Next Steps in the Ann Arbor Public Schools

Friday, June 17, 2022

Introduction from the Superintendent

Hello AAPS Community,

In the Ann Arbor Public Schools, we recognize that the perceptions and understandings of some members of the AAPS community reveal that a racially challenging school and district environment exists. This experience is true for some students, staff, families and community members, and this reality represents a continued and significant challenge in our work to move forward.

Effective learning and work can only occur in environments where all are welcomed, embraced and celebrated for exactly who they are, and trusting relationships are cultivated. Establishing clearly defined systems to address issues when they arise in schools is a priority to ensure that there are clear systems of care, responsibility and accountability.

In the AAPS, we are dedicated to excellence in all we say and do. With a deep commitment to equity and inclusion, we recognize the firsthand experience of those marginalized among us. We will meet these challenges through actualizing the equity work we have engaged in over the previous years, in particular the last two years, and in additional next steps we will incorporate beginning with the 2022-2023 school year.

Members of our AAPS team are committed to the work for social justice and we are making progress, growing as individuals, as teams and across our system. While the information included in this next steps document does not represent an exhaustive list, we are working with intention and focus on key areas. We will continue to deepen our resolve and commitment to this work, receiving input throughout the process as we move forward together. Today we spotlight our work in the AAPS Next Steps Plan.

Sincerely,

Jeanice K. Swift
Superintendent of Schools
Ann Arbor Public Schools
Ann Arbor Public Schools
Areas of the AAPS Equity Work

~ STUDENTS ~

**Systems - Leadership - Culture - Classroom - Family & Community**

AAPS Next Steps Plan
2022-23

1) **Ensure Student, Family and Community Empowerment**

Ensure engagement structures are in place in every school to hear traditionally marginalized voices with the intention of using input to inform final development and implementation of AAPS Strategic Equity Plan.

   A. **Student Equity Advisory Group**

   B. **Engage in an ongoing Community Conversation**
   
   Participate in community listening sessions

   C. **Community Equity Advisory Group**
   
   To include:
   
   - a representative from each of the Board approved parent advisory groups,
   - a representative from community centers,
   - representatives from teachers, support staff, and school leadership, and
   - representatives from the AAPS Student Equity Advisory Group

   D. **District Advisory Group**

2) **Implement and align a central System for Reporting racial concerns**

Implement a Central Reporting and Accountability Process for Reporting Racial Concerns

   A. **Implement a central reporting and accountability process**
   
   Across all schools and all locations in the AAPS

   B. **Clarify steps when there is a violation of equity practice**

   C. **Communicate the central reporting and other support systems widely**
3) **Transform Culture**

Ensure All on AAPS Team are Developed for Engaging in Equity-Centered Mindset and Effective Practices

**A. Center and empower students**
Understand that responsive teaching & learning requires us to center students and continuously expand and shift our practices and methods to empower students intellectually, socially and emotionally, by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes (Gloria Ladson-Billings, 1994). Resource - https://www.cde.ca.gov/pd/ee/culturallysustainingped.asp, based on work of Dr. Paris.

**B. Deepen AAPS practice**
Move from just having a diverse and equitable environment to one of affirmation and belonging. Clarify our expectations of each other and commitments to one another related to diversity to assure equitable, inclusive school environments where all students have a deep sense of belonging.

**C. Develop and ensure a well-trained AAPS team.**
We will consistently and continuously develop ourselves and our team to overcome bias and sharpen our equity lens and mindset.

4) **Transform Classroom, School and Leadership Practices for Equity:**
Take intentional actions to create a learning community free of barriers, biases and disproportionality.

**Instructional Mindset**

**A. Center and empower students in their learning**
Understand that responsive teaching and learning requires us to center students and continuously expand and shift our practices and methods to empower students intellectually, socially, emotionally and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes (Gloria Ladson-Billings, 1994).

