

AGENDA



**Addison Central School District
Policy and Governance Committee
Committee Meeting
Tuesday, July 21, 2020, 4:00 pm - 5:00 pm
Virtual Connection**

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84510235248?pwd=T2VuM1ZwdEMzV2R5WFBKTU1SbmRzZz09>

Meeting ID: 845 1023 5248

Password: Adj91a

- A. Call to Order Upon Reaching a Quorum
- B. Introductions - Board Members, Administration and Staff
- C. Approve Agenda
- D. Recommendation to Approve Minutes of July 6, 2020
- E. Policy Review-Discussions:
 - 1. Discussion: Legal Opinion for Policy B20 - Personnel Recruitment, Selection, Appointment and Background Checks
 - 2. Discussion: Electronic Communications Between Employees and Students Policy Draft from VSBA
 - 3. Discussion: Equity Policy and/or Statement
- F. Adjournment

MINUTES



**Addison Central School District
Policy and Governance Committee
Committee Meeting
Monday, July 6, 2020, 4:00 pm - 5:00 pm
Virtual Connection**

Remote Attendance

Margaret "Peg" Martin; Mary Gill; Vicki Wells

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84510235248?pwd=T2VuM1ZwdEMzV2R5WFBKTU1SbmRzZz09>

Meeting ID: 845 1023 5248

Password: Adj91a

A. Call to Order Upon Reaching a Quorum

Meeting called to order.

B. Introductions - Board Members, Administration and Staff

Administration: Vicki Wells

C. Approve Agenda

Approved

D. Recommendation to Approve Minutes of June 22, 2020

Approved

E. Policy Review-Discussions:

Review Transportation Policy draft: Revisions made. Policy follows VSBA Model Policy-allowing for flexibility in current (COVID) and future situations that may result in changes in bus runs, rider capacity, boundaries and individual student/family needs.

1. Final Policy B20 - Personnel Recruitment, Selection, Appointment and background Checks

Another Final review of Policy draft B20: revisions made. Vicki Wells and Peter Burrows will consult with district legal advisor on policy requirement stating that the board must approve all hires. Committee is concerned this will delay finding qualified candidates in a timely manner. To be determined.

2. Electronic Communications Between Employees and Students Policy Draft from VSBA

Discuss VSBA draft policy: Electronic Communications Between Employees and Students Policy from VSBA for discussion. Committee members will read and research model policy from VSBA and discuss at next policy meeting on July 21 at 4:00 PM.

F. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 5:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Mary Gill, Recorder

Addison Central School District

Policy: **Personnel Recruitment, Selection, Appointment & Background Checks**

File Code: **B20**

Warned:

Adopted:

It is the policy of the Addison Central School District to select for employment only persons of good character who have the skills and other qualifications necessary to fulfill job requirements while complying with the provisions of state law regarding the recruitment, selection and employment of school district employees and contractors.

Persons subject to criminal record checks and abuse registry checks under this policy include all those recommended for full-time, part-time or temporary employment in the school district, **This includes** student teachers, and those contractors and employees of contractors who may have unsupervised contact with students and are subject by law to criminal record [1] and abuse registry checks prior to or in the course of employment.

The superintendent may request a name and date of birth or fingerprint-supported check of the criminal record of any current employee who has previously undergone a check at any time during the course of the record subject's employment in the capacity for which the original check was required.[2]

The district shall ensure that adults employed in the schools maintained by the district receive orientation, information or instruction on the prevention, identification and reporting of child abuse as required by state law. The district will also provide opportunities for parents, guardians, and other interested persons to receive the same information.[3]

Definitions

1. The term criminal record as used in this policy shall have the same meaning as defined in 16 V.S.A. 252(1).[4]
2. The term unsupervised as used in this policy shall have the same meaning as defined in 16 V.S.A. 252(4).[5]

3. The term abuse registry as used in this policy shall include the Vermont Child Protection Registry maintained by the Vermont Department for Children and Families and the Vulnerable Adult Abuse Registry maintained by the Vermont Department of Disabilities, Aging and Independent Living.
4. The terms employ or employment as used in this policy shall, as the context requires, apply to individuals who are, or are being considered for, full-time, part-time or temporary employment in the school district, including student teachers and those contractors and employees of contractors who may have unsupervised contact with students.

