GORHAM SCHOOL DEPARTMENT

STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT TO DIVERSITY HIRING PRACTICES

The Gorham School Department is committed to attracting and retaining a diverse staff. We honor our staff's experiences, perspectives and unique identities. We are committed to:

- Strengthening our hiring practices to ensure the best possible candidates are hired to work with our students, through endeavoring to hire professional staff that reflects that diversity.
- Embedding equity in our practices through a commitment to high outcomes, excellence, and fairness for all.
- Putting diversity into action by creating an environment of engagement, respect and connection based on our Code of Conduct.
- Reinforcing and supporting a work environment where the richness of individual thoughts, ideas, backgrounds and perspectives are harnessed to add overall value to our community of learners that will be supported over time.

Together, our community strives to create and maintain working and learning environments that are inclusive, equitable and welcoming to all who choose to join our Gorham Schools Family.

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DIVERSITY HIRING TOOLKIT

Reference note: A portion of the framework and language seen below has been adapted from the Portland School Department's Equity Hiring Toolkit and from the work of Lawrence Alexander who has consulted with the Gorham School Committee on its diversity hiring practices. Additional features were also added from a variety of online resources. The final toolkit will include feedback from Gorham Schools Staff, Administrators, members of the Gorham Anti-Racism & Equity Committee and members of the Gorham School Committee. The final toolkit will be approved by the Gorham School Committee before broad utilization.

I.   Introduction/Overview:

This diversity hiring toolkit is designed to support hiring committee chairs and hiring committee members throughout the recruitment and selection process for the hiring of ALL staff within the Gorham School Department. It is designed to help mitigate gender, racial and other hidden biases in our recruitment and hiring processes as a district. It is NOT intended to be prescriptive in nature but instead to provide a framework for decision making that is flexible and adaptive to the specific needs of each hiring process for each unique position.

II.   Human Resources Theory of Action:

We believe that…

IF… we can recruit, hire and retain the most highly qualified staff, particularly diverse staff, who believe in our district's mission and vision and commitment for all students

THEN… we will be able to actualize our vision for all students regardless of their race, gender, identity/sexual orientation, socioeconomic situation, home language, disability, or ability.

III.   Key Terms & Definitions:

In our practices, the Gorham Schools will utilize the following definitions for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion:

Diversity	Equity	Inclusion
The representation of different and unique identities,	Expecting high outcomes for all, while giving everyone what they	A community that is created where differences are

characteristics, experiences and perspectives.	need to succeed by increasing access, resources, and opportunities for all; especially those who are underrepresented and have been historically disadvantaged.	welcomed, celebrated and everyone is valued, respected and supported to be able to reach their full potential.

IV.   General Guidelines For An Inclusive Hiring Process:

Note: These were taken from ["8 Ways for Search Committees to Be Inclusive"](#) by Amy Crutchfield in The Chronicle of Higher Education, April 15, 2022 (Vol. 68, #16, pp 58-60)

- *Build rapport and trust within the committee.* This means taking time for getting-to-know-you exercises, however awkward they may feel. Each member should talk about their background and how it relates to the search; overall, the process should not feel rushed.
- *Early on, establish rules for how decisions will be made.* Crutchfield suggests a "community agreement" that includes listening to others' ideas, disagreeing respectfully, not talking over other colleagues, and assuming positive intent. It's helpful for committee members to review all candidates' files before the first meeting and come prepared to talk about their top choices, before they're influenced by groupthink.
- *Provide training and resources on inclusive hiring practices.* So that everyone is on the same page, the committee needs a presentation, literature, and perhaps videos on best practices, including interview questions that are appropriate and inappropriate and being aware of implicit bias.
- *Actively counteract structural hierarchies.* "People in positions of power must be aware of the weight of their opinions," says Crutchfield. "Be mindful not to always speak first." The same is true for extroverted members who tend to dominate conversations. If a member is quiet in a meeting, the chair might reach out afterward and say, "I noticed we did not hear a lot from you in the meeting, and I wanted to check in with you on how you are viewing the decision.
- *Recognize biases and beware of "fit."* Committee members need to be aware of the tendency to favor or downgrade candidates based on race, gender, sexual orientation, social class, geography, and perceived prestige. "A key principle of an inclusive hiring process," says Crutchfield: "Let each person's record speak for itself… Recognize that 'fit' can be interpreted as code for wanting people who look just like you." Rather, think in terms of "culture add" – how a candidate might add to the diversity of the team or institution. Finally, she says, if a committee is giving a white male candidate a pass (e.g., a gap in the résumé or frequent job changes), all other candidates should be cut the same slack.
- *Screen and interview "stretch" candidates.* Crutchfield encourages committees to interview one or two outliers, "calling people in, not out." "Strength on paper doesn't always transfer to being impressive in an interview," she says. "Likewise, someone who

looks mediocre on paper can really wow you in person… Interviews can be nerve-racking, and some people take a while to warm up."

