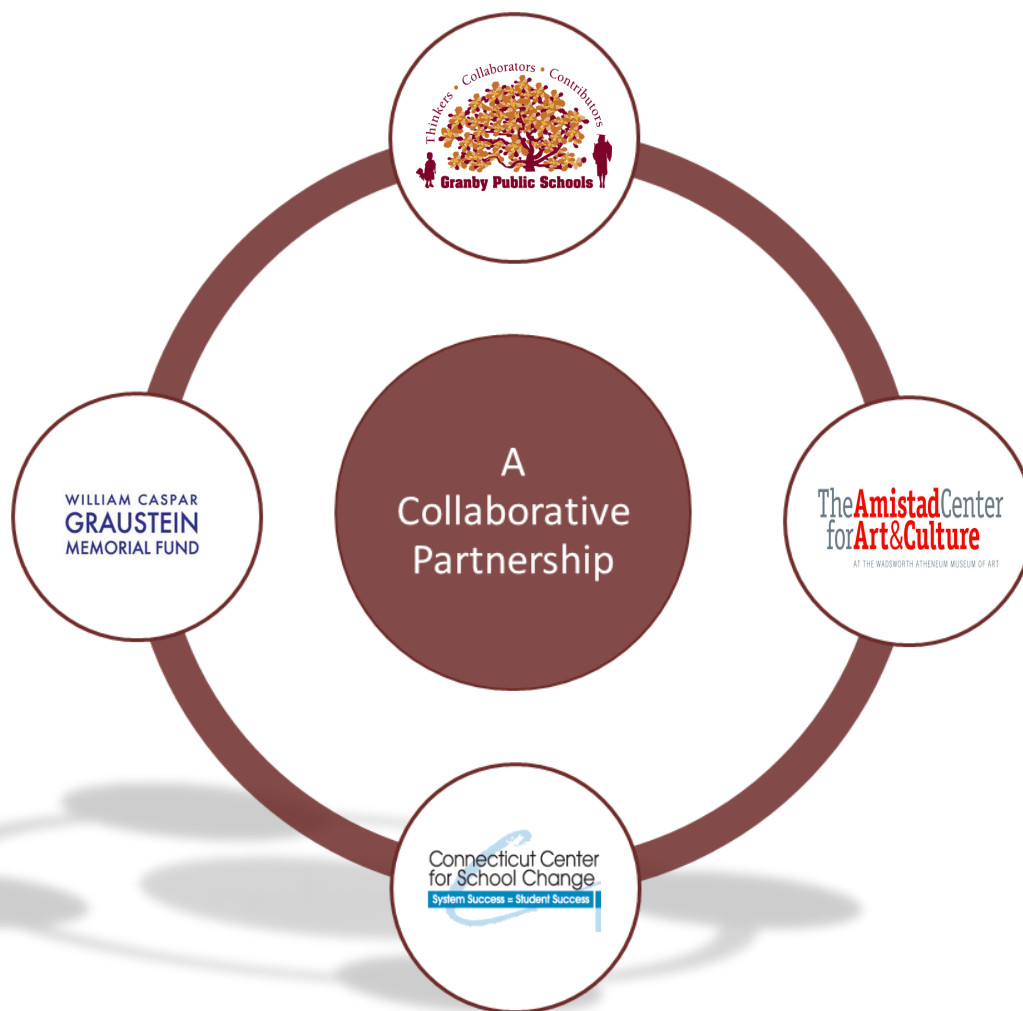


Executive Summary

Granby Public Schools Equity Taskforce

April 2018



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Granby Public Schools' Mission Statement:

All students will become powerful thinkers, effective collaborators, and compassionate contributors in preparation for success in a dynamic, interdependent world.

Taskforce Statement of Equitable Practices:

Equitable practices in the Granby Public Schools ensure that all students achieve at high levels when outcomes are not predicted by race, religion, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, gender, gender identity, or sexual orientation; and barriers are removed to meet the needs of students of all abilities and backgrounds; thereby realizing the district mission for all students to become powerful thinkers, effective collaborators, and compassionate contributors.

