



**Community Cafes for  
School Safety and  
Security,  
Diversity, Equity and  
Inclusion  
And Mental Health**

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

# **Community Cafes for School Safety and Security, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion and Mental Health**

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The East Syracuse Minoa Central School District conducted three Community Cafes on School Safety and Security and - Welcoming Environment; Diversity, Equity and Inclusion; and Mental Health. Approximately two hundred parents attended and participated in the sessions which were held at the following sites:

- Central High School - October 11, 2022
  - Pine Grove Middle School - October 18, 2022
  - Fremont Elementary School - October 25, 2022
- For Park Hill Pre-School and All Elementary Schools

Dr. Donna J. DeSiato, Superintendent, provided introductory remarks at each of the Community Cafes emphasizing the importance of the District's work in each area.

At each Cafe, the topics were introduced by District Administrators, providing general context for the parent participants to engage in a dialogue regarding focus areas and priorities of the District Strategic Plan for 2018-2023. A facilitator and a recorder were included for each small group dialogue.

The following is the structure for the Cafes which was utilized to actively engage participants in dialogue concerning these critically important areas.

## PROGRAM STRUCTURE

### **I. Safety and Security - Dr. Thomas B. Nevelndine, Deputy Superintendent**

#### **A. Strategic Plan Focus Area 5**

##### ***LEARNING ENVIRONMENT SYSTEMS AND STRUCTURES***

**Priority: Provide a secure, safe and welcoming environment PreK-12**

#### **B. Question for Dialogue:**

*As the ESM community, what additional steps could be taken to increase security and safety and promote a welcoming environment?*

### **II. Diversity, Equity and Inclusion - Meghan Thomas, Associate Director for Special Education**

#### **A. Strategic Plan Focus Area 3**

##### ***COMMUNICATION AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT***

**Priority: Increased focus on equity and inclusion**

#### **B. Question for Dialogue:**

*What can we do as the ESM community to continue to build a culture of belonging for all students and families?*

### **III. Mental Health - Cheryl West, Director of Counseling, Youth Development and Leadership**

#### **A. Strategic Plan Focus Area 1B**

##### ***TEACHING AND LEARNING (Social-Emotional Learning)***

**Priority: Social Emotional Learning Curriculum and Mental Health supports in place at all levels**

#### **B. Question for Dialogue:**

*How do we, as the ESM community, support the mental health and social emotional needs of our students and families?*

As part of the Cafe process, each participant moved to different small groups for discussion on each topic. This allowed the parents to share their ideas and suggestions for addressing these topics with several other parents.

The remainder of the Executive Summary for the Community Cafes describes the ideas and suggestions generated through the active engagement of the participants.

The ideas and suggestions generated at the cafes will be utilized to enhance the District-Wide and Building Safety and Security Plans, and also provide critical direction for the District's next five (5) year Strategic Plan for 2023-2028.

## **FOCUS AREA 5 - Learning Environment Systems and Structures**

### **I. Facilities**

Provide a Weapon Detection System in all schools.

- Inform parents how it is working at the Central High School.
- Ensure everyone passes through the system.

Consider bullet-proof windows to slow an attacker.

Support single entry with new construction and in all buildings as a positive step.

Review number of cameras for exterior and interior of buildings.

Support installation of fences at elementary schools.

Consider alarms for all doors.

Monitor bathrooms.

Support Vape detectors as a positive step.

### **II. Communication**

Provide timely communication to parents, staff and students when there is a threat of any kind.

- Provide as much information as possible while protecting the legal rights of alleged perpetrators.
- Share information with parents about terminology used for lock-down and other drills. Parents can then support school safety. Provide parents more information on conduct of drills.
- Conduct more Community Cafes for parents and students.

## **FOCUS AREA 5 - Learning Environment Systems and Structures (Cont'd)**

- Include student voice for Safety and Security.

### **III. Training**

- Conduct parent training sessions on school safety.
- Provide training for staff that is up-to-date.
- Provide more training on active shooter incidents.
- Conduct training for Substitutes.
- Assist parents with strategies to monitor Social Media at home and to gain a deeper understanding of the influence of social media.

