

**SCHOOL DISTRICT OF SOUTH ORANGE AND MAPLEWOOD NEW JERSEY
PUBLIC BOARD MEETING
March 21, 2022**

RESOLUTION 4281

FOR ACTION

SUBJECT: SOMSD Intentional Integration Year 2

WHEREAS, the School District of South Orange and Maplewood's (SOMSD) Board of Education, recognized that the demographics of the elementary schools in our school district did not consistently reflect the overall demographics of our community.

WHEREAS, the School District of South Orange and Maplewood's (SOMSD) Board of Education, approved the Superintendent's Intentional Integration Initiative (III) to move forward in June of 2020.

WHEREAS, the South Orange Maplewood School District (SOMSD) Board of Education, acknowledges the preponderance of scholarly research that supports the assertion that students who attend schools that are both racially and social economically integrated benefit in many ways (Century Foundation, 2019) including:

- Reduction of anxiety...
- Less likelihood to have racial biases;
- Enhanced leadership skills;
- Reduction of achievement gaps;
- Increased standardized test outcome averages;
- Increased likelihood to enroll in college;
- Decreased likelihood to drop out of school; and,
- Improved intellectual self-confidence (stamina).

WHEREAS, the School District of South Orange and Maplewood's (SOMSD) Board of Education, has directed the Administration to report out on year 1 of the III and to also bring forward consideration for its application to our middle school population, with a goal of continuing to foster school environments that reflect our communities diversity and demographics.

WHEREAS, the School District of South Orange and Maplewood's (SOMSD) Board of Education has had the opportunity to review the Year 1 report released publicly by the District in partnership with the Alves Group (Consultant) and have confirmed the success of the year 1 pilot.

WHEREAS, the School District of South Orange and Maplewood's (SOMSD) Board of Education, acknowledges that the Administration has had multiple public presentations on this important topic over the past 3 years both in-person and virtual.

WHEREAS, the School District of South Orange and Maplewood's (SOMSD) Board of Education, believes in the spirit of its moniker, '*a district that celebrates diversity*', and also reiterates the following beliefs that have been shared consistently throughout this process-

1. We believe that educating our children in schools that accurately reflect their communities will best prepare them for success as adults...
2. We believe that our students will benefit both academically and social-emotionally by being educated in diverse schools that closely mirror the demographics of their communities...
3. We believe that no singular school community (nor ethnicity) should bear the majority of the burden of this transition...
4. We believe that 'together,' we can create an intentional strategic plan of action, that can seamlessly complete this transition for our community in a thoughtful and effective way.

WHEREAS, the School District of South Orange and Maplewood's (SOMSD) Board of Education, condemns racism, prejudice, bigotry, intolerance and inequities both in our educational practices and the world as a whole.

WHEREAS, the School District of South Orange and Maplewood's (SOMSD) Board of Education, acknowledges and understands that change in school design and methodology can cause anxiety and angst for students, families and staff members.

WHEREAS, the School District of South Orange and Maplewood's (SOMSD) Board of Education, acknowledges the overwhelming community support received by the public during this process, which is in alignment to the recently shared research from Harvard University (Torres and Weissbourd, 2020).

WHEREAS, the School District of South Orange and Maplewood's (SOMSD) Board of Education, has a strong commitment to address the needs and concerns of our families and also acknowledges the major areas of concern expressed by our community regarding our Intentional Integration Initiative which include:

- Ensuring that students with Special Services are included in a meaningful and thoughtful manner that complies with best practices in educational pedagogy; and,
- Taking into consideration the need for a systemic pacing of our integration that ensures its success and reduces the potential mental health impact on students.

WHEREAS, the School District of South Orange and Maplewood's (SOMSD) Board of Education, based upon the success of year 1 of the III, believes that it is appropriate to move forward with further implementation of the III.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the School District of South Orange and Maplewood's (SOMSD) Board of Education, hereby approves the Superintendent of Schools' recommendation and directs the Administration to move forward with the year 2 of our Intentional Integration Initiative inclusive of rising kindergarteners and 6th graders for the Fall of 2022.