



# Auburn

Enlarged City School District

***Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion  
Strategic Plan  
2024-2025***



# Mission Statement

The mission of the Auburn Enlarged City School District (AECSD) is to develop citizens that are capable of meeting the challenges of their future by providing equitable, fiscally sound educational opportunities necessary to develop confident life-long learners.





# Inclusivity Statement

The Auburn Enlarged City School District believes that people work best when their unique voices are heard and valued, their authentic selves are accepted and nurtured, and their individual needs are addressed.

We are committed to providing an equitable environment where the social, emotional, physical, academic, and professional development of each person is supported through a multi-faceted lens of diversity, allowing for the affirmation of individuality. Through listening, learning, reflection, and purposeful action we are better able to cultivate awareness, model respect, and empower one another to become empathetic citizens with a global mindset.



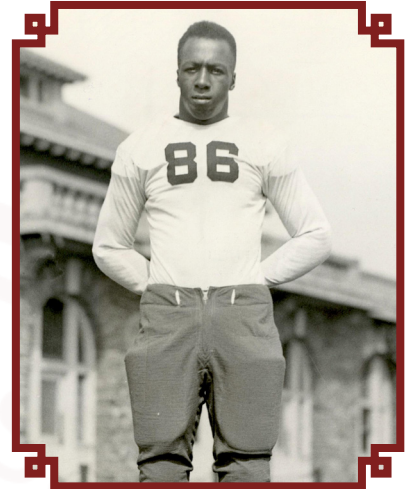
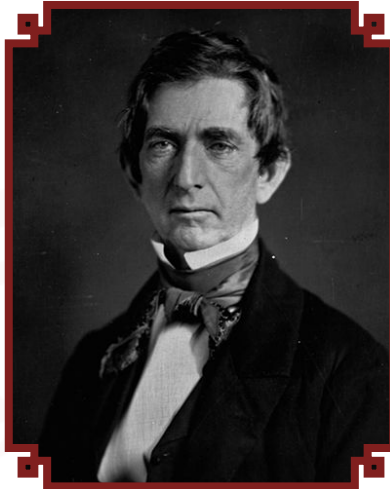
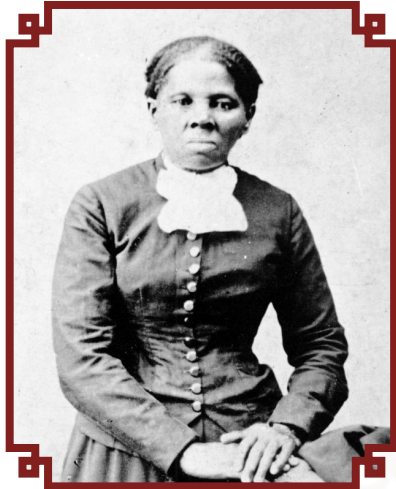
# Historical Background

With respect, we honor and recognize the Cayuga Nation of the Haudenosaunee people on whose traditional land we now call Auburn, New York. Communities in the state of New York have a strong connection to their historical past and geographic area, providing residents with a unique perspective on how diversity has helped shape each region. The City of Auburn is defined by its rich and diverse history and is an ever-changing microcosm of our greater society. In order to have an understanding of why we must undertake the important work of diversity, equity, and inclusion, we must first acknowledge our past endeavors and current needs. The school district encompasses and represents the City of Auburn and surrounding communities, and with its history in mind, the district strives to learn from the past and lead the community into a more progressive future.

Auburn, located in the serene and visually beautiful Finger Lakes region of Central New York, is sited on the northern tip of Owasco Lake. The sole city in rural Cayuga County, agriculture and dairy are big business for the county with 891 farms and increasing revenue from agricultural exports valued at \$65 million. Ranked number one in acres of soybeans and value of sales of grains, oilseed, dry beans, dry peas, county agriculture is also rooted in significant corn production. The City of Auburn complements the area's agricultural economic vitality with 18 farms and 69 "pick your own" near the city. The Saratoga Cheese Corporation built its facility in nearby Aurelius because the county is consistently ranked as one of the largest milk-producing counties in the state.

Over the past few years, Auburn's craft brewery enterprises have been nationally recognized as have several of the local and regional award-winning wineries. Just as importantly, Auburn, though small with a current population of 25,234, is a vibrant city rich in history, culture, and progressive social justice movements and the performing arts as evidenced by the Rev Theater Company and Auburn Public Theater. From The Seward House Museum to the Equal Rights Heritage Center, from the Cayuga Museum of History and Art and its Case Research Laboratory to the Schweinfurth Memorial Art Center, as well as the Tubman National Park a historical centerpiece complemented by historical notables interned at Fort Hill cemetery. Auburn often referred to as "History's Hometown," has a diverse legacy of national heroes who called Auburn home.

