PCSD Equity and Inclusion Goals for the 2021-2022 School Year

As part of its commitment to equity and inclusion for all students, a district leadership team participated in an intensive summer workshop to create Equity and Inclusion Goals for 2021-22. The leadership team included a diverse representation of stakeholder groups, including parents, teachers, administrators, community leaders, and board of education members. In the process of creating the updated goals, the team focused on the “why” behind the district’s equity work and used a number of resources, including the district’s Equity Policy, NYS Call to Action, Culturally Responsive and Sustaining Education Framework, Inclusivity Advisory Committee (IAC) Success Statement, and the district mission, vision, and values.

Among the goals already completed are the production of a training video for interview committees on how to conduct culturally competent job searches and interviews as well as public information campaigns on how to request American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters for district meetings and how to use Google Translate to access the district website in over 100 languages.

Other equity and inclusion goals include actions aimed at improving and increasing student voice, creating opportunities for two-way community dialogue, building welcoming and affirming environments, increasing the hiring and retention of diverse staff, using existing structures and data to inform decisions and identify barriers to equity for curricular and non-curricular learning experiences, ensuring curriculums and resources represent diversity, and implementing NYS Social Emotional Learning (SEL) benchmarks into all new/revised curriculum.

To view the complete list of goals for 2021-2022, with associated timelines and persons responsible for carrying out those goals, visit https://www.pittsfordschools.org/EquityGoals.

Equity and Inclusivity Coordinator appointed

Pittsford’s Board of Education has appointed Vincent I. French to the newly created position of Coordinator of Equity and Inclusivity, a position he began on November 15, 2021.

Mr. French comes to PCSD from the Rochester City School District where he served as a teacher on special assignment at Edison Tech. In this position he was responsible for supporting students and families using restorative practices as well as a variety of other administrative tasks assigned by the building principal.

He also served as an 8th grade English teacher at RSDC’s Roberto Clemente School No. 8. He is the co-founder and program director of “Building Better Foundations” where he works with at-risk youth on developing problem-solving skills, restorative practices and communication skills, and provides academic intervention supports.

He previously served as the Dean of Culture at Equity Charter Middle School in Bronx, NY, where he worked closely with administrators and parents on school-wide events, policies, and support. At the School for International Studies in Brooklyn, NY, Mr. French served as the Community Assistant where he worked with students and parents on personal, social and academic concerns.

Pittsford Education Foundation Supports Need for Increased Student Mental Health Services

There is much to celebrate with the full return to in-school learning for the 2021-22 school year. At the same time, Pittsford schools are again facing many challenges related to COVID-19 and its lasting impact. On October 19, 2021, the American Academy of Pediatrics, American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Children’s Hospital Association jointly declared a national emergency in children’s mental health, citing the serious toll of the COVID-19 pandemic on top of existing challenges:

“As health professionals dedicated to the care of children and adolescents, we have witnessed soaring rates of mental health challenges among children, adolescents, and their families over the course of the COVID-19 pandemic, exacerbating the situation that existed prior to the pandemic.”

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Board of Education Budget Development Meeting Schedule

During the budget development process, there are a variety of meetings held by the Board of Education including Budget Work Sessions which are used by the Board of Education to gather information and ask questions about particular sections of the budget.

The Pittsford Central School District community is invited and encouraged to attend and observe these sessions as they are open to the public. Community members will have the opportunity to comment at the subsequent regular Board of Education meetings, during the time allotted for public comment. All meetings take place in the Barker Road Middle School McCaska Room.

Due to COVID-19, public attendance/participation at Board meetings may be virtual. On the day of a Board meeting, links will be posted to the District website at www.pittsfordschools.org for the public to use for viewing/listening, participation in the public comment section of the Board meeting, and closed captioning.

Tuesday, February 8, 2022
6 - 7 p.m. Budget Work Session.

Tuesday, March 1, 2022
6 - 7 p.m. Budget Work Session.

Tuesday, March 15, 2022
6 - 7 p.m. Budget Work Session.

Tuesday, April 26, 2022
7 p.m. Budget Adoption and Regular Board of Education Meeting.

The Board of Education formally votes to adopt the budget created during the Budget Work Sessions.

Thursday, May 5, 2022
7:30-9 p.m. PTSA Meet the Board of Education Candidates Night.

Pittsford Central School District hosted Parent/Guardian Listening Circles, facilitated by Partners in Restorative Initiatives (PIRI) and the Children’s Institute, on October 13, 2021, to provide small group opportunities to connect and share feedback with the District related to racial incidents and the continued work of dismantling racism in our schools and creating a more equitable school environment.

