

MARYLAND STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION'S DIVERSITY PLAN

The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) has a long history of commitment to assuring that all staff value and appreciate diversity within the agency and that this carries over to providing services for all the stakeholders that MSDE serves. These stakeholders include students, educators, families, and community partners. Diversity relates to multicultural factors such as race, age, ethnicity, national origin, gender, disability, and socioeconomic status. In order to expand existing efforts, MSDE will develop a comprehensive set of innovative strategies to address diversity issues and build cultural proficiency.

At the individual level, cultural proficiency is the level of knowledge-based skills and understandings that are required to successfully interact and work effectively with colleagues and clients from a variety of cultures. Organizationally, cultural proficiency includes the policies and practices at a systematic level as well as values and behaviors at the individual level that enable effective cross-cultural interactions among employees, clients and the community.

Five essential elements contribute to an organization's ability to become more culturally proficient:

- Valuing diversity,
- Assessing cultural knowledge,
- Managing the dynamics of difference,
- Adapting to difference, and
- Institutionalizing cultural knowledge.

MSDE's Strategic Plan states that people are our greatest resource and that, therefore, we are committed to their growth and development. Furthermore, it states that we also believe that cultural diversity, mutual trust, respect, open communication and celebration of achievement are essential to ensuring a successful and productive organization. In order to increase employee awareness of diversity and build cultural proficiency within the organization we are recommending the following enhancements to MSDE selection, orientation and professional development programs.

EMPLOYEE SELECTION

Current Practices

Our current employment practices are focused on legal compliance and continuing efforts to enhance our minority recruitment. Position announcements of our available vacancies are distributed internally and externally to over 200 resources, including educational institutions, community organizations, and professional associations. Recruitment advertising is placed in print media in the major regional newspapers, minority publications, and professional and trade journals. All vacancies are also posted on MSDE's employment website so that candidates can

apply on-line. Basic and advanced interview skills training programs are conducted on a monthly basis. These courses include modules on equity compliance and fair employment practices in the workplace. Employees are required to take the training before they can sit on an interview panel. Human Resources also ensures that interview panels are diverse in composition, reviews all interview questions for compliance, and also reviews the selection decisions to ensure a fair and equitable selection process.

Recommended Enhancements

- Stress MSDE's commitment to diversity in all recruitment communications.
- Include our preference for experience working in or with culturally diverse populations as part of our position announcements and recruitment advertising.
- Add questions to the interview process to determine candidates' experiences with cultural proficiency.
- Increase our targeting of applicant pools that are already diverse in nature.
- Add cultural proficiency components to the existing interview skills training modules.

Target Date: First quarter of 2009.

ORIENTATION TO MSDE

Current Practices

Currently, all new employees are required to attend a formal four-hour employee orientation on their first day of employment. This brief orientation includes an overview of MSDE's history and organizational structure as well as a review of all State-mandated policies and procedures and MSDE's internal policies. Included in this presentation is information on MSDE's commitment to providing a workplace that is free of discrimination and ensuring that all employees will be treated in a fair and equitable manner. The orientation also is designed so that employees are informed of all employee health, retirement and other benefits as well as given the opportunity to enroll in these benefits and complete the necessary paperwork to place them on the payroll.

Recommended Enhancements

- Expand new employee orientation to give new hires a strong foundation in MSDE's ongoing commitment to diversity and the concept of cultural proficiency.
- Expand MSDE's mission statement and strategic plan objectives to include a goal focused on cultural proficiency.
- Develop an action plan to achieve this new goal.

Target Dates:

1. New employee orientation to be expanded by the end of the first quarter of 2009.
2. The MSDE mission statement and strategic plan objective will be developed and communicated by the second quarter of 2009.
3. Action plan to be developed by the third quarter of 2009.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Current Practices:

MSDE currently provides workforce professional development for staff in the area of diversity through Interview Skills Training, which is required for all individuals who serve on interview teams. This training reviews policies related to discrimination in areas such as gender, race, ethnicity, and disability. Training sessions are also provided quarterly on the Americans with Disabilities Act, focusing not only on the law, but on understanding the concerns of individuals with disabilities in the workplace. In addition, Assistant Superintendents request informational sessions for their leadership teams on federal and state civil rights regulations. These are conducted by the Equity Assurance and Compliance Branch. MSDE also maintains an Education That is Multicultural and Achievement Coordinating Team, with representatives from each division. This group meets monthly to discuss implementation within MSDE of the State Education That is Multicultural Regulation (COMAR 13A.04.05).

In addition to these initiatives, several MSDE divisions are currently implementing a range of professional development and outreach programs and activities related to diversity and cultural proficiency. Examples of programs and activities include:

- Coordination of an Education That is Multicultural and Achievement Network comprised of representatives from MSDE and all 24 school systems, which meets monthly.
- Development of a Multicultural Education and Achievement Continuing Professional Development credit course that has been adapted and used by local school systems.
- Publication and dissemination of documents, "A Practical Guide to Accelerating Student Achievement Across Cultures: Strategies for Administrators, Teachers, Parents and Students," and "Multicultural Connections Educational Resource Directory".
- Development of guidelines for young children with disabilities whose home language is not English or whose mode of communication may be sign language or the use of Braille.
- Translation of parent information documents into different languages.
- Surveys of staff to determine multicultural needs and resources.
- Delivery of statewide training on multicultural access for Rehabilitation Services staff.
- Participation in a training program for non-English speaking parents and caregivers and for child care staff on English Language Learning.

Recommended Enhancements:

- Work with recognized experts in the field of diversity and cultural proficiency to develop and conduct mandatory professional development for all MSDE employees.
- Develop a training module on diversity and cultural proficiency internally to be provided to all new employees within their first month of employment with the agency.

Target Dates:

1. Professional development sessions to be conducted for all MSDE employees by the fourth quarter of 2009.
2. The internal training module on diversity and cultural proficiency will be presented on a monthly basis starting the beginning of the third quarter of 2009.

Program Initiatives	Planning Elements	Completion Date
Employee Selection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review recruitment communications and expand references to diversity. • Add related diversity questions to interview process. • Include cultural proficiency components in interview skills training. 	End of First Quarter of 2009
Orientation to MSDE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand new employee orientation to highlight cultural proficiency. • Recommend enhancements to mission statement and strategic plan objectives. 	End of First Quarter of 2009 End of Second Quarter of 2009
Professional Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct professional development needs assessment. • Identify and select external resources to conduct diversity and cultural proficiency training. • Design and implement an internal training module on cultural proficiency, to be presented on a monthly basis. 	End of Third Quarter of 2009