Grant Overview:

Moving to Action for Equitable Classrooms, a grant funded by the William Caspar Graustein Memorial Fund, provided the opportunity for a 10-month equity-focused partnership between the Granby Public Schools, the Connecticut Center for School Change (CCSC), and the Amistad Center for Culture & Change. The partnership focused on uncovering and addressing the systemic inequities and disparities that contribute to the persisting achievement gaps amongst Granby's student population.

Granby has exhibited a long-term district commitment to equity, inclusive of specific Board of Education goals and School Improvement Plan priorities. Despite a five-year equity focus, gaps in achievement between Granby resident and non-resident students, between students of color and white students, and between students with IEPs and 504 plans and others have remained consistent. The partnership between Granby and the CCSC worked toward surfacing the systemic causes of the gaps and offering strategies that will lead to a decrease in the persistent achievement gaps.

Moving to Action for Equitable Classrooms was designed to develop leadership capacity in order to shift mindsets and implement equity-focused classroom, school, and district practices. The CCSC, in collaboration with The Amistad Center for Art and Culture, provided expertise, coaching, facilitation, and technical assistance to district leaders and a guiding coalition, The Granby Public Schools Equity Taskforce. The focus of the partnership efforts included:

- Understanding the root causes of inequity, the organizational contributors to that inequity, ways educators may sometimes inadvertently reinforce those inequities, and recommend change to policies and practices to address inequities.
- Developing and embedding processes and structures for sustained cycles of planning, acting, monitoring and adjusting;
- Changing long-standing mindsets and practices of all the stakeholders to create deep cultural transformation within the district; and
- Establishing both relational and reciprocal professional accountability.



Figure 1: Taskforce members Jacky Paton and Lynn Guelzow working to inform next steps.

Equity Taskforce Improvement Process

Phase I: Identify Areas for Strategic Improvement – Through the grant application process and a thorough review of past and present equity-focused initiatives in Granby, priorities were identified as: (1) Address the Board of Education equity goal to reduce the persistent achievement gaps between identified groups and develop an understanding why equity initiatives to date have not yielded results that have diminished these gaps, (2) Challenge the obstacle of mindset across the district in terms of the perception that achievement is capped for Hartford resident students and students with IEPs, and (3) Develop agency amongst district staff to conduct meaningful dialogue around race and biases.

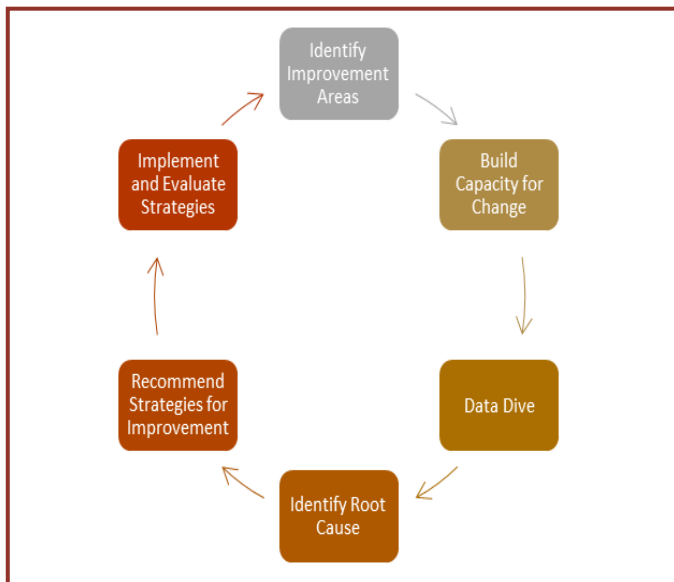


Figure 2: Taskforce Improvement Cycle



Figure 3: Taskforce members Keon Lawrence, Savannah Williams, and Sue Henneberry enjoying a gallery walk at The Wadsworth Museum.

Phase II: Build Capacity for Change – The Granby Public Schools Equity Taskforce was established to support equitable practices across the district. Members of the taskforce included students, teachers, administrators, parents, and a member of the Granby Board of Education. The Taskforce convened once or twice-a-month for a ten-month period with facilitation by representatives from the CCSC and the district project leader. In order to build capacity of the group, time was spent developing an equity lens through story and art. Each meeting included an experience to explore equity with the intention of helping individuals understand deeply held beliefs regarding equity and access by uncovering their own story and learning the stories of others. Varied activities over meetings included two curated experiences to explore equity with the Amistad Center for Arts and Culture. These opportunities contributed to an atmosphere of trust and safety which proved to be a prerequisite to getting to the heart of the work. As a result of the shared experiences, a community of trust was formed within the Taskforce allowing group members to take risks, dive deeply, and engage in difficult conversations.

