

October 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2020

Dear Families of the San Bernardino City Unified School District (SBCUSD),

As we move forward this academic year, I want you to know that your child's success is the most important outcome for our department. This is my second year as director of the Department of Equity and Targeted Student Achievement (ETSA). Though COVID-19 has created some new and unique challenges, ETSA is committed to helping our leaders, teachers, and families achieve the goals in the Improvement Plan for African American Student Achievement. Those goals are:

1. Reading and English language arts success in grade 3
2. Math success in grades 4, 5, and 8
3. A-G requirements success for high school freshmen in Integrated Math I
4. Access to and success in advanced courses, such as GATE, AVID, honors, advanced placement, and the International Baccalaureate program
5. Family and community engagement

Below are some of the steps we are currently taking to meet these goals.

### **Gap Closing Teaching Training**

In November we will begin to offer new professional development for principals and teachers. It is called *Gap Closing Teaching: A Brain-Based Approach to African American Student Achievement*. It brings together the best research on how the brain learns, wellness, childhood adversity, African and African American history, and the mindsets and practices most often used by successful teachers of African American students. We are providing this to small teams at volunteering schools. After the training we will collaborate with participating schools on practices, policies, and systems that will improve outcomes for African American students.

### **Reading Support: 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade**

We have 50 elementary schools in SBCUSD. Our schools have 149 third grade teachers with 489 African American students. To support as many teachers as possible we are taking a three-step approach. In step 1 we are providing both the *Gap Closing Teaching* professional development, as well as new training that focuses on teacher mindsets and practices for African American student reading success. Next, our Reading Equity Program Specialist, Ms. Roxanne Williams, will be working directly with volunteer teachers on teaching to close reading gaps (e.g., instructional planning, assessment, classroom routines). Finally, we will work with some schools to provide additional supports (e.g., data chats; collaborating on practices, policies, and systems for African American student success).

### **Math Support: Grades 4, 5, and 8**

Our schools have 299 elementary and middle school math teachers in grades 4, 5, and 8, with 1,620 African American students combined. To support as many teachers as possible we are taking the steps mentioned above for reading. We will be providing the *Gap Closing*

*Teaching* training, and new training on teacher mindsets and practices for African American student math success. Our Math Equity Program Specialist, Mrs. Chidinma Kalu, will be working directly with volunteer teachers on teaching to close math gaps. And we will work with some schools to provide additional supports (e.g., data chats; collaborating on practices, policies, and systems for African American student success).

### **A-G Requirements: High School**

The A-G requirements are the courses students need to complete in high school to be eligible to attend a University of California (UC) or a California State University (CSU). The Improvement Plan focuses specifically on Integrated Math I as an important class that affects African American student's early A-G success. We have 36 Integrated Math I teachers who have 423 African American students. Our Vice Principal on Special Assignment, Dr. Mary Shelton, will work with high school administrators and counselors to coordinate supports for African American students. These supports will include regular grade checks, attendance checks, course scheduling support, wellness check ins, mentoring and tutoring services, and collaborations with teachers and families. High school principals and Integrated Math I teachers will also be invited to participate in ETSA trainings (e.g., *Gap Closing Teaching*, math teacher mindset; see above). We will work with some high schools to provide additional supports (e.g., collaborating on practices, policies, and systems for African American student success) as well.

### **Advanced Courses: All Grades**

This year we will schedule a series of meetings with key stakeholders to discuss African American student access to and success in advanced courses. These courses and programs include:

- Accelerated Kindergarten
- Vanguard (grades 1-2)
- Gifted and Talented Education (GATE, grades 3-8)
- Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID, grades K-12)
- Honors, advanced placement, and International Baccalaureate courses (grades 9-12)

Principals, parents, teachers, and District staff will be invited to these meetings. We will review past data, identify gaps, and collaborate to address the following questions/issues:

1. Historically, what gaps have existed for African American students in these programs?
2. Why have these gaps persisted?
3. What systems issues have led to these gaps?
4. What policy issues have led to these gaps?
5. What systems can we create to ensure African American students have access to and success in these courses?
6. What policies can we create to ensure African American student access/success?
7. What supports do we need to ensure access/success?
8. Who will provide those supports? When?

The goal is to develop a policy, a system, and some supports that can be approved for the 2021-22 academic year.

### **Parent Engagement**

This year we are offering a range of exciting programs and supports for parent and community engagement. SCBUSD has been a pioneer in the development of African American

Parent Advisory Councils (AAPACs). We are also blessed to have a strong, well-organized District African American Advisory Council (DAAAC). To support our school leaders, we developed a new AAPAC training and began offering it to principals this summer. As of this writing six of our principals, along with some of their staff members, have completed the initial training, and more have signed up. Our goal is to provide the training to 20 principals/schools this year.

We are also providing a new Community Empowerment series. These meetings will be led by local and national experts, and will focus on the themes of Black health, Black wealth, and Black history. Likewise, our lively and engaging DAAAC meetings will be tackling issues such as attending HBCUs, healthy eating, raising successful Black college grads, building a 700-credit score, and parenting and loving Black LGBTQ students.