These individuals epitomize the basic staples of freedom which have informed generations of subsequent Auburnians. Influenced by the democratic principles of the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) people, their Founding Fathers laid a foundation for inclusion, equity, consent of the governed, and the importance of speech. Those steadfast principles now serve as the guiding principles for service to others. The Auburn community takes pride in those local individuals who enriched city life but also had the determination to influence national and global thinking as well as progressive civic action.



Auburn's initial roots were within the territorial domain of the Cayuga and then Tuscarora ([native-land.ca](#)), members of the Haudenosaunee, who settled the area until Europeans took over. And then there were:

- ◇ Harry and Kate Freeman, former enslaved individuals from Guinea, West Africa helped found and settle Auburn along with Col. John L. Hardenberg. Notably, the Freemans are acknowledged as establishing the first Black settlement called “New Guinea” in upstate New York.
- ◇ The city is also home to many other notable historical people, including New York Governor and Secretary of State **William H. Seward** who served as secretary under President Abraham Lincoln, and negotiated the purchase of Alaska from Russia in 1868.
- ◇ **Harriet Tubman** who struggled diligently to bring 70 enslaved people to freedom; served as a scout for the union army in the Civil War, and established a home for the aged.
- ◇ **Dr. Jerome “Brud” Holland**, the first African American to play football at Cornell University, earning All-American honors in 1937 and 1938 and eventually became ambassador to Sweden, as well as the first African American to serve on the board of the New York Stock Exchange.
- ◇ Lydia Ann Moulton Jenkins, the first female ordained Minister for Universalist of Ontario, who was a Doctor of Hydrotherapy, suffragette and temperance leader.
- ◇ Tah-gah-jute (aka Logan), chief of the Cayugas, a tribe within the Six Nations of Haudenosaunee.
- ◇ Theodore Case, who in 1916 established the Case Research Lab in Auburn and went on to invent the Movietone sound-on-film system.



# Executive Summary

During the 2021-2022 school year, the Auburn Enlarged City School District (AECSD) used planned change preparing the organization for new goals to develop its district-wide strategic plan and used a similar process for its Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion initiative. From the onset, the district shared its DEI philosophy and proposed direction to its educational community as well as with parents and community leaders. The formation of the DEI strategic plan was designed to be inclusive to enable a variety of ideas, concerns, and eventually a consensus for action. District personnel had the opportunity to participate on the task force; to join DEI book readings; to attend panel or one-on-one discussions with DEI leaders and raise questions or concerns.



This process recognized that listening to a wide range of opinions was a critical component to include divergent voices. With added personnel (DEI executive director and DEI consultant appointed in March 2022) and additional members invited to join the DEI task force for the 2022-2023 school year, the district presented the final draft DEI plan for BOE discussion and feedback during late May 2023. DEI staff will address board concerns and then incorporate appropriate BOE thinking in the draft document. The revised draft was made available to the entire district learning community and community partners for discussion. After that process was completed, the district executive cabinet had its final read with their resulting comments being incorporated in the plan for presentation to the BOE. The final approved plan was then shared with district colleagues and community partners. At that point, the leadership of the elementary, junior high and the senior high school buildings initiated specific measurable operational objectives for the 2023-24 school year. The DEI Strategic Plan was implemented during the 2023-2024 school year. Members of the DEI task force meet in August 2024 to review action items and revise the plan for the 2024-2025 school year.

This executive summary captures the overfall work of five 2022-23 DEI work groups and suitably frames the scope and purpose of the district's DEI plan. It is a basic primer that presents the district's goals with each building establishing specific objectives that strengthens that building's culture and community aspirations; identify in school "champions;" set doable timeframes; identify assessment protocols and develop subsequent actions to rectify unachieved objectives. As each school building's operational plan takes shape, it is understood DEI initiatives will reflect the building's institutional culture and neighborhood served. Furthermore, the plan will recognize the diversity of various student learning styles supported by student support services. It is important to recognize the cultural attributes that each student brings to her/his classroom in recognition of the NYSED's Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Education Framework. Specifically, the two principles; Welcoming and Affirming Environment and Ongoing Professional Learning align with priorities two and four of this plan, which are on the next page.

# Priorities

**1** Recruitment of a culturally and ethnically diverse teaching staff and retention of all staff.

**2** Professional learning to promote diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging.

**3** Celebrating cultural, ethnic, and shared community aspirations that will empower student self-worth and positive recognition of a student's learning potential.

