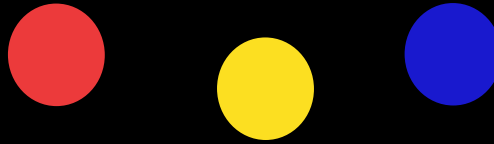


Executive Summary | What is HDAC?



Since 2017, the Hamden Board of Education has been discussing how to address a series of challenges and opportunities: a decrease in state funding to towns for education, a decline in enrollment across Connecticut, the challenge of meeting state guidelines for diversity, and incorporating Hamden's own community's values around diversity and inclusiveness. This inquiry led to the creation of the [3R Initiative](#). Since starting the 3R Initiative, there were a series of new policy developments as well as a global pandemic and national racial uprisings. This inspired the board to support the creation of the Hamden Diversity Advisory Council (HDAC)- an unprecedented community design process.

The Hamden Diversity Advisory Council (HDAC) is an initiative to engage community leaders in the process of reimagining, restructuring, and redesigning results for equity and diversity in Hamden Public Schools with the unique challenges of today's world. HDAC worked to model what the Hamden community needs most: to engage across differences, to build relationships, to analyze data, and to challenge one another to come to a shared commitment and vision for Hamden Schools for racial equity in education. HDAC joined seventy parents, teachers, students, administrators, and community advocates to be part of this work and to share it with their prospective organizations and communities.

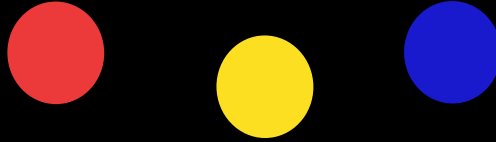
The seventy HDAC members voted five members onto a steering committee- Frank Dixon, parent and community advocate at Hamden High School; Mariam Khan, student and community advocate at Hamden High School; Karlen Meisein, parent, at Hamden Public Schools; Loretha Franklin, teacher and community advocate in Hamden Public Schools, the Ethnic Minority Affairs Commission (EMAC), and the Hamden Board of Education; and Kathleen Kiely, teacher, and community advocate at Ridge Hill Elementary and EMAC. These five community members received an honorarium to draft the following report to publicize the wider group's conversations, priorities, and policy recommendations to the Board of Education. Sarah Medina Camiscoli, founder of [IntegrateNYC](#), instructor at Yale Education Studies Program, and student at Yale Law School served as the lead facilitator. Zoe Masters, student at Yale Law School worked as a researcher and co-facilitator.

The HDAC first met as a full group in February 2020 and then moved to a virtual platform through July 2020 while managing the impact of COVID-19 and national racial uprisings.

HDAC worked towards three deliverables:

- 1) A public policy report designed with and by community members to share with the BOE, the legislative council, and the public as a tool to understand and review community priorities.
- 2) A plan to create a culture shift in Hamden Schools to prioritize integration through existing infrastructure.
- 3) An application to join the [Century Foundation Bridges Collaborative](#)- a national cohort of fifty school districts that will join to support each other's efforts to increase access to diverse, integrated, and inclusive schools and neighborhoods.

Executive Summary | Policy Recommendations



1. Enroll classes with racial diversity.

HDAC calls for a more equitable admissions process that ensures Hamden's schools reflect Hamden's diversity. HDAC calls for this admission process to roll out with a plan for Universal Pre-K. HDAC designed a series of recommendations for this rollout.

Universal Pre-K (UPK)

- 1) Support existing Pre-K businesses
- 2) Create Pre-K space for five schools.
- 3) Provide Pre-K programming information in the Hamden Resource Center or in a centralized resource center.
- 4) Expand the Connecticut School Readiness Grant.
- 5) Increase support for special education services for preschool students

Controlled Choice

- 1) Roll out Hamden's first controlled choice enrollment system at the Pre-K level.
- 2) Weigh the following community identified factors in the matching algorithm: socioeconomic status, neighborhood level data, home language, special education, total commute time, family systems-involvement, and base class size.
- 3) Create a centralized community resource center to share information with parents about UPK and enrollment.

2. Allocate resources for racial equity.

HDAC believes resources include both budget lines and people power. The BOE must monitor, prioritize, and allocate the resources most necessary for equity in Hamden.

Data Monitoring

- 1) Collect data on each school's resources and whether they meet state constitutional right to adequate and equitable education on a school level and individual student level.
- 2) Collect data on commuting time for families and prioritize students with longer commutes in admissions algorithm.

Parent Teacher Associations (PTA)

- 1) Create a mechanism to share PTA dollars across elementary schools.

