

Sharon Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee ("DEIC")

Meeting Minutes

December 16th, 2021

Attendance

Kiana Pierre-Louis - chair, present
Dru Ledbetter - vice chair, present
Wendy Alexis-Janvier - not present
Tricia Asklar - present
Lajos Kamocsay - present
Bill Kondrath - present
Lt. Scott Leonard - SPD Liaison, present
Tanya Lewis - School Committee Liaison, present
Marjorie Mitlin - present
Zainab Mohammed - not present
Hanna Switekowski - Select Board Liaison, not present

The meeting was conducted virtually over Zoom in accordance with Governor Baker's June 16th 2021 executive action extending certain COVID-19 measures adopted during the state of emergency.

The meeting opened at 7:00pm with a welcome from Chair Kiana Pierre-Louis and an attendance roll call.

Approval of meeting minutes 10/21/21

The approval of 10/21/21 meeting minutes was postponed until the next meeting as some corrections were being made to the document.

Kiana Pierre-Louis designated Lajos Kamocsay to take the meeting minutes, and asked committee members to consider volunteering as Secretary. She noted that she has been handling the task of tracking and replying to correspondence given that the Secretary position is currently not filled.

Email correspondence

Kiana Pierre-Louis provided a summary of correspondence received by the committee between 10/21/21 and 12/16/21.

- 36 emails in support of hiring a DEI director at Sharon Public Schools
- An email from a School Committee member in response to emails advocating to hire a DEI director at Sharon Public Schools
- An email about the Indigenous experience of Thanksgiving

- Two emails regarding the police chief search and interviews
- An email from the Chair of the committee about the meeting with SPD on 11/18/21
- Two emails from the Sudbury DEI Commission regarding International Flags in Sharon and a request to meet with a members of Sharon DEIC
- An email from the Holbrook DEI Committee requesting a meeting with members of Sharon DEIC
- An email about tracking and leveling in Sharon Public Schools
- An email from a committee member advocating for a statement in support of LGBTQ+ students at Sharon Public Schools
- An email about establishing a support group for heterosexual parents of LGBTQ+ children going through the coming-out process (discussed later as part of the agenda)
- An email about the grand opening of the Red Lentil restaurant in Sharon
- Emails promoting events in Sharon such as the Veterans Day Ceremony, Chinese Indian Culture Day, the Interfaith Thanksgiving Service sponsored by the Sharon Interfaith Clergy and the “Cultivating Authentic Relationships” workshop sponsored by the Sharon Pluralism Network

Kiana Pierre-Louis volunteered to set up a meeting with the Holbrook DEIC on January 27th. Bill Kondrath and Lajos Kamocsay volunteered to reach out to the Sudbury DEIC to set up a meeting with them.

Introduction of Lt. Leonard as new Police Liaison

Kiana Pierre-Louis welcomed Lt. Scott Leonard as the new liaison of the Sharon Police Department.

Information on Events

Kiana Pierre-Louis gave a brief summary of the meeting organized by the DEIC between the Sharon Police Department and underrepresented groups. The meeting focused on bridging the gap and was very successful. Kiana Pierre-Louis asked Lt. Scott Leonard to set up a follow up meeting with the same participants in February 2022.

Kiana Pierre-Louis and Wendy Alexis-Janvier reported that they had met with Dr. Jarvis Givens, an assistant professor at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, who will give a presentation about Critical Race Theory and education. The presentation will be scheduled for Thursday, February 3rd at 7:30pm.

It was announced that Temple Sinai and the DEIC will co-sponsor an event about “Shared Legacies,” a documentary about the Jewish and African American alliance during the Civil Rights movement. The event will include a screening of the movie, followed by small group discussions. Kiana Pierre-Louis reported that she had met with members of Temple Sinai for a preliminary discussion about organizing the event and that April 5th had been chosen as the

tentative date for the event. The event will take place at the Sharon Community Center in person, if the deadly virus permits.

Some members of the DEIC reported on their attendance at the grand opening of Red Lentil, a vegetarian restaurant in the Town center.