Recruitment

1. The board is committed to securing the services of the best personnel available. Only individuals who meet applicable state licensing requirements will be employed.
2. The district will attempt to provide an educational experience enhanced by the professional contributions of representatives of different races, physical conditions, sexes, ethnic backgrounds and age groups.
3. All personnel will be recruited by the district's administrative staff under the immediate direction of the superintendent.
4. Written or electronic applications will be required of candidates for employment. The application will include a warning to the applicant that falsification of information on the application or during the application process will be grounds for dismissal if the applicant is hired.
5. After the initial written or electronic application process is complete, applicants selected for an interview will be required to provide a statement identifying any criminal charges brought against the applicant, including the date of each charge, the court where the charge was filed and the disposition of the charge. The statement shall also include a warning to the applicant in bold print that falsification of information or the omission of

information on the statement may constitute grounds for dismissal if the applicant is hired. Any job offer shall be made contingent on the candidate successfully completing the school district's background check process.

Selection

1. It is the policy of the board to select employees solely on the basis of character, professional qualifications, and critical job requirements. Employees will be selected in a manner that does not unlawfully discriminate.^[6] The superintendent shall require that all applicants, as a condition of employment consideration, cooperate fully with background investigations, supplying references and releases so the district can contact previous employers. Applicants the superintendent is prepared to recommend for employment will be expected to provide fingerprints, releases and other information necessary to conduct background investigations. The costs of such checks will be borne by the (prospective employee) (the school district). All offers of employment shall be contingent on the candidate's successfully completing the background investigation process and a finding that the information provided by the applicant during the pre-employment process was accurate, complete and truthful.
2. The superintendent shall request a criminal record check through the Vermont Criminal Information Center (VCIC) on any candidate he or she intends to appoint or is prepared to recommend for appointment. Requests will be made for fingerprint-supported criminal records from the FBI as well as criminal records from the state of Vermont and any state in which the superintendent knows the applicant has resided or been employed. The superintendent shall maintain such records in accordance with state law.
3. The superintendent shall also request information through any available abuse registry to determine whether there are any substantiated abuse/neglect charges or sex offense convictions against an applicant before appointing or nominating a candidate for employment. The superintendent shall maintain such records in accordance with state law.^[7]
4. Employment conditioned on the completion of a background check may be terminated if it is determined that the employee failed to respond truthfully to questions about criminal activity or prior employment. In any event the Superintendent shall forward the information received from VCIC to the person about whom the request was made and inform the person of their rights to challenge the accuracy of the record and to determine the disposition of the record under 16 V.S.A. ♦♦ 255(f), (g).

5. Providing a safe learning environment for students is a primary consideration in district employment decisions. The district will base such decisions on all relevant information, qualifications, and circumstances. Unfavorable background check information is not an automatic bar to employment, nor is a background check with no unfavorable information a guarantee of employment.♦ However, no person convicted of a sexual offense requiring registration on the Vermont comprehensive sex offender registry shall be employed by the school district or supervisory union.[8]

Appointment

1. The appointment of licensed employees will be made by the board subject to the nomination of candidates by the superintendent of schools.[9]
2. Subject to any pre-employment screening processes approved by the board,[10] the superintendent shall appoint all non-licensed employees to be employed by the school district or supervisory union.[11]
3. Contracts of employment or other notification of employment will be conditional pending receipt of criminal records check information and evaluation of that information.
4. Upon completion of a criminal records check, the superintendent shall:
 - notify the person subject to the check about the district's protocol for maintenance of criminal history files, and
 - ask the person subject to the check to indicate if his or her record should be maintained or destroyed after the retention period specified in the District's user agreement with VCIC. ACSD procedure maintains criminal records check for 1 year.
5. Employees who have been employed for fewer than two years in Vermont public schools are considered probationary teachers and may be offered a probationary contract.

6. All offers of employment may be withdrawn based on the criminal records check report or upon a finding that the information provided by the applicant during the pre-employment process was inaccurate, incomplete or untruthful.

Date Warned:

Date Adopted:

Legal Reference(s): 16 V.S.A. §§ 251 et seq. (Criminal record checks)

16 V.S.A. § 242(3) and 563 (12) (Responsibility for hiring)

Act 1 of 2009 (Adjourned Sess.)

