

Arlington High School

School Improvement Plan
School Year 2021-2022





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Part 1: Overview of Arlington High School - Learning, Connecting and Caring as a Community

Mission Statement

In an effort to foster academic excellence and personal achievement at the highest levels, Arlington High School focuses on learning, connecting, and caring as a community. AHS provides a safe, supporting, nurturing environment in which students can acquire knowledge, values, and intellectual curiosity that will lead to lifelong learning. As a community we have agreed upon the following values and habits of mind as foundational principles that will guide all teaching and learning and policy decisions at Arlington High School.

They are:

- Integrity
- Communication
- Accountability and responsibility
- Respect
- Effective teamwork

We believe that living these values and habits of mind on a daily basis will ensure all students a rigorous high school education that will prepare them for their future roles as learners, leaders, and citizens in a 21st century democracy.

Academic Expectations for Students

Arlington High School students will:

- Gather data and critically evaluate the content, source, and relevance of that data, especially but not exclusively, through the use of technology
- Reason logically, using appropriate qualitative or quantitative methods and use their analysis to answer questions
- Write clearly and effectively.
- Listen actively and respond through inquiry, discussion, writing, and various forms of art
- Read and comprehend varied materials and be able to interpret and apply what they have read.
- Speak clearly and effectively in a variety of contexts
- Demonstrate life, leadership, physical, and cognitive skills through projects, performance, and products

21st Century Focus Points Across the Curriculum

- Higher-order thinking skills through interdisciplinary learning, analysis, and synthesis of information
- Media and visual literacy
- Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, Mathematics expertise
- Collaboration in a diverse, multicultural world
- Stress and time management
- Communication skills
- A love of learning coupled with a willingness to work hard

Part II: Overview of the Planning

The past year required many adjustments to expectations and practices. With the construction project in front of the school and space limitations created by the pandemic, Arlington High School (AHS) was forced to make most classes remote for the majority of the year. The pressures of the political environment during this period of separation also challenged our sense of community.

This year, we are thrilled to return to in person instruction, but we are still contending with limitations created by safety restrictions such as masking, limiting gatherings, pool testing, and absences due to quarantine. The building is at 100% capacity and the building project complicates logistics. This impacts programming and scheduling. We are also planning to move into Phase 1 of the new construction in the middle of the year.

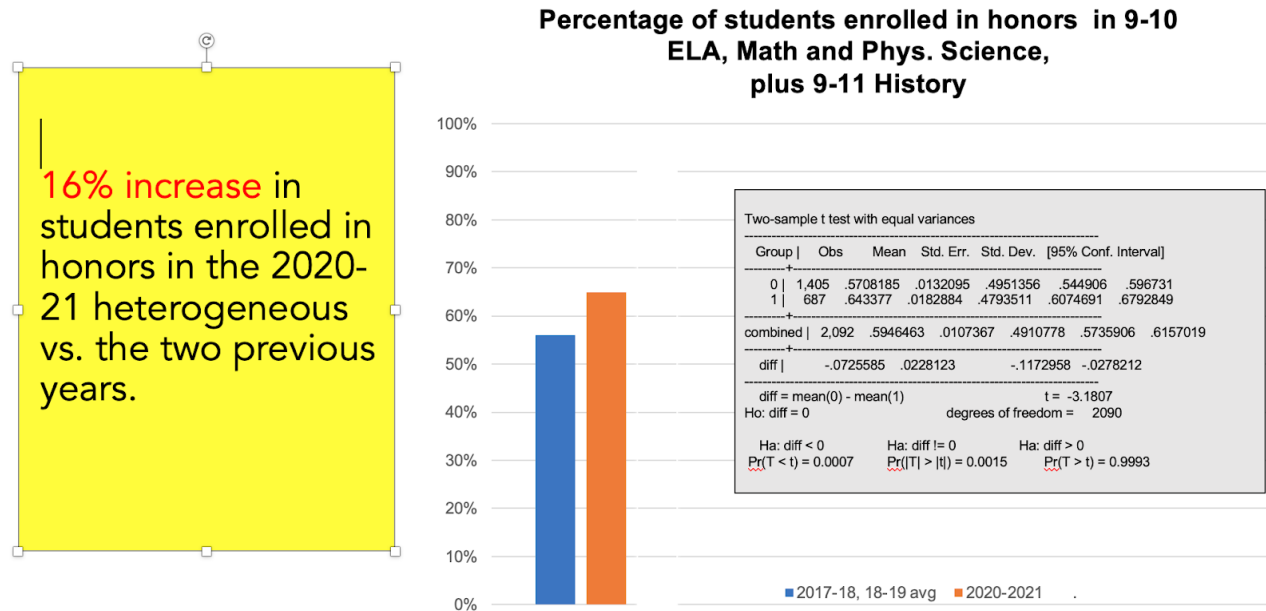
Nonetheless, AHS continues to provide high levels of academic quality and a positive environment despite persistent challenges in facilities and the challenges of the pandemic. Over the last 8 years, Arlington High School has worked steadily on increasing academic achievement, equity, and school climate by working on a number of levels including program structure, classroom instruction, disciplinary practices, student leadership, and technology. This school improvement plan will focus on a few of the current efforts that are carrying work forward in each of these areas. While these areas are divided by “Instructional Objectives” and “Equity and School Culture Objectives” it is worthwhile to note that all of these initiatives impact equity and instruction.

