

Equity Action Plan

Department of Facilities Management
Division of Construction

March 14, 2014

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Equity in Practice

The Division of Construction supports the Montgomery County Public Schools “*Culture of Respect*” compact and values the rich racial, ethnic and cultural diversity of our work force. The Division recognizes that, in a true culture of respect, individuals are aware and understand the impact of their behavior and decisions on others, and have an awareness, understanding, and acceptance of others’ interests, viewpoints, culture, and background.

To truly be a model of excellence in progressive, innovative and process-driven facilities design and construction and ensure that principals, schools, and offices will have the appropriate resources and support to accomplish their missions it is imperative to cultivate a collaborative culture of service, embrace and foster racial, ethnic and cultural diversity in our work force and promote equitable practices in the work place. Accordingly, the Division of Construction’s strategic plan integrates respect and equity in all aspects of our work.

This Equity Action Plan not only shares the Division of Construction’s current and on-going equity strategies and actions, but also provides a framework and plan to foster and strengthen the Division’s equity in practice. The following provides a brief insight into the current and on-going equitable practices.

1. The Division integrates equity into recruiting and hiring practices through:
 - Outreach to professional societies such as the Society of Women Engineer’s and The National Society of Black Engineers to advertise open positions in the Division
 - Networking with existing contacts to extend employment opportunities to minorities
 - Diverse membership on interview panels
2. Division leadership applies equity in setting job expectations by:
 - Maintaining high expectations and standards for all staff and an open door policy for employees to openly and honestly discuss their cultural heritage with respect to job expectations.

3. The Division provides for equity in customer service through:
 - Encouraging consultants to bring diversity in both their staff and sub-consultants to meet with schools and communities.
 - Encouraging and collaborating with architectural firms to teach students about their vocations during the construction process.
 - Some Division of Construction staff that are bilingual and are able to assist with customer communication.
 - Multi-lingual notifications that are distributed to schools and communities for inclusive participation in the facility planning processes.
 - Interpreters that are provided when requested for public meetings to enable community inclusion in the process.

4. The Division provides for equity in vendor/supplier through:
 - Encouraging Minority Business Enterprises (MBE's) to do business with MCPS.
 - Reaching out in conjunction with other jurisdictions and the Division of Procurement to increase the potential pool of contractors and suppliers.
 - Setting goals for MBE participation in capital projects by analyzing available firms and their trades.
 - Working with the Governor's Office of Minority Affairs to increase MBE participation.

5. The Division improves equity and cultural awareness by:
 - Discussing cultural awareness and diversity at staff meetings
 - Participating in study circles and focus groups with other departments and divisions
 - Maintaining zero-tolerance for culturally insensitive behavior
 - Taking immediate action to redress any situation of equitable and cultural discomfort for an employee in the workplace

Mission

The mission of the Division of Construction is to effectively plan and manage design and construction processes to provide quality learning environments in a timely manner.

Core Values

The Division of Construction is committed to fostering an environment that promotes staff growth and development in meeting core competencies, thereby improving the Division's overall performance in achieving our vision and mission. The Division's strategic plan espouses six core values; (1) Learning, (2) Relationships, (3) Respect, (4) Excellence, (5) Equity and (6)

Integrity. While the tenets of the Montgomery County Public Schools “*Culture of Respect*” compact are intrinsically linked with each of these core values, the core values of Respect and Equity speak are specifically addressed in the Division’s strategic plan.

Respect: The Division believes that respectful behavior generates trust that leads to excellence and high productivity, each individual staff member’s contributions add value to the quality of our services, and all staff members should be treated equitably with integrity, honesty, and respect. Therefore, the Division will model civility in all interactions and encourage open and honest communications, provide opportunities for stakeholders to voice their opinions, actively recognize individuals’ contributions and progress. We will be open and respectful of other perspectives

Equity: The Division believes that every person is unique and has value and that diversity in our division provides a wealth of valuable perspectives. Therefore the Division will know customers and colleagues as individuals, seek multiple perspectives and relationships from within and outside the organization, and remain committed to equitable practices.