**4** Foster a safe, welcoming, and affirming school environment that supports and empowers the social emotional well-being and collegiality among staff and students.

These overarching themes poignantly address critical issues that will enhance student learning and staff-to-student relationships.

# 1

## Recruitment and Retention

The Auburn Enlarged City School District (AECSD) is a well-defined complex educational community. The district consists of several school buildings, five elementary, a junior high, and a high school.

Each school is shaped by the neighborhood served and where a diverse range of enrolled students live. The Auburn Enlarged City School District is dedicated to the pursuit, development, and retention of dynamic individuals who will provide learning opportunities to meet the needs of all of our students. With this approach, district personnel can be engaged and maximize their full potential. The district is committed to recognizing all staff as unique individuals, who make valuable contributions towards achieving district goals. Furthermore, the district is also committed to recruiting, developing, and retaining diverse, well-rounded staff who facilitate lifelong learning that is rigorous, relevant, and results driven.



## Goals

AECSD will define and expand internal leadership career ladders and advancement opportunities annually whereby employed staff can further develop and contribute to the vision and mission of the district as evidenced by bargaining unit titles, job descriptions, certification and position requirements, job fair flyers, and materials.

AECSD will provide orientation for newly hired employees to facilitate their successful transition into employment and provide ongoing professional learning and internship opportunities for its employees annually as evidenced by calendars, agendas, and session materials.

AECSD will explore strategies that may have the potential to empower high school student pathways to a variety of educational careers, especially teaching. Such strategies may include job shadow days, (non) credit-bearing courses for senior students as an effective option, civil service options, etc.



Goals	Action Steps	Educator (s) Responsible	Start Date	Timeline or Due Date	Resources	Desired Outcomes
<b>Career Ladders</b>	Implement Recruitment and Retention Plan	Personnel Department	September 2024	September 2024 - June 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Calendars</li> <li>• Agendas</li> <li>• Session Materials</li> <li>• Job Posting via district-wide emails</li> <li>• OLAS</li> <li>• Social Media</li> </ul>	Expand internal career ladders and advancement opportunities
<b>New Hires</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New Teacher Orientation: Bus Tour</li> <li>• Mentoring Program</li> <li>• Summer Professional Learning Opportunities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personnel Department</li> <li>• Curriculum &amp; Instruction Department</li> </ul>	August 2024	September 2024 - June 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CR-S Framework</li> <li>• DEI Resources</li> <li>• Recruitment Flyer</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create awareness and education on the CR-S Framework and various DEI initiatives in the district</li> <li>• Hire qualified staff</li> </ul>
<b>Pathways</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Auburn Junior High School: - Job Shadowing</li> <li>• Auburn High School: - Child Psychology Class: Internship opportunities</li> <li>- Cayuga 101: Internship Opportunities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• District-Level Leaders</li> <li>• Office of Curriculum &amp; Instruction</li> <li>• Cayuga Community College Leadership</li> <li>• High School Building Administrators</li> <li>• Work-Based Learning Coordinator</li> <li>• Guidance Counselors</li> </ul>	September 2024	September 2024 and ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partnership with Cayuga Community College</li> <li>• Community Partnerships</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Providing internship opportunities</li> <li>• Providing college credit courses towards teacher certification</li> </ul>

# 2 Professional Learning to promote diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging

The district will develop and provide job-embedded professional learning sessions to appropriately train staff to create or strengthen an awareness around diversity, equitable teaching practices, and providing inclusive environments.

## Goal

The district will continue to provide professional learning opportunities for all staff. Through a collaborative relationship with district-level administrators and building leaders, the district will develop and plan to implement professional learning focused on DEI to meet at least 50% of the staff by June 30, 2025. Any newly hired staff will have professional learning opportunities after being hired during the district's New Teacher/Staff Orientation, through the mentoring program, and other onboarding opportunities. This goal will be measured by providing all participants with a survey at the completion of each session.





