

### **Brief Contextual Overview**

For 400 years, Black people in the United States have experienced systemic racism in all aspects of their lives, including and not insignificantly in our nation's schools. Santa Barbara is no exception. On Sunday, June 7, 2020 Black Student Youth SB organized a rally and march to protest the deaths of Black Americans, including George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Tony McDade, and David McAtee, by law enforcement officers. After marching to the school district office, the leaders of Black Student Youth SB presented district leadership with a list of demands related to the education of our community's children and youth. On Monday, June 15, 2020 four leaders of Black Student Youth SB met with members of the school board and district leaders to discuss the demands. At the onset of the meeting student leaders presented a slightly revised list of demands to School Board President Laura Capps. This report presents SB Unified's response to those demands.

### **Demand #1: "We demand Ethnic Studies classes with culturally relevant curriculum."**

Research demonstrates that taking Ethnic Studies yields numerous benefits to students of all racial groups. Ethnic Studies classes have been offered as electives in SBUSD for many years, but in November 2018 a graduation requirement was established that would require all students to complete at least one course in Ethnic Studies beginning with the graduating class of 2024. This was achieved in large part through community advocacy and implementation planning, which has been underway for over two years. This fall, over 1,100 SBUSD students are slated to be enrolled in two proposed new SBUSD Ethnic Studies-qualifying courses, and students may also elect to take existing qualifying courses within SBUSD or through the District's Dual Enrollment partnership with Santa Barbara City College.

Ethnic Studies qualifying courses are required to be aligned with the California Department of Education's Model Curriculum for Ethnic Studies, which is an external built-in check-and-balance system to verify that the curriculum is culturally relevant and sustaining. In addition, the course and curriculum development process has and will continue to be grounded in the SBUnified Ethnic Studies Framework, which explicitly acknowledges and draws upon the four foundational disciplines of Ethnic Studies - Africana/Black/African American Studies, American Indian/Native American Studies, Asian American Studies, and Chicana/Latina Studies. This includes the use of Ethnic Studies pedagogy, which is a specific form of culturally relevant and sustaining instruction. During a 4-year "Implementing Phase," courses will continue to be revised--and new courses will be incorporated--in conjunction with state standards and ongoing community engagement.

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### Response to Black Student Youth SB Demands

#### **Demand #2: “We demand SBUSD implement equitable hiring practices and recruit culturally competent teachers of color for Ethnic Studies and all classrooms.”**

Research demonstrates that having a diverse teacher workforce benefits all students. Because of this, SBUnified believes that the demand for equitable hiring practices is not only a valid demand, it is also one we are legally bound to and will therefore vigorously pursue this demand. As a response, we will examine our job descriptions, outreach and recruitment processes, candidate screening practices, interview protocol methods, and our selection process for all teaching and leadership positions to remove any barriers. We will add any protocols that will ensure there are equitable practices in the hiring process as we pursue a teacher workforce that is representative of our student population and community. The importance of building, supporting, and retaining an effective diverse leadership team is also an important factor in supporting teachers of color, successfully implementing broader district plans that prioritize organizational transformation in this area, and supporting the student demands overall.

Specifically, and including and not limited to, we will engage in a rigorous recruitment process to hire culturally competent teachers of color not only for Ethnic Studies, but across all academic disciplines. We will continue to capitalize on programs such as the PEAC Fellowship with UCSB, as well as continue to pursue recruitment partnerships with other teacher preparation programs to yield culturally competent and highly qualified teachers. Teacher retention is an important factor in maintaining a culturally diverse workforce and will also be considered as we address this particular demand. We recognize that an important component in retaining teachers and leaders of color includes creating a diverse, affirming, and inclusive work environment that produces a positive racial climate for staff and students of color.

#### **Demand #3: “We demand SBUSD have School Resource Officers complete bias training class before being allowed to work on campus in addition to de-escalation training and protocols.”**

The District will require that all School Resource Officers/Deputies (SRO/SRD) verify completion on professional learning in the following areas:

- De-escalation Techniques
- Implicit Bias
- Cultural Competence
- Adolescent Brain Development
- Working with Students with Disabilities

District leadership will work with law enforcement leaders in July 2020 to identify gaps in current learning for those officers and deputies who are currently assigned to our district schools. Where gaps exist, a plan will be created to ensure that training will take place prior to the end of the first semester of the 2020-21 school year.