Equity Goals

Customer and Stakeholder Focus

- maintain design and construction processes that are open and transparent engaging our diverse communities in our work and providing timely and accurate information to all.

Workforce Excellence

- provide leadership training and opportunities for all staff to build competency and encourage personal growth and initiative
- create an inclusive work environment
- increase outreach to ethnic minorities during the hiring process

Equity Strategies

In addition to the goals addressing equity, the Division of Construction’s strategic plan promotes a large number of equitable practices, including the following:

Strategy 7 - Develop and maintain consistent operational practices

Strategy 9 - Encourage staff to take pride and ownership in their work

Strategy 10- Provide opportunities to build competency, encourage personal growth and initiative

Strategy 11- Leadership training is available to all DOC staff

Strategy 12- Provide staff with clear job expectations and a process by which those expectations are measured

Strategy 13- Develop action plans that are focused and implemented equitably within the Division of Construction

Strategy 14 - Increase outreach to ethnic minorities during the hiring process Create an inclusive work environment

Strategy 15- Provide opportunities to build competency, encourage personal growth and initiative

Action Plan

1. **HUMAN RESOURCE ACTIVITIES**

A. **Strategy:: Integrate equity into recruiting and hiring**

Actions:

1. Encourage employees to refer candidates who reflect the diversity of the community, diversity of perspective, and who possess the skills and attitudes required to be successful
2. Ensure that interviews promote the selection of highly qualified candidates who reflect the diversity of the community
3. To the extent possible, select interview panels that reflect the diversity of the applicants

B. **Strategy: Integrate equity into new employee orientations**

Actions:

1. New employee orientations will include discussion of racial and cultural sensitivity and the organizational culture of respect
2. New employee orientations will be specific to the job and include expectations, competencies, and requirements to be successful
3. Meet with all new employees during their probationary periods to stress open and honest communications and respect in the workplace

C. Strategy: Ensure equity in the assignment of duties

Actions:

1. Assign and distribute work among all employees with impartiality, fairness, and equality of opportunities for professional cross-training and developmental experience
2. Provide equitable opportunities for non-supervisory staff to participate on leadership teams and committees and in meetings that provide opportunities for professional development

D. Strategy: Integrate equity into employee development

Actions:

1. Train, coach, counsel, and mentor all employees on the importance of self-assessment, professional development, and the pursuit of career objectives that may serve as paths to competitive advancement
2. Encourage all employees to seek training and development that help them to achieve their full potential and career objectives
3. Ensure that all employees prepare professional development plans (PDPs), and that supervisors review PDPs with employees at least annually
4. Provide opportunities for staff to contribute to the success of the organization through cross training and developmental assignments
5. Train, coach, counsel, and mentor all employees fairly and impartially as a means to integrate equity into organizational succession planning

E. Strategy: Apply equity in setting job expectations

Actions:

1. Impartially and fairly set and enforce high expectations and standards of conduct for all employees
2. Ensure that performance standards and criteria used to evaluate staff are clear, consistent, and communicated to all employees well in advance of evaluations.
3. Encourage all employees to speak openly and honestly when they feel that job expectations are in conflict with their cultural heritage or beliefs.

F. Strategy: Ensure equity in feedback and recognition

Actions:

1. Provide regular performance feedback to all employees to encourage them to continue to improve and grow professionally
2. Encourage employees to provide feedback to their supervisors regarding problems or challenges related to workplace equity
3. Regularly solicit and acknowledge the importance of employee feedback
4. Provide consistent, accurate, and specific oral and/or written feedback to employees that supports improved performance and motivation
5. Be fair and impartial in recognizing employees for good performance or for specific accomplishments, either one-on-one or in front of peers, as appropriate to the situation.

2. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND GROWTH

A. Strategy: Ensure equity in professional development

Actions:

1. Ensure that all employees understand their duties, responsibilities, required competencies, and job expectations through periodic one- on-one and/or group counseling
2. Equitably adhere to and reinforce principles and requirements of current MCPS professional growth systems for all employees
3. Encourage employees to participate in the MCPS mentoring and in- service training programs to enhance their cultural awareness and competence as part of their own professional development
4. Annually provide initial and/or refresher training for leaders and supervisors in workplace equity, cultural competence, and the MCPS culture of respect
5. Ensure that organizational training events recognize and respect the language, background, and culture of the participants
6. Address workplace equity and cultural competence with all employees
7. Teach and/or help employees to assess their developmental needs and support their efforts to pursue developmental opportunities
8. Encourage all employees to carefully assess, plan. and pursue their career objectives according to their interests and abilities

B. Strategy: Support equity for English language learners

Actions:

1. Encourage employees to pursue opportunities to improve their English language skills, including in-service training
2. Ensure that English language learners understand the career-enhancing implication of learning and using the English language.

C. Strategy: Improve equity through cultural awareness

Actions:

1. Encourage employees to pursue opportunities to improve their English language skills, including in-service training
2. Ensure that English language learners understand the career-enhancing implication of learning and using the English language.

3. COMMUNICATIONS

A. Strategy: Integrate equity into communications

Actions:

1. Communicate openly and honestly with all employees without regard to racial, ethnic, or cultural differences
2. Treat all employees with equal levels of respect without regard to racial, ethnic or cultural differences
3. Fairly consider all employees' ideas and opinions

4. Develop and employ effective listening skills to improve understanding of the communications of culturally diverse employees
5. Recognize and respect that communication styles can vary with differences in employees cultural backgrounds
6. Use available means (meetings, email, newsletters, websites etc.) to reinforce the importance of cultural differences
7. Model a culture of respect in all oral and written communications

4. TEAM BUILDING

A. Strategy: Enhance equity by effective team building

Actions:

1. Create diverse membership on teams and committees
2. Enforce a culture of respect in team development and operations
3. Include team building principles in organizational training activities
4. Attempt to resolve employee problems and grievances at the lowest possible level
5. Utilize employee assistance program (EAP) or other mediation services to attempt to resolve difficult Interpersonal conflicts between individuals or groups
6. Use "study circle" techniques when appropriate to raise the awareness of diversity issues and to facilitate dialogue on race, ethnicity, language, and other factors of diversity
7. Use interest-based bargaining strategies to ensure that the interests of all groups are fairly represented in operations and decision making

5. CUSTOMERS AND STAKEHOLDERS

A. Strategy: Enhance equity by effective team building

Actions:

1. Provide customer service guidelines to all employees to ensure that customers are consistently treated with respect without regard to racial, ethnic, or other cultural differences
2. Periodically evaluate business processes and procedures to ensure that they are free of structural or institutional racism
3. Provide business services with fairness, equity, and respect for the customer Evaluate customer feedback to ensure that services are being equitably provided, and that customer comments are not the result of service inequities
4. Provide customer service guidelines to all employees to ensure that customers are consistently treated with respect without regard to racial, ethnic, or other cultural differences
5. Periodically evaluate business processes and procedures to ensure that they are free of structural or institutional racism
6. Provide business services with fairness, equity, and respect for the customer

B. Strategy: Provide for equity in vendor/supplier support

Actions:

1. Provide vendors/suppliers with copies of the MCPS “Culture of Respect” and the “Foreward” to the equity action plan to ensure that they understand and respect our goals
2. Report alleged incidents of cultural disrespect by vendors/suppliers to the Division of Procurement for follow-up.

6. ORGANIZATIONAL LEADERSHIP

A. Strategy: Enhance equity by effective team building

Actions:

1. Ensure that new leaders understand the importance of cultural awareness and sensitivity
2. Provide or arrange for cultural training for all new leaders and refresher training for all other leaders
3. Model desired cultural competence behavior to subordinate leaders
4. Include equity and cultural competence issues in recurring counseling and mentoring activities
5. Expect, demand, and enforce equitable behavior by subordinate leaders, supported by periodic observation and counseling
6. Mentor all employees who show ability and potential to advance to leadership positions, without regard to racial or cultural diversity
7. Embrace and display a consistent philosophy of equity in the workplace

