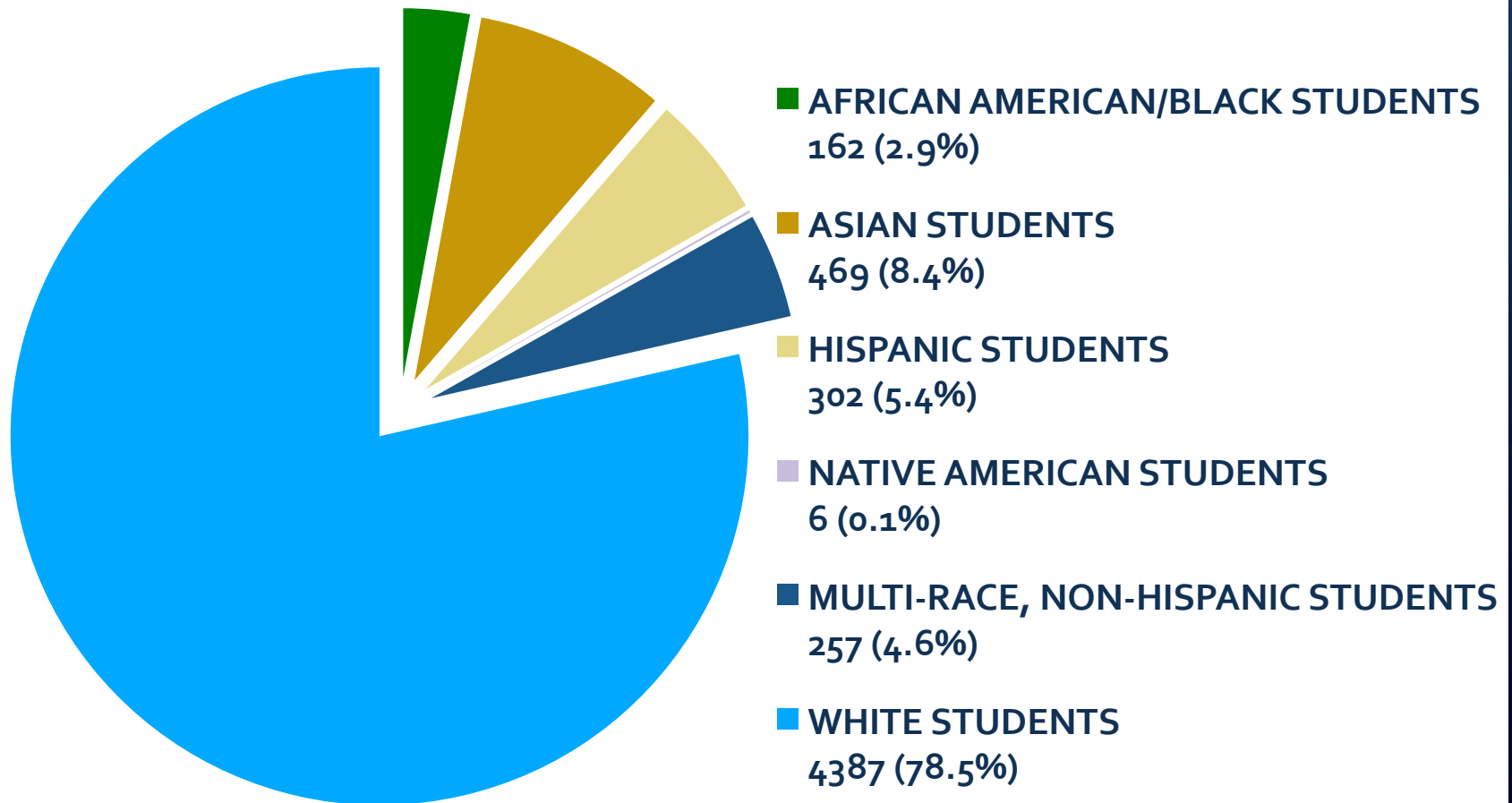




# Supporting Our District in Addressing Racial Equity

April 25, 2017 Update to Needham School Committee

# 2016-2017 NEEDHAM PUBLIC SCHOOLS Student Enrollment By Race/Ethnicity



*Advance Learning for All Students*

# DISTRICT GOALS

- **Long history of incorporating goals for racial equity into *annual District Goals***
  - 2008 District Goal: “**Students achieve an understanding of racism, ethnocentrism, and bias** in today’s society, an appreciation and respect for relationships among peoples, and opportunity to develop skills and perspective in order to become empowered and active learners.”
  - 2017 District Goal: “**Students and Staff develop competencies to address matters of diversity, socio-economic status, racism, gender and bias** in the context of the pluralistic communities in which they learn and live.”
- Reinforced by school-specific goals in **School Improvement Plans**



## **UPDATE on the ongoing work:**

## **PROGRESS IN CULTURAL PROFICIENCY**

- **Professional Development/Training**
- **Personnel Practices**
- **Programs/Special Events**
- **Committees, Clubs, Support Groups**
- **Curriculum/Teaching Practices**
- **Changes in Policy/ Procedures**



# PROGRESS IN CULTURAL PROFICIENCY: Professional Development/Training

Opportunities for staff to deepen understanding and strengthen competencies:

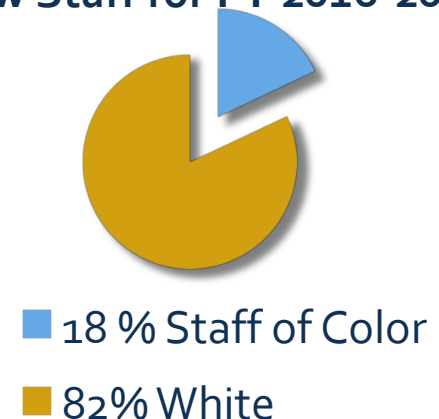
- **IDEAS workshops** (Initiatives for Developing Equity and Achievement for Students) – provided to teachers, teaching assistants, nurses to help with understanding the connection between racial/ethnic identity and academic achievement/student engagement; in 2016, 39 staff participated
- **Cultural Proficiency Training Program for Athletic Coaches** funded through a grant from Needham Education Foundation