Pedagogy and Teacher Recruitment

- 1) Reallocate municipal funds into the BOE strategic plan to support in-classroom black and brown teacher hires and curriculum.
- 2) Expand teacher recruitment area outside of Connecticut and reach Historically Black Universities and Colleges.

Executive Summary | Policy Recommendations

3. Teach for racial justice.

HDAC asserts that diversity includes how students' history and identities are supported and developed through curriculum, relationships, and interventions. Integration must happen at every level of school life.

Teacher Diversity

- 1) Develop partnerships with local universities to recruit teachers of color.
- 2) Monitor retention of current teachers of color
- 3) Design pipeline programs to support current Hamden high school students to pursue a career in teaching.
- 4) Consider cultural experience and education as an asset in hiring practices. Look at the payscale and allow courses in Black History, Hispanic and Latinx heritage courses as well as ethnic studies and Indigenous Peoples to count or have an additional pay step scale similar to a masters +15 column.
- 5) Create implicit bias and anti racist training as mandatory professional development for all staff and faculty.
- 6) Create a BIPOC and affinity spaces for teachers to collaborate and discuss curriculum and teaching strategies as well as work on their own bias within affinity groups.

Anti-Racist Curriculum

Classroom Level

- 1) Celebrate and recognize holidays that honor minority groups.
- 2) Utilize a dynamic curriculum that connects historical events to the future.
- 3) Adopting an anti-imperialist & non-eurocentric curriculum.

School Level

- 1) Require multicultural learning and anti-racist training.
- 2) Compensating and encourage teacher leadership.

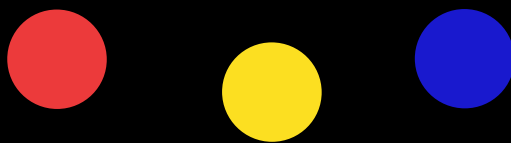
Board Level

- 1) Implement district-wide initiatives regarding an anti-racist and culturally responsive curriculum tailored towards every grade with the voice of students, families, educators, and administrators.
- 2) Reassess religious and cultural holidays in calendar.
- 3) Reassess building infrastructure to support needs of youth across religious and gender minorities in Hamden.

Positive Behavior Intervention Support and Restorative Justice

- 1) BOE review and report on District SRBI, PBIS, Restorative Justice, and trauma informed practices.
- 2) Expand implementation of interventions, with progress monitoring from Pre-K to Grade 12 of SRBI, PBIS, Restorative Justice, and trauma informed practices.
- 3) Provide a focus and framework for district wide restorative practices framework
- 4) Request increased Town Council funding to support SRBI, PBIS, Restorative Justice, and trauma informed practices.
- 5) Request increased State level funding to support SRBI, PBIS, Restorative Justice, and trauma informed practices.

Executive Summary | Policy Recommendations



4. Protect efforts for racial justice during COVID-19.

The commitment to racial justice must remain certain in uncertain times. To protect this work, HDAC asks the BOE to focus on virtual and socially distanced alternatives to the following 2020 policy recommendations and to invest the following community concerns.

Protect HDAC's effort to enroll classes with racial equity in 2020.

- 1) Establish a virtual Pre-K Enrollment Task Force in HPS.
- 2) Hold virtual community forums on designing a new enrollment algorithm and priorities.

Protect HDAC's effort to allocate resources for racial equity in 2020.

- 1) Create a virtual reporting mechanism for "adequate and equitable education."
- 2) Create a virtual Hamden PTA Task Force to design a collective sharing system.
- 3) Create a virtual data collection tool for commuting time from parents. Add a component for technology access and expenses for virtual learning periods.

Protect HDAC's effort to teach for racial equity in 2020.

- 1) Review current outreach efforts and partnerships.
- 2) Collect accurate data on teacher identity and position.
- 3) Meet virtually with Black and Hispanic Student Caucus to vision a teacher pipeline program.
- 4) Create virtual training for administrators in culturally responsive hiring practices.
- 5) Create virtual task force for implicit bias training design.
- 6) Create a virtual community for teachers of color to voice their opinions and share curriculum input.
- 7) Create a plan for retention and leadership teaching roles for existing teachers of color to be role models for their colleagues and students.
- 8) Develop a five-year plan of transitioning to a fully anti-racist and culturally responsive curriculum with a distance-learning format.
- 9) Hold a virtual public forum on the Hamden Holiday Calendar for the 2020-2021.
- 10) Determine the current status of SRBI, PBIS, RJ, and trauma supports at all levels.
- 11) Release a plan for funding SRBI, PBIS, RJ, and trauma supports at all levels.

Respond to the following HDAC community questions.