Following the event, the District Planning Team and Inclusivity Advisory Committee processed the feedback, compared it to the District’s current Equity and Inclusion Goals, and made recommendations for potential additions to these goals as well as areas where more specificity may be required. Recommendations included regular progress updates to the Board of Education and community, student voice and input via the Superintendent’s Student Advisory Council established in 2017/18, updates to the Code of Conduct to include specific language regarding harassment and discrimination based on protected categories (race, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, etc), more clarity around violations to the Dignity for All Students Act (DASA), and new teacher training on how to effectively use the District’s Equity Toolkit and Resources.

The recommendations will be written into specific, measurable goals, added to the current Equity Goals, and shared with the Board of Education and community. The District also plans to host quarterly opportunities for parents and caregivers to dialogue with District staff around a variety of topics. At the first of these quarterly events, the District will share specific work that has been accomplished, answer questions and gather feedback from community members who attend. For more information, visit the District’s Equity and Inclusion webpage at www.pittsfordschools.org/equity_inclusion.

PCSD students, families, staff and community members came together to celebrate Homecoming and show their Pittsford pride during the week of October 4-9, 2021. Students participated in theme days, pep rallies and bonfires with music and food trucks. On Friday, October 8, the Pittsford Panthers football team played Monroe High School under the lights, with a final score of 43-14. Pittsford. The 2019 and 2020 PCSD Hall of Fame inductees were honored during the game, including Troy Forte (MHS 2001), Erik Miller Sundstedt (MHS 1983), Ian Pilarski (SHS 2001), Justin Smith (MHS 1990) and Scott Wilson (SHS 1986). The celebrations continued on Saturday, October 9, with a parade in the Village of Pittsford.

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Homecoming 2021

Board of Education Honors Pittsford Pride Recipients

Nine students received the Pittsford Pride Citizenship Recognition Award during the November 16 Board of Education Meeting for demonstrating excellent citizenship and positive leadership. Congratulations to: Carlasia Clark, Gr. 8, CRMS; Camden Delmago, Gr. 7, BRMS; Ellie Giannattasio, Gr. 4, MCE; Delaney Goetz, Gr. 11, MHS; John Harrison-Mtete, Gr. 5, TIE; Emmi Lu, Gr. 12, SHS; Colin Lynch, Gr. 4, ACE; Maya Mohd Sani, Gr. 4, JRE; Magnolia Yates, Gr. 5, PRE

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Equity and Inclusivity Coordinator

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Appointed (Cont'd)

“Mr. French’s main responsibilities will be to collaborate with students, teachers and administrators to further promote the District’s diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives,” said Superintendent Michael Pero. “His experience in relationship building will also support PCSD in continuing to sustain positive and collaborative partnerships across diverse stakeholder groups.”

The Coordinator of Equity and Inclusivity will assist with the planning, leading, and supporting of best practices as they relate to restorative practices at the classroom, building and District level, support the continuous learning and professional development of staff in the area of equitable and inclusive instructional practices; assist with the District’s ongoing efforts to attract, recruit, and retain a diverse and highly effective faculty and staff; and, assist with the evaluation and selection of high quality curriculum and instructional materials that support all students’ growth and opportunities to learn.

Mr. French received his bachelor’s degree in English from The College at Brockport. He also holds an M.A.T. in secondary English from SUNY Empire College, and a Certificate of Advanced Study in Educational Leadership from The College at Brockport.

Pittsford Education Foundation Supports Need for Increased Student Mental Health Services (Cont’d)

Pittsford students are not immune to the effects of the pandemic, the increased stress and anxiety resulting from COVID-19, or the upheaval it has caused in the sense of stability for children and adults alike. In response, PCSD continues to increase its mental health services across the District, including increased student support in the areas of counseling services and social work support. School counselors, psychologists, behavior specialists and nurses are each contributing to the wellbeing of students in their individual roles.

The Pittsford Education Foundation recognizes the significant need of additional mental health supports as urgent and important. For this reason, the Pittsford Education Foundation is currently focusing its support in the area of mental health services for students and is inviting you to help by contributing to the Foundation.

Donations can be made online at https://www.pittsfordoefoundation.org or with a check mailed to: P.O. Box 243, Pittsford, NY 14534-0243. The Pittsford Education Foundation is a 501C3 and those who donate will be sent a receipt.

Superintendent’s Student Advisory Council Helps Remove Obstacles to Inclusivity

The high school-level Superintendent’s Student Advisory Council, established in 2017/18, sought applicants for the 2021-22 school year in November in order to continue to provide the Superintendent and other District officials with student perspectives on District-wide initiatives. This student charged committee gives students a voice on District issues as they relate to creating a truly inclusive school environment where all students feel a sense of validation, dignity, connectedness and acceptance every day. The committee consists of two students from each high school grade level; eight students per building, totaling sixteen students who reflect the diversity within the Pittsford Central School District, taking into account areas such as Race, Religion, LGBTQ+, Gender Identity, Socioeconomics, Ethnicity and Students with Disabilities.