- **School Leadership Team and District Leadership Team meetings** – agenda dedicated to cultural proficiency at multiple meetings each year; text study using *Cultural Proficiency: A Manual for School Leaders*; ongoing workshops for several years with facilitator Ron Walker, Executive Director of Coalition of Schools Educating Boys of Color
- **Encouraged all staff to include culturally proficient practices in their classrooms;** monitored through Educator Evaluation Process

# PROGRESS IN CULTURAL PROFICIENCY:

## Personnel Practices

- Included **cultural proficiency questions** in interview process
- Administrators working with HR Department on assessing and achieving **culturally proficient recruitment, hiring and retention practices**
- Since 2011, hosted annual **diversity hiring fair** to recruit more staff of color
- Of the brand new staff for FY16-17, 13 are staff of color (5 support staff and 8 professional staff); equals the **most progress NPS has made in the last 11 years in diversifying the staff**; currently 54 FTE staff of color (7.1% of total staff) up from 34 staff of color in FY06-07

New Staff for FY 2016-2017



# PROGRESS IN CULTURAL PROFICIENCY: Programs/Special Events

## ➤ 2011 NEF Grant Funding:

## ➤ 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Diversity Summit: community event aiming to create equitable and welcoming town

## ➤ Involvement of students in MLK Day and Diversity Summit

## ➤ **Student and Staff Panel discussion regarding Ferguson** so school community could join the conversation

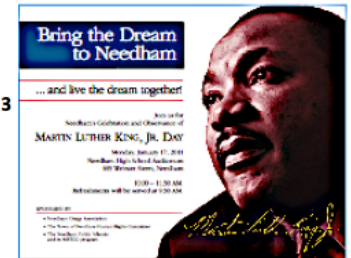
## ➤ Extended homeroom for **reflective activities around race**; after school meeting with 50 students to talk about race; “Silent Beats” video to promote discussion of bias; TED Talk “Danger of A Single Story” viewed and processed

