

BOARD BRIEF

Date: September 27, 2019
For INFORMATION:

Upcoming Board Agenda:
Yes
No

Agenda Date: 10/10/2019

FROM: Julie A. Crawford, Ed.D., Chief Student Services Officer
Kennetra N. Wood, Director, Alternative Programs and Equity
Cheryl Robinson, Coordinator, Cultural Competence

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

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

TOPIC: Update on Equity Activities

ACPS 2020 STRATEGIC PLAN GOAL:

Goal 1: Academic Excellence and Educational Equity

SY 2019-2020 FOCUS AREA:

Focus Area 1: Educational Equity

FY 2020 BUDGET PRIORITY:

Leadership and Professional Development

SUMMARY:

Equity is heavily embedded in the ACPS 2020 Strategic Plan and is planned to be the foundation for the new strategic plan, ACPS 2025. 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 an update on the equity work since March, 2019 and moving into the school year 2019-2020.

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](#). Alexandria City Public Schools' equity work involves creating policies and processes that ensure fair and impartial access to opportunities 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 the racial disparities illuminated by data. Equality is the goal for all children and focuses on the collective. Both equity and equality require vigilance and intentionality with respect to policies, practices and procedures. Equity and equality should be considered polarities. Given the

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historical legacy that influences educational outcomes for students, equity is required in order to achieve equality.

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 based on race and other areas of oppression are the result of longstanding implicit and explicit systems. ACPS is focused on reducing educational inequalities by concentrating on structures and systems which staff can control.

District-wide equity work requires internal stakeholders to:

1. Recognize the influence of their cultural worldview in interactions with others
2. Develop an openness towards cultural difference
3. Acknowledge different cultural practices and worldviews
4. Model cross cultural skills

School Board members, central office and school-based leaders can use their defined roles to lead, model, create and assess equitable policies and practices. Self-awareness and responding to student voice are critical to achieving equitable schools. 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](#)).

Timeline of Selected Activities

March-July 2019

- Completed Administrator Equity Conversations Level-3
 - Prepared administrators for conducting equity audits
- Conducted an equity audit for students in grades 3-12 and school-based instructional staff
- Expanded professional learning offerings for staff
- Collaborated with Equity Alexandria for the City of Alexandria to become a member of the Government Alliance on Racial Equality (GARE)

2019-2020

- Conducted an equity day at the 2019 Leadership Academy
- Participating in the development of the 2025 Strategic Plan
- Analyzing the baseline equity audit data
- Preparing for Spring 2020 equity audit
 - Drafting a request for information for equity audit to include use of focus groups and expansion to all students, staff and families
- Resuming equity education with School Board members
- Providing monthly equity-focused training for Samuel Tucker, James K. Polk and George Mason Elementary Schools
- Continuing to provide equity training sessions for school and central office administrators at each principal and assistant principal meeting with a focus on facilitation skills

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- Preparing a new three-year district-wide Professional Learning Plan as a guide for expanding equity work beyond administration to building level staff.
- Participating with the City of Alexandria in the Government Alliance on Race & Equity-DMV Cohort (GARE)
- Supporting inter-government organizations
- Providing professional learning focusing on areas of intersectionality and culturally responsive teaching strategies focused session for ACPS staff

The DSSAPE is monitoring progress with a variety of evaluation tools. Accountability measures include, but are not limited to, school and department improvement plans, current ACPS 2020 key performance indicators, 2019 equity audit findings, Family Engagement Evaluation results (including survey and focus group data), and the ACPS 2025 strategic plan (including survey and focus group data).

RECOMMENDATION:

The Superintendent recommends the School Board review information in preparation for the upcoming presentation on October 10, 2019.

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