

Bishop O'Dowd
High School

EQUITY & BELONGING

STRATEGIC ROADMAP


BELONGING
BUILDING
BECOMING

DEAR DRAGON COMMUNITY,

At Bishop O'Dowd High School, our mission calls us to cultivate a community where every person is recognized as a beloved child of God, created with inherent dignity and gifted with unique talents. As we look toward the future of our school, we remain committed to strengthening a culture where all members of our community experience a deep sense of belonging, trust, and connection.

This commitment is especially meaningful as we enter a school year centered on the theme of Belonging. Belonging is more than a feeling; it is a reflection of our deepest values as a Catholic school community. It is the experience of being known, respected, welcomed, and valued for one's authentic self. When individuals experience belonging, they are better able to learn, contribute, grow, and flourish. Creating the conditions for that experience is a shared responsibility and a central expression of our mission.

Our charism of Finding God in All Things calls us to Community in Diversity, Strength of Character, Academic Excellence, Kinship with Creation, Social Justice, and Joy—providing both the foundation and inspiration for this work. Our charism challenges us to honor the dignity of every person and create a school community where every student, faculty member, staff member, and family can feel "seen, known, and loved."

Rooted in the Gospel and Catholic Social Teaching, and informed by the voices of students, faculty, staff, alumni, families, and trustees, this Equity and Belonging Strategic Roadmap reflects our community's shared aspirations and our commitment to continuous growth. Through surveys, listening sessions, and dialogue, we identified both areas of strength and opportunities to deepen trust, strengthen community, and ensure that all members of O'Dowd feel valued, supported, and empowered to contribute their gifts.

This roadmap is intended to guide our efforts over the next two years. It outlines key priorities and strategic actions that will help us advance equity and belonging across all aspects of school life while building upon the many ways these values are already lived out within our community. The work described here is not separate from our mission; it is an expression of our commitment to human dignity, justice, and the common good.

The work ahead belongs to all of us. Building a community of belonging requires humility, partnership, courage, and hope. It requires us to listen deeply, engage thoughtfully, and care for one another with compassion and respect. Together, we will continue striving to ensure that O'Dowd remains a place where every individual is welcomed, challenged, supported, and inspired to become the person God calls them to be.

Blessings,

Kim Walsh

PRESIDENT
BISHOP O'DOWD HIGH SCHOOL

CHARISM

COMMUNITY IN DIVERSITY

Recognizing the inherent dignity of all humans, attuned to the real-world experience of difference and the shared experience of being human.

STRENGTH OF CHARACTER

Integrity with self and others built on truth and expressed in loving action guided by an informed conscience.

ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

Purposeful pursuit of knowledge in a process of self-development and in service to the common good.

KINSHIP WITH CREATION

Responsible to stand in solidarity with the marginalized and to work for a more equitable society.