"Begin with art, because art tries to take us outside ourselves. It is a matter of trying to create an atmosphere and context so conversation can flow back and forth and we can be influenced by each other."

–W.E.B Du Bois

Phase III: Data Dive – Following an equity audit facilitated by the project leader, taskforce members selected an area of focus: climate, achievement, program participation, or professional capacity. These four areas are identified as research-based critical points of focus when addressing institutional inequities. Each team investigated data points from the equity audit that aligned with a particular focus area. Continued work in small groups resulted in further questions, determining the need to deeply explore specific data points further. Data were provided from Granby Public School’s internal data tracking systems. Each group developed a focus question to guide their next level of work. This external audit completed through the partnership is in addition to the annual district equity report that has been presented to the Board for three consecutive years. While the audit captures similar data points, this was a more extensive examination allowing for the generation of additional questions needed to identify the root causes of our areas of challenge.

Phase IV: Identify Root Cause – Next, a deeper exploration of each focus question occurred to uncover the root causes, or underlying reasons for the existing conditions contributing to the areas of challenge being addressed. Through research, acquiring and analyzing additional data, and by input from relevant stakeholder groups, each focus group compiled information to gain a comprehensive understanding of the data points that originally framed their focus questions. Each focus group designed a unique pathway to work toward understanding the root cause in order to align recommendations and research-based strategies that would ultimately address the achievement gap in Granby. This step in the process required many additional hours outside of regular Taskforce meeting time in order to meet with necessary stakeholder groups to collect and analyze additional data.

Phase V: Recommend Areas of Focus and Strategies for Improvement – A review of a variety of resources inclusive of research-based strategies for addressing equity were reviewed systematically across the span of Equity Taskforce meetings. When the group shifted to making recommendations, a shared resource folder was developed and groups were provided with research by Taskforce facilitators that had direct links to focus questions. These resources were the guiding force behind the recommendations of the Equity Taskforce.

Phase VI: Implement and Evaluate Strategies – This phase exists beyond the current implementation timeline of the Equity Taskforce. Following a presentation and review of this executive summary, district administrators will closely review recommendations and strategies to address the unique challenges that exist at each building and the collective challenges that exist across the school district. Once improvement plans are developed, the Equity Taskforce will continue to oversee implementation and serve as a guiding coalition to monitor progress, introduce current research and strategies, support the development of an equity lens for all, and identify future areas for improvement.

Components of an Equity Lens

1. Always think in terms of equity.
2. Assume disparities reflect inequities.
3. Acknowledge everyone has biases that will likely need to be addressed to overcome systemic inequities.
4. Know that everyone has stories and experiences that impact inequity differently.
5. Equity must be addressed with differentiated strategies.
6. Data represents real people.
7. Addressing inequities requires addressing the systems causing the inequities.

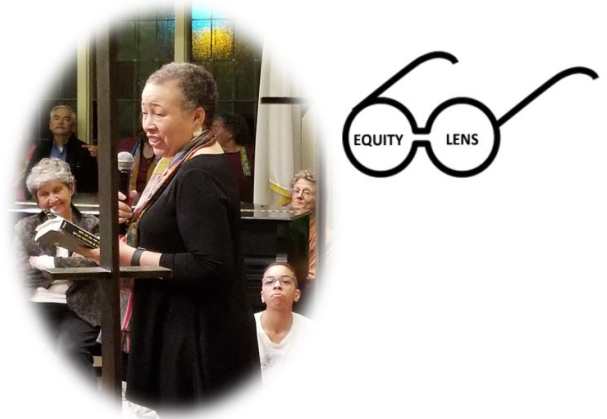


Figure 4: Beverly Tatum, Ph.D., author of *Can We Talk About Race*, addresses some of our Taskforce members in Northampton

Subgroup Focus Areas

Focus Area 1: Climate

Focus Question:

Why are office referrals and in-school suspensions of black males so much higher than that of white males?

| Data 2015-2016 | Office Referrals | |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|-------------|
| | Black Males | White Males |
| | 62.5 % | 17.6% |
| | In-School Suspensions | |
| | Black Males | White Males |
| | 21.4% | 3.6% |

Table 1: Office Referral and In-School Suspension Data

The data above reflects both office referrals and in-school suspensions for grades K-12. 62.5% of all black male students received office referrals, compared to 17.6% of all white males. 21.4% of black male students received suspensions compared to 3.6% of white male students.