## ➤ ***The Other Wes Moore*** book fueled a 2016 school-wide student event at NHS delving into diversity; Needham Diversity Initiative also hosted an evening discussion of the book with community members

## 30 Actions – Living the Dream

### Cultural Competence and Equity

- Saturdays 9am – 12:30pm
- Needham High School Media Center
- April 9, May 14, June 4, October 1, December 3  
and Martin Luther King Day Jan 16, 2011



# PROGRESS IN CULTURAL PROFICIENCY: Committees, Clubs, Support Groups

- **NHS Cultural Climate Committee** – group of teachers, students, administrators planning and implementing programs
- **METCO Family Friends Committee** – social events on early release days; helping to build friendships between Needham and Boston families
- **Peer groups for NHS and MS boys of color** – facilitated by METCO coordinator at NHS and by teacher at Pollard
- **SEAL** (Social Empowerment, Active Listeners) – club for students advocating for cultural proficiency and seeking social change at NHS and in the district
- **College Bound** – additional resources and support for Black and Latino students and families in navigating the post-secondary process
- **Mentoring Club, Needham Steps Up, Sojourner Scholars for Middle School girls of color** – mentoring programs
- **Diversity Book Groups** – school-based groups of parents, students and/or staff reading books and discussing racial identity (*I am Malala, The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*, etc.)

# PROGRESS IN CULTURAL PROFICIENCY: Curriculum/Teaching Practices

- Cultural proficiency focus in various **Advisory and Responsive Classroom** instruction
- ***Jumpstart*** – month-long program for Boston kindergarten and first graders and their families to introduce curriculum and welcome them into the district
- ***Carpe Diem*** – project based math, literacy, and cultural enrichment program for elementary students that meets every other Saturday in Boston
- ***Understanding Differences*** – curriculum modified; **Grade 7 Racism Unit** – revamped
- ***Launching Scholars*** – starting in 7<sup>th</sup> grade, program focused on reducing achievement gap in math of sub-populations of students as indicated by MCAS data (based on work of Dr. Adrian Mims and *The Calculus Project*)
- ***Tenacity Challenge*** – Needham team of Latino and African-American students competing in annual academic scholarship competition
- ***African American Studies and Contemporary Issues*** – full year NHS course
- ***Castle Program*** – focused on increased representation of students of color in Honors, Accelerated and AP courses

# PROGRESS IN CULTURAL PROFICIENCY:

## Changes in Policies/Procedures

- Included specific **cultural proficiency initiatives** in School Improvement Plans and District Goals
- Reported on ideas/**progress with cultural proficiency** at faculty meetings
- Examined literature and expanded libraries to include **more diverse resources**; made **cultural arts more inclusive**; displayed culturally diverse materials and posters in schools and health offices
- Researched **number of students of color on education plans**; explored implications of findings
- Assessed **inclusion practices** (not just Special Education) so as not to marginalize any students
- Gave **consideration to affinity groups** as part of the placement process



# **UPDATE on the 2017 Initiatives: PROMOTING RACIAL EQUITY**

- **Concerns expressed by parents about the student placement process**
- **Racial Equity and Leadership Team**
- **Consultation / workshops with School Attorney**
- **Consultant to support racial equity at Needham Public Schools**
- **Equity Audit**



# PROMOTING RACIAL EQUITY:

## Parent Concerns

- **Considering race as a factor for class or cluster placement**
  - ➔ Practice stopped; need to analyze the potential benefit or harm to our students before moving forward
- **Increasing transparency and communication with parents & community**
  - ➔ School Committee chair and Superintendent responded to school families and updated staff; posted Blog; contributed to article in Needham Times; Parents and Superintendent met to continue discussion
- **Engaging consultant to assess educational equity**
  - ➔ Specifications drafted and prospective consultants being interviewed
- **Providing staff training**
  - ➔ Ongoing cultural proficiency workshops held within schools and Professional Development with District Leadership Team



