



**STATE COLLEGE AREA
SCHOOL DISTRICT**

STUDENT SERVICES

240 Villa Crest Drive • State College, Pennsylvania • 16801

Telephone: 814-231-1054 • Fax: 814-231-4103

TO: Dr. Robert O'Donnell

FROM: Dr. Seria Chatters

DATE: February 1, 2019

RE: Equity and Inclusivity Update

Led by the Director of Equity and Inclusivity, we have been working with the SCASD community during the 2018-2019 school year to implement the School Climate and Inclusive Excellence Policy and further SCASD's effort to become a leader in the K-12 sector in equity and inclusion efforts. SCASD believes that our efforts to implement the School Climate and Inclusive Excellence Policy include improving outcomes related. We will provide an update regarding our efforts in the aforementioned areas at a future meeting.

Over the past six months, we have worked diligently to build and foster new relationships, and deepen existing relationships within the SCASD community and with the community at large. Below is a brief update regarding the efforts by the Inclusive Excellence Committee, district-wide efforts, and our interfacing efforts with students, parents, faculty, staff, and the community.

At an upcoming Board meeting, we will return with a specific update about our district's efforts regarding bullying prevention, peer victimization, and mental health and wellness. We also will provide an update on how the below strategic planning work will develop strategies and action plans.

New District-wide Initiatives

Inclusive Excellence Committee

The Director of Equity and Inclusivity has transitioned into the role of Chair of the Inclusive Excellence Committee (IEC). In the second meeting of the year, the IEC created workgroups focused on the following issues: LGBTQ and gender equity, disability, race and marginalized populations, international and immigration, professional development for cultural competency, student voice, parents as advocates, and religious and spirituality. Each of these workgroups include students, teachers, parents, and district administrators. Each group will focus on establishing goals and strategies to support the implementation of the Inclusive Excellence Policy as it applies to improving student experiences pertaining to respective workgroup issues. Two workgroups, LGBT and Gender Equity Issues and Race and Marginalized Populations, have been formed and are in the process of establishing the first meeting date. These workgroup developments aim to elevate the voice of underrepresented groups to the district level.

Equity Advocates

The Director of Equity and Inclusivity collaborated with administrators, teachers, and the community to identify Equity Advocates in each school. To date, 22 teachers and support staff have been identified. The role of Equity Advocates is to promote the advancement of equity, diversity, and inclusivity within their SCASD school. There will be at least two Equity Advocates at each school. The advocate will work directly with the Office of Equity and Inclusivity to support specific E&I initiatives throughout SCASD, in addition to providing recommendations that address site specific E&I issues. The Equity Advocate will act as the school's representative on the district-wide Equity Council. Equity Advocates will be trained in Restorative Practices, culturally responsive practices, and additional professional development efforts as needed.

Developing an Equity & Inclusivity Strategic Plan

SCASD aims to develop an Equity and Inclusivity Strategic Planning Team. The aim is to develop a plan, grounded in the District Strategic Plan, that will strive to eliminate “class and race as predictors of student success” and “bullying and peer victimization in our schools.” In the early planning stages, SCASD is working collaboratively with Dr. Daniel

Newhart, Assistant Vice Provost of Planning at Penn State University, University Park, to embark upon the following steps: 1) Set initial strategy meetings with district administration, 2) Schedule initial meeting with SCASD Equity and Inclusivity Strategic Planning Team, 3) Develop an outline of the Equity Strategic Plan; and 4) Develop structure to gain community input. SCASD has gathered examples of Equity and Inclusivity Strategic Plans from other school districts in Pennsylvania to use for reference.

Book Club and Book Studies

As SCASD focuses on equity and cultural competence, two of the first steps toward cultural competence are awareness and knowledge. Two book clubs have been developed to provide topic-specific information for employees, parents, and community members. Every semester, the book club will focus on a different dimension of diversity. From January to June, SCASD will focus on race as the first dimension of diversity. The initial book titles are ‘So You Want to Talk About Race’ by Ijeoma Oluo and “Why Are All of the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?” by Dr. Beverly Tatum. The book clubs will meet once a month during the school year. SCASD is working on ways to allow book club members to interact with one another between meetings using Canvas to increase learning opportunities.

