Centering a Culture of *Belonging* in Your Bangor School Department
Role, Practice, and Everyday Experience

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Recognizing the temperature around "DEIB" topics...

'We need change': Students at middle school in Portland rally for civil rights

Diversity, equity, and inclusion education should be included in public schools

Speaking about the impacts of race and racism is not inherently racist, and not talking about racism doesn't make it disappear.

Libraries, and the books in them, must reflect the diversity of thought and values in their communities

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Florida students stage school walkouts over 'Don't Say Gay' bill

High school senior Jack Petocz, who organized the statewide protests, said he was suspended from his school "indefinitely."

Transgender athletes speak out as parents petition to change policy that allows them to compete as girls

Olympic woman boxer who faced gender eligibility claim wins, igniting outcry

After Algeria's Imane Khelif beats Italy's Angela Carini in opening bout, social media erupts with criticism citing disqualifications from last year's world championships

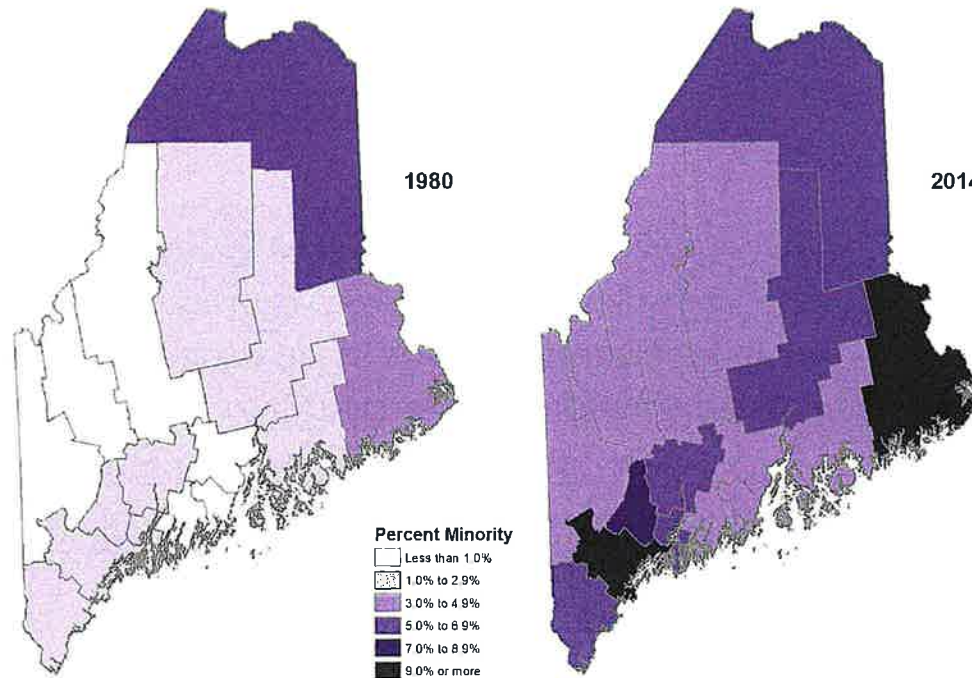**Bangor schools looking to partner with UMaine on equity audit**

Biden's Title IX rule change protecting LGBTQ+ students blocked by judge in 6 more states

FORECASTER OPINION Posted May 9

Mainewhile: DEI is difficult, yes, but also necessary

Why must we consider identities?

1980

2014

Percent Minority
Less than 1.0%
1.0% to 2.9%
3.0% to 4.9%
5.0% to 6.9%
7.0% to 8.9%
9.0% or more