The Climate Focus Group reviewed office referral data from applicable schools. Additionally, they conducted a survey of teachers and administrators regarding office referrals. From this data, the focus group made several discoveries regarding contributing factors to the over-representation of black male students receiving referrals. Data revealed themes of teacher skepticism of the data accuracy presented in the questionnaire, racial bias, and others defended the referrals that were written.

A pattern of referrals being written during lunch, dismissal, and in the hallways emerged as the group analyzed time and location of the incidents. The group also noted that not all the data for referrals was entered in the same manner, so there was a question about the types of incidents for which black males and their white male counterparts were referred.

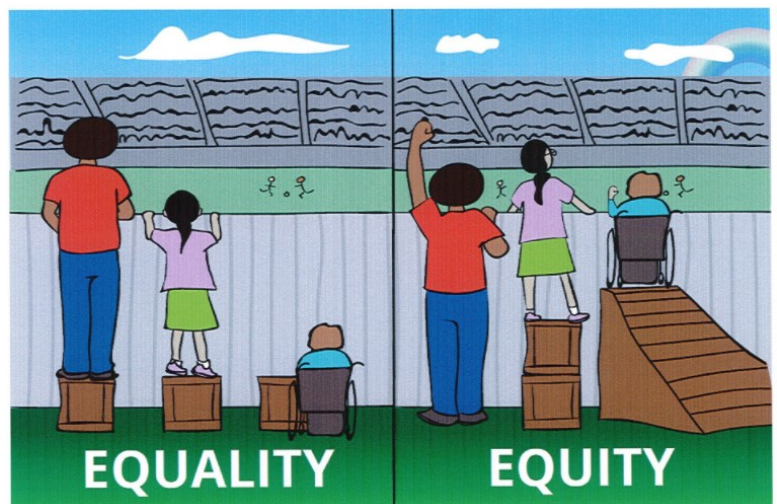
Commendations:

1. The Granby Board of Education and the Granby community are committed to and support the work of the Equity Taskforce, and have previously identified a disparity in discipline as an area indicating inequity.
2. Teachers openly participated in a survey providing insight into the root cause of the disparity.

Recommendations:

1. Identify administrators, teachers, and staff currently trained in equitable practices and utilize them as re-sources throughout the district.
2. Train all administrators, faculty and support staff in a behavior system that addresses equitable practices. Consider PBIS, RULER (Yale), Restorative Justice, and Collaborative Proactive Solutions (Ross Green).
3. Revisit data reporting practices and adopt one system, PK-12, to better facilitate data collection and analysis with capacity to disaggregate data by race, gender, socioeconomic status, referral location, teacher, initial teacher actions taken, and incident time of day. Utilize data to develop policies and practices that address identified inequities.

Figure 5: When equality is the goal, all students get the same thing. When equity is the goal, all students get what they need to be successful.



Focus Area 2: Professional Capacity

Focus Question:

How can we increase and retain the number of minority teachers in the Granby Public Schools?

| Data 2015-2016 | Teacher Minority Representation | | | | |
|-------------------|---------------------------------|-------|----------|-----------------|-------------|
| | Asian | Black | Hispanic | Native American | Multiracial |
| | 1.6% | .6% | 1.6% | 0% | 0% |

Table 2: Teacher Minority Representation

This group worked through a full deep dive process moving from an examination of the quantitative data to interviews with a number of district minority teachers. They also reviewed literature and research related to recruitment and retention of minority teachers. The data represented above reflects the percentage of certified teachers and their self-identified minority designation.

The group noted that minority teachers did remain in Granby once hired despite an ongoing feeling of being “different” and not feeling empowered to speak up or out regarding issues of equity. In the literature, the team reviewed successful recruitment and retention strategies as well as the research supporting the importance and power of students seeing themselves in those that provide their education.