Act 108 of 2010

Cross Reference:

[\[1\]](#) A school board policy on the recruitment and selection of employees is not explicitly required by state law.♦ This model policy is intended to incorporate the various legal requirements that

school districts must address when employing individuals to work as licensed or nonlicensed employees and as contractors or employees of contractors.♦ The VSBA recommends that a policy on the recruitment and selection of employees be adopted by all school district and supervisory union boards.

[2] 16 V.S.A. ♦ 256(a)(2)

[3] See 16 V.S.A. ♦ 563a.

[4] ♦ Criminal record♦ means the record of: (A) convictions in Vermont, including whether any of the convictions listed in 13 V.S.A. ♦ 5401(10) (sex offender definition for registration purposes); and (B) convictions in other jurisdictions recorded in other state repositories or by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI).♦ 16 V.S.A. ♦ 252(1).

[5] ♦ Unsupervised♦ means not in the presence of a responsible adult in the employ of or under the direction of the independent school or school district.♦ 16 V.S.A. ♦ 252(2).

[6] See, e.g. 21 V.S.A. ♦ 495, et seq. (Fair Employment Practices) and 9 V.S.A. ♦ 4500, et seq. (Public Accommodations Act).

[7] Sec. 5, Act 1 of 2009 (Adj. Session)

[8] Sec. 5, Act 1 of 2009 (Adj. Session)

[9] 16 V.S.A. ♦ 242(3)(A)

[10] The term ♦ Pre-employment screening processes♦ as used in this model policy is intended to refer to♦ background checks other than required criminal record and abuse registry checks, interviewing processes or other methods of assessing a candidate♦s qualifications prior to appointment by the Superintendent.♦ Pre-employment screening processes involving participation by employee groups, board members or other interest groups are not required, but are frequently used.

[11] 16 V.S.A. ♦ 242(3)(B)

Printer Friendly Versions:

- [Word](#)
- [Acrobat](#)

ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS BETWEEN EMPLOYEES AND STUDENTS

I. Statement of Policy

The [INSERT SCHOOL DISTRICT NAME] recognizes electronic communications and the use of social media outlets create new options for extending and enhancing the educational program of the school district. Electronic communications and the use of social media can help students and employees communicate regarding: questions during non-school hours regarding homework or other assignments; scheduling issues for school-related co-curricular and interscholastic athletic activities; school work to be completed during a student's extended absence; distance learning opportunities; and other professional communications that can enhance teaching and learning opportunities between employees and students. However, the [INSERT SCHOOL DISTRICT NAME] recognizes employees and students can be vulnerable in electronic communications.

In accordance with Act 5 of 2018 this model policy is adopted to provide guidance and direction to [INSERT SCHOOL DISTRICT NAME] employees to prevent improper electronic communications between employees and students.

II. Definitions. For purposes of this policy, the following definitions apply:

- A. **Electronic communication.** Electronic communication is any computer-mediated communication in which individuals exchange messages with others, either individually or in groups. Examples of electronic communication include, but are not limited to, email, text messages, instant messaging, voicemail, and image sharing and communications made by means of an internet site, including social media and social networking websites.
- B. **Social media.** Social media is any form of online publication or presence that allows interactive communication, including, but not limited to, social networks, blogs, websites and internet forums. Examples of social media include, but are not limited to, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, and Google+.
- C. **Employee.** Employee includes any person employed directly by or retained through a contract of employment the district, an agent of the school, a school board member, and including supervisory union employees.

D. **Student.** Student means any person who attends school in any of the grades Prekindergarten through 12 operated by the district.

III. Policy on Electronic Communication Between Students and Employees.

All communication between employees and students shall be professional and appropriate. The use of electronic communication that is inappropriate in content is prohibited.

