

A SPECIAL EDITION!

AN EXCEPTIONAL DIVERSITY SPOTLIGHT

MEET MR. CHARLES M. COHEN THE FIRST AFRICAN AMERICAN, MALE TEACHER IN THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF PHILADELPHIA.



Charles M. Cohen began his career as a substitute teacher in 1956, before taking a position teaching general math at West Philadelphia High School in 1957. He went on to teach general science at Sayre Jr. High from 1959 to 1961, English at Dobbins Tech. High from 1961 to 1963, at Edison High in 1965, and at Bartram High from 1965 to 1966 before spending the rest of his career at Gratz High from 1967 until his retirement in 1986. He returned per diem in 1986 and worked with the district until 2008. As an English teacher, Mr. Cohen loved teaching Shakespeare and African American literature. His daughter remarked that Mr. Cohen is particularly proud of teaching African American literature to Black students, and during his career was known for the high expectations he held for his students.

The SDP believes that Mr. Cohen was one of the first African American, male teachers, breaking the color lines during the fight for Affirmative Action and serving as a teacher in the district prior to the executive order for the Civil Rights Act of 1964/1965. A pioneer in Philadelphia education he served over 50 years in the School District of Philadelphia, sharing his love of Paul Laurence Dunbar, Langston Hughes, and Lorraine Hansberry.

In his private life Mr. Cohen enjoys the opera, has been a member of several choirs, and is fluent in Latin, German, Japanese and speaks some Yiddish. He has seven children, and took an active role in helping raise his grandchildren. He is a veteran of World War II and the Korean War, after which he used the GI Bill to get his bachelor's degree from NYU. Additionally he holds a master's degree in education from the University of Pennsylvania.





EQUITY IS...

Monthly Newsletter of the SDP Equity Coalition

DIVERSITY SPOTLIGHT

MEET KATTY FERNANDEZ, AN SDP LEADER IN EQUITY.



Katty Fernández is a fourth-grade teacher at Houston Elementary. Katty is leading an upcoming equity session for her school that she co-wrote and will co-lead with two parents. According to Katty, equity is about interrogating and disrupting systemic racism, sexism, homophobia, antisemitism, and other “isms”. It is both internal work (looking at implicit biases and our internalized racism and other isms) and external (for example, questioning the pedagogy of poverty in education; fighting for voting rights; etc.). When asked how she promotes equity in her school, Katty stated, “With the full support of my principal and SBTL, as well as the wonderful folks at TLA academy (especially my mentor, Erina), I am educating myself about anti-racist, inclusive practices in education. Then, I am creating and facilitating workshops for my colleagues centered on: (1) developing an anti-racist educational lens; (2) acquiring the pedagogical tools to implement more inclusive, rigorous teaching strategies that will ultimately help our students bridge the achievement gap.”

When asked how to ensure a more equitable school, Katty said, “For me, a more equitable school district would begin with an equal funding formula. We need adequate resources to bridge these savage inequalities as well as to combat the de facto segregation that exists in our schools. In addition to fiscal resources, we need a shift in mindset. Too often, educational and other reformers blame the poor and subordinated, rather than looking at systems that marginalize and oppress. A more equitable country would have equal rights and equal pay for all, regardless of gender, sexuality, race, religion or immigration status. A more equitable country would amplify voting rights and do a better job of protecting immigrants, Native Americans, and children. A more equitable country would have less jails and more affordable colleges. A more equitable country would face the complexities of our history(ies) and move towards healing and transformational opportunities for all.”

Check out the March Issue of our Equity Is Podcast!

Dr. Sabriya K. Jubilee, Deputy Chief Equity

Click [HERE](#) to Listen



CULTURAL AWARENESS & CELEBRATIONS FOR APRIL!

APRIL IS JAM-PACKED AND INCLUDES: COMMUNITY SERVICE MONTH, SEXUAL ASSAULT AWARENESS MONTH, EARTH MONTH, AUTISM AWARENESS MONTH, ARAB-AMERICAN HERITAGE MONTH, AND TARTAN (SCOTTISH-AMERICAN) HERITAGE MONTH!

April 2nd: [World Autism Awareness Day](#). Links to teaching about Autism Awareness ([here](#)).

April 7th: [International Day of Reflection on the Genocide in Rwanda](#). Resources for teaching about genocide ([here](#)), resources specific to Rwandan genocide ([here](#)).

