

Prioritizing DEI at FLHS

Lauren Marchello, Social Studies Teacher

Colleen Sousa, Social Studies Department Chair

Bari Rabine, House Principal

Vanessa Montorsi, Director of Pupil Services & Counseling





School Improvement Goal #1

- **We will invest in the personal growth of all members of our community in support of diversity, equity and inclusion.**

How it started....

From Dr. Brene Brown's book *Dare to Lead*:

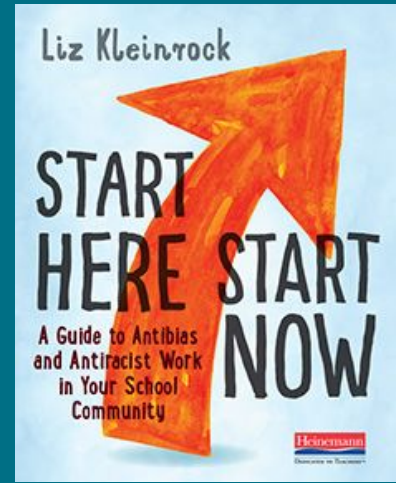
"I see you. I hear you. I don't have all of the answers, but I'm going to keep listening and asking questions."

- **Spring, 2021:**
 - Lauren and Colleen brought this forward to address staff and students' concerns about need for visible action and intentional programming on a building level following incidents in Fairfield Public Schools which led to a student-organized walk-out.
 - Small group of staff chose Liz Kleinrock's *Start Here, Start Now* as optional text for faculty reading for the summer.



How it continued...

- Summer, 2021:
 - Staff signed up to participate in Equity work and met two times
 - Group 1) developed draft DEI Statement, 2) created blueprint for how and where to incorporate this work throughout the year, focusing on faculty training, impact in classrooms, and school-wide activities.
 - Planned for PD for opening days when teachers returned



Fairfield Ludlowe High School DEI Vision Statement



In support of diversity, inclusion, and equity at FLHS, we will invest in the personal growth of all members of our community in order to cultivate brave and safe spaces through:

- **Fostering** belonging and connectedness
- **Committing** to engage in difficult conversations
- **Examining** our biases and striving to overcome them
- **Understanding and Recognizing** the impact of our choices, actions and words
- **Empowering** the community to share their stories
- **Listening** to each others' experiences in order to learn from different perspectives

Key Takeaways from Summer Committee



- Use existing structures that tie to all students/staff
- Learn from people/professionals who are leading this work -and give them credit, such as Liz Kleinrock!
- Work to make it meaningful and effective
- Ensure consistency to ensure that it continues to be at the forefront of decisions and planning for teachers and admin
- Pilot work in classrooms with teachers/staff
- Implement Advisory as “big-scale” option to grow to whole-school
- Map our PD to align w/ Advisory
- Partner with *Anti Defamation League “No Place for Hate” Program*

How it continued...



- **August, 2021:** Fairfield PS Admin participated in Equity training with CREC Staff and Drakes & Burton
- **FLHS PD:** to establish common language, rationale and sense of urgency
 - land acknowledgement,
 - definitions of terms,
 - understanding data (survey information from students, performance data)
 - qualitative information from school counselors

September & October Advisory Lessons

- September-October, 2021:
 - #1, Getting to know each other: Students created “name cards,” with the idea of ensuring that we can correctly pronounce each other’s names, students were asked to include pronouns on their cards, could decorate the card based on their interest and how they identify themselves
 - #2, Reflecting on 2020-2021: As a group, students considered what lessons we have learned in the last year, including what to bring forward and what they would like to not repeat

September & October Advisory Lessons

- September-October, 2021:
 - #3, Identity Mapping: Students considered various aspects of themselves, including what is visible to others and what is not
→ Feedback from staff and students: We needed to do more to develop relationships in order to be able to engage in more personal and sometimes challenging conversations
 - #4, Costumes & Cultural Appropriation with the 12th graders

November & December

- November PD with English & History and representatives from Facing History & Ourselves: “Fostering Civil Discourse in the Classroom: How do we talk about issues that matter?”
- December Advisory introduced the ADL “No Place for Hate Pledge” including video by student committee members

January & February

- PD with teacher choice for reading and follow-up exercise
 - Color Blindness
 - Equity in grading practices
 - How DEI and SEL relate
 - Engaging in difficult conversations (based on Kleinrock's work and Facing History)
- ADL activity on “Intentional Acts of Respect” with all of the English classes
- Advisory Topics: Respectful Community Building -extension from the ADL activity with the English classes
- Request for all teachers to embed content-specific lessons honoring Black History Month; provided a list of general and content-specific resources from which to choose.

March

- Advisory Lesson: Looking at school survey data that related to belonging and respect
- ADL “No Place for Hate” assembly for all 10th graders with student panelists, breakout sessions, and discussion of next steps for the school community

Future Plans

- Continuing to work to be a “No Place for Hate” school, including “Intentional Acts of Respect” activity, book club related to “Channel Kindness” by Lady Gaga’s Born This Way Reporters
- Share DEI Statement with stakeholders, including coordinating with the new DEI Director who started in November, 2021
- Reflect on progress and set goals for 2022-2023
- Restorative practices training

Implementing Your Plan...

- Acknowledge what you know, including your biases, and recognize that you are not an expert... and start learning!
- Develop a vision & purpose to guide the work
- Create a calendar
- Strategically create a “curriculum” for advisory, including vision statement and week-by-week development
- PD for staff: understand where the staff is and what the next steps are to grow
- Work with any student or community groups so they have a role/voice in planning
- Engage with outside organizations, including online resources

Resources/Helpful Materials

Resources for staff

"Start Here, Start Now" - Liz Kleinrock

PD for Staff

Facing History and Ourselves

ADL: No Place for Hate