- 1) How does BOE get information from impacted families in crisis as a result of COVID-19?
- 2) What funds and support exists for WiFi and technology access during distance learning?
- 3) What are other school districts doing?

Letter from HDAC Steering Committee



The inhumane chronological plight of discriminatory and racist practices by “America” towards African Americans has laid a 400-year path of perfidious, grim and targeted institutional suppressive policies; starting with the human bondage of slavery in mid-1600’s, to the Black Codes of 1865 which restricted African Americans’ freedoms, leading into segregations of Jim Crow Laws of 1881 and continued in local, state and federal government-backed initiatives which disallowed the basic civil rights and access to equal employment, health care, housing, and education. This country’s purposeful and chronic history of disfranchisement towards its black and brown populations has contributed to a current social Post Traumatic Stress (PTS) of an entire population of people.

In addition to the institutionalized racism and subjugation, our country has created a multigenerational culture which has consistently contributed to the inability for Blacks to adapt at the same pace as the majority, unfailingly living in a never-ending state of social and economic recovery. The erection of Americans social construct has created “Two Americas:” one black and one white. These two Americas are separated primarily across poverty lines, lines which are linked directly to unequal resources; one being education. Although there are more whites living in poverty in this country, poverty is more persistent across generations of black families, and before any progress can be made to address any of our social and economic inequality roadblocks, we must first actually acknowledge, accept, and remove all systemic racism.

Over the last three decades, little has changed too much within the “other” America; that of non-privilege. In this “other” America, a report by the Office of Civil Rights can sit on a shelf for 20 years because the oppressed rarely have a “voice”.

We are left with looming questions about Connecticut and equity: why is wealth seen as the problem and not poverty? Why isn’t economic development and school improvement with equitable resources seen as a solution to poverty and impoverished schools? Why don’t politicians notice that giving food, giving money for food, and funding poverty isn’t working? Why don’t politicians ask community members what they need to improve community life? Why don’t politicians explore solutions to build healthy communities, including but not limited to healthy schools, thus reducing crime and eliminating the need for more policing? Why don’t politicians notice that isolated solutions, such as increasing teacher salary, aren’t effectively creating better overall school systems in CT? Why don’t our communities realize that giving policymakers power and control over our school systems eliminating the voice of the teachers and students is ineffective and divisive?

It is time for Hamden to reimagine its system in terms of opportunity and equity for all and to hold the leaders and politicians accountable for available resources.

-Frank Dixon and Karlen Meinsen
Parents and Advocates, Hamden Public Schools
HDAC Steering Committee

Letter from an HDAC Student Leader



Our community wrote this report during a global pandemic that's taken over half a million lives and a wave of international demonstrations reigniting the movement for Black liberation. Let's just say that this isn't your average report.

As we researched, developed, and finalized this proposal over the past few months, centuries of unaddressed racist oppression and violence exposed itself. Black and Brown students are underperforming in remote learning programs compared to their white counterparts. People of color are being affected by COVID-19 at disproportionately higher rates. Black communities continue to be brutalized by police, even in the midst of a pandemic. These facts are not unrelated: they reveal how racial injustice permeates education, medicine, policing, and more.

They show how racism affects Hamden's Black and Brown students in every part of life.

2020, a year hallmarked by pain and uncertainty, has shown our communities that we need to demand better. With protests sweeping the nation, towns divesting from policing to invest in education, and communities intentionally combating anti-Blackness and White supremacy, we have affirmed that *it doesn't have to be this way*.

Imagine a world where students of color aren't ashamed by the rich hues of their skin or forced to endure and internalize the racial hate thrown at them. Imagine a world where kids born out of the most marginalized backgrounds are allowed to *just be kids*, and let's not stop there. Imagine a world where our immigrant, disabled, LGBTQ+, Black and Brown students are recognized in our calendar, curriculum, and hallways.

Instead of merely imagining what a robust and just community would look like, let's turn our dreams of equality into calls for accountability, honesty, and change. Let's reject silence and complicity, and stop labeling equality an unachievable goal. Instead, let's be loud and unwavering in the pursuit for justice, and come together to acquire the change spearheaded by our ancestors hundreds of years ago and now being led by our very own communities.

Let's do the work.

I speak to you as a Muslim woman, a daughter of first-generation Pakistani immigrants, an unapologetic community organizer, and graduate of Hamden High's Class of 2020. As you read the report created by a group of Hamden students, parents, teachers, and residents, remember that lasting and meaningful change will always stem from our communities.

Let's transform Hamden into the place we know it can be.

-Mariam Khan
Student, Hamden High School '20
HDAC Steering Committee