SOCIAL JUSTICE

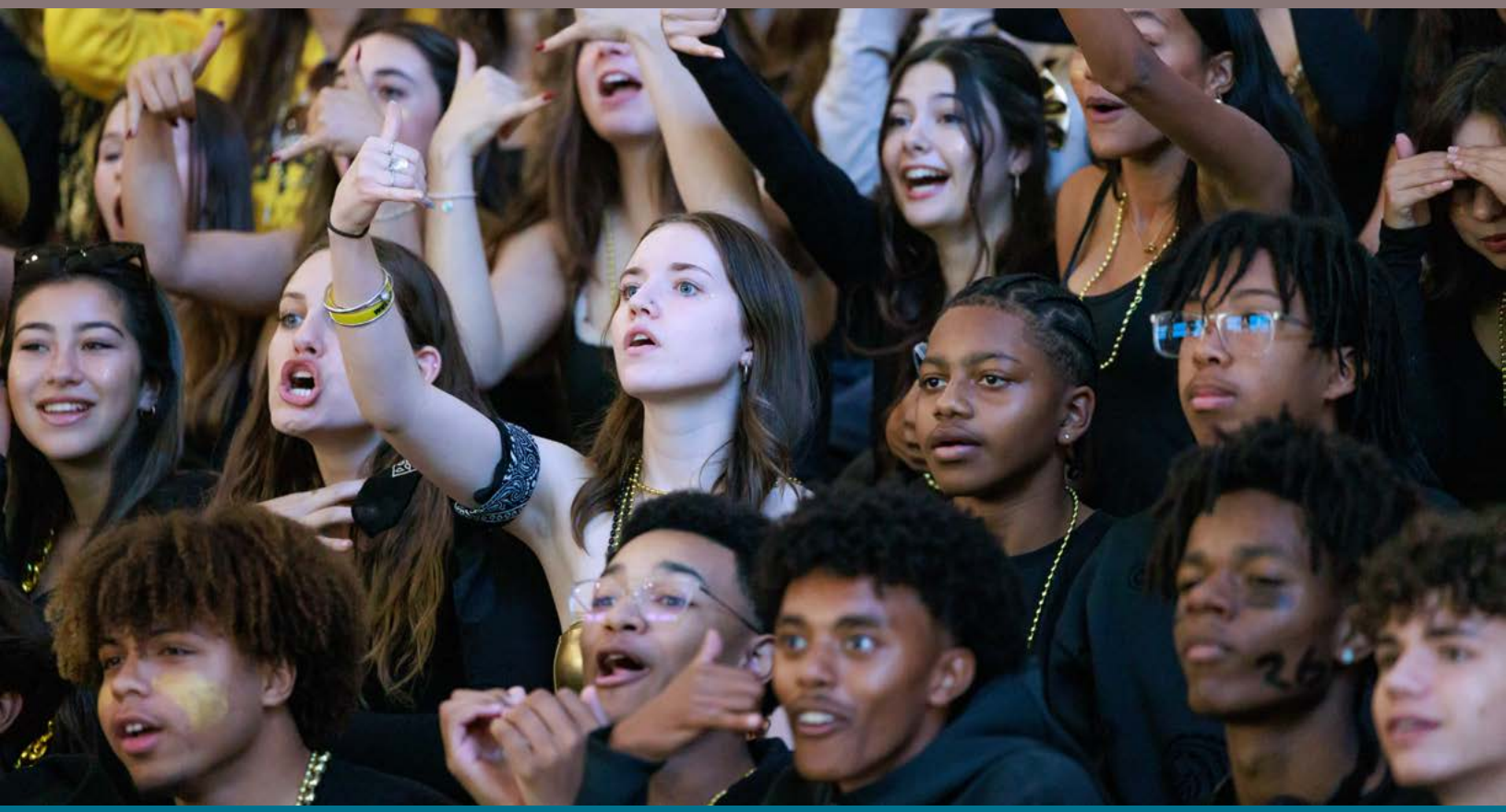
Practices that care for God's creation as a sign of our love for God and neighbor.

JOY

Passionate appreciation of the infinite love of God, of self, of others, and of the gift of life.

MISSION STATEMENT

Bishop O'Dowd High School is a Catholic, college preparatory community guided by the teachings of Jesus Christ that educates its diverse student body to build a more just, joyful, and sustainable world.



VISION STATEMENT

Guided by Catholic Social Teaching and our school charism, Bishop O'Dowd High School strives to be a community that serves the world with compassion and courage. Rooted in a shared commitment to diversity, equity, and social justice, we work together to ensure that all students and staff experience belonging through culturally responsive teaching and practices that honor the life and dignity of every person.

OUR JOURNEY TOWARD EQUITY & BELONGING

Bishop O'Dowd High School's commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging is built on a strong foundation of student-led and community-driven initiatives that have developed over many years. Prior to 2015, this work was reflected in long-standing traditions such as the Black Student Union (BSU) Assembly and Multicultural Week, which for more than two decades have celebrated the diversity of the O'Dowd community and elevated student voice.

Between 2015 and 2019, the school entered a period of intentional expansion. During this time, professional development opportunities focused on implicit bias and cultural competency were introduced, often led by external consultants. O'Dowd also began its annual participation in the People of Color Conference (POCC), while student-led initiatives such as the Bay Area Social Justice Teach-In and Dragon Talks became established parts of school life. In 2018, the school administered its first school-wide climate survey, initiated a review of hiring practices, and expanded curricular offerings, including the addition of a Black Nationalism elective course.

From 2019 through 2023, the school shifted from foundational learning to greater strategic integration. Key developments during this period included a second school-wide climate survey, and the establishment of a required number of DEI-focused professional development hours. In 2020, O'Dowd hired its first Director of Equity and Belonging and convened an Anti-Racism Task Force, resulting in a comprehensive Equity and Belonging Action Plan. This period also saw increased student and family engagement through the formation of racial affinity groups, the launch of a student bias reporting tool, and the piloting of the AP African American Studies course.

From 2024 to the present, Equity and Belonging work at O'Dowd has been shaped by a renewed emphasis on listening, coordination, and data-informed reflection. The Director of Equity and Belonging conducted comprehensive listening sessions across academic departments and student leadership groups to inform the development of this strategic plan. An Equity and Belonging Faculty Advisory Committee was established, and partnerships with external organizations—such as the Sogora-Te Land Trust—were formalized to strengthen curricular and community engagement. New policies and resources were also developed, including guidance related to ICE enforcement, election resources, and support for undocumented community members. Ongoing professional development for faculty, with a focus on cultural humility, continues to embed equity and belonging into the life of the school.