# PROMOTING RACIAL EQUITY:

## Racial Equity and Leadership Team

### REAL Team (established Jan 2017)

- Dan Gutekanst, Superintendent
- Mary Lammi, Director of Student Support Services
- Roderick MacNeal, Principal of Eliot Elementary School
- Jessica Downey, Principal of High Rock Middle School
- Johnny Cole, Assistant Principal of Needham High School
- Joanne Allen-Willoughby, METCO Director
- Diane Simmons, Director of Planning, Communications and Community Education
- Shakur Abdul-Khallaq, NHS METCO Coordinator and Guidance Counselor

### Statement of Purpose

The REAL Team is an **advisory group** providing leadership and guidance to the district in the areas of **eliminating barriers to racial equity** and promoting efforts that support advancement of all learners in the Needham Public Schools.

Recognizing that full **community engagement** is essential to the achievement of racial equity, we are committed to engaging staff, students, parents, and community members in conversations and **actions that promote equitable practices.**

# PROMOTING RACIAL EQUITY: REAL Team's Initial Action Steps

- **Consulted with Beverly Daniel Tatum**, President Emeritus of Spellman College and author of *"Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?" and Other Conversations About Race*
- **Attended Harvard Graduate School of Education panel discussion** on *"Race, Equity and Leadership in Schools"*
- **Received feedback from Harvard Kennedy School of Government's** Ronald Ferguson and his students in class entitled *Strategies and Policies for Narrowing Racial Achievement Gaps*
- **Gathered Student perspective** from 30 NHS students
- **Participated in Attorney workshops**
- **Initiated Consultant search**

# PROMOTING RACIAL EQUITY: School Attorney Workshops

Staff learned about the applicable laws and various case notes :

- **Constitutional provisions** as well as applicable **state and federal laws**
- Highest level of review required for decisions based upon race, color and national origin: **“strict scrutiny”**
- **First step:** Identify reasons for the plan as it relates to the district’s mission and consider whether those reasons provide a **“compelling interest”** for the district (e.g., racially diverse student body; supporting the unique needs of students)
- **Next step:** Show that the plan is **“narrowly tailored”** to meet the compelling interest with four-prong test: 1) Has the school considered workable **race-neutral alternatives**? 2) Does the plan provide for flexible and **individualized review of students**? 3) Does the plan **minimize undue burdens on other students**? 4) Is the plan **limited in time and subject to periodic review**?

# PROMOTING RACIAL EQUITY:

## Consultant to Support Racial Equity at NPS

Seeking individual able to:

- Provide feedback on district-wide programs, practices, policies, and professional development
- Affirm that programs in our schools are beneficial or harmful to students of color and white students
- Broaden our perspective
- Provide novel sources of data
- Connect us to resources and potential solutions
- Help us educate all of the district's stakeholders about racial equity

# PROMOTING RACIAL EQUITY:

## Equity Audit

Collect data in an attempt to answer complex questions like the following examples:

- What mindsets, capacities and skills assist students of color and white students? What K-12 educational interventions exist to foster these and are they “effective”?
- How do we apply a consciousness-raising education framework to white students and to our faculty and staff? In what additional ways can we assist our staff in becoming more culturally proficient?
- What are the benefits and issues with subdividing students by racial/ethnic groups to increase their chances of success? Conversely, do programs that serve all racial/ethnic groups together in a “colorblind” manner have equal success with all groups?



## DISTRICT PRIORITY:

### Cultural Proficiency and Racial Equity

- Important to acknowledge cultural proficiency and racial equity as a district priority
- No definitive answers to complex questions being pursued through Equity Audit
- Soon to hire consultant and continue to address issues
- Ongoing District focus is on the **"WHOLE CHILD"** – ensuring each learner's individual and racial/ethnic needs are met



QUESTIONS? COMMENTS?