A. Inappropriate content of an electronic communication. Inappropriate content of an electronic communication between an Employee and a Student includes, but is not limited to:

1. Communications of a sexual nature, sexual oriented humor or language, sexual advances, or content with a sexual overtone;
2. Communications involving the use, encouraging the use, or promoting or advocating the use of alcohol or tobacco, the illegal use of prescription drugs or controlled dangerous substances, illegal gambling, or other illegal activities;
3. Communications regarding the employees' or student's past or current romantic relationships;
4. Communications which include the use of profanities, obscene language, lewd comments, or pornography;
5. Communications that are harassing, intimidating, or demeaning;
6. Communications requesting or trying to establish a personal relationship with a student beyond the employees' professional responsibilities;
7. Communications related to personal or confidential information regarding employee or student that isn't academically focused; and
8. Communications between an employee and a student between the hours of 10 p.m. and 6 a.m. An Employee may, however, make public posts to a social network site, blog or similar application at any time.

B. Procedures. The superintendent shall develop procedures for both the receipt and handling of reports filed under this policy (see IV.A. and B. below).

IV. Enforcement Responsibilities

A. Student communications violation of this policy. In the event a student sends an electronic communication, that is inappropriate as defined in this policy or that violates the procedures governing inappropriate forms of electronic communication to an employee, the employee shall submit a written report of the inappropriate communication ("Report") to the principal or designee by the end of the next school day following actual receipt by the Employee of such communication. The principal or designee will take appropriate action to have the student discontinue such improper electronic communications.

While the school district will seek to use such improper electronic communications by a student as a teaching and learning opportunity, student communications violation of this policy may subject a student to discipline. Any discipline imposed shall take into account the relevant surrounding facts and circumstances.

- B. **Employee communications violation of this policy.** In the event an employee sends an electronic communication that is inappropriate as defined in this policy or that violates the procedures governing inappropriate forms of electronic communication to a student, the student shall or the student's parent or guardian may submit a written report of the inappropriate communication ("Report") to the principal and/or the person designated by the principal to receive complaints under this policy promptly. The report shall specify what type of inappropriate communication was sent by the employee with a copy of the communication, if possible.

Inappropriate electronic communications by an employee may result in appropriate disciplinary action.

- C. **Applicability.** The provisions of this policy shall be applicable at all times while the employee is employed by the district and at all times the student is enrolled in the school district, including holiday and summer breaks. An employee is not subject to these provisions to the extent the employee has a family relationship with a student (i.e. parent/child, nieces, nephews, grandchildren, etc.).
- D. **Other district policies.** Improper electronic communications that may also constitute violations of other policies of the district, i.e. unwelcome sexual conduct may also constitute a violation of the school's separate policy on the Prevention of Harassment, Hazing and Bullying of Students. Complaints regarding such behavior should be directed as set forth in the school's Procedures on the Prevention of Harassment, Hazing and Bullying of Students.

V. Reporting to Other Agencies

- A. **Reports to Department of Children and Families [DCF].** When behaviors violative of this policy include allegations of child abuse, any person responsible for reporting suspected child abuse under 33 V.S.A. §4911, et seq., must report the allegations to the Commissioner of DCF. If the victim is over the age of 18 and a report of abuse is warranted, the report shall be made to Adult Protective Services in accordance with 33 V.S.A. §6901 et seq.
- B. **Reports to Vermont Agency of Education [AOE].** Accordingly, if behaviors violative of this policy in a public school involve conduct by a licensed educator that might be grounds under Vermont law for licensing action, the principal shall

report the alleged conduct to the superintendent and the superintendent shall report the alleged conduct to the AOE.

- C. **Reporting Incidents to the Police.** Nothing in this policy shall preclude persons from reporting to law enforcement any incidents and/or conduct that may be a criminal act.
- D. **Continuing Obligation to Investigate.** Reports made to either DCF or law enforcement shall not be considered to absolve the school administrators of their obligations under this or any other policy, such as the Policy on the Prevention of Harassment, Hazing and Bullying, to pursue and complete an investigation upon receipt of notice of conduct which may constitute a policy violation.

Date Warned:

Date Adopted:

Legal Reference(s): 2018 Acts and Resolves No. 5 (located at
<https://legislature.vermont.gov/Documents/2018.1/Docs/ACTS/ACT005/ACT005%20As%20Enacted.pdf>)
16 V.S.A. § 1698
16 V.S.A. § 570

To: ACSD School Board

From: ACSD Task Force on Racism, Bias, and Discrimination

Date: June 13, 2018

Re: Final Report and Recommendations

In September 2017, members of the ACSD school board heard statements from members of the community regarding national concerns about tolerance, and heard statements regarding specific incidents of bias in our schools and local community. Parents also shared their hopes for partnership with their schools in teaching their children to understand and appreciate cultures and experiences other than their own, and to forge meaningful connections across differences.