Together, these efforts reflect meaningful progress and deep investment across the community. At the same time, they also reveal an important opportunity: to more clearly name where equity and belonging work is already embedded, and to identify where disparities in experience and outcomes persist. This strategic roadmap builds on that history by offering a shared framework that both honors past work and sharpens our collective focus on impact—clarifying what success looks like and where continued growth is needed.

HOW THIS PLAN WAS DEVELOPED



LEARNING FROM THE 2021 EQUITY & BELONGING ACTION PLAN

The 2021 Equity and Belonging Action Plan represented an important step in formalizing O'Dowd's commitment to equity, belonging, and anti-racism. The plan outlined key focus areas and action steps intended to strengthen community engagement, instructional practice, hiring and retention, and equitable discipline.

A review of the 2021 plan shows meaningful progress in several areas, particularly in community engagement, policy development, and the creation of structures that support equity and belonging. It also highlights areas where efforts were uneven, where work occurred at the department or program level without a shared framework, and where intended outcomes were not fully realized.

Rather than serving as an endpoint, this review provides a snapshot of where the school has built momentum and where greater clarity, coordination, and accountability are needed. These learnings directly inform the strategic framework that follows.



CORE AREA OF FOCUS	SUMMARY OF PROGRESS (2021–2026)	KEY LEARNINGS	IMPLICATIONS FOR THE NEXT PHASE
BELONGING **Community, Trust & Shared Experience**	Strong progress in creating community-based opportunities for engagement and belonging, including affinity spaces, cultural events, student-led dialogue, and bias reporting structures. Equity and Belonging communications and visibility increased across the school community.	While participation and programming increased, data on how belonging is experienced across different student groups remains limited. Trust in reporting and follow-up varies, and feedback mechanisms have been inconsistently used.	Shift from measuring activity to understanding experience. Strengthen feedback loops, track patterns in incidents and responses, ensure belonging is experienced consistently across student populations, and conduct listening sessions.
BUILDING **Teaching, Learning & Student Support**	Department-level efforts in curriculum review, culturally responsive teaching, and academic support expanded, particularly in English and Religion. New courses and resources were introduced, and professional development opportunities increased.	Work occurred unevenly across departments, with limited school-wide coordination or shared benchmarks. Student outcomes were not consistently examined through an equity lens.	Establish clearer structures for curriculum reflection, instructional support, and coordination across departments. Move toward examining access, persistence, and outcomes to better understand where disparities remain.
BECOMING **Adult Formation, Leadership & Systems**	Policies, hiring protocols, and handbooks were updated to reflect equity and anti-bias commitments. Data collection related to hiring, retention, and discipline improved, and equity-focused professional development increased.	Systems exist, but accountability and leadership alignment are inconsistent. Data is collected but not always used to guide decision-making or improvement.	Clarify leadership roles and expectations related to equity and belonging. Strengthen feedback, leadership development, and data-informed decision-making to ensure systems produce equitable outcomes.

FROM BELONGING TO BECOMING: EQUITY & BELONGING AT O'DOWD

Equity and Belonging at O'Dowd is not confined to a single office, program, or initiative. It is expressed in how community is built and experienced, how students learn and are supported, and how adults lead, make decisions, and sustain the work over time.

The review of prior Equity and Belonging efforts makes clear that much of this work is already underway across the school. At the same time, it highlights the need for a clearer, shared framework—one that brings greater alignment and focus as we move from participation and activity toward more consistent, equitable outcomes.

This strategic plan organizes Equity and Belonging work along a developmental arc—from Belonging, to Building, to Becoming. Together, these interconnected dimensions offer a common language for understanding how the work is currently lived at O'Dowd, where progress has been made, and where continued growth and accountability are needed.



BELONGING: Community, Trust & Shared Experience

WHAT'S IN MOTION	WHAT WE'RE STRENGTHENING	WHAT PROGRESS LOOKS LIKE
» Affinity groups and identity-based student clubs » Community events and gatherings (e.g., Multicultural Week, Family Days, Shabbat Dinner) » Listening sessions and structured dialogue spaces » Bias reporting tools and response processes » Student leadership and advisory structures	» Move from offering spaces to ensuring belonging is experienced consistently across student groups » Strengthen trust in follow-through and leadership response to concerns » Better understand differences in experience across student populations » Align community-building efforts with data-informed reflection	» Climate and perception data show increased sense of belonging across student groups » Greater trust in reporting and response processes » Patterns in reported incidents inform proactive community supports » Students and adults report feeling heard, supported, and respected