Jennifer Weiner and Susy Gallor Presentation on Coming Out process

Jennifer Weiner and Susy Gallor announced that they are looking to start a support group for heterosexual parents to help them navigate their non-heterosexual children's coming out process. They noted that, while there are support groups for parents of LGBTQ+ children who are further along in the process, coming out is usually a hard event to handle for heterosexual parents. **Bill Kondrath moved that the DEIC support and co-sponsor with Jennifer Weiner and Susy Gallor setting up a meeting for heterosexual parents about the coming out process.** Marjorie Mitlin seconded. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Affinity group and strategic planning update

Kiana Pierre-Louis provided an update about DEI training and strategic planning. She reported that the Town will not use the services of The Greater Us for further training based on a mutual agreement. Some funds may be returned to the Town from The Greater Us for training not yet delivered. The committee discussed options on moving forward with the remaining training, including reaching out to training providers with whom the committee met during the initial selection process.

Presentation on Executive Director of DEI for SPS from Lori Bihler and discussion

Lori Bihler, representing the Sharon Racial Equity Alliance and Sharon Interfaith Action, gave a presentation advocating for an Executive Director of the Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion for Sharon Public Schools. The presentation is attached to this document below. The committee's discussion following the presentation showed support for hiring a DEI director at Sharon Public Schools. **Kiana Pierre-Louis asked for a motion for the DEIC to sponsor an advisory opinion to the School Committee to request a budget line item for an Executive Director of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion for the Sharon Public Schools. Dru Ledbetter moved the motion.** Lajos Kamocsay seconded the motion. Lajos Kamocsay proposed a friendly amendment to also reinstate the social studies coordinator. Dru Ledbetter rejected the friendly amendment. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Announcements

Kiana Pierre-Louis informed the committee that the Select Board will sponsor an article at the 2022 Town Meeting to recognize Indigenous People's Day in Sharon, replacing Columbus Day. She noted that the DEIC may have the opportunity to co-sponsor the article.

Topics not anticipated within 48 hours

Marjorie Mitlin asked that an agenda item be added for the next meeting to discuss a petition to the Select Board to create a code of conduct for Town government officials and employees.

Tricia Asklar requested a discussion at the next meeting regarding the creation or sponsoring of a listening session at Sharon Public Schools about LGBTQ+ issues.

The meeting was adjourned by unanimous consent at 9:20pm.

Attachment: SREA SIA presentation for Exec. Director of Office of DEI

Sharon Racial Equity Alliance & Sharon Interfaith Action

call for an

Executive Director

for the Office of Diversity, Equity,

and Inclusion

for Sharon Public Schools

2021 Sharon, MA 47.2% of K-12 Students are BIPOC & No DEI Position

MA District	% of K-12 BIPOC	DEI Position Title
Acton-Boxborough	48.3	Assistant Superintendent for Diversity, Equity, Inclusion
Framingham	52.1	Assistant Superintendent for Equity, Diversity, Community Development
Brookline	47.8	Senior Director of Educational Equity
Lexington	57.8	Director of Equity & Student Support
Brockton	84.5	Executive Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
Newton	40.7	Director and Asst. Director of Department of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion
Hopkinton	36.2	Director of DEI/EL for the Department of Equity and Access
Walpole	20.2	Director of DEI
Milton	32.6	Senior Director for Educational Equity
Wrentham/Norfolk	12.1	Director of DEI
Scituate	7.8	Director of DEI

...and also Wellesley, Dedham, Weston, Arlington, Concord, Burlington, Easton, Somerville, Cambridge

April 2019

SHS Black Student Union members share experiences of marginalization and racism



School Committee Meeting April 24, 2019

"We can't stay silent if we want things to change...every time that something happens we don't feel supported, that we don't have a voice."

"I don't feel safe in Sharon High School... I've been harassed time after time after time because of the color of my skin."

2019 Equity Diagnostic Findings for SPS

56% of Black 10th graders reported that in the last 30 days they were teased or picked on more than once because of their race or identity.

45% of Black 8th graders reported that "students respect one another" compared to 75% of all students.

Black students in Sharon are nearly 3x more likely to be removed for disciplinary reasons.

Equity Diagnostic Report (2019)

DESE School Report Card: Discipline by Race/Ethnicity (2019-2020)

August 2019

Equity Analysis Findings

“The teacher workforce in Sharon is racially homogeneous which raises equity concerns given that its student body is much more heterogeneous.

It is unlikely that nonwhite students have the opportunity to be taught by teachers who reflect their racial background.”