Note:"Minority" includes all people other than white, non-Hispanics
Sources: Carsey School analyses of 1980 Decennial Census & 2014 Census Population Estimates

cial/Ethnic/Multi-Faith diversity   Students with IEP and 504 plans   Multilingual and Immigrant Households   LGBTQ+ Identifying Yout
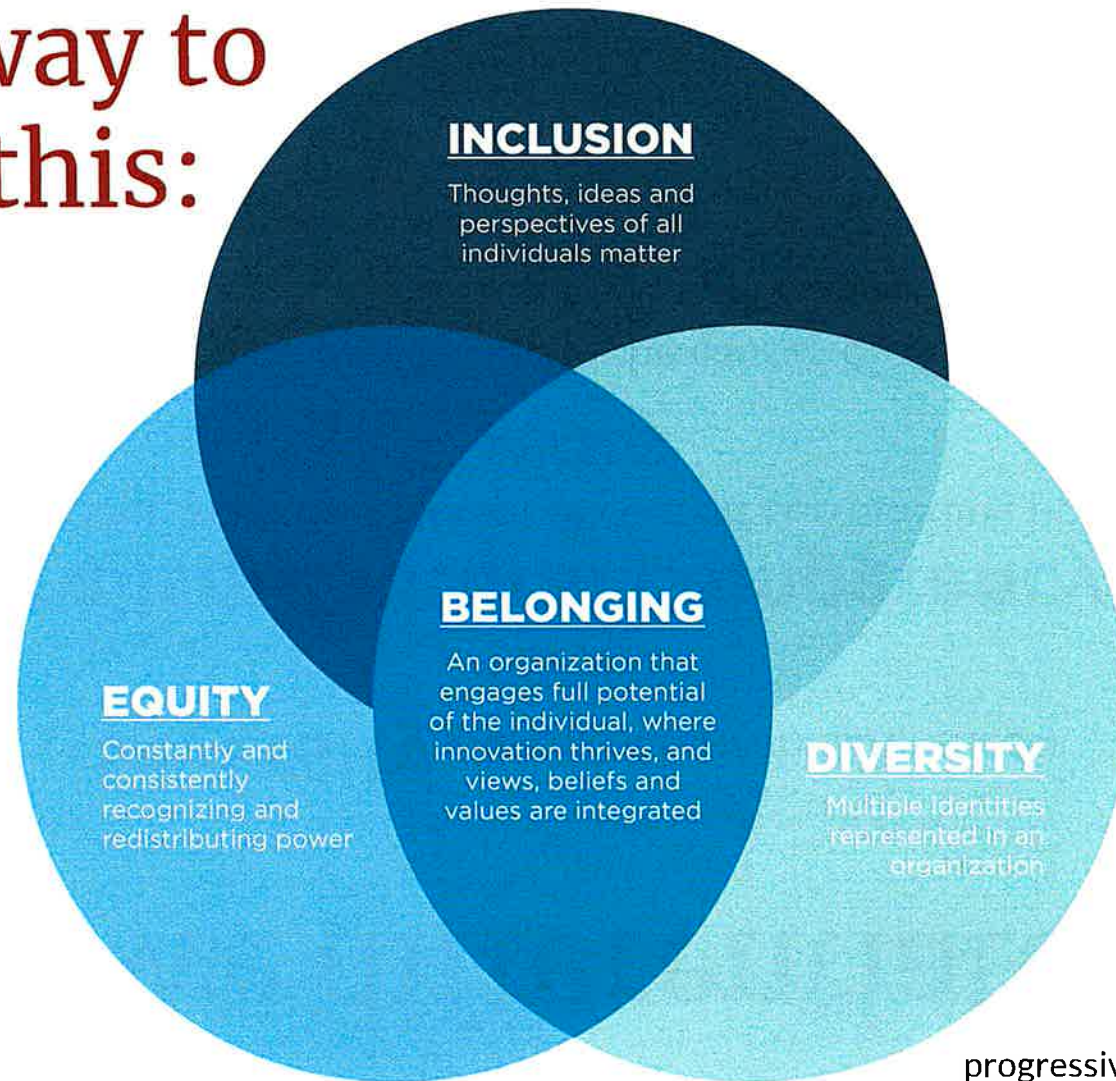
Harm faced by underrepresented student populations within US education system

- Lower expectations and devaluation of BIPOC and other marginalized students
- Teaching and enforcing normative values
    - Curriculum (lack or removal of ethnic/area/race/genocide studies)
    - Holding students to normative dress and communication standards
    - Lack of cultural competence and culturally responsive SEL and instruction
- Unmet needs outside of school and no space to understand or share that in school
- Invisibility within identify formation
- Achievement and disciplinary gaps (above and beyond those projected from the pandemic)

Another way to visualize this:

INCLUSION
Thoughts, ideas and perspectives of all individuals matter

BELONGING
An organization that engages full potential of the individual, where innovation thrives, and views, beliefs and values are integrated

EQUITY
Constantly and consistently recognizing and redistributing power

DIVERSITY
Multiple identities represented in an organization

progressiveae.com

How can we differentiate...