SCASD administrators are taking part in a book study. Elementary principals and SCASD directors are reading “Waking Up White and Finding Myself in the Story of Race” by Debby Irving. Secondary administrators have selected “White Fragility” by Robin DiAngelo.

Fostering a Climate that Celebrates Diversity and Social Justice

Dr. Chatters brought a team of teachers together who had similar interests in developing courses focused on topics related to diversity, social justice, and civil rights. Jacqueline Saylor, Coordinator of Social Studies, has been working with Drs. Efraim Marimon and Ashley Patterson from Penn State, and a team of teachers from Delta, Virginia Squier and Lorraine McGarry, to develop a course titled Diversity and Social Justice at State High and a middle and high school level course focused on civil rights and discourse.

Social Justice Summer Institute. In collaboration with the Penn State College of Education, SCASD is developing a week-long summer institute/program to train a select group of students as peer advocates within State High and Delta High School. Students who are accepted into the institute will receive training in a variety of areas and will apply their training in order to work as peer advocates throughout the following school year. Topics

covered throughout the program include: cross-cultural competence, basic counseling skills, public speaking and facilitation skills, leadership development and etiquette, and professionalism. We will accept 30 students (10 from each grade level beginning with sophomores) as peer advocates for the summer institute and following school year.

Students who participate in the summer institute will be identified as peer advocates during the fall and spring semesters, and will be expected to support fellow students in the following ways:

- Point of contact for students who need assistance in addressing interpersonal issues with fellow students and teachers/staff
- Educate peers on matters related to culture, identity, equity, and social justice
- Liaison for teachers/administrators and peers in resolving challenging issues
- Provide support and advocacy for students struggling with various issues within the academic environment
- Conduct selves as a leader and representative of the school in public and private sectors.

Teaching Tolerance Professional Development Day. In collaboration with Penn State College of Education's Office of Multicultural Affairs, SCASD Social Studies and English departments will participate in a day-long professional development workshop in which they will learn about K-12 national anchor standards in identity, diversity, justice, and action developed by Teaching Tolerance. Teachers will be able to bring sample lessons and learn how to use the anchor standards to implement the anti-bias framework.

Supporting Established District-Wide Initiatives:

SecondStep: Dr. Chatters identified lessons developed by the Human Rights Campaign's Welcoming Schools Curriculum that emphasizes teaching elementary students about identity and family diversity. School counselors started implementing these lessons in K-5 classrooms across the district and have indicated that students are learning more about their identity and that it is OK to be different.

Restorative Practices: There is emerging research supporting the use of Restorative Practices as a vehicle to foster equitable outcomes in school settings. Dr. Chatters has completed her training in Restorative Practices, Circles, and Conferences. She will complete her Train-the Trainer workshop in late March. As she continues to learn more about

Restorative Practices, she will work closely with Jeanne Knouse, Director of Student Services, to assist in the implementation of Restorative Practices district-wide.

Building Relationships with Faculty, Staff, Students, and Parents

Student organization meetings: Dr. Chatters has visited student organization meetings at the middle and high schools. She will continue to seek opportunities to meet and connect with students.

One-on-one meetings: Dr. Chatters has set regular meetings with district administrators. Dr. Chatters has also met with many parents, students, teachers, and staff one-on-one. Dr. Chatters will continue these one-on-one meetings to build and deepen relationships.

Building Relationships with Penn State and the Community

Dr. Chatters has been invited to regularly attend meetings of Community and Campus in Unity and the Community Diversity Group. SCASD continues to be a business partner of Community Diversity Group. Dr. Chatters also attends Penn State's Child Development Centers' Diversity Committee.

She also continues to work toward developing partnerships with Penn State with collaborations with Penn State College of Education's Office of Multicultural Affairs, the Center for Education and Civil Rights and Penn State's Immigration Law Clinic.