### **SANKOFA**

The original SANKOFA program was founded in 2005. It existed at one elementary and one middle school. We are creating a committee to rethink and revamp SANKOFA as a fully recognized magnet program. Ideally, this magnet will retain the elements that made the original model successful. These included the daily use of cultural affirmations, brain-based teaching, caring teacher-student relationships, student voice, high academic expectations/no busy work, regular descriptive feedback, creative and highly engaging instruction, ongoing teacher support and training, and strong parent engagement. In addition to those elements, the new magnet may offer:

- Program continuity through one elementary, one middle, and one high school.
- A SANKOFA counselor at the high school who supports Black students with A-G course and social-emotional success (similar to English learner counselors).
- A SANKOFA AVID class at the high school that prepares Black students for college success (as recommended in AVID's 2013 Blueprint for Success).

### **Mentoring and Tutoring**

Given the unique challenges our community is facing, we are providing a range of mentoring and tutoring services for African American students. The organizations providing these services are listed below in Figure 1. Each organization is responsible for keeping a list of students supported, frequency of and kinds of support, outcome measures, and the progress each student is making toward the outcomes. Some of these student measures may include grades, class performance data, attendance, positive discipline, wellness surveys, interview and observation data.

### **ETSA Website**

We are working with our Communications Department to provide regularly updated Improvement Plan data. Our website will soon display data on African American English, math, A-G, and advanced course performance, as well as family engagement. Our goal is to provide our stakeholders with a range of data types so they can track our efforts in real time. Data will provide information about student achievement, processes and systems, fidelity to new processes/systems, stakeholder perceptions, and stakeholder demographics.

**Figure 1. Mentoring and Tutoring Support Services**

Organizations	Services Being Provided	Sites (if applicable)	Contact Person
African American Boys' Wellness Program	Wellness support for African American boys	• San Bernardino High	Wendy Whitmore Truthhealingevolution@gmail.com
Akoma Unity Center	Tutoring and mentoring	• TBD	Kim Calvin kimberly.c@akomaunitycenter.org
Loma Linda University Healthy Neighborhood Project	Tutoring and mentoring	• TBD	Dr. Juan Belliard jbelliard@llu.edu
Young Visionaries Youth Leadership	Mentoring	• TBD	Terrence Stone tstone@yvyla-ie.org
Young Women's Empowerment	Mentoring for African American girls	• Del Vallejo Middle • Pacific High • San Geronio High	Kesha Vann vannkd@gmail.com
Youth Mentoring Action Network	Mentoring	TBD	Dr. Torie Weiston-Serdan weiston@yman.org

**HBCU College Fairs**

ETSA is working with the United College Action Network (U-CAN) to provide several virtual college fairs for SBCUSD students and families. These fairs showcase Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). Registration links and details will be forthcoming. Fair dates are below.

- 10-1-20: DAAAC meeting (5:30-7:00 PM). Admissions officers from several HBCUs gave presentations and answered questions for families.
- 10-14-20 (3:00-7:00 PM)
- 10-15-20 (3:00-7:00 PM)
- 10-16-20 (9:00 AM-2:00 PM)
- 10-17-20 (9:00 AM-2:00 PM)

All students can attend the fairs, but high school juniors and seniors are the target population. It is important that students have their transcripts with them as some institutions may be able to grant on the spot admissions.

**Black Educator Wellness**

In response to the numerous challenges facing our country at large, and African Americans in particular, we are collaborating as educators to promote mental health and wellness. This summer we created a Black Male Wellness Check In series. Black males make up just 2% of all educators nationally, and are often the only ones on their campuses or in their roles. This makes it challenging when trying to find mentors, networks, support groups, or when

looking for help with promotions and advancement. Moreover, within the broader society, Black males have the highest incidents of being murdered, imprisoned, unemployed, and failed in schools. There is an urgent need for wellness support, and the same is true for Black female educators, Latinx educators, and all others. ETSA is committed to collaborating with and supporting educators to promote health, wellness, and the practices that help us succeed with students.

### **District Equity Department Network**

California has over 1,000 school districts and county offices of education. Of them, 155 have Black student populations of 5% or more. The ETSA office conducted research this summer and found that approximately 30 of those districts have an equity department similar to ours in SBCUSD. We reached out to the leaders of those departments and have formed a District Equity Department Network. We have held three meetings thus far, and they have been attended by leaders from 18 Northern, Central, and Southern California school districts. Our goals are to support one another, and to collaborate on practice, policy, and research for underserved student groups.

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In closing, our department is committed to the success of African American students, and to our community and families. We hope that you will join us at any of our upcoming events (e.g., DAAAC, school AAPACs, Community Empowerment, African American Task Force). Please let me know if we can be of assistance in any way.

Sincerely,

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Ms. Phyllis Hammond, ETSA Secretary, [phyllis.hammond@sbcusd.k12.ca.us](mailto:phyllis.hammond@sbcusd.k12.ca.us)

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Ms. Roxanne Williams, ETSA Program Specialist, [roxanne.williams@sbcusd.k12.ca.us](mailto:roxanne.williams@sbcusd.k12.ca.us)

Mrs. Chidinma Kalu, ETSA Program Specialist, [chidinma.kalu@sbcusd.k12.ca.us](mailto:chidinma.kalu@sbcusd.k12.ca.us)

Ms. Devona Robertson, DAAAC President, [vona822002@yahoo.com](mailto:vona822002@yahoo.com)

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