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MEMORANDUM

TO: SPCSA Board
FROM: Rebecca Feiden, Executive Director
SUBJECT: Initial Steps to Elevate our Focus on Equity
DATE: December 4, 2020

Background

At the July 24, 2020 SPCSA Board Meeting, the Authority discussed actions that the SPCSA can take to support schools in their efforts to serve all students equitably and uphold the SPCSA's values of equity and diversity. At the August 4, 2020 SPCSA Board Meeting, I presented a list of proposed initial next steps and the Authority provided additional feedback. Below is an updated list of Initial Steps, including the status of the identified action items.

Initial Steps to Elevate our Focus on Equity

Site Evaluations

- To ensure a holistic view of the school, the SPCSA will work with the school to ensure that focus groups are representative of the student population and include a statement to this effect in the Site Evaluation Handbook.
- To enable candid conversations about equity, as part of the presentation portion of the site evaluation, schools will be asked to discuss efforts to embed culturally responsive practices into academic and organizational policy and procedure.
- The Site Evaluation Handbook was updated in August and in site evaluations this year, staff has worked with school to ensure representative focus groups and schools have included information in their presentations on culturally responsive practices.

New School and Amendment Applications

- The SPCSA will revise application templates to include questions that directly ask about efforts to close opportunity gaps and address disproportionate discipline practices, including the use of restorative justice practices. For applicants that already operate a school, the application will ask for academic and discipline data by subgroup. In addition, the application templates will continue to include questions on family and community engagement practices and SPCSA staff will convey the importance of this work in applicant trainings. Update the New School Application to contemplate a proposed Alternative School.
- For the winter 2021 new charter school application template, staff has updated the template to ask about efforts to close opportunity gaps and address disproportionate discipline practices. Staff has continued to emphasize the importance of family and community engagement within the application and during applicant trainings.

Renewal Application

- The SPCSA has revised the Renewal Application to include questions on restorative justice practices, plans to monitor for potential disproportionate discipline practices, and plans to address any opportunity gaps for specific student groups. The SPCSA will update the Renewal Application for the Fall of 2021 to include explicit questions on how the school engages parents and families as well as what trainings the school provides regarding diversity and inclusion.
- The Renewal Application was updated in the summer of 2020 to include questions on restorative justice practices, plans to monitor for potential disproportionate discipline practices, and plans to address any opportunity gaps for specific student groups.

Annual Presentation on SPCSA Data

- Presentations to the Authority on student academic performance will include a heightened focus on understanding performance by student group. In addition, the SPCSA will present data on discipline by student group.
- This month, the board will receive presentations on student enrollment, graduation rate, and discipline data, all of which will be provide data by student group.

Focus on Schools

- This year's Focus on Schools series at board meetings will be dedicated to hearing from schools about how they are directly addressing issues of equity, including any specific efforts to combat systemic racism.
- So far, the Authority has heard from two schools about how they are directly addressing issues of equity, including any specific efforts to combat systemic racism. One more school will present in December and we look forward to additional schools presenting in 2021.

Growth Management Plan Working Group

- As the SPCSA reconvenes this working group, we will solicit input about how we can work with organizations across our state to elevate our focus on equity. In addition, the SPCSA will look into adding Equity Data into the Growth Management Plan.
- The Community Working Group had its first meeting of the year. We plan to have a subcommittee that specifically focuses on Equity as well as discuss the current SPCSA Equity Initiatives at the next quarterly meeting.

SPCSA-wide Training

- The SPCSA will survey school leaders to determine what training they currently participate in on diversity and inclusion, and what training they would like to receive through the SPCSA.
- SPCSA staff have developed a survey to send to school leaders regarding existing training and the need for training on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion.

Equity Data

- The SPCSA will identify opportunities to make Equity Data available and accessible to the public.
- SPCSA staff are looking for opportunities through our current annual initiatives including Performance Reports (B) and the Online Hub (H).

User-friendly website to address “How to find a school for my child”

- The SPCSA will make updates to our website to make it a centralized source for information that would be helpful for parents and families looking to identify a school for their child and enroll in a school.
- SPCSA staff are undertaking this effort through our Online Hub Initiative (H).

Equitable Access

- The SPCSA will work to establish lines of communication that would enable more access for those students that are homeless, in foster care or in the juvenile justice system.
- The SPCSA has been in touch with the child welfare agencies responsible for foster care services in each county in which the SPCSA has sponsored schools. We are developing Memoranda of Understanding with each to ensure that the needs of students are met. In addition, staff from child welfare agencies and the juvenile justice system have been invited to participate in the Community Working Group.