

Saucon Valley School District Equity Plan

Board Approved – April 11, 2017

The Saucon Valley School District began purposeful planning work around educational equity during the 2015-2016 school year. SVSD joined with ten other Greater Lehigh Valley School Districts to form the Greater Lehigh Valley Consortium for Equity and Excellence. This consortium was established through the support of Lehigh University's Superintendents Study Council and the expertise of Dr. Robert Jarvis from the University of Pennsylvania. Dr. Jarvis co-founded the Delaware Valley Consortium for Equity and Excellence (formerly the Delaware Valley Minority Student Achievement Consortium) in 2001. Since then, he has worked to establish similar groups of equity-minded school districts throughout the United States. Prior to its inaugural year of GLVCEE, the following mission statement and goals for the work were developed:

Greater Lehigh Valley Consortium for Equity and Excellence Mission

The mission of the GLVCEE is to ensure equity and access to educational services to transform the lives of all students, especially diverse and disadvantaged students who have historically been underserved in educational institutions. We are partners and a strong collective voice committed to creating and sustaining meaningful educational change through a focus on: establishing common vocabulary and beliefs toward equity, conducting data-informed inquiry into equity, and employing a process to address equity issues.

Greater Lehigh Valley Consortium for Equity and Excellence Goals

(Bradley Scott, 2008)

Goal 1: *Comparably High Academic Achievement and Other Student Outcomes*

As data on academic achievement and other student outcomes are disaggregated and analyzed, one sees high comparable performance for all identifiable groups of learners and achievement, attainment and performance gaps are virtually non-existent.

Goal 2: *Equitable Access and Inclusion*

There exists unobstructed entrance into, involvement of, and full participation of all learners in programs and activities within our schools.

Goal 3: *Equitable Treatment Patterns*

Interactions between individuals and within our school environments are characterized by acceptance, valuing, respect, support, safety, and security such that all students feel challenged to become invested in the pursuits of learning and excellence without fear of threat, humiliation, danger, or disregard.

Goal 4: *Equitable Opportunity to Learn*

The creation of learning opportunities so that every child, regardless of characteristics and identified needs, is presented with the challenge to reach high standards and are given the requisite pedagogical, social, emotional, and psychological supports to achieve the high standards of excellence that are established.

Goal 5: *Equitable Resources Funding*

Staffing, and other resources for equity-based excellence that are manifested in the existence of equitably assigned qualified staff, appropriate facilities, other environmental learning spaces, instructional hardware and software, instructional materials and equipment, and all other instructional supports, are distributed in an equitable and fair manner such that the notion that all diverse learners must achieve high academic standards and other school outcomes become possible.

Goal 6: *Equitable Shared Accountability*

The assurance that all educational stakeholders accept responsibility and hold themselves and each other responsible for every learner having full access to quality education, qualified teachers, challenging curriculum, full opportunity to learn, and appropriate, sufficient support for learning so they can achieve at excellent levels in academic and other student outcomes.

Recognizing that district level leadership is paramount in promoting meaningful change and improvement, the focus of GLVCEE's work during the 2015-2016 school year, was on developing the cultural competencies of senior leaders and the analysis of district data to inform change in the pursuit of excellence and equity. District office administration and the high school principal attended a series of six workshops and work sessions together with district leaders from across the Lehigh Valley.

It was the intention of the SVSD Superintendent to align with GLVCEE plans and use the 2016-2017 to begin to involve building level leadership in the planned workshops in order to build capacity at this level. An eventual goal would be the establishment of district and building level equity committees. Our work as a district was hastened by a racial incident at our high school in October of 2016, that raised tension and awareness and demanded an acceleration of our plan.

The first meeting of the SVSD Inclusion/Equity Committee took place on December 13, 2016. The committee identified our district's strengths and areas of needed improvement. Action plans have been drafted to address priority areas and can be found later in this document.

At the third meeting of the committee, the need for a strong statement of our core beliefs around equity and inclusiveness was discussed. A review of the SVSD Mission, Vision and Shared Values, which are a part of the district's comprehensive plan, reveals that Saucon Valley has, for many years, envisioned an inclusive and supportive district and claimed a set of shared values that affirm the worth and dignity of students and families from varied cultural, ethnic, religious and economic backgrounds.

SVSD Mission

To ensure learning and inspire students to succeed in life and contribute to society.

Vision

We envision a Saucon Valley School District in which students, staff and community:

- Are committed to life-long learning;
- Use research best practices to make decisions;
- Gather and apply data from multiple sources to make informed choices;
- Have established strong partnerships;
- Have fostered mutual respect;
- Are committed to continuous improvement;
- Employ information and communication technologies to enhance learning;
- Engender a sense of diversity, tolerance, mutual support and self worth;
- Are committed to a safe, positive, and orderly environment;
- Mutually support programs and services of the school district;
- Are self directed, creative, and responsible citizens who flourish in a global context.

Shared Values

- The school community values individuals from a variety of cultural and family backgrounds.
- All students can achieve their potential when provided with opportunities and resources that target their individual learning needs.
- All students and staff are entitled to a safe, positive, and orderly school environment.
- All students and staff work with a relevant curriculum and adaptable instructional program.
- Successful curricular and extra-curricular experiences promote positive self-concept and contribute to improved individual performances.

- Student success is dependent on the partnership between families and the school community.
- All members of the school community will be accountable for attaining academic and behavioral standards.
- Each individual needs knowledge and skills to function effectively in a rapidly changing society.
- Each individual is unique and deserves respect.
- The district campus serves as a resource for the community.

