

Intercultural Advisory Council Report to the Board of Education 2005

Staff Liaison: Peggy Harris

Charge:

"The Intercultural Advisory Committee shall:

- Provide input on district and school site efforts to facilitate the building of bridges of understanding between diverse student and parent populations so that all groups feel connected to, and part of, the school community;
- Serve as a vehicle for parents, students and community to communicate with the Board of Education on matters related to the successful participation in the educational process of students and parents who come from a myriad of socioeconomic, ethnic, cultural and linguistic backgrounds;
- Serve as coordinating/steering body to which other board appointed groups have representation that provides the opportunity for discussion, analysis, and recommendation on issues pertaining to the success of all students;
- Monitor and assist in the implementation of recommendations made by the Minority Student Study Committee;
- Assist the District in ensuring that curricular, instructional, and assessment practices used in the schools meet the needs of the diverse student population at each school site;
- Provide a forum for the articulation of ideas and activities being implemented at district, school sites, and greater community that are successfully meeting the needs of our diverse student body and parent population;
- Provide periodic reports to the Board."

Accomplishments This Year:

In June 2002, the Board of Education adopted a multi-year strategic plan that was developed to "...lay the foundation on which the District would build during the next five years." One of the seven initiatives contained in the Plan is Equity and Equality for Education. This initiative focuses on promoting and supporting high levels of achievement of "...all students, especially those of low socio-economic status, students of color, students with disabilities, and other students who have historically experienced marginalization."

The focus of the Equity and Equality for Education Initiative is at the center of the work of the Intercultural Advisory Council. Therefore, in order to ensure that this year's Council's report would provide the Board with meaningful information, the Council sponsored a forum to receive feedback from parents from across the District on the implementation of the Equity and Equality for Education Initiative.

In March, approximately seventy-five parents of elementary, middle and high school students from across the District, participated in a two and a half hour session facilitated by District staff. Sessions in Spanish and English were held simultaneously to receive feedback from representatives of the Intercultural Advisory Council, English Learners Advisory Committees, and African -American Parent, Student, Staff Support Groups from across the district. During the sessions participants reviewed the Equity and Equality component, and provided feedback in three areas:

- 1) The level of implementation of each tactic contained in the Initiative.
- 2) Priority strategies that need to be addressed
- 3) Additional priorities not contained in the Initiative

Highlights:

Level of Implementation

Participants rated the level of implementation of each tactic contained in the Initiative's three outcomes on a scale of 1 to 5; one representing not at all, and five representing consistently implemented. Following is a brief overview of participants' responses:

EEE Outcome #1: "All students, especially those of low-socio-economic status, students of color, students with disabilities, and other students who have historically experienced marginalization, are taught and guided to attend and succeed at the university level upon completion of high school." - Overall there has been limited implementation of the tactics for this outcome. The District has shown progress in systematically evaluating academic programs and services. However there remains a tremendous need to meet many of the other tactics adopted to address Outcome #1.

EEE Outcome #2: "All students feel they are receiving the highest level of education and meet or exceed all standards." Clearly the District is implementing a number of the tactics to address this Outcome. In particular, an increased effort is being made to promote and encourage participation in AP and Honors classes. However there was still a desire to see more personalization and mentoring for students.

EEE Outcome #3: "There is an engaged, empowered, informed, supportive community that can effectively communicate and advocate for educational resources and opportunities at the pre-school, elementary, middle school and high school level." While many activities to support parents take place at individual school sites, there are tactics to address this outcome that are not systematically implemented. For example the on-going support of families to learn about the educational system at specific junctures to support effective transitions remains a need.

High Priority Strategies That Need To Be Addressed Participants provided feedback on the priority strategies/ tactics that have not been fully addressed. The highest priorities were:

- 1) Hiring the Student Access Coordinator for Santa Monica High School
- 2) Hire, support, and retain administrators, teachers, and other staff that can effectively teach a diverse student population.

- 3) Hold accountable those who are charged with, or given responsibility for demonstrating equity and equality for education, achieving the goals, and monitoring it.
- 4) Provide Professional Development for teachers and administrators on sensitivity and strategies to work effectively with the diverse students and families in our schools.
- 5) Train teachers in differentiated instruction.
- 6) Convene an Annual Equity Summit to publicly review the district's progress in implementing the Initiative. Include relevant data.

Additional Priorities Not Contained in the Initiative

- 1) Consider reinstating Project REACH or another mechanism that supports ongoing focus of professional development focused on diversity at sites.

Suggested Direction for 2005-06

A number of the strategies contained in the Equity and Equality for Education Initiative address issues that the Council has brought before the Board in the past. Hiring, supporting, and retaining teachers and administrators who work effectively with diverse students, particularly staff of color, is an on-going concern. The systematic provision of Professional Development that enables schools to effectively meet the needs of marginalized students also has been a long-standing recommendation. Therefore the Council strongly urges the Board to implement the tactics and strategies contained in the Equity and Equality Initiative you have adopted. If the Initiative needs to be implemented in phases, the Council suggests that the District address the high priority strategies that parents identified first. Finally the Council feels that an annual review of the District's progress in the form of an Equity Summit is essential to make certain that we make progress in assuring the success all children in our schools.

Budgetary Implications: None at this time

Council Members:

Margarita Gonzalez
Darrell Goode
Patricia Hoffman
Dr. Margaret Phillips
Flo Benjamin
Ana Jara
Samuel Whitehead
Lisa Winter
Michelle Whittig