



# EQUITY IS...

Monthly Newsletter of the SDP Equity Coalition

## DIVERSITY SPOTLIGHT

### MEET JULIO C. NUÑEZ, ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL AT PHILIP H. SHERIDAN ELEMENTARY



Julio C. Nuñez was nominated to be this month's Diversity Spotlight because of the great work he is doing at Sheridan Elementary. When asked how he defines equity, Mr. Nuñez stated, "Equity for me means suspending all of our biases and giving children and families the best education possible. That is, we hear and see them, and make their stories and experiences the central part of the school culture and efforts. Equity is the ability for principals, teachers and support staff, to adjust their skills and expertise to their context, to the needs of their community, not the other way around. Equity is first and foremost a mindset; then policy to guide it, and resources to bring it to life." But Nuñez also states that we also need to understand our district and world in context. Nuñez states, "I wish more people saw Equity as part of this country's promise, to create a more perfect union...this concept forces us all to play our part, to acknowledge how we have benefited from a history that has not always looked at all individuals as human beings. It is time."

When asked how he works for a more equitable School District of Philadelphia, Nuñez stated, "As I see it, I think every action I take as an educator and administrator, whether inside the building or anywhere else, is to promote equitable practices, and to unapologetically challenge practices rooted in racism, particularly when it is uncomfortable to do so. To borrow wisdom from activist, Maggie Kuhn, 'Speak up, even if your voice shakes.' I do find it important to make time to participate in school board and city council meetings, writing to my local newspaper, public representatives, and certainly having courageous conversations around race with school staff and how the team can embrace equitable teaching practices. I think teachers, parents and stakeholders can exert the necessary influence to ensure an environment that works for every child. My voice is just one of many."

Nuñez also states, "A more equitable school district is where practitioners take anti-racists practices and policies head on, and work daily to dismantle them. It is where student need is the primary consideration driving the necessary supports they receive. An equitable school district is where the schools with the highest need get the most qualified and experienced teachers and leaders. It is one where all perspectives are heard, especially those that may be unpopular. More importantly, it is one where segregation is a remnant of the past, not a glaring characteristic of the present."

## CULTURAL AWARENESS & CELEBRATIONS FOR MAY

MAY IS NATIONAL MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH, FOSTER CARE MONTH, AND ASIAN AMERICAN AND PACIFIC ISLANDER HERITAGE MONTH

For classroom resources in honor and celebration of Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage month click [HERE](#).

**May 1:** Beltane, an ancient Celtic festival celebrated on May Day, signifying the beginning of summer.

**May 5:** Cinco de Mayo, a Mexican holiday commemorating the Mexican army's 1862 victory over France at the Battle of Puebla during the Franco-Mexican War (1861-1867). This day celebrates Mexican culture and heritage, including parades and mariachi music performances.

**May 9:** Laylat al-Qadr, the holiest night of the year for Muslims, is traditionally celebrated on the 27th day of Ramadan. It is known as the Night of Power and commemorates the night that the Quran was first revealed to the prophet Muhammad.

**May 12-13** (sundown to sundown): Eid al-Fitr, the first day of the Islamic month of Shawwal, marking the end of Ramadan. Many Muslims attend communal prayers, listen to a khutuba (sermon), and give Zakat al-Fitr (charity in the form of food) during Eid al-Fitr.

**May 17:** International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia, a global celebration of sexual-orientation and gender diversities.

**May 21:** World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development, a day set aside by the United Nations as an opportunity to deepen our understanding of the values of cultural diversity and to learn to live together in harmony.

**May 31:** Memorial Day in the United States, a federal holiday established to honor military veterans who died in wars fought by American forces.

**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](http://philasd.org/dws) to get started!. Surveys close on May 14.**



### QUOTE OF THE MONTH

"Education is a progressive discovery of our own ignorance.

-WILL DURANT

# 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 5/10/21 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: 5/17/21 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: 5/20/21 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: 5/04/21 at 3:45**

**WANT TO GET INVOLVED OR ADD SOMETHING TO THE UPDATES?  
EMAIL [EQUITY@PHILASD.ORG](mailto: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](#).



Maria Andrea Giraldo Gallo, a member of the Research/Systems Change/Policy sub-committee, suggested we read *Cultural Proficiency: A manual for school leaders*.

*Cultural Proficiency: A manual for school leaders* was written by By Randall B. Lindsey, Kikanza Nuri Robins, and Raymond D. Terrell. It states, "Culture shapes behaviors, values, and institutions—and everyone is influenced by norms and expectations. To provide equitable education, educators must assess their own culture and learn to manage the dynamics of difference."

Ms. Giraldo Gallo stated that, "Our team did a book study in 2017 and we found very valuable contents and activities to do as a team. It helps administrators identify common mistakes when addressing diversity and inclusion. It gives specific examples on how other school districts have handled challenges around culture through case studies, and it has resources sorted by: expertise of the facilitator, readiness of the group, time of the activity."

[Link to Document](#)

Recommendations from our Equity Spotlight Julio C. Nuñez:

Podcast: Nicole Hanna Jones for This American Life, The Problem We All Live With.

Book: *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* by Paulo Freire. It transformed my thinking.

# TAKING A LOOK BACK AT APRIL

## April was Sexual Assault Awareness Month

We recognize that sexual assault is an ongoing issue that is not time bound. To commemorate Sexual Assault Awareness Month, the SAAM planning committee has put together a virtual gallery filled with art, poems, comics, and posters that speak to us. We are encouraging our SDP community to interact with the pieces that are there, share your own pieces of art or one's that you love, and take some time to reflect on how we can create a culture of consent within SDP and beyond! Our hope is that this gallery can live as a growing archive of community voices that are often unheard and give us an opportunity to reaffirm our commitment as an organization to equity.

Additionally please find below some resources should you or someone you know experience sexual assault.

[Click here to access the Gallery Walk](#)

[Click here to access resources for individuals experiencing sexual assault](#)

## Equity Partners Fellowship Kicks Off!

On Tuesday, April 27th our district launched the Equity Partners Fellowship, featuring an inaugural cohort of individuals from varying roles throughout the district. This fellowship includes teachers, students, and central office staff members. These 16 individuals will engage in a year long professional learning journey to infuse equity into their personal and professional practice. The Fellowship is a personalized, experiential learning opportunity designed to help educators and students create interpersonal, institutional, and ideological change around race and equity. It will develop, support, and sustain a group of diverse and exceptional students and leaders who are primed to drive transformational change in our District.

[Click here to meet our inaugural cohort of Equity Partners Fellows](#)