At that time, the board created a task force made up of school administrators, teachers, students and parents to look at how to prevent and respond to incidents of bias, and how to foster an environment of openness and inclusion within and across the district campuses. The stated mission of the task force was “The ACSD Task Force on Racism, Bias, and Discrimination will provide recommendations to the Addison Central School District to support the district in addressing explicit and implicit bias, in all forms in our schools.”

Between September 2017 and June 2018, the task force met at least monthly to look at how schools in ACSD respond to allegations of bias, and how the school system could work to prevent such incidents.

The members of the task force were: Kristin Holsman-Francoeur, Miguel Fernandez, Martin Beatty, Cam Simpson, Karen Lefkoe, Meg Baker, Karen Guttentag, Sabrina Westdijk, Courtney Krahn, Betty Kafumbe, Christina Johnston, Elaine Orozco Hammond, Floribeth Jimenez.

Based upon the task force’s research, individual perspectives and experiences, and work with equity consultant Rebecca Haslam, the task force developed three goals: Competency, Community Collaboration and Decision-Making, and Communication. Within each goal, the task force developed desired outcomes, strategic initiatives and action steps.

Why and how did the task force arrive at these goals?

- While national issues may have brought the need for this Task Force to the attention of the school board, we have heard from many families that local equity issues are an urgent concern.
- The task force shared a commitment to support the school system’s improvement toward excellence in this area.

- We see a compelling opportunity to incorporate progress in these areas into the systems changes related to IB implementation: there is a natural harmony between “international mindedness” and “open-minded” and equity.
- We share the vision outlined in the ACSD Strategic Plan that “All students will reach their full academic potential and be prepared for success as engaged citizens.” Our plan supports the development of skills and systems to address this vision, by helping to ensure that:
 - Schools are open and welcoming to all students and their families;
 - Learners can engage with diverse audiences in a respectful way;
 - Learners are productive citizens;
 - Learners can think critically about issues of social justice; and
 - Staff are supported and have the skills to engage and educate all learners.

Goal 1: Competency

Overview

Cultural competence is a necessary component of positive school climate and culture, both at the district and building levels. Cultural competence is defined broadly as the ability to work effectively with and advocate for the success of people from a variety of cultural, economic, ethnic, and religious backgrounds, and is present when all members of the school community consistently and intentionally honor, respect and value diversity not only in theory, but in practice in all contexts, from board meetings and community outreach, to classrooms and school hallways.

Culturally competent practice offers myriad benefits to students, our communities, faculty, staff, and leadership team, including promoting positive and safe conduct, academic and behavioral success, fair and equitable access to opportunity, broad and inclusive engagement, and a supportive setting in which to learn, work, and grow. Achieving and sustaining cultural competence is not a finite activity that can be “completed,” but an ongoing, intentional and transparent process requiring concrete tools and training, unwavering commitment, and continuous cycles of monitoring, critical reflection, and improvement.

Desired Outcome 1: School Board and Central Office staff will:

- Understand systems of power in relation to key social identities (race, gender and gender identity, socioeconomic status, ability, religion, etc.).
- Develop self-awareness of own identity lenses and the ways in which they influence how we interact with others and how they interact with us.
- Develop understanding of the value of diversity.
- Understand the policies, protocols and systems of support available to all constituencies, and how to access them.
- Understand the differing perspectives/realities of families and approaches to effectively communicate with diverse families.
- Understand the IB learner profile, particularly “open-mindedness”: “They understand and appreciate their own cultures and personal histories, and are open to the perspectives, values and traditions of other individuals and communities. They are accustomed to seeking and evaluating a range of points of view, and are willing to grow from the experience.”

Strategic Initiative: Development of 5-year strategic plan for progress in this area with key benchmarks that align with IB transition/implementation/process; include annual review of plan within plan.

