

# Diversity Dialogue

Open Minds — Open Hearts

Issue 10 —Diversity and Inclusivity

Fall 2009

## Superintendent's Diversity Initiative:

### Diversity and Inclusiveness

#### A Note from Michele Hancock, Ed. D.

Chief Officer, Human Capital Initiatives

##### Why Diversity and Inclusiveness Matters!

The following excerpt is a reprint of the words written and published in the Democrat and Chronicle a few years ago that serves as a reminder the importance of diversity and inclusiveness.

Differences in race, ethnicity, culture, age, gender, human abilities, religion, lifestyles, and ways of thinking are accepted in positive and constructive ways. We live in a complex and dangerous world where narrowness in thinking, intolerance, falseness in actions and deeds can undermine our ability to provide quality education. The opportunity to define diversity and inclusiveness in ways that foster empowerment, healing, curiosity, and self-respect is critical to sustaining an initiative that promotes organizational growth and change.

Individual responsibility and accountability is shared when seeking to improve the level of understanding, compassion, and attention to diversity and inclusiveness. Each person within the organization has the ability to examine their own personal backgrounds, beliefs and values. Each person also must be willing to change and/or support the District's goals and objectives. Performance is driven through a desire to improve human conditions, not self-interests.

Varied interests unite to exert synergy in helping others arrive at their personal best. There is no evidence that individuals can rise to low expectations. However, there is a preponderance of evidence that individuals not only rise but excel when high expectations are evident and practiced in our engagement with one another.

Effective work environments are developed and maintained through meaningful communication and collaboration that reflect an increasingly diverse workforce. The richness of diversity is seen through our ability to dialogue, engage in intellectual/emotional discourse that honors human dignity.

Respect is viewed as the most important element for an improved organizational culture. The respect is demonstrated by our interactions with each other that allow us to learn how to be generous in spirit with each other and live/work together with others who might think and/or act differently. We keep uppermost in our minds how we would like, as individuals, to be treated. "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you"!

Stereotypes and biases are challenged in positive and proactive ways. People will have the courage to dispel, share and alter their thinking based upon prior beliefs because they have a deeper understanding and sensitivity toward differences.

Inclusiveness is an integral part of the way in which we operate at all levels and in all sectors of the organization. Our acceptance and teaming together of individual strengths to create a positive environment will result in a synergy that is invaluable to all.

Transformation becomes apparent by the way in which the organization handles diverse modes of thinking that promote continual exploration and implementation of new and different concepts. There is a deep understanding that "remaining stagnant" means failure to grow. How we embrace our technological world and open doors for global communication has a direct impact on the level of our students' ability to become productive citizens.

Year after year, self-awareness and examination of the important role each individual plays within the RCSD is vital. Our actions and behaviors will have a lasting impact upon the effectiveness of diversity, inclusiveness and acceptance of cultural change.

*Michele Hancock, Ed. D.*

"We have become not a melting pot but a beautiful mosaic. Different people, different beliefs, different yearnings, different hopes, different dreams."

*Jimmy Carter*

#### Achieving Workplace Diversity/Inclusive Practices/Protocols

1. Leadership commitment
2. Employee involvement
3. Strategic planning
4. Sustained investment
5. Diversity indicators
6. Accountability, measurement, and evaluation
7. Linkage to organizational goals and objectives



Information from U.S. Department of Commerce, July 2007

Everyone is a winner when we remember to recognize, understand and appreciate Diversity each and everyday!

# Did You Know?

## Implementation of Diversity Advocate Training Has Begun

The Human Capital Initiatives Department (HCI) realizes that the creation, distribution, and use of information is at the core of our daily lives. To equitably distribute information and resources, a designee from each school has been identified or is being identified to bring resources and information back to the school and add to the school's library for everyone to access.

**Vision:** Establish a viable venue to demonstrate the Rochester City School District's commitment toward nurturing professional dispositions, skills, and knowledge that are aligned with New York State and the District's seven essential standards within all city schools.

**Mission:** Develop educators who are caring, curious, competent, committed, and community-active professionals. Use and model ethics of caring, culturally responsive teaching and reflective practices, learning communities, social justice, inclusion, and effective strategies in teaching diverse populations.

**Purpose:** To purpose of the Diversity Advocate Initiative is to support schools to increase their capacity to develop and foster inclusive environments that encourage cross-cultural interaction in order to reduce the exclusion and isolation of diverse groups of students and staff.

**Goal:** To provide a mechanism by which the RCSD Executive Director of Coaching and Diversity Centered-Leadership can work with schools to identify concerns/challenges related to ensuring an inclusive learning environment.

### RCSD Diversity Mission Statement

Our diversity Mission Statement as per the Diversity Outreach Plan is:

- ▶ Prepare caring, curious, competent, committed, and community active teachers with the vision that all students can learn.
- ▶ Individuals should possess a respect for learning, diversity, cultural difference, and multicultural education.
- ▶ RCSD will strive to maintain high standards for ourselves and our students; and honor the critical need for life-long learning.