- *Assess diversity at every point of the process.* Screening résumés, narrowing to first-round interviews, and selecting finalists, the committee should pause and ask if every effort has been made to ensure a diverse pool and include those who could bring different experiences or skills.
- *Handle video interviews respectfully.* These days, first-round interviews are often done via Zoom. "This should go without saying, but it's worth repeating," says Crutchfield: "During video interviews, it's not OK for committee members to take phone calls, check e-mail, depart suddenly, and exhibit other such distracting and disrespectful behaviors." It's also helpful to give candidates the questions 30 minutes before a remote interview; that way they have a heads-up and can refer to a written text but won't be overly rehearsed.

V. Common Pitfalls Of Hiring Processes:

Pitfall	Description
Assuming your interview skills are "up to snuff".	Some people are naturally better at interviewing than others; some simply have more experience. Reflect on whether your interview skills need developing, and prioritize that growth when needed.
Not Leveraging a Hiring Committee	Hiring committees are an essential way to ensure you benefit from multiple perspectives, share multiple perspectives with candidates, and allow for more diversity of the people a candidate meets. They also help divide labor involved in hiring. Think strategically about who to include—and how to share the burden.
Failing to acknowledge or explore one's own biases prior to entering into the hiring process.	We all bring our own complicated and often unrecognized biases to the hiring process. Mitigating biases that may influence your hiring decisions helps build a more effective team. (CLICK HERE to review a slideshow on hiring biases by Lawerence Alexander.)
Not doing reference checks.	Ensure that every teacher hire you make is the strongest possible asset for your school. Think about all the things you know about your exiting teachers that could impact the decision of the next school that considers hiring them. Be sure to seize the opportunity to get input and feedback (when it exists) from prior employers.
Hiring people early and then ignoring them for months.	Recognize the benefits of cultivating relationships with your incoming staff. Rather than hiring them, and then waiting until August to contact them again, find ways to stay in contact with regular, ongoing

	cultivation and communication efforts to keep them engaged, convey your enthusiasm, and ensure sustained commitment.
Not sending notifications to individuals who were not selected for the open position.	Recognize that just because you didn't hire a candidate this time, DOES NOT mean they may not be the best candidate the next time. Hiring is all about relationships and the cultivation of positive relationships. It is important to communicate a "let down" appropriately to ensure the candidate feels valued so that they may one day apply again. Minimally, all applicants should receive a written letter if they are not selected. It is strongly suggested that those who were finalists receive a specific phone call for a more personal touch.
Not prioritizing candidates of color or from diverse backgrounds.	Given the changing demographics of our students—and the lack of representative teachers of color on our staff—The Gorham School Department has an acute need for teachers of color. Staff and students benefit from teachers with diverse backgrounds and experiences, including those from historically marginalized communities. It's important to remember that diversity and representation is broad and encompasses varied backgrounds and skill sets (ex. gender, socioeconomic, neurodiversity, nationality, etc.) Be sure to prioritize these candidates and recognize the unique assets they offer all of our students.

VI.   Types of Biases

1. Personal Bias
2. Situational Bias

Personal bias can positively or negatively impact a candidate during the hiring process.

Examples:

- A candidate is well-received because they went to the same college as the interviewer.
- A candidate is not well received because of her age.

Common Biases Include:

- College attended
- Political affiliations

- Appearance or dress
- Certification route
- Previous employers
- Age
- Race/ethnicity
- Religious/cultural/linguistic difference
- Geographic location

When interviewing a large number of candidates, several situational biases can occur.

Common Situational Biases Include:

Bias Type - Like Me - Rating people more highly because they are "like you"; similarities related to habits, beliefs, and other demographic variables.

Bias Type - Contrast - Comparing employees to each other vs. the rubric, forcing a distribution instead of reflection of actual performance. "This candidate reminds me of the last 20 candidates" or if you have just seen 7 bad candidates, the average one seems like "Teacher of the Year."

Bias Type - Halo - Rating highly because of a deep strength in one area vs. a complete picture.

