

Pittsford Central School District hires coordinator of equity and inclusivity

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Rochester Democrat and Chronicle USA TODAY NETWORK

The Pittsford Central School District revealed Monday that it's hired Vincent I. French for the newly created position of coordinator of equity and inclusivity.

He starts the job, which pays \$85,000 annually, on Nov. 15.

His focus will be on working with students, teachers and administrators "to further promote the District's diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives," Superintendent Michael Pero said in an announcement shared on social media.

"The District has been looking to add an Equity and Inclusivity Coordinator for a couple of years," Pero wrote in an emailed statement. "During the 2021 Summer Leadership Workshop, the goal of adding an Equity and Inclusivity Coordinator was defined along with many other equity goals."

French will join Pittsford from the Rochester City School District, where he is a teacher on special assignment at Edison Career and Technology High School on Colefax Street at Lexington Avenue in the northwest part of the city. "In this position he is responsible for supporting students and families using restorative practices as well as a variety of other administrative tasks," according to the district's announcement.

French also taught eighth grade English at Roberto Clemente School No. 8 on St. Paul Street at Avenue in A in northeast Rochester.

He is the co-founder and program director of Building Better Foundations, which helps at-risk youth develop problem-solving and communication skills and offers them academic support.

Previously, he served as the dean of culture at Equality Charter Middle School in the Bronx. At the School for International Studies in Brooklyn, he was the community assistant, working with students and parents on personal, social and academic concerns.

His duties in Pittsford, where Black students make up 3% of the enrollment, will include planning, leading and supporting best restorative practices; professional staff development in equitable and inclusive instructional practices; and helping to recruit and retain a diverse faculty and staff and choose curriculum that supports "all students' growth and opportunities to learn," according to the announcement. French earned a bachelor's degree in English and a certificate of advanced study in educational leadership from SUNY Brockport and a master of arts in teaching in secondary English from SUNY Empire College.

His hire comes amid allegations of racism at Pittsford schools, most recently at two soccer games. The Pittsford and Greece districts came to different conclusions about whether Pittsford soccer players or fans used racist slurs against Black opponents at the games held in late September.

Those incidents came on the heels of two others: a video in which a Pittsford student brandished an air-soft gun and threatened to kill Black people, using a slur to describe them, and a group text message where middle school students joked about reenslaving Black people.

On Sept. 29, hundreds of Pittsford high school students walked out of school to protest what they called an inadequate administration response to racist incidents in the district, Monroe County's wealthiest.

The district also made news in April over a worksheet distributed to students at Jefferson Road Elementary School that suggested enslaved Africans voluntarily came to America as part of an employment contract. At

that time, Pero called the worksheet inaccurate and “highly insensitive in tone” and added that the district was taking steps in response to its use, including reteaching the unit and apologizing to parents.

The same worksheet has been used nationwide, including in Webster, where parents complained, triggering an apology from that district.

On Oct. 29, in a letter to parents, Pero said The New York Times was working on a story about racism in America, “including recent events in our community,” and that a reporter had interviewed him, students, parents and current and then-prospective Town Board members.

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French

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