



# **GATES CHILI CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT**

## *Strategic Plan for Equity*

Executive Summary | March 2021



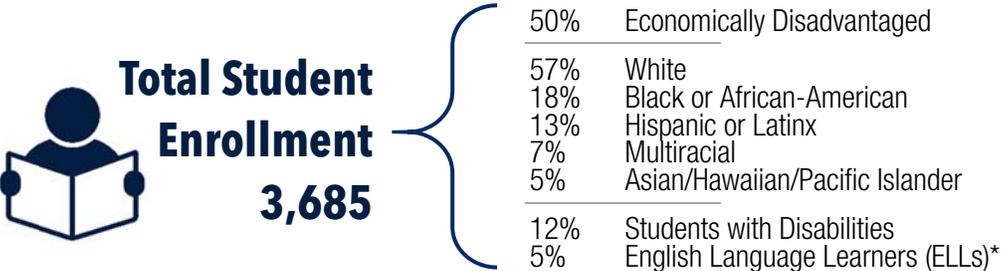
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# Introduction: A Letter from the Superintendent

Dear Gates Chili School Community,

The Gates Chili Central School District is dedicated to creating a welcoming and affirming environment for everyone. As such, the district is committed to strengthening equity and inclusion for all. Through the Strategic Plan for Equity we will remove barriers that hinder growth and learning, so student success is achieved at equitable levels across the district.

As a district, Gates Chili celebrates the diversity of its school community. The district has a reputation as one of the most diverse districts in Monroe County, and is the 16th most diverse district in the state according to Buffalo First News, yet state data showed troubling disparities in student success across various subsets of the student population.



\*Gates Chili students represent more than 20 different home countries and speak more than 30 different home languages.

Consequently, the work to overcome disproportionality at Gates Chili has been methodical and strategic since 2017. The district formed a Root Cause Team to examine district academic and behavior data, as well as the beliefs, policies, and practices contributing to disproportionality. This team worked with New York University's Metropolitan Center for Research on Equity and the Transformation of Schools, a leader in helping school districts to identify systems and practices that lead to disproportionality and recognize areas for growth. Regionally and nationally, NYU has worked with school districts to advance educational equity. From this partnership, the district identified five improvement areas outlined in a strategic, multi-year plan to improve outcomes for all students. This work is underpinned by the district's moral imperative, adopted by the Board of Education in October 2020:

*The Gates Chili Central School District has a moral duty to serve its students and families. Every student must be able to receive an equitable education where they are represented, protected and able to thrive. The district acknowledges the presence of white privilege and bias and how this perpetuates systematic racism. The Gates Chili Central School District is committed to the necessary growth required to develop and sustain equity and dismantle disproportionality.*

The pages of this executive summary outline the five focus areas of the plan and the data to support the need for improvement in these systems and practices. Please review the Forward before the Strategic Plan Drivers and Action Plan, as it establishes a common language to help to deepen understanding. For ongoing updates on the district's equity journey, please go to [www.gateschili.org/Equity](http://www.gateschili.org/Equity).

Sincerely,  
Christopher J. Dailey  
Superintendent of Schools

## Forward: Glossary of Terms

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This procedure is designed to define some of the terms or phrases that are used in or relevant to the strategic plan. Where applicable, the source of the definition has been identified. These definitions are in alphabetical order.

**Anti-Racist:** one who supports policies or actions that are aimed at undoing historical and current racist policies or actions<sup>1</sup>.

**Color-evasiveness/color-blindness:** denial of racial differences by emphasizing similarities. Though well-intentioned, it implies race does not matter and leads to inequity.

**Culturally-responsive/culturally-responsive practices:** helps educators create student-centered learning environments that affirm racial, linguistic and cultural identities and develop students' abilities to connect across lines of difference<sup>2</sup>.

**Disproportionality:** used when one group's population size is too large or too small in comparison with another group. Frequently used to indicate that a policy or action is impacting one group more or less than another.



**Diversity:** a representation of the unique differences, and cultural and lived experiences that make up our school community. These differences can exist along dimensions of race, ethnicity, gender, language heritage,

sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, age, physical abilities, religious beliefs, political beliefs, or other ideologies.