Action Steps	Educator(s) Responsible	Start Date	Timeline or Due Date	Resources	Desired Outcomes
New Teacher Orientation: Bus Tour and Welcoming & Affirming Environment Presentation	Dr. Renee Burgess	August 19, 2024	August 20, 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Framework (CR-S)</li> <li>• School bus</li> <li>• PowerPoint presentation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tour of seven schools and neighborhoods</li> <li>• Knowledge of Auburn's historical aspects</li> <li>• Knowledge of the CR-S Framework</li> <li>• Providing training to all new teachers</li> </ul>
Mentor/Mentee Meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dr. Renee Burgess</li> <li>• Shannon Dunbar</li> <li>• Babette Valentine</li> <li>• Michelle Kolceski</li> </ul>	September 16, 2024	September - June 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agendas</li> <li>• Sign-in sheets</li> <li>• Frontline reports</li> <li>• PowerPoint presentations</li> <li>• Google Classroom</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creating an awareness and educating both mentors and mentees on the CR-S Framework, various DEI topics, ENL, and Special Education</li> <li>• Providing training to all new teachers</li> </ul>
Staff Development Days	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dr. Renee Burgess &amp; Amy Mahunik</li> <li>• Historic &amp; Cultural Sites</li> </ul>	November 1, 2024 & March 14, 2025	November 1, 2024 & March 14, 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PowerPoint presentation</li> <li>• Shared Resources</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Providing training to all staff</li> <li>• Knowledge of Auburn's historical aspects</li> </ul>
DEI Workshop Series	Dr. Renee Burgess	January 2025	May 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sign-in sheets</li> <li>• Frontline Reports</li> <li>• PowerPoint presentations</li> <li>• CR-S Framework</li> </ul>	Providing training on the CR-S Framework and other topics related to DEI
DEI Presentations at faculty meetings, and information shared at staff meetings	Dr. Renee Burgess & DEI Task Force Member	September 2024	June 2025	Presentations	Providing awareness and knowledge
Professional Learning Sessions for teachers servicing ELL students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Amy Mahunik</li> <li>• Michelle Kolceski</li> <li>• Dr. Renee Burgess</li> </ul>	September 2024	June 2025	Monthly presentations and trainings provided by LED Better	To increase our educators' knowledge and capacity to best serve our ELL student population

# 3

## Celebrations to enhance and empower community building and belonging

A school building is a collection of varying cultures localized to that area. A school district is then the gathering of those varied cultures into one overarching community. The AECSD is committed to celebrating all of these different cultures that come together to form our educational community.

AECSD shall focus on celebrating student and staff successes and achievements.

Members of the district's educational community will work to establish welcoming and affirming environments at each school building; foster nurturing relationships with students and families, and highlight, represent, and affirm each student's identity and cultural influences.

Each school building has the opportunity to utilize various incentive platforms and staffing, such as PBIS and PTO's to establish celebratory activities that spotlight the culture and accomplishments of the entire building community. Additionally, each building has the opportunity to leverage its technology resources and social media presence to spotlight the culture and accomplishments of its respective buildings on a scale that is more visible to the community.

### Goal

By September 30, 2024, all eight district buildings will utilize at least one appropriate space in their building to showcase heritage months and the accomplishments of its students and staff throughout the buildings every month. This will be measured by a monthly walk-through tool implemented by the Executive Director of DEI and building administration from September 2024 through June 2025.





Action Steps	Educator(s) Responsible	Start Date	Timeline or Due Date	Resources	Desired Outcomes
Each building utilizes at least one space to showcase heritage months and accomplishments and celebrations of all students throughout the building	Building leaders	September 2024	September 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Physical spaces</li> <li>• TV Monitors</li> <li>• Bulletin Boards</li> <li>• Heritage Month Calendar</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At least nine different showcases during the 24-25 school year</li> <li>• Culturally diverse highlights of students, staff, and the larger community</li> <li>• Evidence of heritage months being celebrated</li> </ul>
Walk-Through Tool	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dr. Renee Burgess</li> <li>• DEI Task Force Members</li> <li>• Building Admin.</li> </ul>	September 2024	June 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Walk-Through Tool</li> <li>• Scoring Rubric in Shared Drive</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At least nine different showcases during the 24-25 school year</li> <li>• Culturally diverse highlights of students, staff, and the larger community</li> <li>• Evidence of heritage months being celebrated</li> <li>• Diversity in celebration of students</li> </ul>
Multicultural Fair	Dr. Renee Burgess	2025	June 2025	TBD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Foster understanding, appreciation, and respect for diversity of cultures</li> <li>• Promote cultural awareness</li> <li>• Encourage inclusivity and unity</li> <li>• Celebrate diversity</li> <li>• Enhance social cohesion</li> </ul>
Communicate Information and Celebrations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dr. Renee Burgess</li> <li>• Jessica Luisi</li> <li>• Chris Sciria</li> </ul>	September 2024	June 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• AECSD Newsletter</li> <li>• AECSD Website</li> <li>• AECSD Social Media</li> <li>• Leadership Meetings</li> <li>• Faculty Meetings</li> <li>• Community Leaders Luncheon</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Empower community building and belonging</li> <li>• Provide consistent communication</li> </ul>

# 4 Foster a Safe, Welcoming, and Affirming Environment

The Auburn Enlarged City School District strives to establish, and implement a framework for diversity, equity, and inclusion by prioritizing the social and emotional well-being and collegiality among district staff members, teacher-to-student, and student-to-student relationships. Data-driven decision-making will provide a consistent multi-tiered system of support that will ensure academic, behavioral, and social-emotional achievement. By creating safe and engaging environments that foster citizenship and wellness, students will be college and/or career ready.

