



Special School Committee Meeting of the Whole

Monday | May 3, 2021



Advancing Equity & Anti-Racism

School Committee Meeting | May 3

Advancing Equity & Anti-Racism

Agenda:

1. Update on Equity work with a focus on work by our School-Based Equity Specialists
2. School Committee & District legal requirements and responsibilities
 - a. Mandated Reporter
 - b. The 51A
3. SPS Restorative Justice Practices
 - a. Mediation Program & School-based Efforts
 - b. Training
4. District/SPD MOU
 - a. Role of SPD as partner in supporting students
 - b. Status of police presence (SRO's, STEPS program)
 - c. Advancing Equity Task Force Policy Subcommittee
 - d. Plans to solicit student voice
5. Where we are and where we are going

Presenters:

Andre Green, Somerville School Committee Chairperson
Mary Skipper, Superintendent of Schools
SPS School-Based Equity Specialists:
- Amber Jackson - Dayshawn Simmons
- Heidi Given - Daphnee Balan
Liz Doncaster, SPS Student Services Director
Paige Tobin, Esq. - Murphy, Lamere & Murphy, P.C.
Sebastian LaGambina, Principal, Somerville High School
Jeannine Nye, Lead Mediator, Somerville Public Schools
Deputy Chief Chris Ward, Chief of Operations, Somerville
Police Department
SPS Advancing Equity Task Force Members:
- Sol Rheem - Jack Haverty
- Sam Patton
Chad Mazza, Asst. Superintendent
Fran Gorski Finance Director



School-Based Equity Specialist

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As shared a few weeks ago by Dr. Davis, there are many initiatives currently underway to advance equity in our schools. Here are a few highlights from her presentation. Today we will focus in specifically on the work of the school-based equity specialists.



District Wide Initiatives

District-Wide Initiatives:

- **Advancing Equity Task Force:** This is a team of 25 staff members (educators, administrators, instructional coaches, and family liaisons) who work together to identify systemic inequities within the district, and create solutions.
- **Affinity Group Working Group:** This is a working group of 10 educators and administrators who are planning the incorporation of affinity groups for students and staff in SPS. The student affinity groups will be piloted during the school day starting in quarter 3.
- **DESE Diversity Network:** The district is a member of the Diversity Network which is a partnership with the MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) to support the diversification of our staff.
- **Educator Professional Goals:** All educator professional goals for this school year must be aligned with the district's priority on equity.

School-Based Initiatives

- **School-Based Equity Specialists:** Each school in the district has a school based equity specialist. This specialist works closely with the Director for Equity and Excellence and the School Administration to create a school-wide equity plan with concrete, measurable goals. They also support organizing professional development for each school community and provide thought-partnership to educators for how to make their practices and the school's systems more equitable.
- **Administrator Coaching at SHS:** Somerville High School Department Chairs are engaged in a year long equity coaching with The Leadership Academy.
- **Explicit Equity Focus at each school:** Each school has equity goals and has led school-based professional development with an explicit equity focus.

District PD for Admin and Educators

- **We have partnered with the following organizations for professional development:**
 - UnboundEd racial equity focused PD for Administrators
 - The SEED Project - equity focused PD for Administrators
 - BetterLesson will offer two PDs for schools and educators:
 - Anti-Racist Fundamentals: Building Understanding of Race in Mostly White Classrooms
 - Anti-Racist Instruction for PreK-8: Integrating Racism and other Critical Topics into Your Lessons
 - Dr. Daren Graves (of Simmons and Harvard Graduate School of Education) and Dr. Scott Seider (of Boston College) - Critical Consciousness in Schools
 - Massachusetts Transgender Political Coalition - Understanding and Supporting Transgender and Non-Binary Identities

School Based Equity Specialist Overview



What is an Equity Specialist at SPS?

- One (or two) specialists at each school that work closely with the Director for Equity and Excellence and the School Administration to create a school-wide equity plan with concrete, measurable goals.
- Partner with Dr. Wang from EDC to go through a continuous improvement cycle as it relates to our goals.
- Each specialist is also a member of their school's Instructional Leadership Team to provide support for school based professional development.

