

Town of Burlington Warrant September 30, 2020  
**Article #7 Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion**

***10 Frequently Asked Questions***

[1- Is this really a big problem?](#)

[2- Do we really need a new full-time position? Shouldn't we form a committee first to examine this issue and determine what we need?](#)

[3- Can a consultant be used instead?](#)

[4- Can the schools repurpose another position like an existing administrative or guidance counselor position to do this work?](#)

[5- Who supports this warrant article?](#)

[6- Hiring for this position seems premature; can we wait and see what other towns are doing and learn from them?](#)

[7- Can't the school department just include this in their 2022 budget?](#)

[8- Are there other funding sources we could use other than this request to the Town?](#)

[9- What about existing services? Will something have to be given up for this position?](#)

[10- Given concerns about financial management within the school department how do we know this will not contribute to budgetary waste or bloat?](#)

Question	Response
1- Is this really a big problem?	<p><b>Yes, it is.</b></p> <p>We know that people in Burlington care and want to make a difference.</p> <p>However, despite good intent, little has been done in Burlington since the first equity committee was established in 2013. There have been a number of public racist, anti-Muslim, and anti-Semitic incidents. Many more incidents have not received attention, or were never reported due to a perception that they would not be taken seriously and there would not be appropriate redress and accountability..</p> <p>We know that currently in our schools and community:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Racist language and behaviors are still often used to try and intimidate BIPOC (<i>Black, Indigenous, and other People of Color</i>) students and other marginalized groups.</li></ul>

Town of Burlington Warrant September 30, 2020  
**Article #7 Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion**

***10 Frequently Asked Questions***

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Teachers are asking for streamlined resources to address racial and other inequities. They report that they feel ill-equipped to support students when an incident happens; and ill-educated to make curriculum changes to better reflect the diversity of our history.<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ <a href="#">Teacher Letter</a></li><li>○ <a href="#">Union Letter</a></li></ul></li><li>● Schools lack protocols to handle and track racist incidents. We have received reports of dozens of racist incidents at all school levels (including after-school):<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ From several parents: “I met with the superintendent four years ago about [son being targeted for being Asian], and he basically laughed at me and said .. and that those things would never happen here [in Burlington].”</li></ul></li><li>● Administrators lack protocols to respond to national crises that result in inequity, such as COVID.</li><li>● Many BIPOC families do not feel listened to, affirmed and supported:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ “My teacher called me a terrorist. No adults heard him so nobody believed us.”</li><li>○ “I just feel like a dramatic change needs to take place. We keep saying the same things over and over like a cycle. Something happens. Everyone gets mad. A long investigation happens; they do something to appease us and it is swept under the rug.. Right now people are fed up with this cycle.”</li></ul></li><li>● Students are asking for more affinity groups and safe spaces to have hard conversations and practice equitable interactions.</li></ul>
--	-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Town of Burlington Warrant September 30, 2020  
**Article #7 Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion**

***10 Frequently Asked Questions***

<p>2- Do we really need a new full-time position? Shouldn't we form a committee first to examine this issue and determine what we need?</p>	<p>Various iterations of BPS equity committees and action plans have been in place since 2013. Little concrete action other than training has taken place and despite that, incidents are rising and students of color feel less safe than ever. To many of us, the issue is currently “dying by committee” because nobody is fully focused on it.</p> <p>Each version of the equity committee has recommended a dedicated person to focus on this. We know what we need to do - hire someone who can and will take action. Since the schools are unable to fit this within their mid-budget cycle, it is incumbent on us to support our community and make this happen as soon as possible by providing incremental funding for this position.</p> <p>History of Equity Efforts in BPS:</p> <p><a href="https://www.burlingtonagainstracism.com/dei-resource-center/a-history-of-equity-opinion">https://www.burlingtonagainstracism.com/dei-resource-center/a-history-of-equity-opinion</a></p>
<p>3- Can a consultant be used instead?</p>	<p>Consultants are expensive and have been used for focused, short-term engagements, like training or to deal with a specific incident or problem. In addition, consultants identify structural gaps (and have assisted with the <a href="#">District Equity Action Plan</a>); but do not remediate and hold leadership accountable for addressing them. Because they are short term positions, they are not responsible for ensuring that any of their recommendations are fulfilled.</p> <p>The Director will be a cost-effective way to implement and further iterate upon the District Equity Action Plan, including by providing unified guidance for navigating racial discussions, evaluating our curriculum so teachers can focus on teaching and supporting our students; and by streamlining incident response protocol and tracking.</p>
<p>4- Can the schools repurpose another position like an existing administrative or guidance counselor position to do this work?</p>	<p><b>No.</b></p> <p>Like Special Education, Equity &amp; Inclusion is best served by dedicated, appropriate experts in its field. We know students and staff are not comfortable seeking out help from existing administrators and staff who are not specially trained in this field and don't know how to handle incidents.</p> <p>In addition, currently teachers and administrators are trying to incorporate this work alongside their daily jobs. This leads to</p>

Town of Burlington Warrant September 30, 2020  
**Article #7 Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion**

