



Watchung Hills Regional High School District

Recognized as a Lighthouse Awardee during the 2021-2023 term for diversifying the teacher workforce.

The New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) Lighthouse District Initiative recognizes districts that have demonstrated measurable progress for equitable outcomes. The NJDOE is proud to welcome the Watchung Hills Regional High School District to the third cohort of Lighthouse Districts.

Watchung Hills Regional High School District Demographics

- 1,936 Total Students
- 9–12 Grades Offered
- 2% Economically Disadvantaged
- 14.7% Students with Disabilities
- 1% English Learners
- 12:1 Student to Teacher Ratio

Want to learn more? Contact us.

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Watchung Hills Regional High School District Equity Story

Below, you will find a narrative describing the ways that the Watchung Hills Regional High School District has diversified the teacher workforce.

Engaging Diverse Stakeholder Groups about Policy to Increase Diversity in the Teacher Workforce

Watchung Hills Regional High School District (WHRHS) has been proactive in both the recruitment of diverse educators and advocating for diversity in teacher preparation programs. As an active member of Central Jersey Program for the Recruitment of Diverse Educators (CJPride), a professional shared services group with a mission of recruiting diverse educators, WHRHS has participated in the development and delivery of the annual CJPride Job Fair, presented as part of CJPride at the New Jersey Convening on Diversifying the Educator Workforce, and developed and awarded CJPride scholarships to students from under-represented groups who are entering New Jersey teacher preparation programs. This information is shared with the professional learning community at WHRHS to educate everyone about the challenges and needs of diversifying the educator workforce. The Watchung Hills district strategic plan for 2020-2025 focuses on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) as one of its four goals, and our previous strategic plan (2015-2020) included DEI as part of wellness. As a district, the DEI initiative was moved to a stand-alone goal as the learning community realized the importance of this work. In our DEI work (which focuses on students, educators, and the community) the teachers, support staff, and administrators have shared information and experiences regarding the importance of diversifying the educator workforce to make certain students do not have an experience of seeing knowledge and power only associated with white classroom teachers.

WHRHS employees view the Comprehensive Equity Plan as more than a mandated requirement, and the district works diligently on the Comprehensive Equity Plan using this as an opportunity to share information among teachers and administrators regarding equity issues, not only for students, but also for teachers and other employees of WHRHS.

Distributed Teacher Leadership Related to Increasing Diversity in the Teacher Workforce

Watchung Hills Regional High School formed an Equity Team several years ago that is composed of teachers, support staff, and administrators. This team offers leadership opportunities to educators who are especially invested in diversity and equity issues. Parallel to the Equity Team are the student Diversity Club and the Black Student Union. These groups

create opportunities for teachers and students to share and to discuss the experiences of underrepresented people in the classrooms and school community. WHRHS has worked with US2 Consulting for the last two school years to advise our Equity Team and the Strategic Plan Action Team members (including teacher leaders) as the district implements programs and resources for students, teachers, and the community.

Professional Learning and Mentoring Related to Equity and Diversity in the Teacher Workforce

Mentoring is a teacher-facilitated program at WHRHS that is supported by the Director of Human Resources and Professional Development. Teacher leaders volunteer to be members of the School Improvement Panel, the team that oversees mentoring. Additionally, all certificated educators new to WHRHS are provided a mentor and the district pays the mentor fees with federal funds, removing any financial barrier for a new employee to have a mentor. All effective and highly effective faculty are invited to become mentors and mentor training is provided by the teacher mentoring team during a regularly scheduled professional development day. Professional learning is aligned with the Strategic Plan and includes surveys to gather educator input on their professional learning requests. The Board of Education includes a line item for speaker fees so the district can encourage and compensate teachers to provide professional learning to colleagues. Professional learning opportunities include DEI topics aligned with the strategic plan. Approximately 30 teachers are part of a Professional Learning Community (PLC) dedicated to DEI. The members of this PLC develop and deliver DEI workshops on diversity and equity topics to all faculty during scheduled PLC time.

Involving Stakeholders in all Stages of the Policymaking Process

As a shared service, WHRHS is an active member of CJPrize, and much of the work on recruitment of diverse educators flows through that organization. The district has been an active member district of CJPrize since July 1, 2016. The information CJPrize shares with legislatures, teacher preparation programs, and other NJ school districts has been shared with teachers, support staff, and administrators at WHRHS. The foundational work begun with CJPrize continues to be built upon through the work of our district strategic plan and the work on DEI the district has done with US2 Consultants. The Board of Education has supported the district's dedication to diversifying the teacher workforce with a budget that allows district personnel to engage in special recruiting events, professional learning, and PLC time dedication to DEI.

Integration of Quantitative Data Sources for Improvement in Increasing Diversity in the Teacher Workforce

Quantitative data on improving and increasing diversity in the teacher workforce comes from the activities of the Comprehensive Equity Plan team and from the data collected and analyzed by CJPrize. The Comprehensive Equity Plan team analyzes staffing, including the results of the self-reporting of race, ethnicity, and gender by employees. CJPrize collects self-reported information on gender, race, and ethnicity from all registrants for the annual job fair that is a diversity recruitment event. Data from that event is shared with WHRHS. The district uses Frontline Applitrack for applications and that program is analyzed by Human Resources to evaluate the diversity of applicants. Applicants may volunteer to complete the sections on gender, race, and ethnicity if they like. This data is presented in an aggregated form and is not identifiable on the individual applications.