**Equality:** regarding or affecting all people in the same way.

**Equity:** the state, quality, or ideal of being just, impartial, and fair. The concept of equity is synonymous with fairness and justice. To be achieved and sustained, equity needs to be thought of as a structural and systemic concept, and not as idealistic. Equity is a robust system and dynamic process that reinforces and replicates equitable ideas, power, resources, strategies, conditions, habits, and outcomes.

**Historically-underrepresented groups:** refers to groups who have been denied access and/or suffered effects of systematic racism and/or discrimination.

**Implicit bias:** the unconscious attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions<sup>3</sup>.

**Inclusion:** involves authentic and empowered participation and a true sense of belonging.

**Inequity:** situations, actions, or instances that result in a lack of fairness or justice.

**Microaggression:** a comment or action that subtly and often unconsciously or unintentionally expresses a prejudiced attitude



toward a member of a historically-underrepresented group.

**Race:** a socially-constructed system of categorizing humans largely based on observable physical features (phenotypes) such as skin color and ancestry.

**Racism:** a belief that race is the primary determinant of human traits and capacities and that racial differences produce an inherent superiority of a particular race.

**Systematic racism:** the operation of racial bias across institutions and society. Lack of fairness or justice resulting from policies, procedures, or ways of doing business.

**White privilege:** inherent advantages possessed by a white person on the basis of their race in a society characterized by racial inequality and injustice<sup>4</sup>. It does not mean white people don't have or haven't had struggles; it means skin color hasn't contributed to their struggles.

## Strategic Plan Drivers

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The district recognizes that all learners do not currently have equitable outcomes, resulting in disproportionality.

### Connections

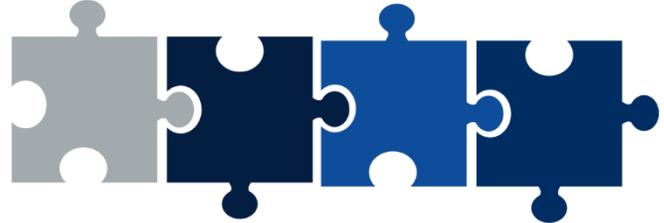
Connections with teachers and staff members are the greatest indicator of student success in the classroom. Teacher-student relationships present a platform to have conversations, share experiences, mentorship and participate in activities that, in sum, create opportunities for engaged learning. The relationships between students and teachers embraces the whole student and assists teachers in recognizing each student's unique story. It is imperative that educators understand the importance of establishing strong connections with all students, particularly with students of color, where cultural differences can present barriers to forming relationships.

### Staff Diversity

Currently, the mosaic of Gates Chili students outlined in the introduction is not reflected in the current teaching staff, which is more than 90% white. Students of color do not have the same opportunities to connect with staff members, which can lead to increased academic disengagement and/or behavioral misunderstanding. Educators of color are assets to the community as role models and advocates for affecting positive outcomes for students of color<sup>5</sup>.

### Staff Perception Survey

The district surveyed its teachers and other staff members in October 2019 to gain a better understanding of their beliefs and perceptions about race and equity. Of the more than 850 staff members districtwide, 66% of them responded to the survey. The survey had five focus areas that included intervention and referral processes, self-efficacy, practitioner's perspectives on



culture and race, and administrator and program director perceptions of teaching.

Survey respondents indicated the following:

- Fewer than half said materials provided to support teachers were culturally responsive and assessments were standardized for the population within the district.
- Fewer than 20% said they felt current intervention systems provide them with feedback on how to better support students.
- Only 30% of staff reported having enough training to deal with multiple learning needs.
- Nearly 60% feel they may not be able to reach all students.
- Almost half of staff reported that they do not have the appropriate level of racial awareness or knowledge.

A critical step in forming positive relationships is being responsive to students as individuals. For this to occur, staff members must engage in the work of understanding their own implicit biases.

### Disproportionality

The Root Cause Team also examined a pattern of disproportionality seen in academics and behavior. Across all grade levels, students of color are not achieving at the same rate as their white peers in the areas of literacy and numeracy. This disproportionality is evident through students performing below grade-

level benchmarks, the number of failing grades, and a lack of participation in advanced placement courses.

In addition to academics, the district is disproportionately disciplining and suspending Black and Latinx students, including students with disabilities. An unintended impact of the current discipline disparity is that oftentimes, students miss valuable instructional time, further increasing the achievement gap.