April 8th: [Holocaust Remembrance Day \(Yom HaShoah\)](#). Links to teaching resources ([here](#)).

April 8-9th: [National Day of Silence](#). Link to Educator Guide ([here](#)).

April 12th: [Ramadan Begins](#) Links to teaching resources ([here](#)).

April 15th: [Youth Homelessness Matters Day](#) (Australia)

April 22nd: [Earth Day](#) Links to teaching resources ([here](#)).

The District-Wide Surveys are now open! If you are a teacher, principal, school support staff, parent/guardian, or student in grades 3-12, please take the survey today! Click [here](#) or go to [philasd.org/dws](#) to get started!. Surveys close on May 14.

New this year: As part of our commitment to becoming an antiracist organization, questions have been added to assess our diversity, equity, and inclusion practices. We are asking similar questions of principals, teachers, school support staff, students, and parents/guardians. Responses to these questions will be used to define areas of strengths and opportunities for change.

Questions? E-mail schoolsurveys@philasd.org.

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

“You cannot get through a single day without having an impact on the world around you. What you do makes a difference and you have to decide what kind of a difference you want to make.”

-JANE GOODALL



SUBCOMMITTEE UPDATES

[CLICK THIS LINK TO FIND OUT MORE ABOUT THE EQUITY COALITION AND ITS SUBCOMMITTEES.](#)

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

- We are developing SDP-specific book guides for book studies on four focal texts in SDP, analyzing data from our survey on the landscape of equity/anti-racist professional learning occurring in our District, finalizing our guiding principles for equity/anti-racist professional learning in our District, and starting to think about our scope and sequence for professional learning for various stakeholders in order to develop equity leadership and advocacy throughout SDP.
- **Next Meeting 4/12/21 at 3:45pm**

RESEARCH/SYSTEMS CHANGE/POLICY

- The subcommittee continues our policy reviews using the newly developed Equity Lens. Policies to be considered by the Board of Education yet this school year will be first reviewed by the subcommittee either via survey tool or working groups and feedback will be provided to program offices for consideration. The subcommittee is also developing questions for focus groups for next phase of equity audit (school level).
- **Next Meeting: 4/19/21 at 3:30pm**

EXTERNAL PARTNERSHIPS

- We are in the midst of conducting interviews with some of the District's key external partners. We have created a list of partners who we should have conversations with and craft questions that help us better understand the equitable work being done.
- Our first interview was with Racial Justice Organizing Committee and we look forward to talking with additional partners next month.
- Our landscape analysis survey of current SDP partners has been completed by 9 central office teams.
- We will take a look at that data to identify any trends and create a strategy for follow up conversations with these teams.
- **Next Meeting: 4/15/21 at 3:30pm**

COMMUNICATION & MARKETING

- Create copy and edit March Newsletter, which will keep all Equity Committee members updated on what is going on in every subcommittee and include a student interview for Equity Is Spotlight.
- We are creating and working towards recording an "Equity is" Podcast that will interview those doing equity work in Philly.
- Building and writing the copy for the Equity Committee website.
- **Next Meeting: 4/20/21 at 3:45**

**WANT TO GET INVOLVED OR ADD SOMETHING TO THE UPDATES?
EMAIL EQUITY@PHILASD.ORG**

VOICES MAGNIFIED

Share books, podcasts, music, articles etc., that are inspiring our equity work!
Submit suggestions today.
Fill out this [google form](#).



Erina Pearlstein, a member of the Professional Learning sub-committee, suggested we read *Mind the Gap*.

Mind the Gap was written by Elena Aguilar, originally written as an article, but included in her book *Coaching for Equity: Conversations That Change Practice*. Aguilar is the president and founder of Bright Morning Consulting.

Mr. Pearlstein stated that, "This is a great way for anyone who is developing others (administrator, coach, peer coach, department/grade chair) to, first of all, cultivate a thought process that is focused on growth rather than deficits, and to support that coach or leader in thinking outside of the 'skill/will' paradigm. Aguilar offers a much broader understanding of why someone may be struggling with something in their practice, and grounds all of these notions in cultural competence and emotional intelligence - two pieces that are essential for high-quality education practice and lead to more equitable practices, and are often left by the wayside as coaches and leader pursue easier wins such as developing skill or knowledge."

[Additional Link](#)
[Link to article](#)
[Link to Book](#)

IMAGES FROM LAST MONTH'S CULTURAL CELEBRATIONS!

