



# EQUITY IS...

Monthly Newsletter of the SDP Equity Coalition

## Welcome Back

The Equity Coalition is excited to welcome everyone back for the 2021-22 school year. Looking back on the last year we are proud of all the coalition was able to accomplish under such extraordinary circumstances. The development of the Equity Framework, the completion of the Equity Audit, and the adoption of the Policy Review Process, stand out as notable achievements. Thank you to our leaders and members for your service and unrelenting support. As we move into the second year of the Equity Coalition we are inspired by the possibilities this new year brings, and look forward to building on the foundation and continuing the work of redesigning a more equitable and anti-racist school district.

## Introducing the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

In September 2020 the School District of Philadelphia announced the creation of the Equity Coalition. During the past year, the Equity Coalition has advanced several key initiatives to help redesign and restructure how our district approaches equity, organization-wide. This success led to the creation of the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. This office serves as the bedrock for the School District of Philadelphia's commitment to anti-racism, providing the structure, strategic guidance, and organizational leadership needed to redesign a more equitable school district.

Through the work of the Office of DEI, stakeholders throughout our SDP community will have an opportunity to engage in Professional Learning Pathways, Equity Audit Focus groups, support the implementation of the Equity Framework, join Cultural Celebration planning teams, engage in learning resources, and more.

To support this work, the office looks forward to welcoming several new team members in the coming months; including, a Program Manager, Equity Professional Learning Specialists, and a Director of Culture and Community Engagement. Additionally, the DEI team will continue to uplift the work of the Equity Coalition, holding regular Townhalls and providing structural and logistical support to the the Coalition Steering committee, as they push forward various district-wide initiatives.

## MEET THE TEAM

### Chief, Dr. Sabriya Jubilee

*"As a Black woman raised in the city of Philadelphia, and a graduate of SDP, I stand on the shoulders of men and women who made great sacrifices in the face of insurmountable adversity, all for the liberation of their community. I am a result of their freedom songs and prayers. Because they were, I am. As such, I am inspired to continue the fight toward complete liberation, here in SDP and beyond, for those who were, those who are, and those who are yet to come."*



### Executive Director, Estelle Acquah

*"A key part of our work is to harness the love and resiliency of so many in our district, and use that to continue to support a cultural paradigm that always centers our students. I am proud to be part of this work"*



### Project Manager, Michelle Gainer

*"I'm inspired by the students here in the City of Philadelphia, and am driven each day to ensure that they have access to all the resources that contribute to a great education"*



### QUOTE OF THE MONTH

"No matter how hard the past is, you can always begin again"

-BUDDHA

# CULTURAL AWARENESS & CELEBRATIONS FOR SEPTEMBER

SEPTEMBER 15 BEGINS NATIONAL HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH

**Sept 6:** Labor Day, pays tribute to the contributions and achievements of American workers and is traditionally observed on the first Monday in September. It was created by the labor movement in the late 19th century and became a federal holiday in 1894.

**Sept 7:** Rosh Hashanah - Head of the Year - begins the evening of Sept. 6 and ends the evening of Sept. 8. It is a special festival which celebrates Jewish New Year. The festival lasts for two days. Rosh Hashanah is a celebration of the creation of the world and marks making a fresh start. SDP Schools and Administrative buildings are closed Sept 7th in honor of this day.

**Sept 15:** International Day of Democracy, is observed every year on September 15, with the purpose of promoting and upholding the principles of democracy

**Sept 16:** Yom Kippur - The Day of Atonement - begins the evening of Sept. 15 and ends the evening of Sept. 16 and is considered the most important holiday in the Jewish faith. Falling in the month of Tishrei (September or October in the Gregorian calendar), it marks the culmination of the 10 Days of Awe, a period of introspection and repentance that follows Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year. SDP Schools and Administrative buildings are closed Sept 16th in honor of this day.

**Sept 20:** Mexican Independence Day, celebrates the moment when Father Hidalgo called for Mexico's independence from Spain in September 1810.

**Sept 21:** Sukkot begins, and commemorates the years that the Jews spent in the desert on their way to the Promised Land, and celebrates the way in which God protected them under difficult desert conditions

**Sept 26:** European Day of Languages, is a means of promoting awareness among the general public of the importance of language learning and protecting the linguistic heritage

**Sept 27:** World Tourism Day, is to nurture the awareness of the importance of tourism and demonstrate its cultural, social, economic and political values across the world.