### **IV. Staffing**

- Provide a School Information Resource Officer (SIRO) or a Special Patrol Officer (SPO) at each building.
- Hire more police officers at the Central High School and Pine Grove Middle School.  
(size of building and number of students).
- Consider the need for additional staff for Weapon Detection Systems.
- Utilize volunteers to support School Safety and Security.
- Utilize Veterans to support School Safety and Security.
- Review size of study halls for students.

## **FOCUS AREA 5 - Learning Environment Systems and Structures (Cont'd)**

### **V. Funding**

- Lobby Legislators and Congress for additional dedicated funding for School Safety and Security.
- Write grants for funding, where applicable.

### **VI. Student Discipline**

- Stress more accountability for student violations of the Code of Conduct.
- Address concern over fights occurring at the Central High School.
- Give credit to students who attempt to stop bullying and fighting.
- Encourage more positive social interaction among students.
- Provide training for parents on how cell phone use should be monitored at home.

### **VII. Transportation**

#### Bussing

- Address Bus Safety and provide training for bus drivers.
- Continue to install cameras on all buses.

## **FOCUS AREA 3 - Diversity, Equity and Inclusion**

### **I. Programming**

- Conduct cultural fairs.
- Conduct more district events to bring all students together.
- Provide opportunities for staff, students and parents to interact.
- Use enhanced arts to teach about diversity.
- Schedule more multicultural events to celebrate diversity.
- Bring kids together to develop positive relationships.
- Create a cultural diversity club.
- Offer more languages in school.
- Expose and celebrate cultural diversity.
- Examine Project Odyssey in Syracuse City School District.
- Arrange welcome back picnics at all levels.
- Establish a course regarding cultural understanding.
- Build and practice student social skills- how to ask questions about culture.
- Provide Ted talks for students and parents on DEI.
- Use shortened days as community building opportunities for students.
- Continue to change the format-student guided tours for Parent open house.
- Provide information about culturally responsive practices.
- Conduct community building-get-to-know one another.
- Offer a 9th grade transition program.
- Build relationships with Lyncourt students earlier.
- Implement classroom curriculum and conversation around race.

### **II. Training**

- Provide more staff training in diversity, equity and inclusion
- Include in Parent University or Parents As Learning Partners: how to talk to children about DEI, emotional well being, special education.
- Provide training for parents and students on DEI.
- Provide training for students, staff and parents on the influence of social media.

### **III. Students**

- Make all students feel included.
- Provide Students with mentoring and role models especially in transition years.
- Address students' lack of social skills to build relationships.
- Foster equity while holding students accountable.



### **FOCUS AREA 3 - Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (Cont'd.)**

- Build relationships between students.
- Help students find and make connections with each other.
- Increase social opportunities across peer groups.
- Provide mentoring programs for transition years 6th and 9th.
- Utilize Youth Development and Leadership students to promote positive role models.
- Review what is in place to welcome new students.
- Design a better system to welcome new students.
- Set high expectations for students.
- Create a peer/buddy mentor program-explore WEB.
- Build trust with students.
- Evaluate students on the need to take responsibility.
- Build support teams at the high school.
- Establish peer connections for those who do not fit in.
- Identify point people for students to see when there is a concern.
- Recognize 9th graders are scared and nervous, provide mentors/buddies.
- Develop Mentor programs for students.

#### **IV. Curriculum**

- Include more diversity in the curriculum.
- Provide more diverse texts available in the library.
- Offer a cultural diversity club.

#### **V. Other**

- Use Inner Faith Works to support DEI.
- Provide child care and food to increase parent participation.
- Address issues that some cultures are not represented due to language barrier.
- Provide digital equity.
- Use the national calendar of holidays to celebrate diversity.
- Build connections with parents.
- Use care in how we label each other.
- Increase representation of race and ethnicity.
- Support child care and transportation programs to lessen barriers to participation for Students and their families.
- Follow-up more timely on incidents that occur.
- Provide resources to families on DEI.

### **FOCUS AREA 3 - Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (Cont'd.)**

Coordinate District outreach to parents when there is a crisis.