Instructional Objectives

Objective 1 - Heterogeneous Grouping Initiative

Over the past 8 years, we have reviewed our course pathways and instructional practices to improve academic achievement and equity. This has included more opportunities for students to accelerate their learning as well as removing structural barriers to students accessing high level, college preparatory curriculum. This has included the creation of co-taught classes in required classes in English, History, Science, and Math in grades 9 and 10 as well as eliminating Curriculum B level courses in our general education programs.

In response to the pandemic, AHS experimented with new heterogeneous classes in grades 9 and 10 during the 2020-21 school year. In heterogeneous classes students in the same class can choose to do either Honors or Curriculum A level work and earn that designation on their transcript. At AHS, this has been more common in Junior and Senior level classes and electives. There is strong research support for the value of heterogeneous classes when implemented effectively in terms of improving the focus on student growth, overall student achievement, a growth mindset, and student equity ([See Heterogeneous Grouping Initiative Proposal](#)). Roughly $\frac{2}{3}$ of our students enroll at the honors level in most of these courses. Nonetheless, we still find students of color and students with IEPs under-represented at the honors level. Our experience in the 2020-21 school year showed increased participation at the honors level in most of the heterogeneous classes and relatively stable levels of performance in grades.



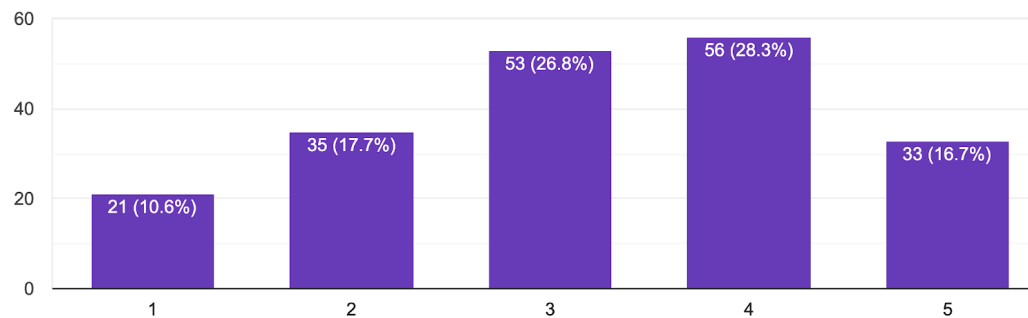
When analyzed for different subgroups, these data also show positive impacts within each subgroup.

- 250% increase in special education students taking Honors
- 400% increase in English Language Learners taking Honors
- 15% increase in White students taking Honors
- 38% increase in Hispanic/Latinx students taking Honors
- 17% increase in Asian/Pacific Islander students taking Honors
- 16% increase in African American students taking Honors

Furthermore, our surveys of students and parents who participated in these classes indicates that, in spite of the many limitations on the courses placed by the pandemic and rapid planning, their experience was mostly positive. Teachers of those classes also expressed a positive overall experience.