"We all should know that diversity makes for a rich tapestry, and we must understand that all the threads of the tapestry are equal in value no matter what their color."

*Maya Angelou*



The role of the Diversity Advocate is to be a point person to receive information and resources that will be shared with the school and placed in the school library. The Advocate will collaborate directly with the Executive Director of Coaching and Diversity-Centered Leadership to obtain ideas and strategies to share with the building staff. **They are not responsible for providing diversity trainings at their buildings as they have just begun to acquire information.**

### Diversity Advocate Quotes from trainings

"The training was both meaningful and powerful. I am happy to be a part of this. This should have occurred years ago." **Lia F.**

"The training we are receiving is fantastic. This is some of the best training I have ever received as a teacher." **Gail R.**

"I am so proud to be a part of this. I look forward to getting more information. The three of you have done an exceptional job. I look forward to many more meetings of this nature." **Molly S.**

"I would have loved to have shared this information at the August board meeting but I was out of town. The training has been awesome." **Ethan K.**

### Information Sharing



We are looking for others to contribute to the Diversity Dialogue. If you have something you would like to submit, pending approval, it will be posted in upcoming issues. If your school is hosting an event related to diversity, please feel free to provide the information as well.

**The Baobab Cultural Center**  
**728 University Avenue**  
**583-2145**

The center offers art and educational exhibits, films and documentaries, poetry readings, book discussions, and other cultural activities. These programs provide a semi-structured curriculum for personal cultural development goals. The Baobab also serves as a venue for local artists to display their work. Contact them to inquire about submission. This is also a great location to hold events.

# Are You Aware?

## GLSEN Trainings (Gay, Lesbian, Straight Education Network)



We will complete the mandatory training for all secondary administrators, social workers, psychologists, counselors, school safety officers and teachers by the end of December. Thus far the RCSD, in collaboration with GLSEN, have trained over 900 employees. The RCSD is the first to have provided GLSEN training for this number of employees from any one district. Additional trainings are currently being developed specifically for elementary schools.

These trainings will be offered on a voluntary basis once the mandatory trainings have been completed. Dates and times will be published in the next edition of the Diversity Dialogue, as well as on AVATAR.

## Creating an Inclusive Work Environment

- Address others in courteous terms—do not use nicknames without a person's permission, or use any derogatory terms to refer to a person, even if you have heard others use the terms.
- Ask permission before using a speakerphone during a telephone conversation.
- Try to keep electronic and voicemail messages concise.
- Treat everyone with respect and consideration, and expect others to treat you with the same courtesy.
- Try to be sure everyone in a meeting or group setting has been introduced.
- During meetings, stay on point—everyone's time is valuable.
- Welcome new employees and volunteers.
- Treat others how you would like to be treated.
- Listen to others without interrupting and expect the same courtesy.
- Fulfill commitments, meet deadlines, comply with policies and procedures—if your workload is unmanageable or you need help setting priorities, talk with a trusted colleague, mentor, or coach.
- The use of rude, derogatory, harassing, or obscene language in the workplace is offensive and unacceptable.

## Diversity Can Improve Decision-Making

Recent research at Stanford Business School finds that diversity among employees can generate better performance when it comes to out-of-the-ordinary creative tasks. Today's corporations and districts are built around groups that must find answers to novel and complicated issues. These teams bring together diverse groups of people who incorporate a variety of backgrounds, ideas, and personalities.

People tend to think of diversity as simply demographic, a matter of color, gender, or age. However, groups can be diverse in many ways. Diversity is also based on informational differences, reflecting a person's education and experience, as well as on values or goals that can influence what one perceives to be the mission of something as small as a single meeting or as large as a whole district or company.

## Types of Diversity ~ A Powerful Tool

- ▷ Researchers have found that informational diversity stirs constructive conflict, or debate, around daily tasks. That is, people deliberate about the best course of action. This is the type of conflict that absolutely should be engendered in organizations, says Margaret Neale of the Stanford Business School.
- ▷ On the other hand, demographic diversity can sometimes whip up interpersonal conflict. This is the kind of conflict people should fear. "People think, 'I have a different opinion than you. I don't like what you do or how you do it. I don't like you,'" said Neale. "This is what basically can destroy a group."
- ▷ The third type of diversity is based on goals and values, and it actually generates both types of conflict. This is the most potentially damaging of all the diversities. Without value-goal homogeneity, a team can accomplish little. But once a team recognizes and accepts a goal, it makes problems easier to deal with because each person knows the intentions of the others are the same. (By The Stanford Business School, Margaret Neale, the John G. McCoy-Banc One Corp, 2009).

