

Question #1: The Hingham Public Schools Equity & Inclusion Working Group was formed in 2019 and has been charged with conducting an Equity Audit of the district's operations, programs, and services. The Working Group pledges to "challenge ourselves to regularly evaluate and refine curricula, policies, practices and procedures and commit to providing the appropriate services and resources to ensure every student has what they need to perform at their optimal level." What is one specific policy, practice, or procedure that you would modify to ensure students are able to reach their full potential?

Our schools have documented and collected an amazing amount of data and insight on what is happening within our schools. Often while this exists, parents are unaware of all the work that has happened behind the scenes. In many cases, this then manifests itself with frustration and a feeling that nothing is moving forward when in fact there is work being done.

Simultaneously, within and across the schools there is not always consistent internal communications. There are inconsistencies in the data being used to make decisions. This happens on a granular level with classes of the same level taught by different teachers having different grading structures. This results in students in the same class and level having a huge swing in grades because they are being measured differently. It also is found on a higher level with differences in terminology and information used for decision making. It would help if there was common language and terms being used as well as school wide processes to keep expectations the same across the board.

With more consistent communications plans in place about how, when and what will be shared, expectations can be set with parents and the community on when they will see and hear answers.

For instance, the Equity working group has been working diligently on audit and analysis of data within our system. They are using this information to lay out plans for schools. Where I would modify how this is proceeding is to prioritize a collective and consistent effort on how and when these changes will be implemented. We have persistent achievement gaps that are clearly seen in our advanced course offerings with only 3% of students on an active IEP participating in math classes and 14% in science. Simultaneously there is ongoing work right now to address these trends and develop strategies to

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Hingham Unity Council and SEPAC Follow-Up Written Questions

increase access for these students. There should be documentation throughout the whole process and shared information on what this means to families. Much of this already exists yet many don't even know it is happening or when this work will be explained and implemented.

Our schools have good plans, but they need more support to integrate changes across all schools at the same time and in the same manner. This allows for equity from school to school, it allows for better transitions from elementary to middle and middle to high school. It allows collaboration and more exchange of ideas between buildings. It allows all students to feel more belonging at every stage in their schooling.

The past two years have been really challenging for schools, staff, students, and families, and we need to find ways to help support them in this work so that they can succeed.

Question #2: There is a significant shortage of paraeducators in the district. Feedback we have received is that paraeducators feel undervalued by administrators' unwillingness to negotiate a higher living wage. Hiring has been difficult as well, primarily for this reason. How would you address this ongoing issue and ensure paraeducators feel valued in our district?

Unfortunately, there is a national shortage for paraeducators, and across the country we are seeing towns like Hingham struggle to hire paraprofessionals when they don't make a living wage within any district. Hingham has historically been luckier than other districts because of the wealth of high quality, dedicated and compassionate educators that work with in our schools. Often these educators do so even though the pay isn't nearly adequate for how much they give to our children each and every day.

The problem now is that for many reasons, the paras have spoken loud and clear that they do not feel heard or respected by the school committee. Worst of all, given the low pay, they don't feel valued. As we enter a contract renegotiation year, it is absolutely crucial that we change this relationship. We must come closer to paying them what they deserve for their service to Hingham's students.

Hingham Unity Council and SEPAC
Follow-Up Written Questions

But money itself won't heal these wounds, and an increase in salary alone won't attract new paraprofessionals from surrounding communities. We must be serious but respectful in our contract negotiations this year with the Para's Union and ensure that both sides of the table are treated fairly and respectfully. We need to support and enable a culture that promotes and supports all employees. And we may need to think outside of the box for new ways to attract not just paraprofessionals, but substitutes, bus drivers, and per diem help (like the speech pathologists we used last year), all of whom have been especially difficult to hire since COVID.

Question #3: What are your thoughts on HPS developing its own vocational-technical programming?

I believe there is a short- and long-term portion to the question. Developing a meaningful and thorough vocational-technical program is an important and long-term investment that Hingham should consider.

Short term we need to find opportunities for students to have this education before it is too late and they move on from our schools or graduate. We should explore and enter the process to become a member of the South Shore Vocational Tech. This is not a quick entrance however and requires both a town meeting vote from Hingham but also from all the current member towns. All in it is a 2-3-year process.

So, what happens in the interim? Hingham does offer some classes that can be taken as an off-site program. This is a portion of the day and the other portion they are at HHS for classes. This is a wonderful program but not the full immersive experience that many students are desperately wanting.

Long term, Hingham should look towards the future and what our students are seeking. We should consider the benefits to the town of investing in our own unique and innovative program for our own students. Could this be a revenue source long-term, pulling in out-of-district students whose towns are not members of SS Vocational? Why not? We need to look forward to what makes sense for our students, and the traditional pathways of parents' generation is not necessarily the best option for our students in 2022. We need to be innovative and flexible and open to new ways forward, both for

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Hingham Unity Council and SEPAC
Follow-Up Written Questions

our students but our towns revenue needs. And we need to allow students to feel confident in exploring a path that fits what they want to study.