AHS Student Experiences with Heterogeneous Classes During the 2020-21 School Year

This year, AHS used HETEROGENEOUS CLASSES in required classes in grades 9 and 10 for Math, English, History, and Science. In a heterogeneous experience with HETEROGENEOUS CLASSES this year?
198 responses



With the need for rapid decision making created by the pandemic, we decided to pause efforts to adopt heterogeneous grouping in these classes. We plan to spend this year reviewing our data and the research to make a pilot project proposal and then to engage in professional development and planning to plan for a pilot in the fall of 2022. We will also collect baseline data on student classroom experiences. We are looking particularly at grade 9 English, History, and Science.

Our immediate objective would be to increase overall participation in honors level work, maintain or improve students grades, decrease disproportionality by demographic group in participation and outcomes, and increase overall student engagement as reported in survey data. In the long term, we hope that this will open up more opportunities for improving equity and achievement in our curriculum pathways.

Instructional Objective 2 - Curriculum Equity Review

The AHS departments work each year to refine and modify our system of standards, curriculum, and common assessments aligned to state and national standards and our district vision with the aim to provide a guaranteed and viable curriculum. In the past 3 years, we have focused, in particular, on reviewing our curriculum or curriculum pathways for equity, that is to remove bias, to increase student representation, and to encourage student voice. For each discipline this may look slightly different. For English it includes adding more diverse groups of authors or different types of texts. For history it includes covering the experiences of different groups or cultures. For science, it includes adopting practices/strategies and curricula in order to address biases and support marginalized groups. For music it includes expanding the repertoire to include different cultures and communities. In addition, each discipline must think about how they present this content so that it increases access and engagement for diverse groups of students. For visual arts, it includes encouraging students to use their backgrounds to inform their artmaking. Each department will establish equity as a primary lens through which they review and revise their curriculum.

Overall, our goal is to develop and implement curriculum course level revisions (texts, repertoire, content, etc.) to increase diversity of perspectives, equity, representation, and voice for all students. We plan to assess student experiences and engagement in classes at the end of each semester to monitor impacts and to create baseline data for the following year.

Equity and School Culture Objectives

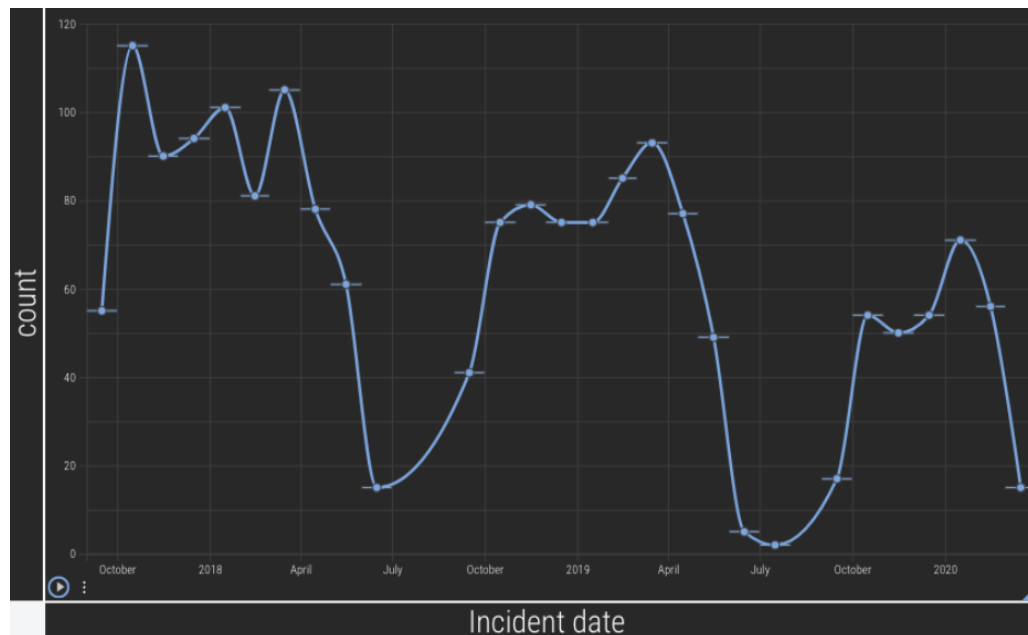
Equity and School Culture Objective 1 - Collaborative Problem Solving

Over the past four years, AHS has partnered with Think:Kids, a program in the Department of Psychiatry at the Massachusetts General Hospital (thinkkids.org), to pilot an approach to school discipline known as Collaborative Problem Solving (CPS). Our selection of CPS arose from our research and study into effective practices; analysis of school data on equity, mental health, and student engagement; and a period of experimentation with different practices and programs.

