

BOARD BRIEF

Date: March 8, 2019

For ACTION _____

For INFORMATION X_____

Board Agenda: Yes ___

No X_____

FROM: Julie A. Crawford, Ed.D., Chief Student Services Officer

THROUGH: Gregory C. Hutchings, Jr., Ed.D., Superintendent of Schools

TO: The Honorable Cindy M. Anderson, Chair, and
Members of the Alexandria City School Board

TOPIC: Update on Equity Activities

SUMMARY: Equity is heavily embedded in the ACPS 2020 Strategic Plan and is planned to be the foundation for the new strategic plan. The Department of Student Services, Alternative Programs and Equity (DSSAPE) is committed to creating and sustaining equitable policies and practices in each school and department. This brief provides a review of the ACPS equity work and offers an update on the work moving forward.

BACKGROUND: ACPS joined the Minority Student Achievement Network (MSAN) in 2012. The vision for eliminating disparities in achievement to date is grounded in the MSAN Statement of Purpose [MSAN Statement of Purpose](#). Equity involves providing access to and opportunity for each student. Equity and equality are not the same. Equality involves treating every student the same way. Equity focuses on nurturing the talents and gifts of individual children in order to address disparities illuminated by data. Equality is the goal for all children and focuses on the collective.

Achieving learning spaces for adults and students that affirm, nurture and build on pre-existing strengths begins with looking at old problems in new ways. Disparate outcomes for students and staff based on race and other areas of oppression are the result of longstanding implicit and explicit systems. Rather than blaming students, parents and communities for educational outcomes, ACPS is more likely to reduce educational inequities when focusing on structures and systems which staff can control.

District-wide equity requires School Board members, the Senior Leadership Team and school based leaders to use their clearly defined roles to lead, model cultural competency, create equitable policies and practices and [assess the impact](#) of each. Self-awareness and responding to student voice are critical to achieving equitable schools.

In the school year 2015-16, the Department of Student Services, Alternative Programs and Equity (DSSAPE) initiated an equity audit across schools in order to recognize areas of strength and opportunities for growth. Information gained from an equity audit is useful for uncovering biases and inequities; responding in the immediate term; creating long-term strategies and finding ways to create and sustain bias-free and equitable learning environments ([Gorski, 2016](#)). The results of the 2015-16 equity audit informed the first level of professional development for ACPS staff. Topics identified through the equity audit findings became the focus of professional

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development sessions. Between 2016 and 2018, professional development provided a consistent message across all internal stakeholder groups. Professional learning is focused on awareness, knowledge and skills.

Timeline of Selected Activities

2015-2016

- Implemented the ACPS 2020 Strategic Plan
- Conducted district level equity audit
- Started Equity Team comprised of central office and school staff members across levels
- Began offering professional learning (PL) on selected topics
- Joined Alexandria City's Equity in Alexandria
- Shared best practices and resources in culturally responsive education and equity (ex: MSAN Minute)
- Supported the work of Alexandria's MSAN students
- Provided consultation and technical assistance to schools and departments upon request

2016-2017*

- Began School Board and Administrator Equity Conversations Level-1
- Expanded PL offerings for staff
- Provided targeted PL for schools and departments as requested by administrator
- Refined the role of the Equity Team

2017-2018*

- Designed and facilitated Administrator Equity Conversations Level-2
- Piloted equity conversations in schools
- Added additional PL for staff

2018-2019*

- Supporting Dr. Hutchings' First 100 Days & Listening and Learning Tour
- Continuing Administrator Equity Conversations Level-3
- Preparing administrators for conducting equity audits
- Conducting equity audits at schools
- Expanding PL offerings for staff
- Collaborating with Equity Alexandria for the City of Alexandria to become a member of the Government Alliance on Racial Equality (GARE)

Anticipated 2019-2020 activities

- Support the development of the 2020-2025 Strategic Plan
- Resume Equity Conversations with School Board members
- Institute ACPS Equity Conversations in all schools
- Design equity audit protocols for departments
- Continuing Administrator Equity Conversations Level-3

* Represents additions to previous activities and offerings.

The DSSAPE will monitor progress with a variety of evaluation tools. Accountability measures include, but are not limited to, school and department improvement plans, equity audits, focus group input, walkthrough data and survey results (e.g. TELL). Using the information from the accountability measures, the DSSAPE will collaborate with schools and departments to develop

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a five-year Equity Implementation Plan. This process will coincide with the development of the new strategic plan and will also inform the direction of future equity work.

RECOMMENDATION: The Superintendent recommends the School Board review information in preparation for upcoming training on equity conversations.

IMPACT: By reviewing updated information on equity, the School Board continues its commitment to ensuring the provision of equitable services to ACPS students and staff by providing an inclusive and responsive learning environment.

CONTACT: Dr. Julie A. Crawford, 703-619-8034