Students on this committee assist in the development of solutions to inclusivity obstacles and provide feedback and suggestions on a wide variety of topics including but not limited to District initiatives (equity goals), school climate and culture, and challenges facing students today. While agendas often include a primary topic of conversation for each meeting, students are encouraged to share concerns and ideas at any time.

Student advisors must commit to attending at least four of the six meetings planned for the 2021-22 School Year.
Fall Sports Teams Earn Seven Section V Titles

Rainbow Classic Recognized with Outstanding Young People in Philanthropy Award (Cont’d)

Hospital patients; and it now honors the memory of many Pittsford students. Katelyn, who drew rainbows while in the hospital, inspired the fundraiser’s name.

Over the years, funds raised from the Rainbow Classic have supported various projects at Golisano Children’s Hospital including a Pediatric Intensive Care Unit patient room, the Child and Adolescent Hospital patients; and it now honors the memory of many Pittsford students. Katelyn, who drew rainbows while in the hospital, inspired the fundraiser’s name.

Fall Sports Teams Earn Seven Section V Titles

Congratulations to our athletes whose hard work and dedication led to these Section V Championship Titles!

- Mendon Boys Cross Country
- Mendon Field Hockey
- Mendon Girls Soccer
- Mendon Girls Tennis
- Pittsford Gymnastics
- Pittsford Girls Swimming & Diving
- Sutherland Boys Varsity Soccer

Reported COVID-19 Positive Cases

Newly reported COVID-19 cases in PCSD are available in the NYS COVID-19 School Report Card website (https://schools.covid19reportcard.ny.gov/home) that includes data from around the state.

In addition to working closely with the Monroe County Department of Public Health (MCDPH), we will continue to reinforce a layered mitigation approach in our classrooms includes wearing masks indoors, social distancing when possible, improved ventilation, ongoing education about proper handwashing and respiratory etiquette, encouraging students and staff to stay home when sick, and regular cleaning and disinfecting.

Please send any school-related questions to your child’s school principal or for District questions, please contact Shana Cutia, our COVID-19 District Liaison, at Shana_Cutia@Pittsford.monroe.edu.

Annual Tradition Honors Memory of 9/11 Victim Todd Pelino

John Santowski, a senior on the Mendon Boys Varsity Soccer team, was chosen for the honor of wearing the #9 jersey this year in memory of Todd Pelino, a 1985 Mendon High School graduate who lost his life on September 11, 2001, while working in the World Trade Center. As part of the tradition that began in 2002, a ceremony was held in honor of Todd Pelino and the special jersey was presented to Santowski who said, “It’s a big honor. It’s also a privilege and very humbling at the same time.” With 2021 marking the 20th anniversary of 9-11, head coach Mark Hurley said “John embodies everything that Todd stood for, which is that ideal teammate, the guy you would pick first to be on your team, not just because of his ability but because of his character.”
School Bus Delays and Cancellations Due to Bus Driver Shortage

Pittsford Schools is not immune to the school bus driver shortage affecting the nation and has a critical need for bus drivers. PCSD has employed multiple stopgaps while maintaining the highest level of safety, but the District anticipates that bus driver availability may become even more limited during the winter months and flu season, compounding an already difficult situation. While 105 school bus drivers are employed in a typical school year, PCSD began the school year with 92 drivers and, as of mid-November, is down to 78 drivers.

Families may feel the impact of this shortage in delayed bus runs to and from school as well as the cancellation of extra-curricular and athletic bus runs. In preparation for this likely scenario, the District is alerting parents about what to expect if their child(ren)’s bus is going to be delayed or canceled.

In the event that the District is unable to cover all bus routes as scheduled:

- Parents/guardians will receive an email from the District detailing the bus number(s) affected and estimated time of delay as soon as we are aware of a driver absence. Parents/guardians should check their email each morning and afternoon before their child(ren)’s normal bus run to learn about any delays or cancellations. (Text messaging for this purpose should be available in the near future)
- Parents/guardians are encouraged to consider driving their child(ren) and/or carpooling with neighbors to help alleviate some of the burden on the current system
- Parents/guardians who wish to pick up their child(ren) at the school should inform the school’s main office and arrange a time for pick-up
- When contacting the Transportation Department, keep in mind that all certified drivers – which includes office and mechanic staff – are being deployed as drivers during this period. This may cause a delay in responding to your call. It is best to email (Carla_Grove@pittsford.monroe.edu) or call in the middle of the day between morning and afternoon bus runs. Someone will respond as soon as possible
- After-school activities and athletics bus runs may be canceled due to this labor shortage. Please check your email for notifications about cancellations or delays
- Similar to other Districts, we are experiencing virtually no applicants in the areas of Bus Driver, Food Services and Operations & Maintenance (custodial/cleaner). If you or someone you know is interested in a career with PCSD, please ask them to visit https://www.pittsfordschools.org/JobOpportunities or call 585-267-1008. Pittsford Schools offers competitive pay, benefits, and NYS Retirement. School bus drivers also receive free training for a CDL-B License.