Continue to increase diversity of staff.

Be empathetic and problem solve issues regarding DEI.

Provide DEI training for teachers, and staff.

Identify data points for culturally responsive strategies.

Ensure accountability for students with extended absences.

Address social media challenges.

Develop a stronger culture of acceptance.

Conduct critical conversations about race and ethnicity.

Assist students to learn to work together.

Develop a stronger culture of acceptance.

## **FOCUS AREA 1B - Social Emotional Learning and Mental Health**

### **Five Main Areas:**

#### **I. Relationships**

Connect students with trusted adults.

Build community in the classroom.

Encourage individual teacher connections with students.

Provide less programming and more genuine interactions.

Establish community/connection and relationships.

Provide more opportunities to build community within the school.

Connect disconnected students.

Support new students.

Focus on commonalities among students.

Use dialogue and restorative circles to build community.

Bring small groups of elementary students together.

Create connections so students have people to sit with and develop bonding activities for students.

Educate students on how to work together.

Teach kindness on social media.

Continue to change the format of Open House (we want to meet the teachers and get to know them, less about curriculum more about relationship)

Intervene with students missing a lot of school.

#### **II. Mentoring/Role Modeling**

Offer more activities and opportunities for students to socialize.

Provide more support for the 5th to 6th grade transitions.

Pair student mentors 6th with 8th graders.

Tap into High School students to work with Elementary students

Use positive role models from the Central High School for Pine Grove Middle School Students.

Design a Buddy System for lunches so all students have someone to sit with.

Design a 9th grade orientation where upperclassmen serve as role models and mentors for the freshman students.

Develop a lunch buddy program at the high school.

Pair new students with older students when they come to the District.

## **FOCUS AREA 1B - Social Emotional Learning and Mental Health (Cont'd.)**

### **III. Communication**

- Provide more communication with parents regarding the resources available.
- Share what is in place for universal screening.
- Develop Communication about lunch bunch groups.
- Provide training for parents on Mental Health.
- Provide parents more connections with each other utilizing smaller cafes.
- Establish strategies to reach parents who are struggling,
- Give parents more opportunities for input regarding district programs and services.
- Educate students on who to contact if they need help.
- Allow for anonymous reporting of situations.
- Minimize the stigma of mental health.
- Educate parents about SEL curriculum.
- Promote student voices especially those we do not hear from.
- Provide more resources for parents on the topic discussed.
- Address with students and parents the use of Cell phones and social media.
- Share SEL information with parents.
- Provide direct information not links to resources.
- Inform parents of culturally responsive strategies.
- Conduct more events to bring parents into the school.
- Conduct exit interviews for families.
- Provide tip sheets for parents after racial issues occur.
- Normalize asking for help.
- Teach students the skills to communicate in person.
- Provide family access to the principal's hotline.
- Teach empathy and problem solving.
- Conduct open student forums.
- Debrief after events, i.e., what happened at homecoming
- Provide students a voice in the areas covered in the Cafes.

### **IV. Teacher Practice**

- Provide more training in DEI and culturally responsive practices.
- Provide more Mental Health training for teachers.
- Provide counseling staff and services at Park Hill.
- Continue to expand Social Worker and School Counselor services.
- Conduct teacher training around Mental Health and Supports.

## **FOCUS AREA 1B - Social Emotional Learning and Mental Health (Cont'd.)**

Provide teachers the tools to handle situations involving mental health.  
Assess the need for more Social workers at the High School.

### **V. Programming**

Conduct more district wide events that promote different cultures/groups.

Develop more partnerships with colleges and universities.

Provide Parent and Family workshops on social media and mental health.

Provide training for parents.

Conduct assemblies for students to learn how to manage emotions.

Stress the importance of Suicide Prevention.

Include parents in SEL programs.

Provide more culturally diverse texts in the library and in the curriculum.

Explain the data points for examining culturally responsive practices.

Increase SEL Programs at the High School.

Conduct Cultural fairs.

Provide social media education for students and parents.

Provide more Mental Health and social work services in school.