Action Steps:

1. Conduct an Equity Audit (MAEC) to assess strengths and areas for improvement to inform 5-year strategic plan.
2. Follow up with annual internal or external audits for strengths and areas for improvement and implement recommendations.
3. Use results of equity audit(s) to inform universal training that includes School Board, Central Office, school administrators, faculty and staff, so that our learning community is all on the same page. Topics to be covered through universal training:
 - i. identity lenses, value of diversity, IB, policies and protocols, diversity, inclusive communication, power and privilege (anti-bias training);
 - ii. Skills specific and appropriate to each of the participating constituencies.
4. Integration and incorporation of equity literacy and understanding of diversity into board meetings, access to board materials, and community interactions.

Desired Outcome 2: Building administrators, faculty and staff will:

- Understand systems of social power and power in general, and in relation to key social identities (race, gender and gender identity, socioeconomic status, ability, religion, etc.).
- Develop self-awareness of own identity lenses and the ways in which they influence how we interact with others and how they interact with us.
- Recognize the value of diversity.
- Understand the policies, protocols and systems of support available to all constituencies, and how to access them.
- Understand the differing perspectives/realities of families, and how to communicate effectively with a variety of families.
- Implement age- and content-appropriate curriculum, performance criteria and assessments that support cultural competencies.
- Understand the IB learner profile, particularly “open-mindedness”: “They understand and appreciate their own cultures and personal histories, and are open to the perspectives, values and traditions of other individuals and communities. They are accustomed to seeking and evaluating a range of points of view, and are willing to grow from the experience.”

Strategic Initiative 1: Development and communication of clear school-specific expectations and guidelines re: exploring and addressing challenging topics (course content and individual incidents) in class, including recognition of challenge and appreciation of commitment—as well as tolerance for mistakes and how to handle them.

Action Steps:

1. Use results of equity audit to drive building-based expectations and guidelines.
2. Formation of a District Equity Team or addition of a District Equity Coordinator position who can support and consult with staff members when anticipating or confronted with a challenging situation they're not sure how to address. This resource must provide demonstrated expertise in equity literacy, anti-bias practices, and cultural competence and be characterized by timely access and responsiveness.
3. Identify when and how professional development can be used to advance the desired outcomes for faculty and staff.
4. Use already-established collaborative structures within and across schools (IB collaborative teams, Professional Learning Communities, subject-area departments, school leadership groups, etc.) to promote ongoing growth, support, reflection and accountability in the area of equity literacy.
5. Employ best practices, models and instructional coaching to promote ongoing growth, support, reflection and accountability in the area of equity literacy.

Strategic Initiative 2: Development of hiring practices that promote equity literacy.

Action Steps:

1. Set strategic goals for diversifying applicant pool for district job openings
2. Incorporate competency in these areas into all job descriptions/hiring processes.

Strategic Initiative 3: Development accountability criteria tied to cultural competency to incorporate into staff annual review process (as an addition to ACSD's current evaluation protocol based on Danielson model)

Desired Outcome 3: Students will develop:

- Understanding of systems of social power and power in general, and in relation to key social identities (race, gender and gender identity, socioeconomic status, ability, religion, etc.).
- Self-awareness of own identity lenses and the ways in which they influence how we interact with others and how they interact with us. This includes students understanding the lens of their family structures.
- A recognition of the value of diversity.
- Ability to critically evaluate/understand media with regard to cultural messages.
- Ability to self-advocate and advocate for others.

- Understanding the policies, protocols and systems of support available to all constituencies, and how to access them.
- Development of open-mindedness as defined by the IB learner profile “They understand and appreciate their own cultures and personal histories, and are open to the perspectives, values and traditions of other individuals and communities. They are accustomed to seeking and evaluating a range of points of view, and are willing to grow from the experience.”

Strategic Initiative: Development of curriculum to promote and support equity literacy at all grade levels.

Action Steps:

1. Identify age-appropriate set of student competencies in these areas, and research-based strategies for their cultivation
 - a. This includes the skills to critically evaluate/understand media with regard to cultural messages.
2. Research and identify curricular programs that can support these competencies, or how current curricula can be better utilized to advance them.
3. Leverage IB framework and philosophy to incorporate identified competencies.
4. Use already-established collaborative structures within and across schools (IB collaborative teams, Professional Learning Communities, subject-area departments, school leadership groups, etc.) to develop age- and subject-appropriate teaching and learning opportunities to advance these competencies
 - a. actively integrate and incorporate best practices into the daily classroom/instruction.