Rather than trying to motivate kids to behave better, CPS builds relationships and teaches skills through a process of helping adults and kids learn how to resolve problems collaboratively ([CPS Description 2019-20](#)). At AHS the approach has shown a 55% reduction in the need for out-of-school suspensions and a decrease in disciplinary incidents overall. With the adoption of remote instruction, student disciplinary incidents dropped even further, but it was difficult to identify trends in student behavior. We saw positive patterns in relationships and individual experiences.

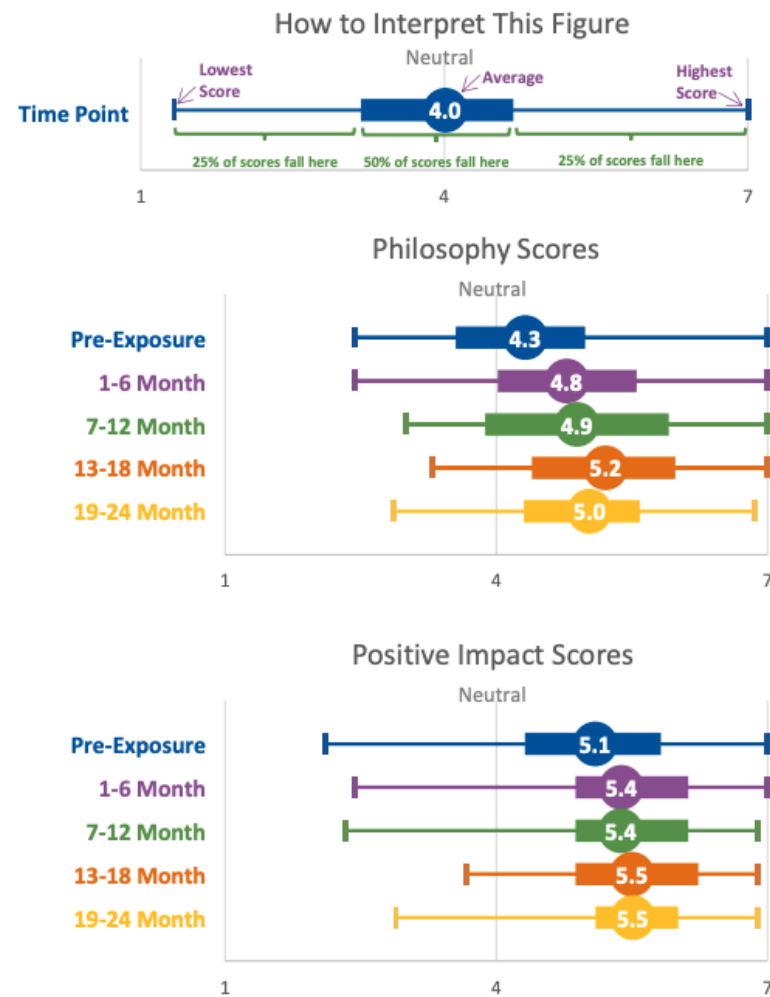
We believe that CPS is a powerful intervention for school equity and culture because it focuses relationships on understanding student perspectives, building helping relationships, and finding lasting solutions. Given the racial disproportionality we find in our disciplinary interactions, reducing punitive discipline overall, building relationships, and helping students meet expectations can interrupt the structural and interpersonal obstacles that create inequity in our schools ([District Discipline Presentation - July 2020](#)).

***AHS Trends - All Discipline
For School Years 2018-2020***



During the 2018 and 2019 school years, all faculty received introductory training and a leadership cohort participated in team coaching. In 2019-20, we reorganized the schedule to allow for Tier 1 training and monthly coaching for all faculty in CPS. With the closure, we continued leadership coaching, but were not able to train new staff or maintain all staff coaching. Our implementation measures indicate increases in staff understanding and buy-in to the approach. Our observations and discussions indicate that, while staff share and understand the philosophy, there is still room to more deeply embed collaborative problem solving into everyday classroom interactions, teaching of work habits, and our discipline policies ([CPS Implementation Report for Arlington High School](#)).

