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Our Journey Toward Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

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Over the recent years, it has become clear that **PTA can and should establish itself as an anti-racist organization** committed to improving and changing systems that are structured in ways that do not equitably benefit all students and families, as well as actively create space for all parents and educators to feel included and valued in our collective efforts – especially those who may not have seen themselves reflected in PTA leadership and decision-making.

In recognition of this reality, the Second District PTA Executive Board unanimously voted in early June 2020 to begin a formal effort to address Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) in our daily practice.

At this meeting, we created a task force of board members to explore how best to approach this work; and we have been mindful of these goals to advance this effort. This statement is an effort to transparently share our journey thus far and to invite your feedback and participation in this effort. You can find our next steps towards the end of this letter.

As we determined how to approach this work, several values and priorities emerged:

- Be aware of how dominant culture works. Does this work need to live in a committee just because that's how PTA always does things? Don't rush to structural solutions.
- We need to identify which PTA leaders want to be part of this work at the district level before creating the structure and process it exists in. We want to lift leaders of color to help guide the process.
- We need to move through this work WITH typically underrepresented parents rather than do it FOR them.
- Diversity, equity and inclusion is not just "checking a box" to indicate that there is racial and ethnic diversity in a PTA, but it is about creating the space and culture where people who are typically underrepresented in PTA spaces are wanted, valued and respected as participants and leaders..
- We have lots of learning to do in order to approach this work with humility. We should make a statement about our intent and build our capacity to do the work thoughtfully.
- We need people with diverse experiences to help guide us through this work so we don't unintentionally cause harm.

As a result of this discussion, we determined the most important next step was to conduct some research to understand what related efforts are already happening in the SFUSD community, e.g. learn about purposes and goals of SFUSD advisory groups: African American Parent Advisory Council (AAPAC), District English Learners Advisory Committee (DELAC), Community Advisory Committee (CAC) for Special Education, Indian American PAC, etc.; learn why schools have started DEI committees; CAPTA districts/councils in diverse cities; what are SFUSD Office of Equity and SFUSD Family Partnership and Empowerment

Departments doing, i.e. what conversations are they having? This is what we started doing and have continued to do so to date.

Some take-aways from our initial conversations in 2020:

- One school started their work off several years ago with a book club and has had speakers and support from SFUSD. Micro-grants are available from SFUSD for schools who want to take this work on. The school created their Racial Justice and Inclusion Committee.
- There is interest to have students at middle/high schools help lead these types of efforts.
- The tip sheets about working with African American parents from the National PTA are offensive and used deficit-based language, contrary to tip sheets about working with other racial/ethnic groups; we will let National PTA leadership know about this and ask for it to be corrected.
- Making schools safe and welcoming for everyone is a goal.
- Self-education/reflection is necessary in order to make broader progress as a group.
- Education around what the [characteristics of white dominant culture are](#) could be helpful for improving unintentionally offensive PTA communications, actions, structure.
- We should support parents and prospective parent leaders with education and skill building to improve their ability to be inclusive and responsive leaders, and also set expectations around what we expect from leaders who consider entering PTA leadership. We should consider how we incorporate anti-racism practices into regular PTA trainings. If we are going to say we embrace anti-racism, it must be present in this aspect of our work.
- Effective DEI work can't be about Black and Brown people educating everyone else. White people need to do their work first.
- AAPACs and other affinity groups can co-exist with PTAs, we don't need to have them fit underneath a PTA umbrella. We should look to partner in affinity spaces. Before we can be an "us," we need to co-exist in a supportive and respectful way.
- Consider where we can make PTA culture less rigid, and where it is rigid, ask why. This can be a turn off for many families and can contribute to a culture that isn't welcoming.
- Come from an asset-based perspective. Everyone brings value. Every parent has a right to be involved.

As a result of our efforts so far, the task force recommended these next steps to the Second District

board, which they approved at our August 2020 board meeting.

1. Communicate with our units about this process, our intentions, and the journey so far, as well as an invitation to join us if interested.
2. Develop a statement to put on the sfpta.org website; establish anti-racism as a stated priority for SFPTA. You can find our [statement here](#) and the addition of an [anti-racism goal](#).
3. Incorporate anti-racism training into annual officer trainings (if we believe this is important work, we have to integrate it into how we train parents to be leaders).
4. Create a page on the sfpta.org website for anti-racism and [DEI resources](#) for easy reference.
5. Commit to providing interpretation for district-wide meetings, and translating information that might go to units broadly (e.g. trainings, 411 meetings, etc.).
6. Don't rush to structural solutions. We think this could become a committee, but it could also become a position on the Second District PTA board (specialist, chair, etc.). Be open and flexible.

We also want to conduct and continue a yearly needs assessment of our units, to learn what you want and need, what issues you may need support in, and to ask principals what challenges they've experienced, etc.

We are excited to be intentionally engaging in this work and expect to learn a great deal as we move through this process.

- Do you have experience at your school or PTA that you'd like to share?
- Would you like to stay informed of our work?
- Or invite one person from your PTA to be a contact person for this effort?

We invite you to ask questions, keep us accountable, and join us wherever you have interest. Please feel free to share this email with your members and/or email DEI@sfpta.org or any executive board member with your thoughts.

Thank you for all you do to support the students, families and teachers in your schools.

The Second District PTA Board

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Second District PTA

555 Franklin Street,
San Francisco, CA
94102

E-mail:

2ndDist@sfpta.org

Website:

www.sfpta.org

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Resources

> California State PTA

> TOTEM – The E-Membership System

> Ed100

> School Smarts

> National PTA

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