[CLICK HERE](#) for resources to help you celebrate Hispanic Heritage Month.

[CLICK HERE](#) for resources to help you celebrate September Cultural Holidays.

## TEACHER SPOTLIGHT: KELLY APONTE

Kelly Aponte is the grades 4 and 5 dual language teacher at Bayard Taylor Elementary in the Hunting Park Neighborhood of North Philadelphia. In the seven years she has served at Taylor, Ms. Aponte has worked to develop a rigorous, high quality program focused on biliteracy. In addition to her role as a classroom teacher, Ms. Aponte also serves as the Dual Language Teacher Leader, ensuring K - 5 alignment through instruction and programmatic approach.

Growing up in Mexico, Ms. Aponte always knew she wanted to be a teacher. Raised by her grandparents, with her grandmother not knowing how to read or write, she was encouraged to do well in school but had to work through her academics on her own. Neighborhood kids, even ones older than her, would come to her for help with their schoolwork. Her dream of becoming a teacher drove her to be the first in her family to graduate from college, setting a standard that her 3 sisters would follow.



When asked why she is passionate about teaching in the dual language program, Ms. Aponte shared, "Besides wanting my students to become bilingual and biliterate, I also love the fact that they have the opportunity to see people who look like them who've made it, to show that they can make it too. I always tell my story. My desire is that one day they'll hear my story and see themselves. We have a community that is completely underserved, but I like my job because I can inform and educate parents and let them know their rights and the things their kids deserve, the things they can fight for. I'm not only teaching my students, but also the community we serve."

[CLICK HERE](#) for resources to support educating dual language students



# INTRODUCING THE SDP EQUITY FRAMEWORK

This year all individuals in the district will have the opportunity to engage in shared learning that will help us build a foundational understanding of equity and antiracism. To kickoff this shared learning we are introducing the SDP Equity Framework. This video module is meant to build your understanding of the SDP Equity Framework and encourage you to think deeply on how this framework impacts your specific professional context. Ultimately, the SDP Equity Framework is meant to guide decision-making district-wide, engaging in thoughtful reflection on the particular equity considerations that arise in your work as an employee of the SDP. While the training is designed through an asynchronous structure our recommendation is to engage in this training as a school and/or office team.

*For questions or additional information please email [equity@philasd.org](mailto:equity@philasd.org).*

**[CLICK HERE](#) - To access the video, training instructions, and supplementary resources.**

## EQUITY RESOURCE GUIDE

As a result of the work completed by our Professional Learning Subcommittee we are proud to provide an equity resources guide. This guide is intended for those facilitating professional learning opportunities to develop and/or deepen participants' reflections on systemic racism and other systems of oppression in our personal and professional lives. The resources and facilitation questions in this document are for ongoing, self-guided learning for all stakeholders throughout our District, and the resources are all aligned to learning modules that target specific concepts and understandings about equity and anti-racism. This guide should be seen as a starting point for your facilitation decisions -- it is not meant to be prescriptive or all-encompassing.

We encourage each facilitator to adapt our recommendations based on your knowledge of your participants and contexts, and based on the time that you have in your sessions. For facilitation thought-partnership, please email [equity@philasd.org](mailto:equity@philasd.org).

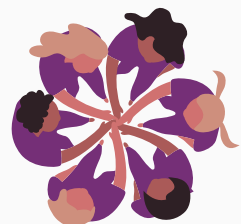
**[Equity Coalition Professional Learning Resources - Facilitator Guide](#)**

## EQUITY COALITION: SAME MISSION, NEW STRUCTURE

As the Equity Coalition enters the second year, through the work of the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, the Coalition leadership format has been restructured from four subcommittees to a single Steering Committee. The purpose of the Steering Committee is to un-silo the work of the subcommittees, moving to a more unified body, that will provide guidance and scope to Equity Coalition projects. Following a project-based model, this new structure will allow members to more easily find synergy between current projects, leveraging the efforts of the Steering Committee to uplift and amplify their work. Steering Committee members will be announced in our October Newsletter.

### 2021-2022 EQUITY COALITION PROJECTS

- Equity Professional Learning Resources
- Social Justice Summit
- Newsletter
- Equity Audit Support
- External Partnerships
- Podcast
- Affinity Groups
- Policy Review Cycle
- Website



**[To register for membership in the Equity Coalition for SY2021-2022 + To sign-up for an Equity Coalition Project - click here.](#)**