Bias Type - Horn - Opposite of halo, focus on one thing they don't do well, or the biggest story of growth dominates the story.

Bias Type - Leniency - Everyone gets a positive or satisfactory rating, limiting nuance across multiple reviews. Interviewer tends to be too hard, or too easy on everyone. Interviewer things, "Well the candidate is trying hard and is really enthusiastic."

Bias Type - Recency - Most recent behavior becomes the primary focus. This can be a positive or negative thing.

3. <u>Implicit Bias</u>
4. <u>Explicit Bias</u>

Also keep in mind the difference between implicit and explicit bias to ensure you're working to eliminate both.

Implicit Bias	Explicit Bias
Implicit biases are negative associations that	Explicit bias is overt and conscious. May be

people unknowingly hold. Characteristics: ● Unconscious ● Automatic ● Influences mindset and actions ● Is reinforced by social and cultural context and does not happen in a vacuum. ● Is influenced by internalized messages and cultural context.	values, beliefs, and/or actions that perpetuate a myth of dominance and inferiority or one individual identity or group over another.

An Equity Lens Considers…

- Whose experiences, contextual affordances, and cultural identities am I privileging?
- Whose experiences, contextual affordances, and cultural identities am I marginalizing?
- Whose voices are we missing?
- Where are the "gaps" in our process?

VII.   Candidate Review & Selection

Each hiring committee should use a well defined and consistent plan to assess candidates and make selections during any hiring process. Prior engagement with the hiring team in the planning and outreach stages will allow for an effective selection process, where the school's commitments to diversity and inclusion should be apparent. A candidate review that is thoughtful and consistent will allow for an effective and successful candidate hire. Below is an outline of the general steps that should be taken by each hiring committee during ALL hiring processes conducted by the Gorham School Department. Once again, please note that these are NOT PRESCRIPTIVE items to be "checked off" for any process; however, this overview should be considered a framework for all hiring decisions and should be carefully considered in each process by each hiring committee chair.

☐ Develop a Candidate Assessment Rubric - One of the most effective methods for maintaining balance and consistency is to use a scoring rubric. A rubric is an assessment tool that aligns the stated position requirements, hiring priorities, and candidate qualities being sought in a way that can be used to evaluate an application package. Though time-intensive on the front-end, one of the advantages of using a rubric is that it minimizes subjectivity and increases opportunity for a more thoughtful and objective approach to screening. When developing rubrics, hiring chairs should consider the following:

- Create a rubric that is based on the criteria in the job description before the position is even posted;
- Apply the assessment rubric consistently for all applicants;
- Be aware that different rubrics can be created for different parts of the hiring process. For example, one rubric could be created to review the applicants initial application materials while another rubric could be utilized to score performance during interviews, etc.

CLICK HERE for a sample rubric that was used recently for the hiring of a Technology Director position.

CLICK HERE for a sample listing of questions to use in hiring processes.

☐ Form a Hiring Committee - Ensuring more than one person makes hiring decisions creates a system of checks and balances that mitigates each individual's biases and results in greater success in hiring the right candidates. Hiring Committee chairs should try to create as diverse a hiring committee as possible to further mitigate individual team members' biases and counterbalance inherent institutional biases that disadvantage women, people of color, and other underrepresented communities.   Diversity includes hierarchy, location, gender, age, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity and a diversity of perspectives. INCLUDE STUDENTS WHENEVER POSSIBLE ON HIRING COMMITTEES. Take the time to discuss issues of bias and diversity in the hiring process with your team prior to beginning each process. Value all member's input and be clear up front about what input committee members have in the process and ultimately how decisions will be made.

Prior to beginning the formal process of applicant screenings, please make sure each member of the hiring committee completes and signs a CONFIDENTIALITY FORM.

☐ Conduct Initial Screening of Application Materials - Many hiring committee chairs find candidate evaluation to be one of the most tedious phases of the process. Use the minimum qualifications listed in the ad as a guide for screening applicants. It is important to maintain consistency to stay true to the priorities identified when the job ad was created. Attempting to vastly narrow the pool at this stage is unnecessary and can disadvantage candidates who might not appear as qualified at first glance. Consider the initial screening a "first look" before removing to something a bit more thoughtful. During the review, be mindful of biases that may be present. Beware of over-valuing applications that arrive early in the process, or simply giving them more attention. Wait until the priority deadline before reading any applications. While reviewing, try to set aside personal "pet peeves" such as incorrect spelling/grammar in the cover letter or gaps in employment. Instead, focus on the message and philosophy the candidate is trying to convey and understand there are many legitimate reasons for gaps in employment such as taking care of children. These "little things" are often what disadvantage specific candidates early on in the process who may ultimately have other qualifications and characteristics that would make them very well suited for the position.