Diversity (Range of human differences)

versus

Multiculturalism/Cultural Competency (Not just describing differences—added acknowledgment of context surrounding power and value)

versus

Equity (Promoting inclusion and getting to the causes of disparities at institutional level)

versus

Inclusion (Above PLUS promoting a feeling of welcome-ness and access) *and then*

Belonging (Diverse perspectives and values are infused into decision making, leadership, policies, processes, culture with intention.)

Considering specific demographics

- Gender dynamics
- LGBTQ+ students (sexuality and gender diversity)
- Neurodiverse students
- Students with disabilities (visible and less visible)
- Students impacted by poverty
- Multi-language learners (who have a wide range of experiences)
- BIPOC communities
- Faith-based considerations
  - Addressing stereotypes
  - Lack of representation
  - Dietary/holiday circumstances

While there is no 'one-size-fits-all' model, when considering an individual student situation or your school community, you can make a world of difference by acknowledging and helping to overcome barriers, like:
- Lack of representation/mentors/role models
- Conversations with caregivers
- Language barriers (English language or cultural familiarity/comfort)
- Less visible needs
- Less accessible community (and what comes with community)
- Histories of trauma

→ *Empowering students as sources of knowledge...but not a demographic spokesperson. No one person can know any/all details of different cultures, but meeting students with kindness and compassion matters.*

A preview: Responding to those inevitable "uh oh" moments

- Understand the policies

- Take student concerns seriously--use same standard for all students regarding discipline and reporting

- Consider the ripple effect of discrimination: you are the front line to create a culture of belonging

- Report immediately to Title IX Coordinator/Affirmative Action Officer

→ Takeaway: You are **not** responsible for assessing behavior or allegations, facilitating an investigation or any potential outcome(s). You **are** responsible to hand off any potential discrimination, harassment and/or bias concerns to the Title IX/Affirmative Action staff

KNOW**IX**
YOUR

So...what can we do *today?*

Exclusion   Integration   Inclusion
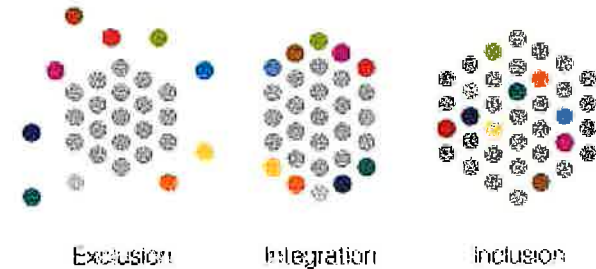
- Show up as educators...*and* learners
- Make space for this work and the reflection and growth it requires
- Identifying strengths within differences
- Recognizing differences in experience...even within the same classroom
- Affirming names, pronouns, cultural differences, the words we use, and the learning spaces we create
- Identifying allied/"safe" staff for students to reach out to...and lean into outsourcing expertise and community engagement
- Prioritize cultural education and BSD's inclusionary policies (bullying, Title IX, nondiscrimination) seriously
- Collaboration and transparency--with your own self-reflection and your BSD team

To think about moving forward...

How are you an instrument of change?

What is your classroom culture and what steps can you take to cultivate inclusion and belonging?

Diversity is a fact.
Equity is a choice.
Inclusion is an action.
Belonging is an outcome.

(Arthur Chan)

The big takeaway: this work does not exist in a vacuum. It requires ongoing conversation, self-reflection, active practice, adapting to community needs and providing students with critical skills they need to be tomorrow's global leaders.
This is a messy and challenging but necessary and vibrant task…
so let's do it together!

Let's keep these conversations going :)
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