How do we support our schools?

- Office Hours
- Resource Sharing
- Supporting teachers in response to local and national moments of racism and violence
- Community Conversations
- Planning/ facilitating PD
- Thought-Partnership with Admin and Educators
- Reviewing/Supporting Creation of Anti-Bias Curriculum/Materials

Areas of Challenge

- Everything is a priority -- How do we choose where to focus?
- Limited time to move work forward
 - At equity specialist level - there is so much to do in a limited role
 - At the adult level (to grow practice and expand curriculum)
 - At the classroom level (to integrate ABAR work into current schedule/curricular demands)
- First year of the role -- still learning what works best for each school community
- Working towards more consistent and clear district and/or school-based messaging to families and community about equity stance, work and curricula (supporting teacher growth and risk taking).

Goals for Future Work

- Build off of foundation set this year
- Build Equity teams (not just 1 person) at each school
- Shared professional development opportunities for equity specialists and administrators.
- Shared conversations and planning with Equity Specialists and Administrators together
- Continue to use data to prioritize our areas of focus.
- Consider ways to incorporate more student and family voices in our work
- Develop more detailed articulation of district equity/ABAR stance - through messaging to families/community, curriculum standards/frameworks, etc. classroom-based equity coaching

THANK YOU!

QUESTIONS?





SC and District Legal Requirements and Responsibilities

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Mandated Reporter

Who is a Mandated Reporter?

Massachusetts law requires professionals whose work brings them in contact with children to notify the Department of Children and Families (DCF) if they suspect that a child is being abused, neglected, or both. (ex. Teacher, para-professional, specialists, administrators, Nurse, counselor)

Legal Requirements and Responsibilities of a Mandated Reporter

Massachusetts law requires mandated reporters to immediately make an oral report to DCF when, in their professional capacity, they have reasonable cause to believe that a child under the age of 18 is suffering from abuse or neglect. Mandated reporters must also submit a written report to DCF within 48 hours.

- Abuse is any non-accidental act to a child that causes or creates a risk of physical or emotional injury. Abuse includes any sexual contact between a caretaker and a child.
- Neglect is the failure by a caretaker, either deliberately or through negligence or inability, to provide a child with minimal care.

Types of abuse which must be reported

Sexual Offense: Act by a caretaker involving a child that constitutes a sexual offense under the laws of the Commonwealth

Physical Injury: Death; or fracture of a bone, a subdural hematoma, burns, impairment of any organ, and any other such nontrivial injury; or soft tissue swelling or skin bruising, depending upon such factors as the child's age, circumstances under which the injury occurred and the number and location of bruises; or addiction to a drug or drugs at birth; or failure to thrive.

Emotional Injury: An impairment to or disorder of the intellectual or psychological capacity of a child as evidenced by observable and substantial reduction in the child's ability to function within a normal range of performance and behavior.

The 51A

What is a 51A?

- The first step in the DCF investigation process is the 51A report. This report is named after the statute which authorizes its existence, namely [G.L.c. § 51A](#). A 51A report is generated when DCF receives a report of alleged abuse and/or neglect of a child somewhere in Massachusetts.
- Mandated reporters who are licensed by the Commonwealth are required to complete training on recognizing and reporting suspected child abuse or neglect (51A Reports).

What happens after a 51A is filed?

- If the intake investigator determines that the reporter is describing the neglect or abuse of a child falling under DCF's purview, a "51A Report" is filed. The next step in the investigation focuses on determining whether the allegation(s) should be "screened in" or "screened out."
- If the screener determines that a child may have been abused or neglected by a caretaker, the case is "screened in", and the investigation and assessment will continue under what is known as a "51B Investigation". If a case is "screened out" DCF ceases its investigation. In the case of emergency, DCF will take steps to remove the child from the home. More commonly, DCF permits the children to remain at home but continues the investigation with an [assessment of the family](#) and the need for services.

