

## **What is Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) and what is its purpose within LAS?**

Lowell Area Schools values diversity, equity, and inclusion and we strive to make all students feel welcomed and valued. Efforts to increase staff and student knowledge, analyze systems, and recognize potential areas for improvement in the area of DEI are not new. Board of Education Policy #2105 details the district's mission for all students.

*Lowell Area Schools, in the spirit of high expectations, ensures all students will master essential skills, empowering them to become lifelong learners and contributing, responsible members of our global community.*

As with many other districts in Kent County and across the nation, Lowell has an established committee in place to work on ongoing DEI related practices. The DEI Committee seeks to focus on equity within the school environment and believes this work is essential to the concept of "Learners Today, Leaders Tomorrow, and Red Arrows for Life." The committee focuses on common values that make the school community stronger.

The committee also assists district efforts to provide resources and training to facilitate collective learning and self-reflection around the contributions of all cultures and people with the understanding that each unique experience benefits the educational experience for all persons.

Lowell Area Schools, in short, values its work to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion. While there may not be a clear, linear path to properly addressing issues related to DEI, the district is committed to the continued exploration of increasing knowledge with the ultimate goal of benefitting all students.

## **What is Social/Emotional Learning (SEL) and how is that implemented within LAS?**

It is important to view each student holistically and strive to meet their individual needs as possible. Social/emotional learning, at its base, is simply the district's attempt to promote positive mental health. Students deal with school, stress, and life circumstances in a variety of ways. We are concerned about students and adults who struggle with anxiety, depression or other mental health challenges. Learning is our district's top priority, but SEL engagement practices are both in place and continue to be developed.

Lowell Area Schools uses a Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) model to reflect on behavior, academics, and social/emotional learning. We consider universal supports in place that are available for all students. We also consider potential intervention options for students that display concerns as related to mental health. Systems are in place in our schools through social workers, counselors, other itinerant staff as well as through child study teams.

As of this September 2021, Lowell Area Schools does not have a specified SEL curriculum in place. There is not an embedded curriculum that all schools adhere to. Rather, developing SEL practices is an ongoing work in progress. School staff work individually with students and parents to consider supports that may benefit each person. At times, outside counseling agencies may be recommended. Surveys to gather information may be in place as a tool to assess data around social/emotional learning.

## Is Critical Race Theory taught within LAS?

Critical Race Theory, as defined and explained below, is not taught within Lowell Area Schools. Curriculum taught in our schools is based on identified state standards. For example, [state K-12 social studies standards](#).

Recently, Michigan State Superintendent Michael F. Rice issued the following statement:

*“Despite the concerns raised by some in the state and country, critical race theory is not a curricular issue in pre-K-12 education. Critical race theory is in fact an academic umbrella of reflections and writings developed in higher education (colleges, universities, law schools, and graduate schools) since the mid-1970’s. It is not a curriculum and it is not a pre-K-12 curriculum. It is an academic lens or set of lenses developed primarily by those in higher education to consider the elements and impacts of racism and particularly institutional racism on our country and citizenry.”*

Encyclopedia Britannica defines Critical Race Theory as follows:

*Critical Race Theory (CRT) – intellectual movement and loosely organized framework of legal analysis based on the premise that race is not a natural, biologically grounded feature of physically distinct subgroups of human beings but a socially constructed (culturally invented) category that is used to oppress and exploit people of color. Critical race theorists hold that the law and legal institutions in the United States are inherently racist insofar as they function to create and maintain social, economic, and political inequalities between whites and nonwhites, especially African Americans.*

In the event that a concern or question arises regarding what may be CRT, please contact the specific staff member that is best suited to address the issue. For example, if one has a question about a specific class activity, then it would be appropriate to contact the teacher in order to have a conversation. If the question persists, then contacting the school principal is a possible step to take.