Shared Values and Beliefs on Inclusion and Equity

The Inclusion / Equity Committee members propose that additional language be incorporated into the language of our shared values statement as part of a district equity plan. It is the intention of the committee that this plan will become part of the district's next comprehensive plan. With the district's shared values as a starting place, the committee recommends the following additional statements:

- The school community values individuals from a variety of cultural and family backgrounds.

To this end, we will strive to create a context for learning that purposefully includes and welcomes all of the cultures, backgrounds, religions, identities, and other diversities represented in our student body.

- All students can achieve their potential when provided with opportunities and resources that target their individual learning needs.

To achieve this, we will advocate for equitable resource distribution that will prioritize access to education and services to meet the varied needs of all students in our schools.

- All students and staff are entitled to a safe, positive, and orderly school environment.

We therefore expect that the actions, words and other forms of expression used by all members of our school community are respectful and demonstrate recognition of the dignity of all members of our learning community. Students and families will feel secure in knowing that faculty and administration will intervene in a timely manner to ensure dignity and respect for all.

- All students and staff work with a relevant curriculum and adaptable instructional program.

We will attend to our curricular resources and literature, our celebrations, our concerts and holiday observances, the language we use and the symbols we display to ensure inclusivity and balance.

- Successful curricular and extra-curricular experiences promote positive self-concept and contribute to improved individual performances.

One strategy to promote positive self-concept is to strive to ensure that students of all races, ethnicities, identities and abilities can find role models among our faculty, staff, coaches and other adults that work in our schools.

- Each individual is unique and deserves respect.

It is incumbent upon each member of our school district community to speak up when respect for any individual is threatened. We therefore expect the actions, words and other forms of expression used by all members of our school community to be respectful and demonstrate recognition of the dignity and diversity of all members of our learning community. It is incumbent upon each member of our school district community to speak up when respect for any individual is threatened. Students and families must feel secure in knowing that faculty and administration will intervene in a timely and appropriate manner to ensure dignity and respect for all.

- The district campus serves as a resource for the community.

As a community resource, all members of our community should feel welcomed and thus we will, as a school district community, be mindful of ensuring that we promote activities and events that welcome all and we will refrain from allowing the display of signs and symbols that could create an unwelcoming environment.

In order to begin to move toward a more equitable and inclusive education experience for our students, the following action plans have been drafted:

Action #1 Awareness-Building and Examination of Attitudes, Values, and Beliefs

1. Ensure that the SVSD Equity/Inclusion Committee continues to meet at least quarterly to review district progress in achieving equity goals.
2. Establish an Inclusion/Equity Committee at each building for the purpose of examining practices and programs to ensure inclusiveness and to build awareness of the positive contribution recognition of diversity brings to learning.
3. Include the additions to the district mission, vision and shared values, equity goals and action plans in the next district Comprehensive Plan which is to be completed by November of 2018.

Action #2 Teacher/Staff Preparation and Professional Development

1. Teachers (new and veteran) will become knowledgeable and skilled in multiple pedagogies and a variety of instructional practices.
2. Teachers, new and veteran, will be trained in effective use and application of student achievement data.
3. Teacher/staff preparation and professional development will address instructional strategies which provide equitable outcomes for all learners.
4. Teacher/staff preparation and professional development will address how to create a culturally inclusive classroom environment.
5. Teacher preparation and professional development will provide inquiry-based opportunity for building capacity to work with under-served students.
6. Teacher/staff preparation and professional development will address the impact of holding high expectations for all students.
7. New teacher training, mentoring, and beginning teacher support (TV- TIP) will integrate new staff into the ongoing equity, diversity, and anti-bias teacher practices.
8. Grade level teachers and/or departments will meet with each other to facilitate development of curriculum and instruction using an “equity lens.”

Action #3 Review bullying, harassment and discrimination policies with focus on results and consequences

1. Review and revise district policies relating to bullying, harassment, discrimination and student expression.
2. Develop examples of conduct that may constitute “harassment” related to race, ethnicity, origin, gender, sexual orientation, religion, and ability
3. Add language barring symbols related to discrimination, intimidation, exclusion, hostility, etc.
4. Align student handbook with procedures and policies
5. Develop policy statements for character education

Action #4 Diversity of Adult Role Models in the Schools

1. Review and revise hiring policies and strategies leading to a more diverse professional staff.
2. Actively seek out parent and community volunteers who represent the racial, ethnic, religious and gender diversity of the Saucon Valley School District Community.
3. Investigate possible mentoring programs with area college and university in order to make more diverse role models available to our students.

Action #5 Innovative and Inclusive Practices in Teaching and Learning

1. As part of the curriculum renewal cycle, institute a process that will:
2. Ensure classroom content is fair, accurate and inclusive
3. Includes positive representations of diverse cultures
 - Includes a variety of perspectives and multiple voices and provides practice in this skill
 - Discusses social contexts and social issues
 - Includes activities that foster critical thinking
 - Ponders ideas of how to be an active citizen
 - Explores how discrimination and prejudice negatively affect a democratic society
 - Promotes sensitivity and respect of an for societal differences
4. Explore the role of music through history to tell a story, express emotion, offer opinion, and as a source of pride
5. Include a communications course at the secondary level
6. Incorporate programming that directly targets students and aims to develop understanding and skills which will foster a more inclusive and supportive learning environment. Programs to be considered include:
 - Character Education,
 - Positive Behavior Support,
 - Mentoring
 - Peer Mediation