## Goal

By June 2025, AECSD students will respond that they feel safe in school with a 20% increase as measured by the annual Student Voice survey results from 2024 (Elementary: 87.9%; Secondary: 50.5%).





Action Steps	Educator(s) Responsible	Start Date	Timeline or Due Date	Resources	Desired Outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus Groups</li> <li>• Student Advisory Groups</li> </ul>	District and building-level leaders	Fall of 2024	June 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff</li> <li>• Students</li> <li>• Questions</li> <li>• Monthly Meetings</li> </ul>	To have a qualitative approach to the data on students safety
Professional Learning sessions for teachers & teaching assistants	Curriculum & Instruction Department	September 2024	June 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CR-S Framework</li> <li>• Exit surveys for participants</li> <li>• Faculty Meetings</li> </ul>	Increase social, emotional, and physical safety for students
Educating students on the surveys	District and building-level leaders	February 2025	February - March 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Audio Announcements</li> <li>• Visual Announcements</li> <li>• WeVideo</li> <li>• Classroom Visits</li> <li>• Google Classrooms of Classes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Defining safety for students</li> <li>• Importance of student voice</li> </ul>
Student Groups: - Student United Way at AHS - Restorative Student Groups at AJHS - LGTBQIA Club at AJHS & AHS - International Club - ASL Club - First Amendment First Vote	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dr. Renee Burgess</li> <li>• Admin &amp; Staff</li> </ul>	September 2024	June 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monthly Meetings</li> </ul>	Student involvement and leadership development
Mentoring Programs: - MBK (TBD)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dr. Renee Burgess</li> <li>• Admin Teams</li> </ul>	Winter of 2025	June 2025	TBD	Student development

## 2023-2024 DEI Task Force Members

**Angel Baines**, Assistant Principal at Casey Park Elementary School

**Talora Barbuti Peterson**, Student Representative

**Brianne Batis**, Assistant Principal at Herman Avenue Elementary School

**Netta Blakes**, Family & Consumer Sciences Teacher at Auburn Junior High School

**Emerson Brown**, Student Representative

**Dr. René Burgess**, Executive Director of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Instruction

**Tessa Crawford**, School Business Executive

**Sarah Cupelli**, Deputy Superintendent

**Allison Fennessy**, English Teacher at Auburn High School

**Kelly Garback**, Principal at Herman Avenue Elementary School

**Mariela Hernandez**, Student Representative

**Anne Herrling**, Literacy Instructional Coach at Herman Avenue Elementary School

**Susan Inagaki**, HR Benefit Associate

**Michelle Kolceski**, Director of Early Learning and ELL

**Rebecca Kott**, Fifth Grade Teacher at Herman Avenue Elementary School

**Julie Liccion**, Family & Consumer Sciences Teacher at Auburn High School

**Amanda Maher**, Third Grade Teacher at William H. Seward Elementary School

**Melanie Maher**, Graduation Coach at Auburn High School

**Amy Mahunik**, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction

**Jaclyn Malone**, Teaching Assistant at Auburn Junior High School

**Holly Maltese**, Fifth Grade Teacher at Genesee Elementary School

**Elizabeth Molloy**, Assistant Principal at Owasco Elementary School

**Nicholas Musso**, Math Instructional Coach at William H. Seward & Genesee Elementary Schools

**David Oliver**, Principal at Auburn Junior High School

**Sarah Passarello**, Principal at Genesee Elementary School

**Jeffrey Pirozzolo**, Superintendent of Schools

**Jonathan Roberts**, Principal at Casey Park Elementary School

**Beth Robinson**, Fourth Grade Teacher at Genesee Elementary School

**Joseph Sheppard**, Technology Teacher at Auburn Junior High School and Auburn High School

**Lisa Spencer**, STEM Teacher at Casey Park Elementary School

**William Tenity**, District Substitute and Community Member

**John Testa**, Assistant Principal at Auburn High School

**Angela Viccaro**, Science Teacher at Auburn Junior High School

**Julie Vitale**, ESL Teacher at Auburn Junior High School

**Jillian Witchey**, Secretary at Genesee Elementary School

**The district will maintain a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Task Force that meets bi-monthly over ten months of the year to review, assess, and update the DEI Strategic Plan. An updated DEI Strategic Plan will be rolled out for the 2025-2026 school year.**