

For Immediate Release

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Media Release

CCSD to roll out cultural diversity training to all staff

Office of Strategy and Communications

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Charleston, SC – Charleston County School District (CCSD) will unveil a new Board mandated Cultural Competency training in the coming months for all district employees.

The district is developing an advisory group to help teachers and staff understand their roles in creating schools that are more culturally responsive to the diverse student population it serves.

The official policy was adopted by the CCSD Board of Trustees December 16, 2019.

Additionally, the committee will help recruit an individual to lead the district's diversity and inclusion efforts. Staff is currently drafting the job description for the committee to review when they first convene in March. The group will meet quarterly and consist of 11 community members that are not CCSD employees.

Don Kennedy, the District's Chief Financial and Administrative Officer, said the committee's responsibilities will include the identification of ways to improve diversity at all levels through leadership and feedback in developing initiatives, strategies and training.

Kennedy and his team consulted with entities around the country, includes Miami-Dade County Public Schools, Austin, TX. Independent School District and the Colorado Department of Education to develop a model for CCSD.

Targets for the diversity and cultural training ultimately developed will include principals, teachers, volunteers, paraprofessionals, district level leaders, department heads, and school board members.

Top-level leadership training will differ from that of the classroom teacher who is working directly with students said Kennedy. Teachers must be more culturally responsive to a student as compared to district leaders who need to develop wide-range strategies that benefit the entire district.

The committee will also find ways to obtain baseline data to ascertain where district staff is as far as their understanding of cultural competency, Kennedy explained. Once complete, the committee will create the various types of training that will be rolled out.

Cultural Competency is comprised of four components:

- Awareness of one's own cultural worldview
- Attitude towards cultural differences
- Knowledge of different cultural practices and worldviews
- cross-cultural skills

The word culture implies the integrated patterns of human behavior that includes thoughts, communications, actions, customs, beliefs, values, and institutions of racial, ethnic, religious, or social groups.

The word competency implies having the capacity to function in a particular way: the capacity to function within the context of culturally integrated patterns of human behavior defined by a group. Competency in functioning cross-culturally means learning new patterns of behavior and effectively applying them in the appropriate settings.

The policy adopted contains the following elements that are essential for its employees to contribute to the District's ability to become more culturally proficient:

1. Value Diversity: Claim Differences • Incorporate differences in the curriculum – students must see themselves in their curriculum and instructional materials
 - Acknowledge the contribution of various cultural and ethnic groups through teaching and learning
2. Institutionalize Cultural Knowledge • Incorporate cultural knowledge and training into the professional development of all District staff
 - Ensure educators' pedagogy is culturally responsive
 - Structure opportunities to engage parents and communities in cultural awareness
3. Adapt to Diversity
 - Develop structures for revisiting community needs and values to align school policies and resources

For more information contact the Office of Strategy and Communications at (843) 937-6303.

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About the Charleston County School District

Charleston County School District (CCSD), a nationally-accredited school district, is the second largest school system in South Carolina representing a unique blend of urban, suburban, and rural schools spanning 1,300 square miles along the coast. CCSD serves more than 50,000 students in 87 schools and specialized programs. With approximately 6,100 employees district-wide, CCSD is the fourth largest employer in the region.

CCSD offers a diverse, expanding portfolio of options and specialized programs, delivered through neighborhood, charter, magnet, IB (international baccalaureate), and Montessori schools, and is divided into three Learning Communities. Options include specialized programs in science, engineering and mathematics; liberal arts; music and other creative and performing arts; career and technical preparation programs; and military and other public service enterprises.