2021-2022 Sharon Public Schools	% BIPOC	% White
Superintendent, Asst. Superintendent, Principals	0	100
Classroom Teachers K-12	2.3	97.7
Students K-12	47.2	52.8

July 29, 2020 School Committee passes ANTI-RACISM RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, as schools have the responsibility to equip students with their civil right of obtaining a free and appropriate public education, it is the responsibility of each school to ensure we **create a welcoming community for ALL students**; and

WHEREAS, it is the responsibility that every district provide to all district staff, including School Committee members **annual professional development on diversity, equity and inclusion**; and

WHEREAS, every district will commit to **recruiting and retaining a diverse and culturally responsive teaching workforce**; and

WHEREAS, every district will **examine their policies for institutional and systemic racialized practices and implement change** with sustainable policies that are evidence based; and

WHEREAS, every district will incorporate into their **curriculum the history of racial oppression and works by black authors and works from diverse perspectives**; and

WHEREAS, we as school district leaders can **no longer remain silent to the issues of racism and hate** that continue to plague our public and private institutions;

July 29, 2020 **School Committee passes ANTI-RACISM RESOLUTION**

RESOLVED: that Sharon and all the school districts in the Commonwealth must guarantee that racist practices are eradicated, and diversity, equity and inclusion is embedded and practiced for our students, families, faculty and staff. We must ensure our own school culture and that of every district in the Commonwealth is anti-racist, that acknowledges that all lives can not matter until black lives matter.

August 5, 2020 **Sharon Racial Equity Alliance asks SC to allocate funding for an Assistant Superintendent of DEI**

SC Minutes 08.05.20 Final Copy

Open Forum

Kiana Pierre-Louis and Lori Bihler,

Members of Sharon Racial Equity Alliance

SREA is asking the School Committee to add a budget line item to create a new position of Assistant Superintendent of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. They will forward their information to the School Committee and to the Superintendent of Schools.

Sample Job Description was received by SC 08.11.20



October 25, 2020 Sharon School Committee Listening Session



28 incidents of discrimination shared

“We have diversity in Sharon; we do not have inclusion.”

“You cannot put race on the back burner if you are Black or brown.”

“We all need to learn to understand each other.”

**SC Chair: “This listening session is not performative.
There will be action.”**

2021-2022 District Cuts to DEI Programing

Eliminated TWO Social Studies Coordinator positions: K-5; 6-12

*Led history/social studies teachers in developing diverse
curriculum & anti-racist instruction*

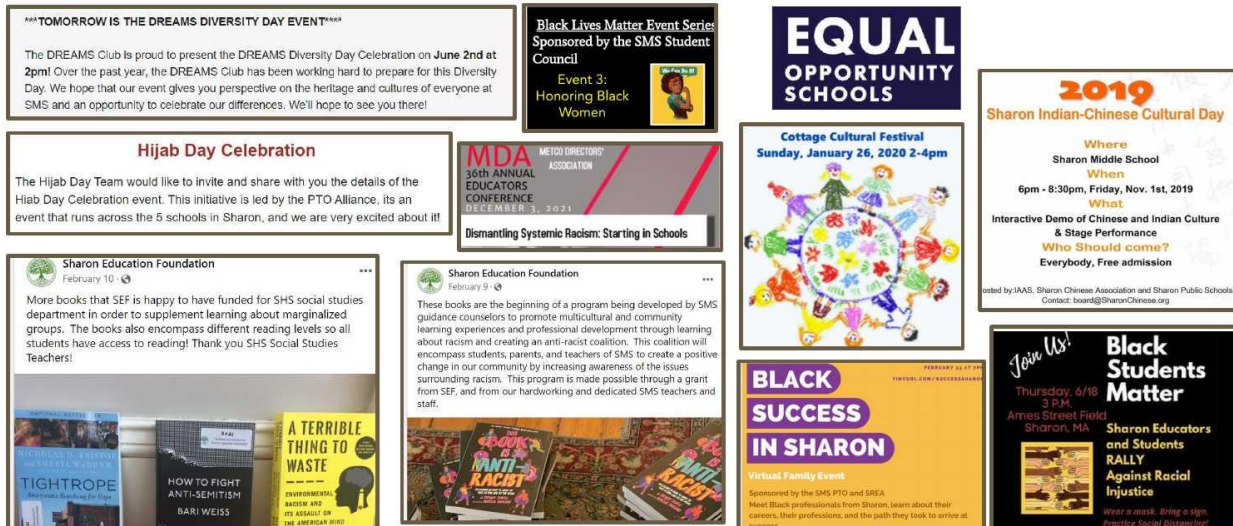
Withdrawal from IDEAS & Social Studies Resources:

*Provided high-impact, Professional Development and instructional
resources related to cultural competency and equity for SPS K-12 teachers
No library budget; No access to Primary Source, ABC Clio, Facing History*

Calls for DEI Assistant Superintendent ignored.

2021 Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion Initiatives Across SPS?

Yes, but Disparate, Not Coordinated, No Assessment of Impact



Bias Incidents and Microaggressions: Data Collection?

Sharon High School <noreply@sharonschools.net>

Good Morning SHS students, families & staff, I am writing today to address two recent incidents of hateful graffiti classrooms at SHS. The first incident happened on May 20 when someone defaced a poster that a student had grandmother describing how she had raised her family as a survivor of genocide. The poster was part of a display that was placed by someone in our school and it was reported by a teacher immediately. The second incident when a teacher noticed a swastika drawn in pencil on a student desk. The teacher took immediate steps to report the symbol of hate from the desk. I am writing today to make sure that these two incidents do not get overlooked. It is of utmost importance to the administration and the staff at Sharon High School that students feel safe here at school. We condemn these actions as examples of Anti-Asian and Anti-Semitic Hate and we stand united in our support of all students. If you have any information about these two incidents, please come forward to speak to our team.

Victoria Greer <noreply@sharon.k12.ma.us>

Tue, May 15, 2019 at 5:53

Dear Sharon Community,

It saddens me to share with you that this morning students discovered a swastika accompanied by a racial slur written on a whiteboard in one of the classrooms at Sharon High. I commend our students for being up standers and for their quick action of alerting school administration and the school resource officer.

The Sharon Public Schools is committed to supporting and embracing each and every student, family and community member regardless of race, religion, class, or sexual orientation. On behalf of my students, educators and staff, I stand against the actions of anyone who promotes or believes that this type of hatred and vandalism will be tolerated. These types of incidents send chills through our schools and community each time they happen and it is time for them to cease.

The Sharon Police Department is actively investigating this cultural and religious assault on our school. I am grateful for their partnership and support.

Sharon Middle School <noreply@sharon.k12.ma.us>

Wed, Nov 30, 2016 at 3:30 PM

November 30, 2016

Sharon Middle School Parent Update

We want to update you all with more information and plans in response to the disturbing and unacceptable actions that have occurred at Sharon Middle School. As I shared at the beginning of this week, a student brought to our attention that several swastikas were drawn on papers in the back of the classroom. We have investigated and unfortunately at this time have not been able to identify the person that wrote these.

We are working to support all students and plan student assemblies that reinforce the core values of respect and safety for all. This Friday 12:22 we will hold grade level assemblies in the auditorium. We have worked with the Anti Defamation League, our own peer leaders, the Interfaith council, local clergy, the Sharon Police Department and Sharon Schools staff to plan a program to address this very critical issue with all of our students.

Sharon High School <noreply@sharonschools.net>

Fri, Mar 5 at 2:48 PM

pbiller@yahoo.com

At you know we received a report from a student that there was a small swastika written in pencil on the wall in one of the stalls of our student bathrooms.

We reported the incident to SPD and SPD is investigating the incident. Our custodial staff has removed the symbol. I have alerted our staff and asked them to remain vigilant to ensure that Sharon High School remains a safe place for all of our students. At times like these, it is important to call out hateful speech for what it is and I wanted to state unequivocally, on behalf of the entire staff and student body of SHS, that we have no tolerance for hate in any of its pernicious forms.

SHARON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

District Information

For Families

- Family Resources
- Family Links
- Student Links
- Homeless Assistance Act
- Hotline Help
- Anonymous Tips: SPSEyewitness

Is there data on bias incidents called in by parents, staff, & students? Who do they call? What is the procedure? Who analyzes the data? Plus: "Hotline Help" is for sexual assault and domestic violence. Can we include hate crimes?