When DCF Refers to the District Attorney

If DCF determines that a child has been sexually abused or sexually exploited, has been a victim of human trafficking, has suffered serious physical abuse and/or injury, or has died as a result of abuse and/or neglect, **DCF must notify** local law enforcement as well as the District Attorney, who have the authority to file criminal charges.



SPS Restorative Justice Practices

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Restorative Justice Practices

- Restorative Practices involve interventions when harm has happened, as well as practices that help to prevent harm and conflict by creating a sense of belonging, safety, and social responsibility within the school community.
- The underlying principle is that relationships are important. When an incident occurs, the focus is on the harm caused to the relationship and how to repair the relationship; rather than what rule has been broken and what consequences will be imposed.
- Restorative Justice Trainings:
 - WSNS hosted a district wide offering of Introduction to Restorative Justice Practices and Circles.
 - SHS Administration team participated in a Restorative Justice workshop facilitated by Carmen Williams.

Overview of SEL supports

We have many programs and resources to support our students' Social Emotional and Mental Health needs.

Second Step:

- Second Step is our district-wide research based social emotional curriculum.
- Basis of curriculum is on teaching Self Awareness, Self Management, Social Awareness, Relationship Building, Responsible Decision Making.
- Lessons are taught explicitly and woven in throughout the day.
- Our counseling staff has done a great job of compiling additional lessons by age group for our educators to tap into when wanting to teach to more recent topics such as the effects of COVID 19.

Student Support Team meetings:

- Meeting held at each school.
- Part of the MTSS process for identifying students in need of supports for many reasons.
- Meetings are attended by Admin staff in building and are held once a week.
- Specific action items are identified to ensure that student receives support services they need.

Social Emotional Supports: District Wide

In addition to Second Step, each school in the District is required to take on a Positive Behavior Intervention Strategy.

Examples would be:

- Responsive Classroom
- Restorative Justice
- Open Circle

Social Emotional and Mental Health Supports PreK-12

- General Education Counselors: 19
- Special Education Adjustment Counselors: 11
- Redirect Teachers/ Deans of Students: 14
- Crisis Case Manager, Christine Campbell
- General Education Behaviorist, Laura Davis
- Special Education Tier III Behaviorist, Dan Spritzen
- District Wide Social Worker (new position this year), Carla Feehan
- Coordinator of Social Emotional Support and Director of SEEK Program, Caeli Gallitano
- Promise Program Counselor at WSNS, Chessie Shaw
- Next Wave Therapeutic Middle School Program
- Supervisors of Attendance, Engagement and Outreach

Highlight of SHS Social Emotional Supports

- Deans added this year to all Houses and this additional support will continue next year
- Two BU College and Career advisors joined the counseling department and will continue next year
- Additional school counselor in SY 2022 will decrease counselor caseloads in houses
- Streamlined schoolwide multilingual supports for multilingual learners and families will occur next year
- Planned support for the specific needs of our newcomers (impact of pandemic, anticipation of new students from the border)
- Improved organization and administrative support for MLE and Special Education programming
- CTE students will have one counselor 9th-12th grade
- Special Education Adjustment counseling continues for assigned students per their IEP
- Highlander Community time - mentor/mentee program for all students that we hope to continue next year
- Becoming a Man (BAM)- SHS and Healey

SPS Mediation Program

Mediation is a method of conflict resolution that creates understanding and prevents escalation. A neutral third party hears both sides and helps the parties explore possible solutions until a mutually acceptable and lasting agreement is reached.

- We train students to be peer mediators. Mediators do not take sides, give advice or solve the conflict for the parties. They listen to them, help create understanding and find a solution that the parties want.
- Our peer mediators: reflect the school community in terms of gender, racial and ethnic backgrounds, relate to the students in ways that adults cannot, are able to frame conflicts in the perspective, language and attitudes of their peers and they keep everything told to them confidential.
- We provide mediation services to all Somerville Public Schools.
- Referral process is specific to each school.
- When a case is received:
 - Staff do an initial intake with each party involved to determine what is going on, who is involved and the potential for escalation.
 - A mediation is then set up with peer mediators and supervised by staff.
 - A mediation involves meeting with the parties together and separately.
 - After the conflict is resolved, staff let the school know that an agreement has been reached.
 - Staff will follow-up with parties in the days following the mediation for check-ins. If the agreement isn't working to the parties' intentions, staff will speak with them and amend the agreement as the parties see fit.

