

## **EDI Assessment Recommendations: 2021 efforts**

### **1. Issue a statement that explicitly recognizes historic racism in Evanston and commits the Library to social justice. (Completed)**

- The Evanston Public Library Board approved our Equity statement at the April 2020 board meeting. Please refer to [the statement](#) in both English and Spanish.

### **2. Invest in cultural competence development for EPL leadership and staff. (Ongoing)**

- Evanston Public Library participated in mandatory, yearlong training using the [Project Ready](#) curriculum that began in January 2020 and continued through 2021.
- In addition to Project Ready, Library staff attended numerous professional development workshops and seminars on EDI topics such as “Becoming a Trans Inclusive Library” from the University of Illinois, “We Know Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion are Important...Now What?” and “Creating Pathways to Civil Legal Justice” from WebJunction, and Racial Healing Circle training from the YWCA.
- Staff annual review goals reflect a commitment to completing EDI training and reviewing their work through an equity lens. EPL will be repeating Project Ready’s initial modules for new staff. Existing staff wishing reinforcement of the content may repeat modules and/or continue their learning through the study of additional modules.
- At the Robert Crown Branch, our Branch Assistant was selected to join RAILS’ EDI committee and is presenting on inclusive programming for its Reaching Forward Conference. Our Branch Assistant also participated in a YWCA workshop on Power, Privilege and Oppression, is a board member of Environmental Justice Evanston (EJE), and attends monthly meetings of a local White Anti-Racist Group.
- The Administrative team began working with the *Anew Collective* consulting group to build their racial literacy skills, consciousness, and capacity as a collective of leaders through an intersectional lens.

### **3. Develop a talent management plan that identifies goals for hiring, developing, and promoting people of color. (Ongoing)**

- Led by a bilingual Supervising Librarian, our Robert Crown branch library staff reflects and serves our diverse community in English and Spanish.
- Our recruitment efforts expanded to place job notifications with Illinois Library Association, American Library Association Black Caucus and REFORMA (Latinx Caucus) and locally with partners such as Cherry Preschool, Evanston Township High School, and Youth Job Center which serve our diverse students and families.
- BIPOC staff enrolled in accredited MLIS programs and participated in tuition reimbursement. Across the library profession, MLIS degree requirements are an often-cited barrier to equitable representation in leadership roles.
- Job descriptions have been rewritten to attract a more diverse pool of applicants.

- Two new Family Engagement Coordinator positions were staffed to connect with and foster deeper engagement with Evanston's Black and Latinx communities.
- We added a new paid intern position for the Citywide STEM challenge that is specifically for Black and Latinx young adults.

4. *Create a group focused on equity and race composed of Library staff and community members. (Ongoing)*

- The Racial Equity Task Force (RETF) comprises 8 community members, 2 library trustees, and is supported by 4 staff persons. The Task Force met monthly in 2021, advising the library on approaches to encouraging library cardholders to voluntarily share their race/ethnicity and language spoken at home with the Library.

5. *Create and use metrics to assess and adjust efforts in support of the Library's EDI values. (Ongoing)*

- Staff are discussing metrics that can be tracked that reflect improvement over time.
- In 2021, EPL worked with our computer consortium to customize our patron database and invite new library cardholders and those renewing their cards to voluntarily share their race/ethnicity/language spoken at home during the registration process. This data will be protected and used in aggregate to track our efforts to better serve our Black and Latine community members.
- The metrics program collectionHQ is used by the library for collections. In 2021, it introduced a way to evaluate DEI metrics. We can now see which items slated for removal fall into DEI categories (Black authors, Indigenous content, etc.) and can instead highlight them in displays so that they circulate. We are currently inputting additional information to make these DEI metrics as accurate as possible.

6. *Create an innovative approach to space and services in Fifth Ward. (Ongoing)*

- We continued discussions with groups seeking to redefine the future of the Family Focus facility.
- We continued to provide an electronic pop-up library at Fleetwood Jourdain Community Center.
- EPL has enhanced our presence in the 5<sup>th</sup> Ward through partnerships with Y.O.U., Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church, Evanston Own It, Fleetwood-Jourdain Community Center, Family Focus, Gibbs-Morrison Cultural Center, Freedom School, Teen Baby Nursery (IWSE), Home Daycare Provider Book Bag Delivery (4 daycare homes), YMCA Headstart, EvanSTEM, Connections for the Homeless, Over the Rainbow/Hill Apartments, Jacob Blake Manor, and Ebenezer Primm Tower.
- We provided Foster Seniors Group with hardware and training to support their virtual meetings during the pandemic.
- EPL staffed twice weekly (10 hours per week) office hours at Fleetwood Jourdain for assisting residents with their local reparations applications.

- Our 11 Community Listening sessions welcomed community members from all wards, though the highest representation was from the 5th ward. Residents from the 8th, 9th and 2nd wards were also well represented. We are centering the voices of our community members in our work and co-creating the future of the Library with our residents.

*7. Expand book collections that reflect the needs and interests of the Black and Latinx communities. (Ongoing)*

- EPL created the Collection Advisory Committee to advise and aid in the purchase of materials to better serve the Black community (<https://www.epl.org/announcing-the-collection-advisory-committee-of-evanston-public-library/>). On the advice of this committee we began purchasing materials from local Black-owned bookstore Semicolon. The committee also helped to select materials to give away at outdoor events over the summer.
- In 2018, we began to track book purchases of Black authors and subject matter. The total number of purchased titles (not number of copies) was 447. This did not include Urban and Romance titles. In 2019, we expanded to include those genres as well. In 2020, the number of purchased titles was 485. This in spite of a 35% budget decrease. In 2021, we began tracking Black, Latinx, Indigenous, and LGBTQIA+ titles purchased.
- The 101 Great Books for Kids 2021 list (<https://www.epl.org/announcing-evanston-public-librarys-101-great-books-for-kids-list-of-2021/>) was released in October 2021. This list exemplifies the wide diversity and variety of children's literature published that year.
- We conducted a diversity audit of the Adult Fiction section giving us a baseline to improve upon in the future.

*8. Continue supporting culture-specific engagement specialists. (Ongoing)*

- We recruited and hired a bilingual Supervising Librarian who is leading the diverse team at Robert Crown Branch Library. We also hired staff for two new Family Engagement positions serving our Black and Latinx families.

*9. Shift the focus of communications from the multitude of programs and services to engagement. (Ongoing)*

- We continued to work with the Racial Equity Task Force, and piloted new ways to communicate with Black and Latinx residents.
- Staff recorded episodes of The Checkout podcast, featuring the diverse spectrum of Evanston people living and/or working in Evanston and thereby giving voice to the community.

- Through a competitive grant and working with the Racial Equity Task Force, EPL is creating a series of videos to promote library materials and services to our Black and Latinx community.

10. *Embed EDI into the Library's ongoing communication strategy. (Ongoing)*

- Work of the Engagement team, marketing, and Executive Director focus upon deeper engagement with all Evanston residents especially the Black and Latinx community members.
- Continue to work with the Racial Equity Task Force and seek new ways to communicate with Black and Latinx residents.
- Strategic messaging revised to focus on and promote equitable access to literacy and other resources and equity in who, where and how we serve the community.
- In partnership with EvanSTEM and District 65, we focus marketing to and participation in STEM programs to BIPOC and female students.
- External communications extend broadly through the variety of channels available in Evanston, including those intended for and/or reaching Black and Latinx residents.
- Increased communications in Spanish, including a new Spanish-language newsletter with increased Spanish programming and content to feature and produce.