2020-2021 Incidents continue to occur. SREA fields ongoing complaints about bias in SPS including incidents of:

Anti-Black Racism

Islamophobia

Anti-Asian Hate

Homophobia

Antisemitism

No district-wide data on reported incidences available. No transparency. No training or guidance on how to report bias incidents for students & families.

We need to do the same thing that we do for bullying and sexual harassment to protect our children and staff.

2011-2021 One Family's Decade of Anti-Black Racism in SPS

Child A

Is told by a classmate in middle school that her hair is "ugly."

Is harassed all year by three classmates who threaten to call her a racial epithet. When parent went to the HS to meet with administration, they Googled how to handle this problem in front of the parents. Subsequently, this problem escalates to the point of parents having to retain legal counsel to force SHS to force the classmates to stop harassing her.

A social studies teacher at SHS when teaching civil rights teaches the class that "white people were lynched as well as Black people." The students are also shown an outdated video regarding the civil rights featuring an avowed racist and Klan sympathizer. Parent asks the chair of the social studies department to remove the video from circulation and he says he can't.

Child B

Is told by classmates in elementary school that she is "ugly and has big lips."

Is told by a classmate that her skin "looks like it has dirt on it" and her hair "looks like a mop."

In middle school she is told that her "lips are fat." The parents of the student who said this, claim that the boy was misunderstood. When the parent suggests they meet with the parents to discuss the incident, they refuse. The parents do, however, insist on meeting with the Assistant Superintendent to discuss their concerns. They would not meet with Dr. Greer because she is African American and they felt she would be biased against the boy.

In HS a student says aloud a racial epithet while reading during a class reading. The teacher had previously told the students not to read epithets aloud when reading. The student was not rebuked by the teacher.

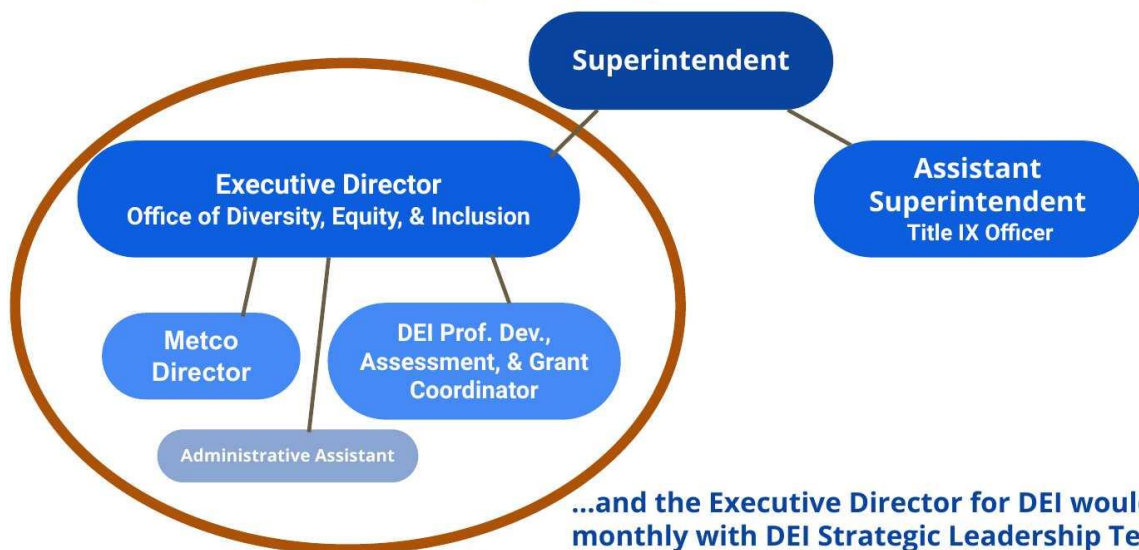
We can NOT afford not to make a commitment to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Consider:

- Liability around discrimination suits
- Legal fees accrued by School Committee
- Cost of paying two Superintendents 2020-2021
- Cost of hiring a recruiting firm for Superintendent
- Bad Press PR
- Future discrimination suits
- Not meeting DESE and NEASC Standards