Desired Outcome 4: ACSD and its campuses are inclusive spaces that encourage, support, and competently facilitate challenging conversations.

Strategic Initiative: District and school leaders and staff are trained and supported to address challenging topics around bias and discrimination appropriately and consistently

Action Steps:

1. Encourage senior district-wide leadership to expand comfort level with higher levels of discomfort that may result from more challenging work in this area. Requires leadership to make decisions and support staff decisions that may result in community activation/conflict.

2. Provide thoughtful and proactive support for staff, students and families in anticipation of and response to provocative local or national events/incidents (e.g. Charlottesville).
3. Identify weekly space in the school day for community conversations in class (with facilitation training and guidelines).
4. Communicate to students the goals for the classroom environment and what the expectations are re: asking questions, sharing opinions, handling conflict, etc.

Desired Outcome 5: Administrators address incidental and systemic bias and discrimination effectively

Strategic Initiative: Administrators are clear and consistent within and across school buildings about acceptable conduct and handling of individual incidents. Incidents are analyzed for systemic implications, and appropriate prevention and response strategies are implemented.

Action Steps:

1. Invite appropriate professionals from outside of ACSD to review student and staff conduct expectations, and , and incorporate recommendations. Develop clear and appropriate district-wide expectations.
2. Follow AOE accepted protocol for response and incident analysis. Implement appropriate communication and data collection practices.
3. Review/develop clear and enforceable protocols for the transfer of student conduct records between schools within/outside of the district, and path of redress if protocol not followed.
4. Identify a point person/team to lead this initiative, and ensure that this team or individual has appropriate training, support, and accountability.

Goal 2: Community Collaboration and Decision-Making

Overview

Equity literacy in the context of an educational environment refers to the knowledge and skills that enable us to recognize, respond to, and redress conditions that deny some students access to educational and other opportunities enjoyed by their peers. To promote equity literacy within our communities, we must engage in preventative planning to strategically assess our school climate and address capacity building for the future. We will need to build cultural bridges to inclusively engage historically marginalized populations in collaborative decision-making that takes into account the expertise and resources available within our local community. We will also need to seek out multiple perspectives and resources available from the international community.

Strong communication between school staff and families is important in any school and has special relevance for schools committed to equity literacy. Incorporating family and community knowledge enhances student learning and fosters understanding between different groups. All communities have valuable resources that can enhance teaching and learning, allowing groups to acknowledge their differences and often find common ground. A core component of equity literacy is learning to take action against exclusion, prejudice, and discrimination. It can be especially powerful for students to do this in their own schools and communities.

Desired Outcome 1: Systems will foster equity literacy among staff, administration, school board, students, families and the broader community.

Strategic Initiative 1: Develop 5-year strategic plan for progress in this area with key benchmarks that align with IB transition/implementation/process; include annual review of plan within plan.

Action Steps:

1. Conduct an Equity Audit (MAEC) to assess strengths and areas for improvement to inform 5-year strategic plan, taking into consideration multiple community perspectives, including staff, families, and students.
2. Follow up with regular and consistent audits for strengths and areas for improvement and implement recommendations.

Strategic Initiative 2: Develop standing committee that includes community members, families and students to provide ongoing district-wide leadership and direction in this area.

Action Steps:

1. Identify other organizations that can provide audit-like services and resources (e.g. AHEAD for K-12; Pride Center for K-12, etc.).
2. Identify related grant opportunities to support these efforts.
3. Annual review of strategic plan and progress made.
4. Gauge over time improvements/changes seen in Equity Audits from multiple community perspectives.

Desired Outcome 2: Create partnerships to support staff, students, families, administration and the broader community in creating equitable learning environments.

Strategic Initiative 1: Create structure and budget for semi-annual forums on critical identity issues relevant to students and families.

Strategic Initiative 2: Support developing partnerships with schools in other parts of the state/country/world to learn more about their lives and communities.

Strategic Initiative 3: Consider support groups for parents/families from underrepresented background (“Historically marginalized families”).

Strategic Initiative 4: Consistently identify opportunities for family participation in initiatives as appropriate.

