



## SHREWSBURY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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June 24, 2020

To: School Committee

From: Joe Sawyer

Re: Initial Steps to Advance Equity and Anti-Racism in Shrewsbury Public Schools

Dear School Committee:

As the crisis regarding racism continues to embroil our nation, this evening you are receiving the “equity audit” that our school district commissioned several months ago. As you know, in recent weeks we have received feedback, both solicited and unsolicited, from students, parents and caretakers, alumni, and staff regarding the issue of racism and how our schools might more effectively combat it and educate our students and community about this systemic issue. You have endorsed a resolution and each principal and I have made formal statements about the work we need to do as a school community to advance equity and anti-racism in our district. Our district has made elements of this work part of its strategic priorities and goals work that began in 2018, and there have been initiatives underway since that time; however, as we have stated, we need to do more and we need to do better, and there is a sense of urgency that must be applied to this work.

While both urgent and important, this work also must be undertaken with great care, thoughtfulness, and deliberation. Hastily constructed plans and rushed solutions have

the potential to hinder or even harm efforts to create effective and lasting improvements, and it is critical that we honor the significance of this work and the people it will affect by ensuring it is done well. I recommend the following approach as a pathway forward with elements that respond to the urgency to improve while planning for long-term and deep-rooted changes for the better.

**Initial Plan of Action to Advance Anti-Racism and Equity in SPS**

The approach our school district takes should follow an improvement cycle with the following elements:



While cyclical, these steps will overlap each other as some efforts will be happening in concert with one another.

	<b>Initial Actions/Timeline</b>
<b>Listen</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Survey staff for feedback/suggestions (June, already completed)</li> <li>2) Survey students, families, alumni, and community members for feedback/suggestions (June/July)</li> <li>3) Seek out voices who wish to be heard on these issues, especially those of persons of color, through focus groups &amp; 1:1 conversations with students, staff, parents/caretakers, alumni, and community members of color for district and school leaders to learn about their perceptions and solicit their feedback/suggestions. We may seek expert assistance and/or training to ensure that these are facilitated thoughtfully and skillfully; interpreters will be needed for some as well. (July/August/September/October)</li> </ol>

<p><b>Learn</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Provide resources on anti-racism and equity to families and staff to help them learn about these issues and to support discussions with children at home and in the classroom; look for partners in this work, such as the Shrewsbury Public Library (partially accomplished, continue updating at least monthly until a formal equity and anti-racism plan is in place)</li> <li>2) Identify high quality professional development opportunities that can be provided to staff in the near term. This will include ways to integrate additional elements into new staff orientation and required coursework for newer educators, as well as potential coursework or workshops for all staff. (July/August/September)</li> <li>3) Review options for high quality and effective staff training and professional development that could be provided over the coming year as part of the professional development plan for staff, such as the open course on equity through MIT EdX. (July/August/September)</li> <li>4) Continue and expand anti-racism &amp; equity book and discussion groups for staff. These have been established for middle and high school levels already and should expand to include the early childhood/elementary level. Plan a year-long book study for the District Leadership Team to build leaders' capacity to move equity and anti-racism work forward.</li> <li>5) Determine ways to engage parents and caretakers and community members with SPS staff and students in learning about anti-racism and equity through methods such as workshops, speaker series, community reads or book talks, etc. in the coming school year. (July/August/September/October)</li> <li>6) Find other school districts who have successfully engaged in this work in order to learn from their experiences (July/August and ongoing)</li> </ol>
<p><b>Plan &amp; Act</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Establish the Shrewsbury Public Schools Equity and Anti-Racism Coalition. This coalition would consist of representatives from stakeholders including students, parents, community, and staff. It is envisioned that this coalition would have a steering committee and subcommittees for the following goal areas for advancing equity and anti-racism (July/August) <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Curriculum, Instruction, &amp; Assessment</li> <li>b) School Culture &amp; Climate</li> </ol> </li> </ol>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>c) Policies &amp; Practices</li> <li>d) Adult Learning</li> <li>e) Hiring &amp; Employment Practices</li> <li>f) Community Engagement</li> </ul> <p>2) The Equity and Anti-Racism Coalition would be charged with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) creating overarching essential questions and strategic priorities to guide the district’s work on these issues;</li> <li>b) reviewing the work that the district has done on these issues in recent years, the equity audit, and other information related to our current situation;</li> <li>c) developing a plan with specific, measurable goals and recommended action steps under each of the goal areas listed above; and</li> <li>d) publicly reporting activities in order to update the School Committee and the community on progress.</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>(Work to begin as soon as coalition is formed, with more intensive work beginning in the early fall; timeline for the above will be dependent on several factors, including time and staff resources available depending on needs for school reopening and other issues related to managing through the pandemic)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3) Incorporate resources into the final Fiscal Year 2021 budget plan to support initiatives related to equity and anti-racism. (July/August)</li> <li>4) Integrate specific, required professional development into the district’s professional development plan for the 2020-2021 school year (July/August/September)</li> </ul>
<b>Assess</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Once plans are completed, goals established, and action taken, the district will need to assess results using both quantitative and qualitative measures, and report these results publicly.</li> <li>2) Assessment results will be used to determine next steps in the improvement cycle.</li> </ul>

This initial plan is a beginning, and is not exhaustive. What we learn as we begin the work will surely shape our approach as we go. It is my hope that this provides a

structure that will enable the critically important work of advancing equity and anti-racism in our school district to move forward in a manner that is both timely and deliberate. I look forward to helping advance these efforts together with our students, families, colleagues, and fellow community members.