The Professional Capacity Focus Group examined and analyzed data and resources within the context and history of district efforts around minority teacher recruitment. Drawing on this, they created a strategy map that both summarizes findings regarding strengths, challenges, barriers, supports, and growth areas, along with recommendations for both short and long-term strategies. Based on their research, highlights of the strategy map are included in the following commendations and recommendations:

Commendations:

1. Granby currently participates in the regional Minority Teacher Recruitment Organization facilitated by Capitol Region Education Council (CREC).
2. While Granby does not employ many minority teachers, the district successfully maintains minority teachers.

Recommendations:

1. Engage as leaders in the Minority Teacher Recruitment organization through CREC.
2. Develop and implement an onboarding plan for minority teachers.
3. Provide ongoing equity-focused professional learning experiences for all as a model of district commitment to equity.

Focus Area 3: Special Education

Focus Question:

Why are black students identified for special education at twice the percentage of white students?

| Data 2015-2016 | Special Education Representation | | | |
|-------------------|----------------------------------|---------------|-------------|---------------|
| | Black Males | Black Females | White Males | White Females |
| | 29% | 23% | 14% | 8% |

Table 3: Special Education Representation

The data reviewed by the this focus group reflects the percentage of students identified for special education services in comparison to the whole population by racial subgroup. In other words, 29% of all black males in Granby receive special education services while 14% of all white males in Granby receive special education services. A similar disparity is noted with 23% of all black females receiving special education services while 8% of white female students receive special education services.

In the beginning, members of this group struggled to agree how to proceed with their deep dive look into their focus question. Challenges included questions around what kind of data to review, and how to go about the data collection. Once these issues were resolved, an additional obstacle was consistent meeting attendance and finding opportunities to work together to analyze data in order to determine next steps. Their commitment to getting to the root cause of the issue is sincere, but the group was not able to move much beyond the early deep-dive stages of analyzing data.

To date, this group has reviewed data related to disability prevalence for black students receiving special education services, distribution of special education students across grade levels, grade levels students are identified and exit special education services, and the number of students identified prior to entering GPS. In addition, they reviewed research on the disproportionate overrepresentation of black students in special education.

The project leader along with the Granby Public Schools Director of Pupil Services met to review progress and identified the following commendations and recommendations in support of this focus group's initial findings.

Commendations:

1. While in need of refinement, the district has a tiered intervention support model designed to provide appropriate instructional and behavioral support services to students and minimize the over identification of students for special education services.
2. The Granby Public Schools Board of Education proposed FY19 budget includes funding that will support students with smaller class sizes, additional social/emotional supports, and additional intervention supports.

Recommendations:

1. Provide clarity that behavioral and academic performance are not mutually exclusive. Develop curriculum and course offerings that are diverse and culturally responsive in order to engage all learners at high levels.
2. Provide professional learning experiences for administrators, teachers and staff that build a culture of growth mindset and high expectations for all students. This will require acknowledging and moving beyond implicit bias.

Focus Area 4: Achievement

Focus Question:

Why is there a difference between black students and all other groups enrolled in AP courses? Why are our black male and female PSAT and SAT scores lower than that of any other students?

| Data 2015-2016 | AP Enrollment | | | |
|-----------------------|---------------|---------------|-------------|---------------|
| | Black Males | Black Females | White Males | White Females |
| | 14.3% | 8.3% | 32.3% | 39% |
| | PSAT Grade 11 | | | |
| | Black Males | Black Females | White Males | White Females |
| | 807 | 864 | 1134 | 1123 |

Table 4: AP Enrollment and PSAT Performance Data

The achievement and program participation data for this group included PSAT and SAT scores (PSAT average scores displayed) as well as enrollment in honors and Advanced Placement (AP) courses (demographic percentage of all AP enrollments displayed). In addition to examining quantitative data and reviewing policies and procedures related to course placement and selection, group members spoke informally with teachers about practices and expectations in relation to AP and honors class enrollment and to students regarding their course recommendation and selection process.

Group investigation revealed that black students were often unaware or not recommended for AP/Honors classes. There were a few instances of recommendations but a choice not to enroll by students. Some black students enrolled in these courses but withdrew because of class demands or not feeling like they belonged. Regarding testing, some students (and their parents) were unaware that they would be required to take the PSATs/SATs, and often did not understand the value of PSATs/SATs in terms of college entrance. In examining policies and procedures, it became clear that course recommendation procedures are inconsistent and often subjective.

