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TO: Members of the State Board of Education
FROM: Nancy S. Grasmick *Nancy*
DATE: February 24, 2009
SUBJECT: Diversity and Cultural Proficiency Initiatives

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this item is provide an overview of current and expanding initiatives focused on developing and enhancing diversity awareness and cultural proficiency within the Maryland State Department of Education. These efforts are aligned with the Department's mission and organizational principles, targeting all employees through recruitment, screening, orientation, and continuing professional development.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:

The mission of the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) is to provide leadership, support, and accountability for effective systems of public education, library services, and rehabilitation services. Organizational principles in place to support this mission include two that are directly related to diversity and cultural proficiency:

- We believe people are our greatest resource and are committed to their growth and development.
- We believe cultural diversity, mutual trust, respect, open communication, and celebration of achievements are essential to a productive organization.

MSDE has a long history of commitment to assuring that all staff value and appreciate diversity within the agency and that this carries over to providing services for all of the stakeholders that the Department serves. Individuals must possess, develop, and maintain knowledge-based skills and understandings to successfully interact and work effectively with colleagues and clients from a variety of cultures. Organizationally, cultural proficiency includes the policies and practices at a systemic level as well as values and behaviors at the individual level that enable effective cross-cultural interactions among employees, clients and the community.

In working with stakeholders, MSDE implements a State Regulation (COMAR 13A.04.05), expanded in 1995 and revised in 2005, that requires all local school systems to infuse Education That Is Multicultural into instruction, curriculum, staff development, instructional resources, and school climate. It also requires the Maryland State Department of Education to incorporate

multicultural education into its programs, publications, assessments, and instructional resources. Education That Is Multicultural is defined as "a continuous, integrated, multidisciplinary process for educating all students about diversity and commonality. Diversity factors include, but are not limited to race, ethnicity, region, religion, gender, language, socioeconomic status, age, and individuals with disabilities. Education That Is Multicultural prepares students to live, interact, and work creatively in an interdependent global society by focusing on mutual appreciation and respect. It is a process that is complemented by community and parent involvement in support of multicultural initiatives.

Internally, it is essential to ensure that recruitment and selection activity conducted as part of the employment process are designed to ensure hiring practices and outcomes that will bring individuals into the Department who understand, embrace, and extend the organizational principles of diversity and cultural proficiency. Orientation for new staff members is an important component to ensure that there is consistent awareness and understanding of this organizational priority. Additionally, all MSDE staff can benefit from systemic professional development that expands cultural proficiency.

In order to increase awareness and value of diversity, and to build cultural proficiency within the MSDE, planned enhancements to employee selection, orientation, and professional development programs are underway. An overview of current practices and enhancements is attached; additional information specific to employee selection, orientation, and professional development is attached, as well.

SUMMARY:

Critical to the mission of the Maryland State Department of Education are the priorities of valuing diversity and developing cultural proficiency. Current practices related to these priorities extend across the State in work with external stakeholders and clients. Additionally, internal emphasis on diversity and cultural proficiency is vital to ensuring that the MSDE staff succeeds in embodying the organizational principles associated with (1) the growth and development of individuals, our greatest resource; and (2) recognition that cultural diversity, mutual trust, respect, open communication, and celebration of achievements are essential to a productive organization. Longstanding commitment to these principles is reflected in current practice, and significant initiatives are underway to enhance cultural proficiency.

ACTION:

This item is presented for information; no action is required.

NSG:jcs

Attachments

MARYLAND STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION'S DIVERSITY PLAN

The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) has a long history of commitment to assuring that all staff value and appreciate diversity within the agency and that this carries over to providing services for all the stakeholders that MSDE serves. These stakeholders include students, educators, families, and community partners. Diversity relates to multicultural factors such as race, age, ethnicity, national origin, gender, disability, and socioeconomic status. In order to expand existing efforts, MSDE will develop a comprehensive set of innovative strategies to address diversity issues and build cultural proficiency.

At the individual level, cultural proficiency is the level of knowledge-based skills and understandings that are required to successfully interact and work effectively with colleagues and clients from a variety of cultures. Organizationally, cultural proficiency includes the policies and practices at a systematic level as well as values and behaviors at the individual level that enable effective cross-cultural interactions among employees, clients and the community.

Five essential elements contribute to an organization's ability to become more culturally proficient:

- Valuing diversity,
- Assessing cultural knowledge,
- Managing the dynamics of difference,
- Adapting to difference, and
- Institutionalizing cultural knowledge.

MSDE's Strategic Plan states that people are our greatest resource and that, therefore, we are committed to their growth and development. Furthermore, it states that we also believe that cultural diversity, mutual trust, respect, open communication and celebration of achievement are essential to ensuring a successful and productive organization. In order to increase employee awareness of diversity and build cultural proficiency within the organization we are recommending the following enhancements to MSDE selection, orientation and professional development programs.