Embedded Counseling and Community Partnerships

Riverside Community Health:

- Provides one on one and group counseling
- Mental Health Supports and assessments
- Counsults at Student Support Team meetings
- Bi-lingual counselors available

Home For Little Wanderers:

- Provides one on one counseling and group counseling
- Consults at Student Support Team meetings
- Bi-lingual counselors available

City of Somerville Health and Human Resources:

- Clinical Support
- Safety Assessments
- Drug and alcohol assessments and education
- Professional Development
- Part of the Crisis Team

Embedded counseling contracts increased to support students throughout the summer.

Summer Social Emotional Supports

- Counselors, Redirects, Deans of Students will have the option of working over the summer to support students and families.
- Embedded therapy partners will continue services with students through summer
- Supervisors of Attendance will continue to work over the summer to build relationships with students and families and support our summer school students with attendance and engagement.
- District-Wide Social Worker and the Crisis Case Coordinator will work full time throughout the summer to provide counselors, program directors, students and families with social emotional and mental health supports.
- Many programs being offered through SPS, other City departments and Community partnerships this summer to support students' social emotional and academic growth.
- YRBS Survey, which is being administered this week, results will help to inform supports needed for summer programs and into the coming school year.

Student Services Data:

Attendance Rate: Our attendance rates remain high. 94.2% / 2019

Suspension Rate: Our District wide in-house and out-of-school suspension rates have continued to decrease.

- Out of school suspensions: 1.0% (2020)
- In school suspensions: 0.7% (2020)

Drop Out Rate: Drop-out rate continues to remain historically low: 2.0% overall (2020)

Graduation Rate: Our graduation rates continues to rise: 88.0% overall (2020)

SOA Home Visits: Our Supervisors of Attendance have made more than 250 home visits for various reasons throughout the year. (basic needs, well visits, tech delivery, engagement, delivering school supplies, notes from teachers, etc.)

Social Emotional Professional Development Offered

- Understanding Trauma and Trauma-Sensitive Schools in the Midst of COVID-19: Joanna Bridger, Riverside Trauma Center
- Ongoing Support for PreK-8 Counselor Educators: Laura Davis
- Ongoing Support for School Adjustment Counselors: Daniel Sprintzen
- The Mind-Body Classroom – Caring for Yourself and Your Students: Dr. Theresa Melito-Conners
- Shaping an Understanding of Trauma through Professional Development: John Braga
- The Teacher's Room: Marah Paley
- Adapting to School Reopening: Marah Paley



District - SPD MOU

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SPD as Partner in Supporting Students

SPS - SPD MOU

- The Memorandum of Understanding between SPD and SPS formalizes the partnership between the parties and facilitates a clear understanding of roles, duties and responsibilities.
- The MOU has been in the District since 2010
- Status: Last MOU signed in 2018

Status of Police Presence in Schools:

- School Resource Officer: Is assigned to the Detective Bureau. Selection process through the Board.
- Trainings required of the SRO:
 - Child Adolescent development, including impact of abuse, exploitation, violence, trauma, disability, poverty, and immigration status
 - Conflict Resolution
 - Diversion strategies and practices
- Community Police Officer: Assigned to all schools in that Ward. Utilized in a number of ways.
- STEPS Program cut due to funding

SRO at Somerville High School

- Integral part of the SHS community
 - Former SHS graduates and coaches, serve as role models to students
 - Build relationships to enhance cultural understanding between students and law enforcement
 - Promote school safety and help maintain a positive school climate for all students, families, and staff
 - Assist students and families as needed
-
- Do not take part in school investigations
 - Do not have access to student records