Tips to Review Application Materials Without Bias:

- Screen resumes with names, address, and even schools marked out - just look at experience.
- Consider input and not just output: Ask if you're only considering output and recognition (publications, awards, accomplishments) versus input (relationships held, cultural knowledge accessed, time spent engaging in advocacy). The latter is often not rewarded but as valuable if not more in some positions.
- Understand that men's resumes are often shorter than women's. Research has found that women's resumes were longer than men's because women try to tell a story in their resumes, while men often simply list the facts. Both are valuable qualities.
- Avoid making any assumptions based upon a candidate's age, gender, and or other non-experience related information. Highlighting parts of the application materials that deal only with experience related information and focusing there is an excellent strategy.

☐ Conduct Interviews - This stage in the hiring process allows the interview team to get to know applicants and follow up on application materials. Develop an interview protocol that is within the scope of the position and use it CONSISTENTLY. It is important to ensure interview questions are aligned with the criteria in the assessment rubric. Ideally, all interviewers are familiar with the rubric at this point and can formally rate the applicants based on the written materials and interview responses. Consider the following for every candidate's interview:

- Incorporate behavioral questions to gain insight into the job candidate's past experiences.
- Be consistent and use the same set of questions for each candidate.
- Ask candidates questions about their experiences related to diversity, equity and inclusion
- Check your body language and your expectations for the candidates' body language. Expecting candidates to shake your hand firmly, make eye contact, sit squarely with you, and speak in a loud, modulated, firm tone biases your interview in favor of white, American, male candidates. In some communities of color and non-Western cultures, eye contact is seen as an affront, sitting squarely is viewed as aggressive and not respectful, and handshakes are not a common practice.
- Hire for "values fit" and not "culture fit." Hiring for culture fit just reproduces a current culture and prevents organizational change and growth. Instead, hire for values fit, meaning a candidate shares core values with the school system, despite having major differences in styles, backgrounds and experiences.
- Embrace multiple communication styles. Depending on the candidate's culture, they may be more indirect or even use storytelling to make a point, they may be more formal than you're used to, and they may be more reflective. Provide the candidate with time to respond and ask clarifying questions if you do not understand their responses.
- Consider sharing interview questions prior to the interview. Not doing so disadvantages more reflective candidates who need time to process complex information. If you're worried that a candidate will go research and seek answers to the questions from other

people or resources, don't be. That's a sign of a person who knows where to find information, synthesize it, and apply it to your organization. Typically a great skill!
- Ask if there is anything you didn't ask that the candidate wants to contribute. Be sure to give the candidate the opportunity to end the interview by sharing information you didn't ask about.
- **BE SURE TO USE THE "FAIR AND UNFAIR INQUIRIES" AS A GUIDELINE (SEE APPENDIX A).**

☐ Conduct Reference Checks - Some hiring chairs prefer to conduct reference checks between the semi-final and final stage, and some prefer to conduct the checks following the final interview. It doesn't matter when reference checks are conducted as long as they ARE conducted and as long as they are conducted consistently. Reference checks should always be conducted in a similar manner and format using an agreed upon template. A general guide is to ensure to conduct three reference checks for the successful candidate before extending an offer to hire.

☐ Decision Making & Hiring - The final decision is dependent upon carefully reviewing all data and making a recommendation to the position's hiring committee chair. Items to consider in the decision making process:

- Avoid prematurely labeling any candidate as the "most promising" until all candidates are interviewed;
- Debrief as a search committee/interview panel to compare notes and identify strengths and weaknesses for all candidates;
- Use identified strengths and weaknesses to help inform an individualized onboarding plan, especially if the candidate is new to the school district.
- Focus on each candidate's track record of achievements and qualifications to meet the requirements of the position as they have been ranked in the assessment rubric. This does not have to determine the final outcome, but scores should play heavily in the final decision.
- Consider the long term. Often interview committees focus on what needs to happen in the shorter term, and think about how candidates can achieve those goals. That can shift a committee's preference toward an internal candidate. If the position has high turnover, then thinking about the short term is certainly important. However, it is also important to think about how that candidate can contribute to new ideas for larger scale projects and future work.

