



Verona Public Schools

Request for Proposal (RFP)

(1) School Climate & Culture; (2) Hiring, Recruiting, & Retainment Practices

The Verona Public School District invites qualified consultants to submit a proposal to provide feedback and recommendations after evaluating our (1) School Climate & Culture and (2) Hiring, Recruiting, and Retainment Practices, through the lens of diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Background

The Verona Public Schools (VPS) are located in western Essex County, New Jersey. The district has approximately 2,250 students in grades K-12. VPS has four elementary neighborhood schools (grades K-4), one middle school (grades 5-8), and one high school (grades 9-12).

Our faculty members work collaboratively to revise all courses of study, K-12, utilizing the Understanding by Design (UbD) framework in order to develop a consistent, coherent, horizontally and vertically articulated curriculum aligned to state standards that promotes achievement for all students. The UbD framework calls for a meaningful integration of all three components of teaching and learning - curriculum, instruction, and assessment - where true understanding is the goal.

As educators within the Verona Public Schools, our overarching goal is to continue to refine our classroom instruction and our professional practice in order to keep pace with the evolving expectations of the 21st century. Toward that end, we have established a framework for professional development that fosters the growth of professional learning communities within our schools.

The Verona Public Schools receive local, state, and national awards based upon its hard work and dedication of students, staff, and support from our community. Verona High School is one of 373 school districts in the U.S. and Canada honored by the College Board with placement on the 9th Annual AP District Honor Roll. Three out of our six schools, Brookdale Avenue Elementary, Henry B. Whitehorne Middle School, and Verona High School, earned the Bronze Medal for the Future Ready Schools initiative. Verona High School was recognized in the top 1.5% of America's Most Challenging High Schools and was ranked as high as #24 in the state in New Jersey Monthly.

Demographic Profile

The Verona Public Schools students are predominantly English speaking where only 1.1% of its students are identified as English Language Learners and 17.6% of its students are students with disabilities. The average

teacher experience is approximately 11.7 years and the student to teacher ratio is 12:1. The overall K-12 student population is approximately 80% White, 10% Hispanic, 4.5% Asian, 2.5% Black or African American, and 2.1% two or more races.

Our Accomplishments So Far

The Verona Public Schools are focused on diversifying and enriching our curriculum and instruction, improving our hiring practices, improving our school climate and culture, and joining organizations that will broaden our understanding of diversity, equity, and inclusion. Below is a short list of our some accomplishments:

- Broadened our curricular offerings and educational experiences to ensure multiple perspectives
- Offer dual enrollment university courses to VHS students on Race, Culture & Identity, as well as multicultural topics
- Populated all school libraries with diverse resources such as books about diversity, equity & inclusion as well as books by authors like Jaqueline Woodson, Monica Clark-Robinson, and Kwame Alexander
- Formed the Verona Public Schools Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI) Committee
- Instituted Staff and Administrator Book Clubs: *How to be an Anti-Racist* by X. Kendi, and *Biased: Uncovering the Hidden Prejudice that Shapes What We See, Think, and Do* by Jennifer Eberhardt
- Joined the Kean University Diversity Council
- Conducted searches for a consultant to help us to identify next steps that fit the needs of the Verona Public Schools
- Staff Professional Development by partnering with Learning for Justice in the program Facilitating Critical Conversations. Our staff members learned (1) how to identify strategies and resources to create a positive and respectful learning environment where critical conversations can take place, (2) reflect on personal assumptions and learned biases and recognize their impact on classroom practice, and (3) develop skills and confidence for engaging in and facilitating conversations about race and other critical topics.
- Staff members from each school building as well as community members met over the course of several meetings in spring 2021 to begin a conversation about diversity, equity, and inclusion in our school community.

Our Commitment, Essential Questions, and Needs Evaluation

The Verona Public Schools are committed to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. Our overarching goal for DEI is to match our structure, procedures and actions with our purpose, vision, and core values, to create an environment of belonging for all students and for our entire school community.

We are seeking answers to the following essential questions:

- What does an environment that is diverse, equitable and inclusive look like...sound like...feel like?
- What are we doing right now that makes people feel left out, left behind, not seen, or not heard?
- How far are we from where we are, to where we want and need to be?
- What is our goal and how do we reach it?

The District Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee, Superintendent of Schools, and Board of Education view the evaluation of our (1) School Climate & Culture, and (2) Hiring, Recruiting, and Retainment Practices, through the lens of diversity, equity, and inclusion, as our next step. The evaluation and recommendations are intended to provide actionable steps that will improve our school district learning environment for our students and staff members.

Requested Deliverables

The successful external consultant(s) will prepare a work plan and related budget based on the following performance expectations:

- External consultant(s) will work collaboratively with the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) committee, including administration and staff members.
- External consultant(s) will meet initially with the Superintendent of Schools, Diversity Coordinator and Diversity Facilitators to discuss what the district has accomplished so far in terms of school culture and climate as well as hiring, recruiting, and retainment of staff.
- External consultant(s) will review the (1) school culture & climate and (2) hiring, recruiting, and retainment of staff by outlining methods and approaches that will be utilized to answer the agreed-upon areas of focus (i.e. conducting interviews, focus groups, surveys, and any individual conversations with a variety of stakeholders in the community).
- The external consultant(s) will submit an evaluation report with specific feedback for (1) school culture & climate and (2) hiring, recruiting, and retainment of staff, including recommendations in order to provide a report that will promote a better understanding and clear vision of the present district environment.
- External consultant(s) will have ongoing, consistent communication with the DEI committee to ensure smooth implementation of the work plan.
- The external consultant will meet with the DEI committee and Superintendent of Schools to share the feedback and recommendations.
- Formal presentations of results will be shared with the public at a Board of Education meeting to be determined by the DEI committee, Superintendent of Schools, and the Board of Education.

Budget

Please provide an expected budget for your proposal. The exact total of the contract will depend on the scope of work and qualifications of the evaluator or team.

Proposal Submissions

The successful bidder may be an individual who serves as a prime contractor, a public or private education organization, or an ad hoc research and consulting group. The external consultant(s) must demonstrate experience as a leader implementing current research and effective practices with (1) School Climate & Culture and (2) Hiring, Recruiting, and Retainment Practices school through the lens of equity, inclusion, and diversity, at the elementary, middle, and high school levels.

Proposals should include the following:

- Description of approach
- Estimated timeline
- Budget
- Brief vita outlining key qualifications
- Work samples from previous evaluations or audits
- References from former and/or current clients complete with contact information for each

Proposals, including the professional vitae of all external consultant(s), must be submitted to Dr. Charles R. Miller, Director of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment at cmiller@veronaschools.org, Verona Public Schools, 121 Fairview Avenue, Verona NJ 07922 by 3:30 p.m. by **January 21, 2021**.

The approximate timeline for this RFP Evaluation is as follows:

<i>RFP Dissemination</i>	<i>December 2021</i>
<i>Proposal Submission</i>	<i>January 2022</i>
<i>Contract Awarded</i>	<i>February 2022</i>
<i>Initial Meeting of External Teams</i>	<i>March 2022</i>
<i>Data Gathering</i>	<i>March 2022</i>
<i>Draft Report</i>	<i>March 2022</i>
<i>Presentation of Draft Report to DEI Committee</i>	<i>April 2022</i>
<i>Presentation to Board of Education</i>	<i>June 2022</i>

Additional information about the district may be obtained from the district web site at www.veronaschools.org.