Action Steps:

1. Evaluate the on-line and agency resources identified thus far and create and maintain summary document clarifying what each can offer.
2. Identify other Vermont and non-Vermont schools that have successfully achieved district-wide progress through long-term strategic planning, Teaching Tolerance curriculum use, etc.
3. Identify evaluation/consultant experts who work specifically with school systems on long-term change of this kind.
4. Work with district organizations (Community Partnership Council and School Partnership Teams) to explore opportunities for family leadership in this area.
5. Document how families are involved as decision-makers in multiple initiatives
6. Develop and annually update and advertise a list of resources and experts available to staff, students, and families.
7. Collect biannually community, family, staff, and student satisfaction information.

Desired Outcome 3: Ensure that communities have a shared and accurate understanding of the climate re: issues of bullying, bias and harassment for the purpose of increasing awareness, identifying trends, encouraging reporting, and developing appropriate school and community responses.

Strategic Initiative 1: Create a Bias Response Team to establish best-practices approach when incidents occur. Ensure that these best practices include appropriate community notification.

Strategic Initiative 2: Create centralized district-level team to conduct investigations with high level of training, unbiased approach to involved parties; preserves roles of in-school educators/administrators. Explore coordinating with Bias Response Team and broader training/referral services approach, both as full time staff and consultants. (Community Partnership Council)

Action Steps:

1. Systematic education and re-education of/with community around issues of bullying, bias and harassment.
2. Regular and ongoing reporting of trends related to bullying, bias and harassment to school board and larger community.
3. Document incidents of bullying, bias and harassment.
4. Document communication around education and re-education of/with community.

Goal 3: Communication

Overview

Cultivating a community in which students, families and staff feel a sense of belonging and a capacity to participate actively doesn't just require attention to initiatives, competencies and policies: it requires a commitment to ensuring that key information is communicated to all constituencies through means that are accessible to all members. Issues of constituency, class, culture, language, literacy, disability and citizenship can play a substantial role in influencing not only what information is shared, but how, by whom and with whom it is shared, and whether it is received and understood.

A successful communication plan for ACSD will recognize the myriad ways in which its members are capable of and comfortable initiating and participating in communication, and accessing, sharing and responding to communication from others, and the languages and modes through which they do so. It will also identify what information needs to be actively shared, rather than merely be available to those who take the initiative to look for it, and how to take advantage of existing official and informal communication practices to maximize accessibility. It will routinely follow protocols inviting consideration of who needs to know important information, and why, and the best ways to provide it for each constituency. Finally, it will create systems to ensure that communication can flow easily in all directions, facilitating accessible opportunities for students, families and staff not only to receive information but to provide it. These goals are critical in all district-based initiatives, but especially important to those surrounding incidents of bias and discrimination, individual or systemic.

Desired Outcome 1: Students, families and staff have a clear understanding of and confidence in the district's commitment and ability to support a school environment free of bias and discrimination.

Strategic Initiative: There is community awareness of and agreement on conduct expectations, and on what conduct is unacceptable. Students, staff and families are clear on what they can do and what they can expect if unacceptable conduct occurs.

Action Steps:

1. Develop a communications strategy to ensure that the following information is easily accessible, constituency-specific, and available in multiple formats and languages as appropriate: conduct expectations; examples of unacceptable

conduct; protocols and resources when concerning conduct occurs; and expected response from the school and district as appropriate. Ensure that accessible and appropriate feedback opportunities are available at all stages, and feedback assessment processes are incorporated.

2. Develop protocols for appropriate community sharing of redacted data re: investigation findings, and pattern analysis, along with clear expectations of entity roles and responsibilities in response.

Desired Outcome 2: All communications to students, families and staff are timely and accessible.

Strategic initiative: Development of constituency-appropriate communications strategies (brochures, webpage, meetings, emails, texts, newsletters, social media, events, etc.).

Action Steps:

1. Independently and in partnership with the Community Partnership initiative, identify and utilize best practices for assessing the needs of district-wide and school-specific communities as they relate to communications, including culture, language, disability, socioeconomic status, literacy, and other salient factors.
2. Ensure ongoing strategic communication with students, staff and families as initiatives in this report are pursued.
3. Assess effectiveness of existing school-wide and district-wide communication practices, based on user feedback, data, existing research.
4. Take advantage of existing important communications and share them with families and beyond (e.g. AOE memos), extracting key content for families, and translating content as appropriate.