***AHS Trends in Teacher Adoption of
CPS Philosophy and Belief in Positive Impact
For School Years 2018-21***



Our objective for the 2021-22 school year is to renew staff understanding of and commitment to CPS philosophy and practice. We need to train both first and second year teachers at the tier 1 level. We are working to create classroom level leadership in intervention, internal coaching capacity, and review systems and policies aligned with Collaborative Problem Solving. This will include faculty refresher training, tier 1 training for all first and second year faculty, classroom teacher coaching, leadership review of policies and practices, certification of trainers. *Our goal is to increase classroom level implementation of CPS with greater fidelity to improve equity, student relationships, and classroom behaviors. In program evaluations, we will look for evidence of reductions in challenging behaviors, increases in student engagement, and teacher use in their classroom practice.*

Equity and School Culture Objective 2 - Student Affinity and Anti-bias Group Leadership

Expand student leadership and programming in anti-bias and affinity groups to improve student climate and culture.

While equity and racial justice have been long-term goals, the events of the past two years brought particular attention to these issues. We were proud to be able to launch and support a number of collaborative students, staff, and community projects focused on improving our work with diversity, equity, and inclusion at Arlington High School and in the community. Our newly formed Anti-racism Working Group created multiple active subgroups that worked together on several topics. The Everyday Anti-racism group led advisory activities, supported public art, and created a monthly video newsletter on anti-racism ideas and activities. The Resources for BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and people of color) group helped create an equity incident reporting process which will be introduced this year. We also worked together to increase access to counseling services and other services for BIPOC students. The Curriculum Review group took feedback from students and worked with teachers to identify texts and materials that increased the diversity of voices and perspectives in our classrooms. The Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee of the student council worked with the administration to successfully retire the Menotomy Hunter seal as a symbol for the high school, consistent with guidance around the use of Native-American images in schools. This year we had a particular emphasis on student voice and leadership and school affinity groups flourished with higher levels of support, these included the Black Student Union, Asian American Coalition, Gender and Sexuality Alliance (GSA), and the Young Feminist Alliance (YFA). Staff also worked on training and course work including Leading with Equity, Unconscious Bias, and the IDEAS Leadership Course.

This year, we plan to build on this success to support student leadership in our affinity and anti-bias groups. Affinity groups are groups of students who come together around a particular identity for mutual support and growth. Anti-bias groups are groups that work within our school community to combat bias and inequity. This year, we are working to strengthen the impact of these groups by providing additional resources, adult support and funding. We are also working to build the leadership of these groups by providing

educational opportunities within the groups as well as shared leadership training among the group leadership. *Our goals are to see increased membership and participation, to promote successful student projects, and to create positive impacts on measures of school climate and culture.*