For support staff positions, the recommendation of the hiring committee chair will be reviewed by the Superintendent and then implemented. For professional staff, the individual selected by the hiring committee chair will FIRST meet with the Superintendent of Schools as a final step in the process before the Superintendent brings forward their name for nomination to the School Committee. For all professional positions, the superintendent must bring forward a final nomination to the School Committee for approval. The School Committee must then approve

the Superintendent's nomination via a majority vote. Once done, the Superintendent is then responsible to issue a contract to the candidate. Only after each of these three steps have been completed is a professional staff member considered "hired."

Every new hire needs and deserves an on-boarding plan - especially if they are new to the school district. The hiring committee chair should consider the collection of strengths and weaknesses of the candidate developed during the hiring process when developing said onboarding plan for the candidate once they are hired. Once hired, implementation of the onboarding plan should begin immediately.

VIII.   After the Hiring Process (once approved by EITHER the Superintendent or School Committee)

☐   Hiring Committee chair should ensure New Hire Form is completed and returned to Central Office.

☐   Hiring Committee chair should collect all extraneous paper information, notes, etc. from the process and ensure they are shredded.

☐   Hiring Committee chair should notify technology department of new hire and request email address be created and shared.

☐   Hiring Committee chair should develop a specific "onboarding" plan for the new hire and begin implementation immediately. Onboarding plans should be individualized to meet the needs of each new hire, but should minimally include:

- Ensuring access to their classroom or office space.
- Digital Introductions to existing staff in the building/program.
- Ensuring access to required trainings and materials.
- Ensuring access to group emails and methods used by Principal/Program Directors to communicate with staff on a regular basis.
- Ensuring access to staff employment handbook and other staff handbooks provided to building or program level staff.

APPENDIX A

Fair and Unfair Pre-Employment Inquiries		
Subject	**Fair Inquiry**	**Unfair inquiry**
Age	Inquiry related to birth date and proof of true age.	Inquiry that implies an age preference for persons under 40.
Arrest/Convictions	Request any previous convictions are divulged after paper application process.	Inquiries concerning arrests, convictions and imprisonment are not justified by any hiring committee unless they are directly related to a person's job duties.
Citizenship	Whether an applicant can be lawfully employed in this country because of a visa or immigration status and whether an applicant can provide proof of legal right to work in the U.S. after being hired.	Whether applicant is a citizen; before hire requiring an applicant to present a birth certificate, naturalization or baptismal record. Any inquiry into citizenship that would tend to divulge applicant's lineage, ancestry, national origin, descent, or birthplace.
Disability	Whether applicants can perform the essential functions of the position, with or without reasonable accommodation. Request to describe or demonstrate performance of the essential functions with or without accommodation.	Inquiry about nature, severity, or extent of a disability. Inquiry as to whether an applicant requires reasonable accommodation. Whether an applicant has applied for or received worker's compensation. Any inquiry that is not job related or consistent with the district's needs.
Height/Weight	None	Any inquiry relating to height or weight.
Marital Status	None	Any inquiry about the applicant's marital status whether an applicant is married, single, divorced, separated, engaged, widowed, etc. Any form requesting identification by Mr., Mrs., Miss, or Ms Status.
Family	Whether applicant can meet specified work schedules or activities, commitments, or responsibilities that may prevent meeting work attendance requirements.	Inquiry concerning spouse, spouse's employment or salary, children, childcare arrangements or dependents.
Military	Inquiry concerning education, training, or work experience in the U.S. Military	Type or condition of military discharge, request for discharge papers, an applicant's experience in a military other

		than the US. military.
Name	Whether applicant has worked under different name, and if so, what name. Name by which applicant is known to employment references if different from present name.	Any other inquiry concerning name which would divulge marital status, lineage, ancestry, national origin, or descent. Inquiry into original name where it has been changed by court order or marriage.
National Origin	Inquiry into ability to read/write/speak foreign language when the foreign language is a job requirement.	Any other inquiry into applicant's lineage, ancestry, national origin, descent, birthplace, native language, or national origin of an applicant's parents or spouse.
Photograph	None. May request after employment for purpose of identification.	Any request for submission of photograph at any time prior to employment.
Pregnancy	Inquiry as to duration of stay on the job or anticipated absences made to males and females alike.	Any inquiry related to pregnancy, medical history concerning pregnancy, and related matters of the pregnancy.
Sex/Sexual Orientation	None	Any inquiry concerning sex or sexual orientation.
Race or Color	None	Any inquiry concerning Race or color.