## The Diversity of "OZ"



Stereotypes that took place in "the Wizard of Oz" are still common in our society today. Many continue to view people different from themselves as lacking intelligence (Scarecrow), lacking feelings or a heart (Tin Man), or even being a coward (Lion) when they do not speak up for themselves and allow others to bully them. Just like in the Wizard of Oz there would have been no need for the journey if only the Scarecrow, Tin Man, Lion and Dorothy had realized that their own inner power and strength would provide them with what they perceived as lacking. However, the movie serves as an example of people's ability to hold the key to their own destiny. To this end, we must advocate for ourselves and our students to be afforded the skills and resources to acquire a good quality of life. We can start by providing inclusive environments and valuing the wealth of diversity we find ourselves surrounded by. We all hold the key. Are you ready to use yours to open yourself up to diversity of thought and a world of listening, thinking and understanding?

# Are We Living This?

## Getting to Know One Another

**Diversity Activity Goal:** to learn about each other

**Instructions:** Divide learners into small groups. Provide each group with a large sheet of chart paper and markers. Have them draw a large flower with a center and an equal number of petals to the number of learners in their group. Through discussion with their group members, have them find their similarities and differences. They should fill the center of the flower with something they have in common. The group can also decide to draw something else as long as it has a center and everyone can add something to the drawing.

Each member should then fill in his or her petal with something about themselves that is unique, unlike any other member in their group. Participants should be instructed that they cannot use physical attributes such as hair color, weight, etc. This encourages them to have more meaningful discussion with their group members. They should be encouraged to be creative in their ideas and drawings. After the small group activity, have them share with the large group, about similarities and differences.

## Upcoming Events

### OCTOBER ~ Disability Employment Awareness Month

#### Friday, October 30, 2009

2:30 - 4:00 pm, Radisson Hotel, Riverside, 120 E. Main Street  
**A Time For Healing and Rebuilding Conference (UJIMA Rochester, INC.)** Keynote: Dr. Joy Leary-DeGruy, Author of *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome* "Culture Specific Models of Service" Go to link for listing of workshops.

8:00 pm, University of Rochester Callahan Theater, **Shaolin Warriors**

#### Saturday, October 31, 2009

12:30 pm, Radisson Hotel Riverside, 120 E. Main Street  
**A Time For Healing and Rebuilding Conference (UJIMA Rochester, INC.)** Keynote: Dr. Joy Leary-DeGruy, Author of *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome*.

### NOVEMBER ~ Native American Heritage Month

#### Tuesday, November 3, 2009

4:30 pm, University of Rochester Wilson Commons, Gowen Room, **Women and Sustainability Lecture Series**

7:00 pm, University of Rochester, Interfaith Chapel, River Campus, **John Zogby and NBA Legend Manute Bol Present the Story of Sudan Sunrise**

#### Thursday, November 12, 2009

5:30 - 7:00 pm, Warner School of Education, Dewey Hall, Room 1-101, **Urban Teaching & Leadership.**

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#### Wednesday, November 18, 2009

5:00 pm, University of Rochester, Rush Rhees Library, Gleason Library, **Africa Video Series: Bling - A Planet Rock**

#### Thursday, November 19, 2009

12:00 pm, University of Rochester Eastman Commons, Director's Meeting Room, **Let's Talk About Diversity @ ESM**

#### Sunday, November 22-23, 2009

GEVA Theatre Presents, **No Child** by Nila Aja Sun. An award-winning one-woman play that shines a light on the struggles and miracles of America's public schools from 16 perspectives.

#### Friday, November 27, 2009

7:00 pm Baobob Cultural Center, 728 University Avenue, **African Diaspora Film Series presents Cosmis Africa Explores Africa's Astronomy**

#### Tuesday, December 1, 2009 ~ World AIDS Day

#### Thursday, December 10, 2009

4:30 pm, **Women and Sustainability Lecture Series**, University of Rochester, Wilson Commons, Gowen Room

#### Friday, December 11, 2009

7:00 pm, Baobob Cultural Center, 728 University Ave., **Baobob African Diaspora Film Series presents Rape of a Nation**

#### Saturday, December 26, 2009 ~ Kwanzaa

## Resources

**Celebrating the Ordinary: The Emergence of Options in Community Living as a Thoughtful Organization** by John O'Brien, Connie Lyle O'Brien and Gail Jacob ISBN 1-895418-34-8

**ABCD in Action: When People Care Enough to Act, Asset Based Community Development** by Mike Green with Henry Moore & John O'Brien ISBN-13:978-1-895418-74-3

**When Spider Webs Unite: Challenging Articles and Essays On Community, Diversity and Inclusion** by Shafik Asante, ISBN 1-895418-32-1

## Understanding Diversity Through Novels and Picture Books

- **Inclusion, Equality and Diversity in Working with Children-** Griffin, S. Heinemann (2008) , UK ISBN 978-0-435402-40-2
- **We're Different, We're the Same** - Bob Kates, ISBN 0-67983227-0 (ages 3-7)
- **Whoever You Are** - Mem Fox, ISBN 0-15200787-3 (Ages 4-8)
- **Crutches** - Peter Hartling (translated by Elizabeth D. Crawford), ISBN 0-68807991-1 (Ages 9-12)
- **Just Like Everybody Else** - Lillian Rosen, ISBN 0152416528 (Ages 10-16)