Police Reform Act (Ch. 253 of Acts of 2020)

Signed into law by Governor Baker, December 31, 2020

- Allows Superintendent request the appointment of a SRO (no longer mandatory)
- Authorizes specialized certification for SRO's
- Directs Chief of Police, in consultation with Superintendent to establish operating procedures for use of force, arrest, chain of command
- Forbids SROs/schools from disclosing certain student record information (immigration status, citizenship, area of residence....) to law enforcement unless with consent, subpoena or in health/safety emergency
- Retains information-sharing for reporting abuse/neglect per MGL c.119, 51A

New Model MOU requirements

Special Commission developing Model MOU

Model MOU must have:

- Mission statement
- Goals and objectives of the SRO program
- Roles and responsibilities of SRO/police/school
- Process for selecting SRO
- Procedures for incorporating SRO into school environment
- Information-sharing between SRO and school staff
- Training and supervision of SRO

<https://www.mass.gov/service-details/learn-about-the-model-memorandum-of-understanding-for-schools-and-police>

Overview of Police Interaction:

Over the past three school years the SPD, in accordance with our MOU, have been involved in incidents at our schools on 35 occasions. Examples when SPD supported SPS:

- Threats on social media
- Racist graffiti on school property
- Fire starting on school property
- Alcohol, drugs and/or weapon possession
- Of the 35 occasions, there was only one arrest which occurred at the high school level for selling drugs and possession of a weapon (knife)

Incidents are always viewed through a Restorative Justice lens, with emphasis on repairing relationships and giving back to the community. All students involved were supported from a social emotional/mental health perspective.

Police Department Employee Diversity Data:

Race/ Ethnicity	Asian	Black/ African American	Hispanic/ Latino	White	% Asian	% Black/ African American	% Hispanic/ Latino	% White
ALL SPD (N=124)	3	14	14	93	2.4%	11.3%	11.3%	75.0%

Advancing Equity Task Force

Policy Evaluation Subcommittee

Who we are

❑ Advancing Equity Task Force

- ❑ identifying, understanding, and mitigating or removing the barriers of current inequities
- ❑ highlighting and advancing best practices in policy and practice

❑ Policy Evaluation Subcommittee

- ❑ Focus on reviewing policy to align with district's Equity Policy
- ❑ Focus on SPS's SRO policy
- ❑ Members:
 - ❑ Aisha Banda - 6th Grade Teacher, Argenziano, ELA/Social Studies
 - ❑ Sam Patton - 5/6 Teacher, Healey, ELA/Science
 - ❑ Sol Rheem - Teacher, Somerville HS, Social Studies/Multilingual Learners Program
 - ❑ Jack Haverty - Assistant Principal & SE Department Head, Next Wave/Full Circle
 - ❑ Dayshawn Simmons - 5/6 Teacher, Healey, ELA/Social Studies
 - ❑ Caeli Gallitano - District Coordinator of Social Emotional Support & Services Grades K-8, and Director of the SEEK Program

Goals

- ❑ Review MOU with Police Department
- ❑ Learn about history, context, and goals of SRO program in Somerville, the state, nationally
- ❑ Gather stakeholder feedback about desired relationship between SPS - SPD
- ❑ Gather stakeholder feedback about experiences of safety vis-a-vis police presence in schools

Steps taken to gather information

- ❑ Review SPD MOU
- ❑ Research history of SRO programs, state laws, and studies on evaluating effectiveness of programs
- ❑ Reach out to state and city elected officials
- ❑ Conversations with district officials
 - ❑ Director of Student Services, School Committee, Deans of Students
- ❑ Meeting with Mary Skipper
- ❑ Meeting with SHS Equity Club
- ❑ Developed staff- & student-facing surveys to collect data on SPS community
- ❑ Next steps: Distribute surveys, possible focus groups, analyze data

Timeline





Where we are going

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Next Steps - Curriculum & Hiring Practices