**B. Recognize biases and one’s own positionality**
Recognize biases and ways of viewing and coding student capacity and behavior that create barriers and prevent students from bringing their full and authentic selves into the learning environment. This includes understanding one’s own positionality and implicit bias, as well as implicit and explicit messages communicated by curriculum, colleagues and other sources.
C. **Recognize systemic racism in privilege and oppression**

Understand the systemic role that racism plays in privilege and oppression, and the ways racism impacts the agency and identity of our students. Commit to unlearning practices that oppress and replace them with practices that empower.

D. **Understand the importance of authentic relationships**

Understand the importance of authentic relationships, and social-emotional connections to students within a safe space for learning (Hammond, 2014).

**Instructional Practice**

E. **Develop relationships with students and families**

- Build climates of trust
- Affirm and celebrate students’ identities and cultures
- Recognize, search for, and name funds of knowledge that students bring to the learning environment
- Know students as multifaceted individuals

F. **Enact equitable instructional practices that support the actualization of the Framework for Equitable Instruction 2.0**

- Design learning experiences that provide students with multiple ways to engage, multiple representations of information, and multiple means for expressing/demonstrating learning.
- Plan for learning experiences that regularly and intentionally include criticality, linking learning with active steps so that students can apply their learning in ways that respond to injustice (such as racism, ableism, xenophobia, environmental concerns, etc.) (Muhammad, 2020) Take intentional actions to create a learning community free of barriers, biases, and disproportionality.
- Maximize engagement with a blended learning experience that includes collaboration, differentiation, inquiry, and varied opportunities for rich discourse.
- Facilitate learning activities that include linguistic and academic accommodations to meet the needs of ALL students.
- Create regular opportunities to experience joy.

*To see more information about the work on Mindset and Instructional Practice, please see the [Framework for Equitable Instruction 2.0](#)*
5) **Use community input and feedback from students, staff and community engagement to inform the final development and implementation of the AAPS Strategic Equity Plan.**

6) **Ensure richly diverse curricula**
   Affirm curricula are designed and actualized with student interests, cultures and identities at the center.
   
   **A. Reshape curricula**
   - Cultivate information about students and families’ identities and cultures from students and families themselves
   - Design diverse, culturally-affirming resources and learning activities that use the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students
   - Make learning resources more relevant and representative of students and their families

   **B. Audit curricula**
   - Understand that stereotypical and/or other limited representations of our students can communicate “a single story” that is harmful
   - Apply curriculum auditing tools such as the Education Justice Assessment Transformation Tool to ensure our curriculum is representative of and responsive to the students and families we serve

   **For more about our district commitment to ensure a richly diverse curricula, see please see the Framework for Equitable Instruction 2.0**

7) **Ensure Diverse Staff and Faculty Representation across AAPS Team**
   We will ensure an increasingly diverse representation among AAPS Teaching, Support Staff, and Leaders at every school.
   
   **A. Recruit**
   Continue efforts to recruit & hire a diverse staff by increasing our partnerships with historically black colleges & universities, fraternities and sororities and organizations from those universities that are close in proximity that support students of color in their professional growth & career path.

   **B. Support & Retain**
   Ensure that the proper supports are in place for staff to be successful through a lens of equity. Provide opportunities for staff to share needed improvements, provide training
and make every effort to retain staff by ensuring a more inclusive environment through our programs and activities.

C. Engage & Elevate
Increase the scope of our “Grow your Own Program” by offering more candidates of color an opportunity to participate. Also, increase the reach to include those students of color who may be interested in teaching opportunities in the future. This will create a larger pipeline of internal candidates to interview for our open positions, also giving an opportunity for the district to engage with more staff and support those looking to elevate into other roles.

Organizational Values for Equity

A. Recognize biases and one’s own positionality
Recognize biases and ways of eliminating barriers that prevent students from bringing their full and authentic selves into the learning environment. This includes understanding one’s own positionality and implicit bias, as well as implicit and explicit messages communicated by curriculum, colleagues and other sources.

B. Understand the importance of authentic relationships
Understand the importance of authentic relationships, and social-emotional connections to students within a safe space for learning (Hammond, 2014).