



ALL ways able.

Jeffrey S. Bravin,  
Executive Director

139 North Main Street  
West Hartford, CT 06107  
www.asd-1817.org

October 15, 2020

The Black, Indigenous, and People of Color Community at ASD  
[ASDequalityOL@gmail.com](mailto:ASDequalityOL@gmail.com)

Re: Your correspondence of September 12, 2020

Thank you for your letter addressed to the Board of Directors and me about the need for the American School for the Deaf (ASD) to ensure justice, equality and a safe and healthy environment for our Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) Community.

ASD is proud to be an inclusive community that welcomes and celebrates diversity. We do not tolerate oppression, discrimination, bigotry or racism of any kind, and in the wake of George Floyd's senseless death in May, we stood in solidarity with those peacefully protesting against prejudice and persecution in all forms and we pledged to work with members of the ASD family for whom these matters personally resonate. Since that time, we have taken the following actions:

- The Board of Directors established an **Advisory Board Committee on Diversity** (which was formerly known as the Task Force on Racism and Diversity) to advise and guide us on ways to be responsive and accountable to the ASD community on matters of diversity. The Advisory Board reports directly to the Board of Directors, is independent of the school's Executive Leadership Team (ELT) and has full autonomy to bring forth recommendations to the Board of Directors. The Advisory Board is led by Professor Emeritus George Sugai, Ph.D., the founder and former director of the University of Connecticut's Center for Behavioral Education and Research.
- The Advisory Board on Diversity recommended establishing an internal **Diversity Task Force** to convene school administration, faculty and staff. A school-wide email resulted in several volunteers stepping forward and the Task Force was empaneled, representing various departments across ASD. Dr. Sugai charged the Diversity Task Force with developing a diversity plan for ASD, and that draft charge was shared with all staff during the Opening of School Staff Information Session. The Task Force has met several times as of the writing of this letter, and while it is working with the ELT, it reports to Dr. Sugai and the Advisory Board Committee and they are free to make any and all recommendations as they see fit.

It is important to note that the Board of Directors, these two panels and the ELT all have distinct roles to play in ensuring that ASD lives up to our mission and responsibly promotes diversity and equity throughout our community and provides a safe, inclusive, and equitable environment for our BIPOC members and everyone in the ASD community.

The Board of Directors will be discussing these matters and receiving a progress report about the Diversity Task Force at our next meeting later this month. I have shared your letter with the Board's officers and Mr. Bravin and will inform the Board of your letter at our meeting.

As President of the Board, I want to encourage everyone who wants to make us a better school to work together, in the open, and I have an important request for you: Become a part of the solution by joining the Task Force's work to make positive change at ASD. The BIPOC community for whom you wrote and our entire ASD community needs the best that we all have to give if we are going to achieve the open, safe environment we seek. The Task Force has established an email for people to get involved, and I ask you to join by contacting them at: [Diversity@asd-1817.org](mailto:Diversity@asd-1817.org).

Thank you for your letter and expressed dedication to ASD.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "CMBurns". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Catherine M. Burns  
President, ASD Board of Directors