***10 Frequently Asked Questions***

	<p>inconsistent strategies and results. These efforts are inefficient, disorganized and unresponsive to students' needs. It is an additional burden on teachers, and dependent on the individual teacher's priorities and ability to devote time to addressing these issues.</p> <p>The Director will be a cost-effective way to support teachers by providing unified guidance for navigating racial discussions, evaluation of curriculum so teachers can focus on teaching and supporting our students, providing incident response protocol and tracking.</p>
5- Who supports this warrant article?	<p>There is wide-spread community support for this position and the warrant, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Burlington Public Schools Equity Committee</li><li>• <a href="#">Support for this position has emerged over time from students and diversity focused working teams</a>. For example, in 2018 students who completed IDEAS (Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, Access) training recommended 5 action items; one was an explicit request for a Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion</li><li>• <a href="#">Open letter from community members (7-21-2020)</a> signed by nearly 150 people</li><li>• <a href="#">Burlington Education Association</a></li><li>• <a href="#">Burlington Educators</a></li><li>• <a href="#">Town Meeting Members</a></li><li>• Faith-based members of our community</li></ul> <p>The School Committee has affirmed support for a role to focus on this work.</p>
6- Hiring for this position seems premature; can we wait and see what other towns are doing and learn from them?	<p>Burlington has enjoyed the prestige of being an early adopter on so many issues, but is already behind in addressing race and equity issues, especially given our demographic make up.</p> <p>The pandemic has exacerbated the lack of resources and attention provided for BIPOC families resulting in last minute communications and adjustments and leaving our most vulnerable families as an afterthought. Survey data has confirmed that the administration was making decisions for our entire community without the input of BIPOC communities.</p> <p>This position has been requested for years, as detailed in <a href="#">this</a> article, by School Committee Member Martha Simon. Burlington is lagging behind other communities at addressing these issues and gaining a reputation for its lack of diversity and inclusion, which is resulting in</p>

Town of Burlington Warrant September 30, 2020  
**Article #7 Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion**

***10 Frequently Asked Questions***

	<p>prospective buyers choosing other communities to raise their families.</p> <p>Many nearby cities and towns in Massachusetts have attacked equity &amp; inclusion issues head-on. Examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Several communities have declared “Racism is a Public Health Crisis” (<a href="#">Boston</a>, <a href="#">Somerville</a>, <a href="#">Cambridge</a>, <a href="#">Everett</a>, <a href="#">Framingham</a>, <a href="#">Medford</a>, <a href="#">Revere</a>, <a href="#">Chelsea</a>, <a href="#">Beverly</a>, <a href="#">Springfield</a>)</li><li>• Massachusetts Teachers Association has declared “Racism is a Public Health Crisis”</li><li>• <a href="#">MA Partnership for Diversity in Education</a> comprises over 25 communities looking to close the achievement gaps within their schools. Burlington is not part of the list (Lexington, Woburn, Medford, Arlington, are among the 25)</li><li>• Many towns and communities have invested in Town-wide and/or school wide positions already including (Lexington, Arlington and Medford) that have systems in place that we can learn from and model after.</li><li>• Others communities are hiring, despite the pandemic and budgetary concerns and the competition for qualified candidates will continue to increase.</li></ul> <p>Learning how to communicate with community members who may not look like you, celebrate the same holidays, or worship the same way are life skills that our children need to learn now to be successful in today’s world and workplace .</p>
7-Can't the school department just include this in their 2022 budget?	<p>Absolutely, the schools should do this. However, this is not a new request. This is a recurring request included in the two prior fiscal years’ budget cycle; however, it never made it to the final budget plan.</p> <p><b>The recent events of 2020 make it clear this cannot be further delayed.</b> Students of color are less safe in our communities and schools than ever. We are at a historic moment in United States history and it is time to act.</p> <p>Local, State and National incidents of racism and hate crimes are on the rise. White supremacy groups are actively recruiting, including in Massachusetts.</p> <p>The pandemic has had a disproportionate impact on BIPOC and underserved communities. BIPOC communities are more likely to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Hourly / inflexible work schedules</li><li>• Suffer from job loss / instability</li><li>• Have lower income, less internet access,</li></ul>

Town of Burlington Warrant September 30, 2020  
**Article #7 Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion**

***10 Frequently Asked Questions***

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Participate in free/reduced lunch programs</li><li>• Utilize YMCA for after school</li><li>• Face increasing rates of discrimination due to pandemic</li><li>• Face additional obstacles for participation in the decision making processes</li><li>• Face larger transportation and bussing challenges</li><li>• Live in higher density, lower cost housing which increases exposure and transmission of Covid-19</li><li>• Speak additional languages</li></ul>
8- Are there other funding sources we could use other than this request to the Town?	Funding sources include the school budget, town meeting, public and private grants, and private donations. All of these are being explored.
9- What about existing services? Will something have be given up for this position?	<p>Available funds should continue to target the highest priority and impact areas. Diversity, equity and inclusion is clearly one of those highest priority areas and this is a critical hire that needs to be filled.</p> <p>The schools should explore in partnership with the community any required trade-offs required to budget neutrality, if required, for fiscal year 2022.</p>
10- Given concerns about financial management within the school department how do we know this will not contribute to budgetary waste or bloat?	<p>Our children are our future and have <a href="#">civil rights</a>. We need to invest in them and their safety.</p> <p>Burlington Public Schools has a <a href="#">legal</a> responsibility to provide a free, appropriate public education for all students. The person in this position will help BPS deliver education and related services more efficiently and effectively to all students in the district, especially those in marginalized communities.</p> <p>We are not trying to minimize other budgetary / responsibility concerns, including those exposed in recent years. In fact, we share many of those concerns. But this position should not be about the money. This is about doing the right thing for our kids and community. This is a small amount of money to do the right thing.</p>

Town of Burlington Warrant September 30, 2020  
**Article #7 Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion**

***10 Frequently Asked Questions***