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Additionally, the District will create an evaluative tool to measure student, staff, and parent/guardian perception of SRO/SRDs on each school's campus. Results will be provided to law enforcement leadership so that it may be used in the officer/deputy's annual evaluation.

#### **Demand #4: "We demand SBUSD publicly condemn the school to prison pipeline."**

The school board will address this demand by publicly condemning the school to prison pipeline through resolution. However, words are not enough. Words must be followed by work. The District will continue to evaluate its practices through cycles of inquiry, in which we review data to improve our practices, to keep Santa Barbara's youth in our schools and out of the juvenile justice system. The Assistant Superintendent of Student Services is a member of the Juvenile Justice Convening Council workgroup. This group serves to implement the action plan that came out of Santa Barbara County's Racial and Ethnic Discrepancies Evaluation, which was conducted by expert faculty in UCSB's Gevirtz Graduate School of Education. In addition, district leadership sit on the South Coast Task Force for Youth Safety, which has a primary focus of keeping youth out of the juvenile justice system. We will continue to pursue professional learning opportunities to build adult capacity in creating diverse and affirming learning environments that value all learners and cultures. Additionally, the District will continue to engage in ongoing conversations about the school to prison pipeline with Black Youth SB in order to share experiences, expectations, and ideas to help evaluate actions and inform improvement.

#### **Demand #5: "We demand SBUSD allocate funds to rehabilitation and mental health services for at-risk youth as an alternative to probation and/or juvenile hall."**

In conjunction with Family Service Agency (FSA) and Child Abuse Listening Mediation (CALM), the District currently provides school-based mental health services to students Preschool through 12th grade. Over 1,500 students have received services in the past two years. These services include traditional therapeutic counseling, drug and alcohol services (secondary), and trauma-informed consultation for teachers (elementary). In its efforts to create alternatives to suspension, the District makes referrals for mental health assessment for students who have behavioral concerns. In total, the District allocates over \$1,000,000 per year to fund mental health services in its schools.

Additionally, the District staffs two positions - a Clinical Youth Outreach Worker and a Lead Youth Outreach Coordinator - who work with students who are already involved with or are at risk of entering the juvenile justice system. Working primarily in the high schools, these individuals meet weekly with more than 100 students.

Finally, the District recently received a \$90,000 start-up grant from the Women's Fund of Santa Barbara to start a high school program called Sources of Strength. The program provides evidence-based prevention for suicide, violence, bullying and substance abuse by training,

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supporting, and empowering both peer leaders and caring adults to impact their world through the power of connection, hope, help and strength.

**Demand #6: “ We demand SBUSD adopt a resolution declaring racism as a public health emergency and allocate resources to implement restorative justice practices to deal with hate crimes.”**

The District began implementing restorative approaches to student behavior during the 2012-2013 school year. An internal program evaluation of the initiative was conducted in 2016-17, showing mixed results, due in part to inconsistent implementation and a need for mutually-reinforcing and -supporting systems and practices to be in place. Student input through the evaluation revealed that in order to mitigate barriers to their success, strong and affirming relationships between students and adults as well as between students and students are essential. In response, the District began focusing on shifting adult mindsets from a zero tolerance philosophy to a restorative way of doing business that values relationships as the top priority in our schools. By braiding behavioral initiatives that include social emotional learning, culturally responsive teaching, and trauma-informed practices with restorative approaches, the District strives to create affirming learning environments where each student is set up for success.

To this end the District funds the following positions to do the work of implementing restorative approaches and its complementary initiatives:

Coordinator of School Climate and Safety

Teacher on Special Assignment-- Student Engagement

Dean of Student Engagement (All high schools and junior high schools)

Elementary Assistant Principals (Four schools)

In February 2020, the District made a commitment in a board meeting to audit its behavioral initiatives (including Restorative Approaches) and conduct a root cause analysis to determine why suspensions have been increasing in the past few years and disproportionality continues to exist between racial groups. A work group will be formed in July 2020 to begin conducting that audit and analysis. The work group will include community members and students.