BUILDING: Teaching, Learning & Student Support

WHAT'S IN MOTION	WHAT WE'RE STRENGTHENING	WHAT PROGRESS LOOKS LIKE
» Department-level curriculum reflection and revision » Culturally inclusive and responsive professional development for teachers » Academic support and wellness resources » Understanding the impact of AI on student learning » Growing attention to neurodiversity and student workload	» Examine access, persistence, and outcomes across student groups » Increase alignment across departments around workload, assessment, and expectations » Ensure academic supports reach students who need them most » Strengthen coordination among teaching, counseling, and academic support teams	» Reduced gaps in academic outcomes and course access » Increased use and demonstrated impact of academic support structures » Faculty report greater clarity and support around equitable teaching practices » Students report classrooms as inclusive, rigorous, and supportive



BECOMING: Adult Formation, Leadership & Systems

WHAT'S IN MOTION	WHAT WE'RE STRENGTHENING	WHAT PROGRESS LOOKS LIKE
» Equity-focused and Belonging-centered professional development » Equity and belonging advising in the hiring process » Clear expectations in employee and student handbooks » Faculty-wide leadership and coaching » Creation of an E&B data dashboard and regular data review	» Clarify leadership roles and responsibility for equity and belonging » Strengthen feedback, coaching, and accountability structures » Use data more consistently to inform decision-making and improvement » Align policies, practices, and outcomes across systems	» Leaders and faculty understand their role in advancing equity and belonging » Policies and practices consistently reflect stated values » Data is used regularly to assess systems and guide improvement » Equity and Belonging are embedded in decision-making, not treated as add-ons

TURNING FRAMEWORK INTO PRACTICE

Advancing Equity and Belonging at O'Dowd requires both sustained commitment and intentional pacing. Rather than attempting to address every priority at once, this strategic plan outlines a phased approach that builds capacity, deepens practice, and strengthens outcomes over time.

This approach recognizes that Equity and Belonging work is most effective when it is thoughtfully sequenced, responsive to community feedback, and supported by our entire O'Dowd community. While all three areas of focus remain active throughout the life of the plan, specific areas of emphasis will be prioritized during each phase to support meaningful and sustainable progress.





A PHASED APPROACH TO PROGRESS

2026–27: Building Adult Capacity and Shared Practice

The first phase of implementation has centered on adult formation, professional learning, and co-curricular engagement. During this year, emphasis has been placed on:

- Professional development and teacher support
- Strengthening an equity and belonging culture across the community
- Supporting co-curricular programs and community-based experiences
- Reinforcing leadership commitment and psychological safety

This phase has continued to support faculty, staff, and leaders with the tools, support, and shared understanding necessary to advance the work in classrooms and systems in subsequent years.

2027–28: Deepening Classroom Practice and Student Outcomes

Building on the foundation established in the first phase, the second year focuses more directly on teaching, learning, and student support, with particular attention to outcomes. Priority areas include:

- Equity in classroom practice and curriculum
- Psychological safety and trust-building, specifically for marginalized or underrepresented student populations
- Student support structures for all students, focused on wellness and belonging

This phase emphasizes examining student experience and outcomes more closely, strengthening coordination across departments, and addressing disparities in access and achievement.

Ongoing Commitments Across All Phases

While specific focus areas are emphasized each year, several commitments remain ongoing throughout the life of the plan, including:

» Leadership commitment and accountability

» Community engagement and belonging

» Restorative practices and student accountability

» Fostering a supportive and inclusive school culture

These ongoing efforts ensure continuity, responsiveness, and alignment across the three core areas of focus.

How This Framework Guides the Work

This phased approach provides a clear roadmap for moving forward—one that aligns daily practice with long-term goals, honors existing efforts, and creates space for reflection and adjustment along the way. It allows the school community to honor its charism value of Community in Diversity and focus deeply on this important work as it continues to evolve at Bishop O'Dowd.





ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We extend our sincere gratitude to the entire O'Dowd community for their thoughtful input, engagement, and support throughout the development of this Equity and Belonging Strategic Plan. This work was strengthened by the voices, experiences, and commitment of students, faculty, staff, and families who participated in listening sessions and offered feedback along the way.

We offer special thanks to the members of the Equity and Belonging Faculty Advisory Committee, the O'Dowd Parent Equity Network (OPEN), and Dragon Parents and Guardians (DPG) for their time, insight, and leadership in shaping this plan.

Equity and Belonging Faculty Advisory Committee

- **Earl (EJ) Walls '11,** English Teacher
- **Jonathan Angeles '08,** Director of Theater Tech
- **Julia Hollinger,** Academic Dean
- **Lauren Kruger,** Science Teacher
- **Michael Downs,** former Director of Justice and Kinship
- **Shannon Vanderpol,** Associate Principal for Community Life and Culture
- **Malik McCord,** Academic Support Liaison and Varsity Girls Basketball Coach
- **Nicole Elliott,** former Social Studies Teacher

Bishop O'Dowd High School

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