Management and Operations Objective

Management and Operations Objective - AHS Building Project

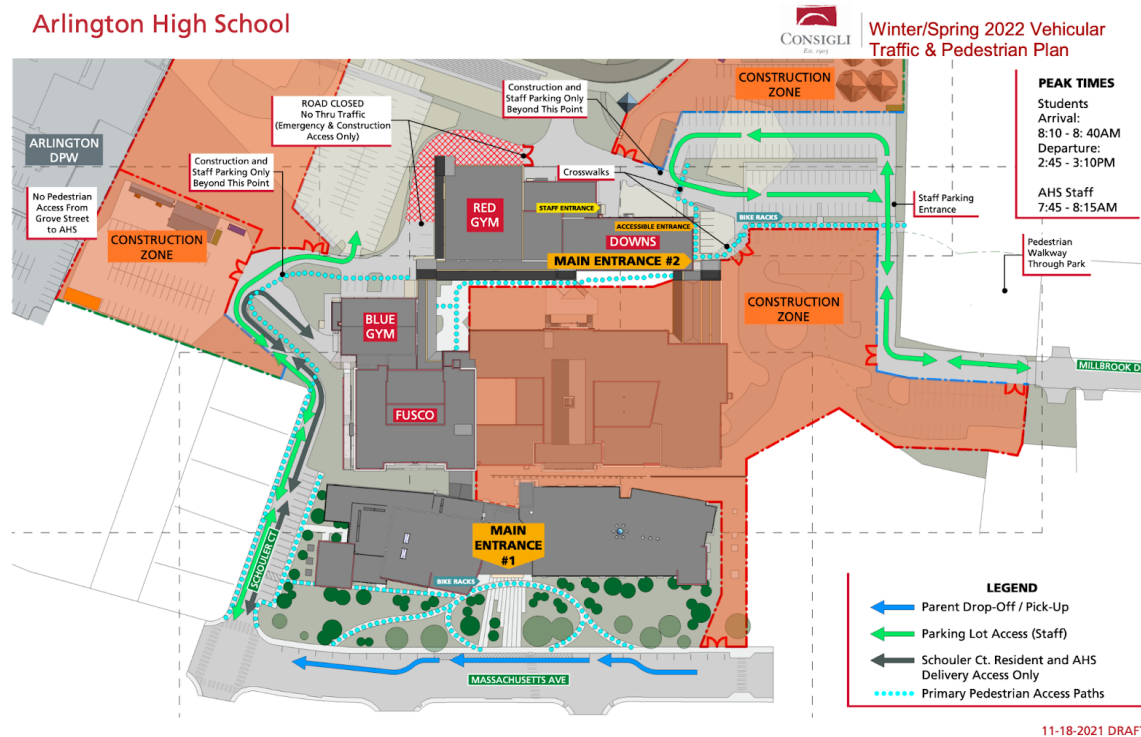
Manage the transition from Phase 1 to Phase 2 of the AHS building project. Information on the project can be found here: ahsbuilding.org.

AHS continues to face significant challenges in terms of facilities, but we are excited that we will be completing Phase 1 of the construction process in February of this year. Construction on the STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math) and Performing Arts wings of the building is well underway on Massachusetts Avenue.

The project was planned to minimize the impact on instruction, so school will continue in the current buildings until our partial move in February 2022. We have constructed a new entrance (Main Entrance #2) to allow students to enter from the field side of the building and a covered walkway (Main Entrance #1) on Massachusetts Ave. We are thrilled that the community has supported this important project and excited that we will be occupying some of the new facilities in less than one year. The new building design is framed by this Educational Vision and reflects the best of what we are doing now as well as flexibility and balance for its many users and future uses.

During this year, we have an enormous logistical task to plan the final outfitting of the new STEAM wing, shifting of classes and classrooms, movement of the library and cafeteria, purchasing of new furniture and equipment, revisions of safety plans, adjusting to building impacts, and maintaining the aging infrastructure of the current building. This entails regular meetings with departments; communications with the community; weekly meetings with the construction and architecture teams, and daily updates on construction. It also requires us to handle ongoing issues with the current building such as flooding, heating and cooling issues, shortages of space, and upkeep of ventilation systems.

Arlington High School



Our primary goal is to achieve the phase 1 move with a minimum disruption of the instructional time and environment. We will be taking input during community forums and will collect survey feedback from staff and students following the move in order to improve our planning for the phase 2 move in 2023.

Part III: Strategic Objectives and Initiatives

Instructional Objective I - Heterogeneous Grouping Initiative	
Strategic Initiative 1:	
Action Steps: Heterogeneous Grouping Initiative	Responsible Teams and People:
<p>Review data on grades, participation, and participant feedback related to grade 9 and 10 leveling practices from 2018-2021.</p> <p>Develop literature review (selections of readings and resources) to support study of leveling practices and inclusion.</p> <p>Form a representative study group to review research and data, to collect community feedback, to develop and present a proposal for improving our curriculum pathways (possible pilot).</p> <p>Plan and implement staff planning and professional development in the spring and summer of 2022 as necessary for implementation and evaluation of the pilot project proposal.</p>	Principal, Principal Intern, Department Heads
Strategic Initiative 2:	
Action Steps:	Responsible Teams and People:
Create a Heterogeneous Grouping Initiative speaker series on issues related to heterogeneous grouping and leveling such as: inclusion, differentiation, tracking, equity, and postsecondary preparation.	Principal, Principal Intern, Diversity Equity and Inclusion Director, Cindy Bouvier
Outcomes and Benchmarks	
Description:	Target:
<p>Improvements in overall equity and achievement in grade 9 or 10 classes.</p> <p>Build capacity for reviewing and improving equity and achievement in our curriculum</p>	In targeted classes increase overall and subgroup participation by 10%;