EMPLOYEE SELECTION

Current Practices

Our current employment practices are focused on legal compliance and continuing efforts to enhance our minority recruitment. Position announcements of our available vacancies are distributed internally and externally to over 200 resources, including educational institutions, community organizations, and professional associations. Recruitment advertising is placed in print media in the major regional newspapers, minority publications, and professional and trade journals. All vacancies are also posted on MSDE's employment website so that candidates can

apply on-line. Basic and advanced interview skills training programs are conducted on a monthly basis. These courses include modules on equity compliance and fair employment practices in the workplace. Employees are required to take the training before they can sit on an interview panel. Human Resources also ensures that interview panels are diverse in composition, reviews all interview questions for compliance, and also reviews the selection decisions to ensure a fair and equitable selection process.

Recommended Enhancements

- Stress MSDE's commitment to diversity in all recruitment communications.
- Include our preference for experience working in or with culturally diverse populations as part of our position announcements and recruitment advertising.
- Add questions to the interview process to determine candidates' experiences with cultural proficiency.
- Increase our targeting of applicant pools that are already diverse in nature.
- Add cultural proficiency components to the existing interview skills training modules.

Target Date: First quarter of 2009.

ORIENTATION TO MSDE

Current Practices

Currently, all new employees are required to attend a formal four-hour employee orientation on their first day of employment. This brief orientation includes an overview of MSDE's history and organizational structure as well as a review of all State-mandated policies and procedures and MSDE's internal policies. Included in this presentation is information on MSDE's commitment to providing a workplace that is free of discrimination and ensuring that all employees will be treated in a fair and equitable manner. The orientation also is designed so that employees are informed of all employee health, retirement and other benefits as well as given the opportunity to enroll in these benefits and complete the necessary paperwork to place them on the payroll.

Recommended Enhancements

- Expand new employee orientation to give new hires a strong foundation in MSDE's ongoing commitment to diversity and the concept of cultural proficiency.
- Expand MSDE's mission statement and strategic plan objectives to include a goal focused on cultural proficiency.
- Develop an action plan to achieve this new goal.

Target Dates:

1. New employee orientation to be expanded by the end of the first quarter of 2009.
2. The MSDE mission statement and strategic plan objective will be developed and communicated by the second quarter of 2009.
3. Action plan to be developed by the third quarter of 2009.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Current Practices:

MSDE currently provides workforce professional development for staff in the area of diversity through Interview Skills Training, which is required for all individuals who serve on interview teams. This training reviews policies related to discrimination in areas such as gender, race, ethnicity, and disability. Training sessions are also provided quarterly on the Americans with Disabilities Act, focusing not only on the law, but on understanding the concerns of individuals with disabilities in the workplace. In addition, Assistant Superintendents request informational sessions for their leadership teams on federal and state civil rights regulations. These are conducted by the Equity Assurance and Compliance Branch. MSDE also maintains an Education That is Multicultural and Achievement Coordinating Team, with representatives from each division. This group meets monthly to discuss implementation within MSDE of the State Education That is Multicultural Regulation (COMAR 13A.04.05).

In addition to these initiatives, several MSDE divisions are currently implementing a range of professional development and outreach programs and activities related to diversity and cultural proficiency. Examples of programs and activities include:

- Coordination of an Education That is Multicultural and Achievement Network comprised of representatives from MSDE and all 24 school systems, which meets monthly.
- Development of a Multicultural Education and Achievement Continuing Professional Development credit course that has been adapted and used by local school systems.
- Publication and dissemination of documents, "A Practical Guide to Accelerating Student Achievement Across Cultures: Strategies for Administrators, Teachers, Parents and Students," and "Multicultural Connections Educational Resource Directory".
- Development of guidelines for young children with disabilities whose home language is not English or whose mode of communication may be sign language or the use of Braille.
- Translation of parent information documents into different languages.
- Surveys of staff to determine multicultural needs and resources.
- Delivery of statewide training on multicultural access for Rehabilitation Services staff.
- Participation in a training program for non-English speaking parents and caregivers and for child care staff on English Language Learning.

Recommended Enhancements:

- Work with recognized experts in the field of diversity and cultural proficiency to develop and conduct mandatory professional development for all MSDE employees.
- Develop a training module on diversity and cultural proficiency internally to be provided to all new employees within their first month of employment with the agency.

Target Dates:

1. Professional development sessions to be conducted for all MSDE employees by the fourth quarter of 2009.
2. The internal training module on diversity and cultural proficiency will be presented on a monthly basis starting the beginning of the third quarter of 2009.