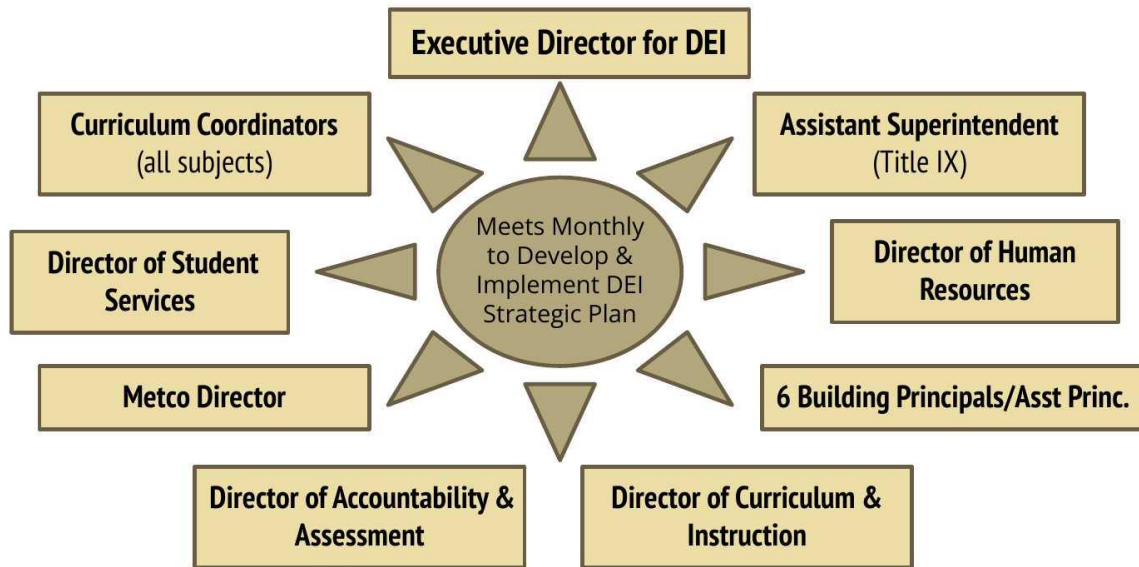
Emotional costs on our children and families

Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion for SPS



...and the Executive Director for DEI would meet monthly with DEI Strategic Leadership Team...

Executive Director chairs DEI Leadership Team



DEI Executive Director Job Description

- develop and implement with a DEI Leadership Team a district-wide **strategic plan** to support diversity and inclusion initiatives by defining clear goals and measurable objectives
- use **data-driven metrics** to identify methods of accountability and evaluate progress
- create comprehensive and ongoing training and **professional development** opportunities across all SPS populations to build a shared vision for an equitable future.
- conduct a thorough and ongoing **review of all SPS policies** for institutional and systemic racialized practices and implement change with evidence-based policies and procedures
- develop a **district-wide bias incident response protocol** with DEI Strategic Leadership Team and educate students, families, staff, and administrators around bias incident protocols and procedures
- work directly with administration and human resources toward the **recruitment and retention** of a diverse and culturally responsive teaching workforce
- conduct ongoing **K-12 curriculum reviews** to ensure the inclusion of the histories and perspectives of diverse communities

SREA's 3 Big Asks

1. SC Budget for an Executive Director of DEI to lead district-wide DEI Leadership Team

(that includes School Admins (5 schools), HR, all Curric. Coordinators, Asst. Supt., etc.)

- a. Develop **Bias Response Protocols** & educate staff, students, and families on them
- b. Conduct full scope, on-going **Equity Assessment** (course access, scores, grades, discipline, bias incidences, family surveys, etc.)
- c. Develop **Strategic Plan** based on Equity Assessment, including **Recruitment & Retention** of diverse SPS staff

2. Professional Development

- d. **50%** of all district Professional development funds to **DEI-focused training**
- e. **100%** of all PD must **integrate equity lens**

3. Reinstatement of Social Studies Curriculum Coordinators K-12

The Time Is NOW

"The Sharon Public Schools is committed to providing an inclusive, safe, and healthy learning environment for all. Our District is dedicated to developing an educational foundation that fosters academics, model citizenship, and cultural diversity, in collaboration with all stakeholders. We maintain the vision that all students will apply their skills and knowledge to inspire our global society."

Sharon Public Schools, District Plan, 2018-2021, Vision Statement