A review of policies, including the Student Code of Conduct and Character, also revealed subjective and punitive language that has resulted in inconsistent responses to supporting the behavioral needs of students of color.

According to data from the 2018-19 school year\*:

- For grades 8-12, Black students are two times more likely to fail English courses.
- Only 5.35% of Black students and 2.69% of Latinx students were enrolled in advanced courses.
- A higher percentage of Black students receive more referrals than their white peers.
- Latinx males are 22% more likely to be suspended than any other male group, followed by Black male students, who are 12% more likely to be suspended.

\*The Root Cause team met in the 2019-20 school year and analyzed data from the 2018-19 school year in order to have a complete data set.



# Strategic Plan

Based on the findings summarized in the previous section, the district worked with New York University's Metropolitan Center for Research on Equity and the Transformation of Schools to create a multi-year strategic plan to improve outcomes for all students.



## Focus Areas

The following five areas emerged as districtwide areas in need of improvement to dismantle disproportionality across the district.

Focus Area	Strategic Plan Action	Strategic Plan Outcome
<b>Teaching and Learning</b>	Review district curriculum, resources and instructional practices, make recommendations for changes or additions to learning materials and experiences to ensure relevance to all students and that students' history and cultural norms are being honored.	Develop and implement culturally-responsive curriculum, resources and instructional practices to engage students in relevant and authentic experiences to address the disproportionality of historically underrepresented students to ensure success.
<b>Recruitment, Hiring and Retention</b>	Diversify the methods by which the district recruits employees of color, remove bias and barriers from all hiring practices and procedures, and strengthen the sense of belonging amongst all staff members through increased support and connections.	Develop and sustain strategies which focus on recruiting, supporting and retaining employees from historically underrepresented groups to achieve a balance of representation of faculty and staff that is in line with our student population.
<b>Multi-Tiered Systems of Support</b>	Analyze current resources, how they are accessed and by whom to create an aligned framework that uses consistent, data-informed processes and practices to maximize these supports for all students and their families.	Develop and implement a culturally-responsive Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) that is data driven, includes diverse stakeholders, is aligned (PreK-12), equitable and proactive; and that will result in significant reduction of the disproportionality existing in our academic and disciplinary data.
<b>Restorative Practices</b>	Empower teachers to provide the skills and opportunity for students to take responsibility for their choices and support them in finding a viable option to repair any harm caused.	Develop and implement a culturally-responsive restorative justice district culture and discipline approach to create a welcoming and affirming environment for every student, family, and staff member to decrease disciplinary disparities in our district.
<b>Data Systems</b>	Create a culturally-responsive data dashboard, which will inform decisions on all district levels, including teaching practices and interventions for students.	Develop and implement a culturally-responsive data system that provides accurate collection of demographic data to monitor and address disproportionality across the district for staff and students.

# Equity Teams

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The district will establish three teams that will work collaboratively to guide the work of the plan.