Culturally Responsive Curriculum

- Pre K-8: Develop a review schedule to examine each core curriculum area for cultural responsiveness
 - '21-'22 Study Year
 - '22-'23 Development Year
 - '23-'24 Implementation Year
 - '24-'25 Monitoring Year
 - '25-'26 Reflection Year
- SHS
 - '20-'21 (summer): Individual departments focused on elements of Equity work, such as open honors, anti-racist curricula and practices.
- Anti-racist curricula - partnership with SEU and focus groups as key next step

Hiring Practices

- Diversifying our workforce with talented educators of color is a moral imperative
- Continuing to strengthen recruitment, hiring, and retention practices to ensure fidelity of hiring policies
- Intentional recruitment efforts to support educator diversification
 - Diversity Network / Educator Diversification Program
 - Diversity Recruitment Fair
 - Affinity Groups

Next Steps - Policy & Practice

- Examine policy and practice through an anti-racist lens
 - Math
 - 9th Grade Placement Guidelines
 - All students will take the same courses in grade 6-8 for equitable access.
 - Some differentiation support for both students and teachers to support the new work.
 - Unidos
 - A 2-bucket lottery system for Unidos enrollment: based on English language screener; one lottery for prospective English language learners ($\frac{2}{3}$ of the seats) and one lottery for English fluent students ($\frac{1}{3}$ of the seats). This is a change from the current 3 lottery system.
 - Adoption of the ARC (American Reading Company) Spanish/English Curriculum.
 - AP access and performance
 - Eliminated prerequisites and exam fees
 - Saturday session for students with mock exams to prepare students
 - Aim to partner with an organization like The Rennie Center or The Leadership Academy (formerly New York Leadership Academy) to help accelerate this work

Investments in Equity Work - Local Budget

- Anti-Racism Training & Curriculum (\$35,000)
- 2nd Step Restorative Justice/Responsive Classroom (\$45,000)
- Stipends for Equity Work at Schools (\$5,000 per site)
- Funding for Equity PD and Curriculum (\$50,000 for schools/\$30,000 for admin)
- Addition of Director of Equity & Excellence position (FY20)
- Becoming a Man (BAM) programs at SHS and the Healey School (\$210,000)
- Multilingual Learner Education (MLE) Interpreting/translation services (\$300,000)
- Special Education MLE Interpreting/translation services (\$225,000)
- Embedded Counseling Increases (\$40,000)
- New Social Workers, Deans of Students, and School Counselors (\$380,000)

Investments in Equity Work - Grant Funds

The following list represents a sample of some of the grant-funded initiatives supporting our district equity work over the last few years. Items noted in **blue bold** are current funds:

- “Envisioning the Future of SHS” Educational Redesign Planning Grant in partnership with CCE - Barr Foundation (\$300,000 over 2 years)
- **“Envisioning the Future of SHS” Implementation Grant - Barr Foundation (\$500,000 over 3 years)**
- Engage New England NWFC Educational Redesign Planning Grant in partnership with CCE - Barr Fdn. (\$150,000)
- Engage New England NWFC Pilot Implementation Grant - Barr Foundation (\$200,000 for 1 year)
- **Engage New England NWFC Full Implementation Grant - Barr Foundation (\$550,000 over 2 years)**
- **Equity in Action Grant - The Boston Foundation (\$250,000 over 2 years)**
- Educator Leadership Model Planning Grant - Nellie Mae Education Foundation (\$275,000 over 2 years)
- **Educator Leadership Model Implementation Grant - Nellie Mae Education Foundation (\$260,000 over 2 years)**
- **Cummings Foundation (\$100,000 over 4 years)**
- **Educators for Black Lives Grant - Nellie Mae Education Foundation (\$20,000 for 1 year)**
- Teacher Diversification Grant FY2020 - DESE (\$27,850)
- **Teacher Diversification Grant FY2021 - DESE (\$50,000)**
- Early College Planning Grant - DESE (\$28,820 for 1 year)
- **Early College Implementation Grant - DESE (\$45,000 for 1 year)**

THANK YOU!

QUESTIONS?