pathways.	maintain or improve students grades overall and by subgroup; and increase student engagement as reported in survey data.
Professional Development to Support Objective 1	
<p>HGI Study group - 8 meetings between now and March to develop a proposal</p> <p>Teacher planning and training for implementation of the proposal (roughly 3 meetings in the spring, a week of summer professional development, and common planning time in the fall) focused on questions such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the core skill and content knowledge goals that we have for students at each level? • What will be our mechanism for encouraging appropriate honors participation? • How will classes be organized to meet the needs of all learners, differentiated? • How will we increase the level of discourse and engagement with learning? 	
District Resources to Ensure Success	
Funding: teacher participation in HGI Study Group, spring and summer professional development for pilot. staffing to allow for common planning time or adjustments in grouping. Support for HGI speaker fees.	
Instructional Objective 2 - Curriculum Equity Review	
Strategic Initiative 1:	
Action Steps:	Responsible Teams and People:
Develop and implement curriculum course level revisions (texts, repertoire, content, course pathways etc.) to increase diversity of perspectives, equity, opportunity, representation, and voice for all students.	Principal, Department Heads and Teacher Study Teams
Strategic Initiative 2:	
Action Steps:	Responsible Teams and People:

Assess student experiences and engagement in classes at the end of each semester to monitor impacts and to create baseline data for the following year.	Principal, Department Heads and Teacher Study Teams
Outcomes and Benchmarks	
Description:	Target:
Evidence of improvements in diversity of perspectives, equity, opportunity, representation, and voice for all students. Improvements in student achievement in affected classes.	End of semester survey results showing increased or positive outcomes in terms of students experiences with diversity of perspectives, representation, and voice. Positive course level surveys focusing on specific curriculum content or activities. Analysis of grades by demographic groups.
Professional Development to Support Objective 1	
Summer 2021 curriculum development work. Department and Professional Learning Community planning time. Development, administration, and analysis of survey results.	
District Resources to Ensure Success	
Funding for Summer 2021 curriculum development work. Department and Professional Learning Community planning time. Resources for development, administration, and analysis of survey results. Support for analysis of grades by demographic groups.	
Equity and School Culture Objective - Collaborative Problem Solving	
Strategic Initiative 1:	

Action Steps:	Responsible Teams and People:
Renew staff understanding of and commitment to CPS philosophy and practice. This will include faculty refresher training, tier 1 training for all first and second year faculty, training for curriculum leaders, classroom teacher coaching, leadership review of policies and practices, and certification of trainers.	Principal, Assistant Principal, Deans, CPS Lead Teachers
Outcomes and Benchmarks	
Description:	Target:
Continued improvements in student behavior as measured by our discipline data. Reduced use of punitive discipline as measured by our discipline data. Improved adoption of the CPS philosophy and practice as measured by the CPS-AIM survey and the annual implementation report.	Ten percent reduction in disciplinary incidents overall and by subgroup.
Professional Development to Support Objective 1	
Teacher Coaching Group (voluntary) Tier 1 training for all new and second-year teachers Leadership consultation Curriculum leader introductory training Two refresher trainings Certification of trainers (2 year process - up to 3 staff)	
District Resources to Ensure Success	
Funding for training and teacher PD time.	
Management and Operations Objective - High School Building Project Phase 1 Completion	

Strategic Initiative 1:	
Action Steps:	Responsible Teams and People:
Maintain a safe and effective learning environment in spite of current space, facility, and construction challenges.	Principal, Assistant Principal, Facilities Department
Strategic Initiative 2:	
Action Steps:	Responsible Teams and People:
Plan and execute Phase 1 move.	Principal, Assistant Principal, Facilities Department, Building Project, Curriculum Leaders, and Affected Staff
Outcomes and Benchmarks	
Description:	Target:
Our primary goal is to achieve the phase 1 move with a minimum disruption of the instructional time and environment.	Generally positive response from community forums and post move feedback survey.
Professional Development to Support Objective 1	
Technology training on new classroom technology Building training on move impacts Department meetings on move planning, furnishings, equipment, and space planning	
District Resources to Ensure Success	
Maintenance of existing facilities Funding for room moves per contract Release time and funding for organization of departmental furnishings and equipment	