Commendations:

1. The district has sustained attention and commitment to reducing/eliminating the achievement gap with value of AP Enrollment and high-stakes test performance as an indicator of success.
2. The district has maintained high participation and an active role in the Open Choice Program since program origination.

Recommendations:

1. Invite new members to the Taskforce. Include representation from special education, classroom teachers, and administration so necessary stakeholders have a voice in the conversation, charge, and leadership in addressing inequities related to student achievement.
2. Revisit guidance/school counseling practices to target gaps and provide differentiated developmental programming and course planning for students. Address policies and practices that are barriers for students in accessing the highest-level classes.
3. Address the achievement gap through direct and targeted instruction. Include 1:1 tutoring, direct/explicit instruction (such as precision teaching), tiered intervention, and students support centers as part of the solution.
4. Increase Open Choice participation and reestablish a program for host families to provide additional support to students outside the school day.

PROGRAM PARTNERS

The Connecticut Center for School Change

The Connecticut Center for School Change works to ensure that all students—regardless of income, ethnicity, language, race, zip code, disability—have equal access to and experience of a high-quality education and are supported in achieving at high levels.

The Center partners closely with school districts across Connecticut to assist them in creating policies, practices, and structures that support large-scale instructional improvement aimed at reducing gaps and raising achievement for all students. These partnerships help district leaders develop leadership capacity, analyze data, develop and implement coherent improvement strategies, align resources, engage stakeholders, sustain improvements, and hold staff members accountable for improved system and student performance.

The Center serves its partner districts in a variety of ways and works to build organizational capacity and develop leadership for a range of stakeholders. The Center's work includes designing professional development systems, conducting external reviews, providing executive coaching, and promoting innovative educational reform using contextually appropriate strategies and tools. The Center has extensive experience working with all district stakeholders from parents to superintendents and boards of education. The Center's staff acts as advisors, thought partners, coaches, and critical friends to its partner districts. (ctschoolchange.org)

The Amistad Center

The Amistad Center is a non-for-profit cultural 501(c)3 institution established in 1987 to purchase, preserve, develop and provide public access to a collection of 6,000 works of art, artifacts and ephemera that documents the African American experience. Through excellent stewardship and scholarship this collection has grown to 7,000 objects and has inspired dozens of exhibitions and culture-based educational programs and events to uniquely engage, enlighten and entertain the public. In 1987, the founders determined that the Greater Hartford community would be well-served by housing The Amistad Center in the Wadsworth Athenaeum, and over that time the unique institutional partnership has facilitated broad-based museum visitorship and valuable cross-cultural conversations. (amistadcenter.org)

The Graustein Memorial Fund

The mission of the William Casper Graustein Memorial Fund is to achieve equity in education by working with those affected and inspiring all to end racism and poverty.

The Memorial Fund defines equity as the just and fair inclusion into a society in which everyone can exercise their individual agency and achieve justice, in order that everyone can reach their full potential. Equity work includes increasing awareness, deepening understanding, and taking actions, particularly at the institutional and structural levels.

Equity in education refers to learning environments that hold high expectations for every child, from birth to adulthood, and provide whatever opportunities and resources are needed to help reach those goals. Equity in education also acknowledges and actively works against structural barriers that oppress people of color and people living in poverty. (wcgmf.org)



Figure 6: Taskforce members at the Wadsworth

Taskforce Leadership

Evette Avila
CCSC

Kerry Lord
CCSC

Patrice Nelson
CCSC

Christopher Tranberg
Assistant Superintendent

Taskforce Members

Sarah Amara
Teacher

Ann Belding
Teacher

Kim Dessert
Principal

Lynn Guelzow
Board of Education

Sue Henneberry
Principal

Ursula Jackson
Social Worker / Choice Liaison

Cathryn Kibby
Teacher

Keon Lawrence
Student

Kimberly Miller
Parent

Ken Mouning
Parent

Rich Neal
Social Worker / Choice Liaison

Jacky Paton
Teacher

Andrew Piro
Teacher

Catherine Schantz
Parent

Amanda Webster
Parent

Savannah Williams
Student