



CAMP HILL SCHOOL DISTRICT

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Daniel D. Serfass

Superintendent

Important Note: The Board of School Directors is reviewing the scope and authority of the Equity Advocacy Council and the agenda going forward. Therefore, this document has been revised to suspend planned EAC activity until further action by the Board on this matter.

Memorandum from The Superintendent Regarding Equity

Camp Hill Community,

Recently, there has been much conversation about the purpose and actions of the Equity Advocacy Council (“EAC”). In an intentional effort to hear the variety of voices in the community and be completely transparent, I have personally met with many Camp Hill parents that have posed questions regarding our District's equity work. This document is provided to address the questions posed in these meetings and the public comments made at recent school board meetings.

Let's begin with a definition of educational equity as stated in the Pennsylvania Department of Education (“PDE”) website. PDE defines equity as, “every student having access to the educational resources and rigor they need at the right moment in their education across race, gender, ethnicity, language, disability, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, family background, and/or family income”. This language is consistent with the Camp Hill School District mission statement. That is, “The Camp Hill Learning Community is committed to providing all students with foundational skills, knowledge, and opportunity for lifelong success”.

The questions addressed below are an accumulation of several parent meetings and public comments/questions at board/committee/council meetings.

Q: Are we teaching Critical Race Theory (“CRT”)?

A: No, Critical Race Theory is not included in our curriculum nor are there any plans to do so.

Q: Is Social and Emotional Learning a rebranding of CRT?

A: Absolutely not. Our position and program planning do not include any connection between Critical Race Theory and Social-Emotional Learning.

Q: What is Social Emotional Learning (“SEL”)?

A: According to PDE, “Social and Emotional Learning plays an important role in school climate and youth development. SEL refers to the process of learning and applying the skills of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making. School-wide SEL programming has been shown to support achievement gains in students and contribute to post-graduation success. It is an integrated



part of PA Career Ready Skills, wellness and mental health, and student-centered approaches to discipline, including restorative practices and trauma-informed strategies."

Q: When will Social Emotional Learning be implemented with students?

A: We have not finalized a program yet, so realistically the earliest will be school year 2022-2023. Much information will be provided on the selected social emotional learning program so families can be involved in the implementation process.

Q: How does the District intend to meet PDE State Standards for Career/Life Readiness Skills?

A: To include PDE State Career Readiness Standards in our curriculum, District Administration, along with colleagues from other Capital Area Intermediate Unit Schools, has been researching Social Emotional Learning Programs for several months. Implementation of a Social Emotional Learning program will start with the faculty and administration and aligned to State standards and the [CASEL Framework](#). Again, there is absolutely no connection to Social Emotional Learning and Critical Race Theory.

Q: How can parents and the public be included in the conversations to increase transparency and provide a forum for all voices to be heard?

A: The Community Engagement Committee will meet periodically to discuss issues of importance to the community to include those discussed on this document. The next Community Engagement Committee meeting is scheduled for 12:00pm on August 17th in the Green Room of The Pollock Center. District residents are invited to attend committee meetings with pre-arrangement (to accommodate room size). However, public comment/participation is not afforded at these meetings.

Q: It was mentioned that English Language Arts ("ELA") is next in line for curriculum review. What is the timeframe for the roll out? Will there be a presentation to the Curriculum Committee to get feedback on adjustments to curriculum?

A: We have allocated time during the summer for teachers and administrators to begin to work on ELA curriculum development. There will be points along the way that the curriculum committee will be presented with the status of the review, in accordance with District Policy. This review will occur over the next several months. Please note that this curriculum review was already scheduled to take place. We review each content area on a systematic basis.

Q: Is there an impact to the budget related to curriculum review, such as buying new textbooks?

A: We have a purchasing cycle and we budget for that yearly, so we are prepared. The textbook approval process will continue to be in accordance with District Policy.



Q: How can I access the curriculum that Camp Hill School District is teaching? What other protocols are in place for parents and guardians to review the instructional resources being used in the classrooms?

A: In compliance with PDE regulations, all public school systems in Pennsylvania are required to instruct and assess to PA State Standards. PA Department of Education Standards are [linked here](#) for your review.

Camp Hill School Board Policy 105.1 covers Curriculum Review request procedures by Parent/Guardians. Here is the [link to the policy](#). Guidelines to request a review are delineated in this policy. Requests should be submitted to the building principal. Further, please consider referring to the specific course syllabi and the book lists and materials that are available on teacher webpages and through the District's learning management system, Schoology.

Q: You are using resources from Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) for the District's approach to equity, correct?

A: Yes. Here is the link to the [PDE resources](#).

Q: Will equity information be available on the website?

A: We have had preliminary discussions of creating an equity hub on our District website.

Addendum to the Question and Answer Document

Equity Advocacy Council

Background

Following initial conversations in Summer 2020, the Equity Advocacy Council (“EAC”) was created in fall 2020 when three distinct groups (concerned parents, representatives of the Leadership Team (school administrators), and teachers from an existing group supporting the same cause) came together to discuss ways to assess and advance equity, diversity, and inclusion in our District. The term “council” denotes the direct participation of stakeholders beyond the standard committees that report to the Board. The EAC’s mission statement reads as follows: “The council is committed to advocating for a safe, empowering, empathetic, and mutually respectful school community where all students, families, and staff feel welcome, valued, and supported, and where diversity is honored and celebrated as a source of strength”.

The Pennsylvania School Board Association defines equity as “the just and fair distribution of resources based upon each individual student’s needs” and notes that “Students [. . .] bring with them unique gifts, individualized learning styles, skills, experiences, and cultural identities. A significant number of our students also carry the weight of poverty, racism, sexism, trauma, and other forms of prejudices and conditions [e.g. disabilities] that effect how they perform in school. Achieving equity ensures that students’ identities will not predetermine their success in schools.”



The EAC initiative dovetailed with efforts already underway in our District before its conception, including (1) reinitiating a curriculum review cycle process for all content areas and (2) researching and implementing a Social and Emotional Learning Program to meet State Standards for Career/Employability/Life Readiness.

Activities

Past conversations in the EAC have included discussions about the best way to acknowledge events like Black History and Women's History Month, the Earl Besch project to provide food support to the economically disadvantaged, the universal benefits of representation in curricular materials, and fair treatment of all students in our schools. Future efforts currently under consideration include a speaker series open to the community, anti-bias training for administration, and, on the horizon, an internal equity audit. The Leadership Team does plan to meet with Dr. Nikole Hollins-Sims from PDE to discuss best steps for going forward.

Meeting minutes from all EAC gatherings are freely available upon request by emailing Megan Wert at mwert@camphillsd.k12.pa.us. A recording of the presentation provided in the July meeting, which took place via Zoom, is posted on our District website.

Clarifications

The EAC was created as an advisory group with no independent power or authority to enact policy, prescribe curriculum, or create lesson plans. At no point is its proceedings has the ideology of Critical Race Theory been considered for inclusion in our classrooms. Furthermore, a mechanism for the addition of other voices on the EAC is currently being developed, to increase the depth of perspectives from the community.

Meaningful learning is impossible without a willingness to engage new ideas, concepts, and understandings. The entire District Leadership Team joins with those who helped create the EAC to wholeheartedly and unequivocally denounce any lesson, activity, or effort that would shame, denigrate, or belittle any group or student. Indeed, this is the antithesis of equity work, which seeks to honor, uphold, affirm, and celebrate the unique value of each human being.

Very Respectfully,

Daniel D. Serfass
Superintendent
Camp Hill School District

Educational Excellence, Community Strength, Student Success