Program Initiatives	Planning Elements	Completion Date
Employee Selection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review recruitment communications and expand references to diversity. • Add related diversity questions to interview process. • Include cultural proficiency components in interview skills training. 	End of First Quarter of 2009
Orientation to MSDE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand new employee orientation to highlight cultural proficiency. • Recommend enhancements to mission statement and strategic plan objectives. 	End of First Quarter of 2009 End of Second Quarter of 2009
Professional Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct professional development needs assessment. • Identify and select external resources to conduct diversity and cultural proficiency training. • Design and implement an internal training module on cultural proficiency, to be presented on a monthly basis. 	End of Third Quarter of 2009

ATTACHMENT II

OFFICE OF HUMAN RESOURCES INTERVIEW QUESTIONS REGARDING DIVERSITY

Interview questions have been developed with a specific focus on diversity and cultural proficiency for support, professional, supervisory and management positions. Examples of attributes, experiences, and skills to be explored include:

- Experience working with individuals and groups representing varied economic, social, and cultural backgrounds.
- Situational approaches and skills that facilitate successful interaction with diverse colleagues, stakeholders, and clients.
- Leadership knowledge and practice for effectively advancing the mission of the agency toward sustained cultural proficiency.
- Strategies that effectively promote diversity and address diversity needs.

NEW EMPLOYEE ORIENTATION

The new module to be added to the orientation program will include the following elements:

- Description of MSDE's long standing commitment to diversity including its prominence in our Strategic Plan.
- Share demographic information about the Maryland student population, civilian workforce and MSDE's current workforce.
- Define diversity and cultural proficiency.
- Ask participants to share their experiences working in, or with, diverse groups and anything new that they learned about themselves and others.
- Indicate the date, time and location of the new diversity training program and stress that they are required to attend.

MSDE CULTURAL PROFICIENCY PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Cultural proficiency training strategies and programs will be based on the Maryland State Department of Education's Organizational Principles numbers four and five:

4. *We believe that people are our greatest resource and we are committed to their growth and development.*
5. *We believe that cultural diversity, mutual trust, respect, open communication, and celebration of achievement are essential to a productive organization.*

I. INTRODUCTORY PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- **Executive Team**
Focused professional development activity
Presented by Equity Assurance and Compliance Branch (EACB) in collaboration with outside consultants
May 2009

II. DIVISIONAL PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- **Staff Development Cultural Proficiency Needs Assessment**
Developed and distributed by EACB
April, 2009 distribution
May, 2009 completion
- **Professional development for each division**
Organized by division heads in collaboration with EACB
Presented by EACB in collaboration with outside consultants
Technical assistance provided by EACB
2-hour sessions
June 2009 – June 2010

III. NEW EMPLOYEE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- **Orientation**
Part of ½ day orientation sessions
Human Resources Division
Beginning March 2009
- **Cultural Proficiency Professional Development (mandated)**
2-hour sessions
Presented by EACB
Quarterly - September 2009; January, May, September 2010

IV. ONGOING ACTIVITIES

- **Brown Bag Lunch Sessions**
1 hour topical, interactive sessions open to all staff
Presented by EACB
Bi-monthly - October, December 2009; February, April, June, August, October, December 2010

V. FOLLOW-UP

- **Develop work performance norms related to cultural proficiency**
Divisional representatives
July 2010
 - **Ongoing cycle professional development to achieve continuous improvement**
July 2010 and beyond
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KEY CONCEPTS UNDERLYING CULTURAL PROFICIENCY

Professional development addresses essential elements that contribute to enhanced cultural proficiency:

- **Valuing diversity**
 - **Having the capacity for cultural self-assessment**
 - **Managing the dynamics of difference**
 - **Having institutionalized cultural knowledge**
 - **Having developed adaptations to service delivery reflecting an understanding of cultural diversity**
 - **Intercultural communication**
 - **Addressing bias in the workplace**
 - **Establishing culturally supportive working environments**
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BRIEF LIST OF RESOURCES

- **Building Cultural Intelligence by Richard D. Bucher, Baltimore City Community College, Pearson Prentice Hall, 2008**
- **Cultural Proficiency, A Manual for School Leaders by Lindsey, Robins, and Terrell, Corwin Press, Inc., 2003**
- **Leading with Diversity by Elise Trumbull and Maria Pacheco, Brown University and Pacific Resources for Education and Learning, 2005**
- **Building on the Promise of Diversity by R. Roosevelt Thomas, Jr., American Management Association, 2006**
- **www.tcada.state.tx.us Texas Commission on Alcohol and Drug Abuse power point presentation on cultural proficiency training ... online presentation.**
- **www.sharingdiversity.com**
- **http://www.businessweek.com/adsections/diversity/diversecompet.htm**
- **www.mkemarketplace.com/shrm/content/Strategic Planning Cultural Competence.ppt**