## District Equity Team

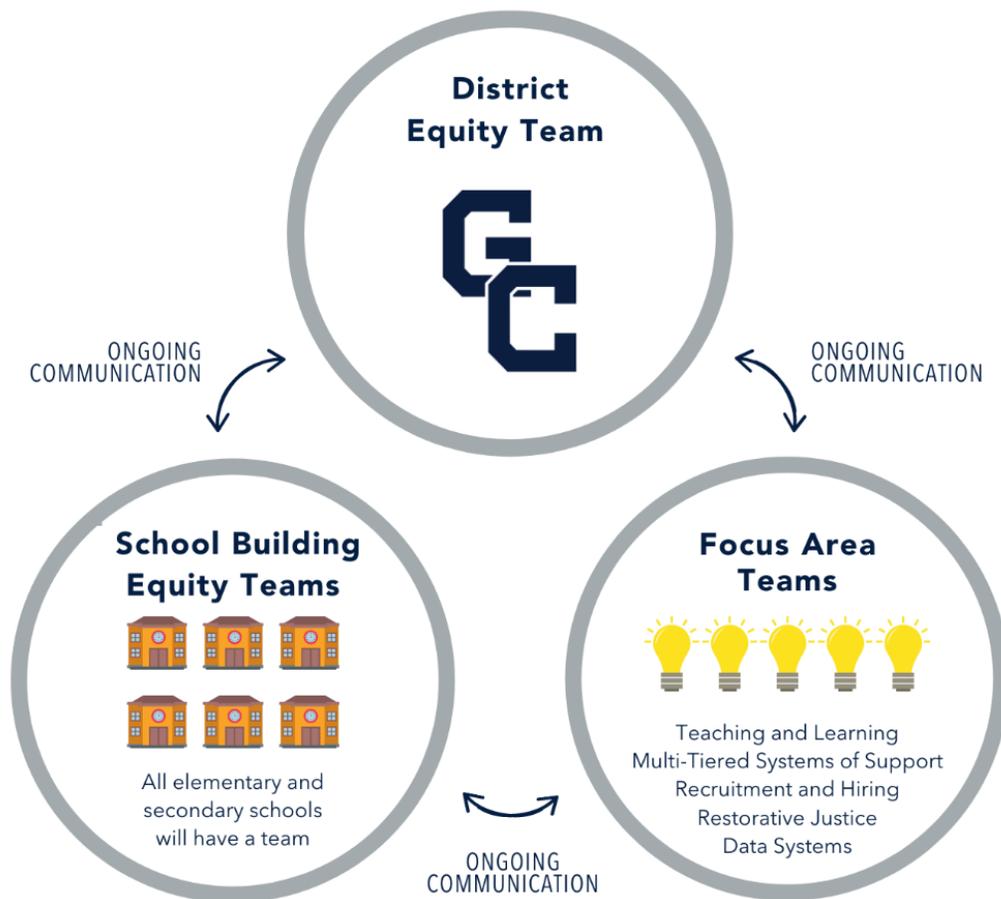
The district equity team will serve as an advisory group and accountability partner to ensure we are making progress towards achieving our goal. The team will be comprised of representatives from all stakeholder groups including community members, parents and students. They will meet three to four times a year to hear about accomplishments, ask questions and provide feedback.

## School-Building Equity Teams

There will be a school-building equity team at each of the six school buildings. These groups will support each school's work in helping stakeholders understand and implement culturally-responsive sustaining practices. The work in the school buildings will be unique to the needs and culture of the building.

## Focus Area Teams

The Root Cause team identified five areas that need strengthening to make our systems and practices more equitable for students. The focus area teams will guide the work of the five focus improvement areas.



## Conclusion

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Gates Chili Central School District is committed to the necessary growth outlined in this plan, in order to develop and sustain equity and dismantle disproportionality.

The actions and outcomes identified in this report are the first phase of the overall work that needs to be done to dismantle disproportionately and improve outcomes for all students. In working on the focus areas of this plan, the district expects to continually monitor progress and effectiveness, as well as identify additional areas for improvement.

## References

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<sup>1</sup> Adapted from How To be An Antiracist, Ibram X. Kendi (2019)

<sup>2</sup> Adapted from the New York State Education Department Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Education Framework

<sup>3</sup> Ohio State University Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity

<sup>4</sup> Lexico.com

<sup>5</sup> The Added Value of Latinx and Black Teachers for Latinx and Black Students: Implication for Policy. T.J. Bristol & J. Martin-Fernandez (2019)

## Special Acknowledgement

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Thank you to the members of the Gates Chili Root Cause Team for their dedication to creating a more welcoming and affirming environment for all:

### Districtwide Administration

Christopher Dailey, Superintendent of Schools  
Carol Stehm, Co-Facilitator  
Jason deJong, Co-Facilitator  
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Angela Moniquen  
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Nancy Menendez-Soto  
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Carissa Binger  
Katrina Cimato  
Maureen Fundis

### Paul Road Elementary School

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Jahmar Elliott  
Sarah Ryan, Psy.D.  
Catherine Schwasman  
Gina Sirianni

### Walt Disney Elementary School

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Lillian Grisby  
Marla Guarnieri  
Michelle McCumber  
Sara Ray Meza  
Sara Mucino  
Katherine Picha

*Thank you!*



### **Board of Education 2020-21**

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Kerri Keyes

Robert Long

Francis Muscato

The Gates Chili Central School District is dedicated to fostering curiosity, growth and diversity within our school community. The district celebrates and embraces differences and strives to dismantle exclusion, bias, racism, and prejudice of all forms.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT [GATESCHILI.ORG/EQUITY](https://gateschili.org/equity)**