

ALABAMA SCHOOL OF MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE

A Way Forward: Listen. Learn. Reconcile.

Our commitment to the ASMS community is to do everything in our power to guarantee that ASMS values diversity, equity, inclusion, respect, and accountability at higher levels, so that we can help educate Alabama's future leaders. We acknowledge that African Americans in our country and our community have been personally affected and wronged through racism, oppression, and privilege. The ASMS community emphatically denounces racial injustice, hate, prejudice, and violence. We grieve any pain caused by senseless death. We are entirely in support of our African American community members. Our team came together to develop a plan of action for this summer and the school year ahead. We do not intend for these actions to provide a "quick fix." They are only the beginning of a more intentional approach. We know we have a long way to go. We will continue to assess our endeavors and implement new programs and initiatives in the months and years ahead. This is a living document, and we are more than willing to add to it based on the feedback, perspectives, needs, and concerns of our students.

SUMMER 2020

Action Step 1: Offer a for-credit minority relations class starting June 15

Students who wish to receive education on minority relations and strengthen their interracial, interethnic, and intercultural competencies will be given the opportunity to take this for-credit class starting in mid-June of 2020. History professor Derek Barry will offer this class online. The course will also be offered during the school year, as it has been for the past 14 years.

Action Step 2: Host teleconference dialogues for students to come together to discuss current issues

ASMS African American staffers will schedule and offer web-based video sessions during the next few weeks to facilitate conversation, group processing, and understanding amongst current ASMS students. Dates, time, and sign up information to follow. Topics include:

- Lived experiences of ASMS Black community members and why they matter
- Breaking down barriers: Taking actions to address systemic racism and oppression
- Microaggressions: How to recognize them and change your behavior
- Coping and Responding: What to do when you experience prejudice or injustice

Action Step 3: Offer a campus conversation, web-based video session

Katrina Thompson, ASMS Assistant Director of Judicial Affairs, will host a Zoom session entitled "Surviving and Thriving in a Time of Uncertainty." Dates, time, and sign up information to follow.

Action Step 4: Facilitate a summer Black Student Union (BSU) retreat

For Black students and Black student allies, the advisors for the ASMS Black Student Union will facilitate a retreat in July, which will include education, training, and resources regarding systemic racism, privilege, minority relations, and inclusivity. Dates, time, and sign up information to follow.

Action Step 5: Offer free counseling resources

ASMS counselors will offer counseling sessions, resources, and groups to ASMS students. To schedule an appointment, email Ms. Kara Whitney at kwhitney@asms.net or Ms. Katrina Thompson at kthompson@asms.net.

Action Step 6: Work with Subject Matter Experts

We will work with outside consultants to ensure that we are using all available tools to combat racism and inequality. We will also review our policies and protocols to determine if there are more direct actions that we can take to ensure the school uses best practices to address racism, violence, oppression, and injustice.

SCHOOL YEAR 2020-2021

Action Step 7: Establish a theme as a mindset for next school year

Students will submit ideas and vote on a theme for the next school year. This theme will serve as a guidepost for how we will operate and treat each other with respect, kindness, and inclusiveness next year.

Action Step 8: Utilize school assemblies

Next school year, ASMS will dedicate two assemblies every term to speakers/sessions to educate and train students on topics related to African American history, racial reconciliation, microaggressions, privilege, ending violence and oppression in America, diversity, and inclusivity, etc. ASMS faculty and staff will select one each term, and student leaders will vote on the other.

Action Step 9: Engage faculty and staff members in diversity and inclusion training

ASMS faculty and staff members will use an in-service day to participate in training on how to foster a more inclusive ASMS campus.

Action Step 10: Host campus-wide Practicing Inclusive Excellence (PIE) Trainings

The University of Alabama Crossroads Community Engagement Center team will be invited to facilitate campus-wide PIE training sessions based on the sustained dialogue curriculum.

Action Step 11: Partner with the BSU during Black History Month

ASMS will partner with the Black Student Union to elevate our learning and celebration of Black History Month in February of 2021.

Action Step 12: Establish the Dr. James Njeng'ere Scholars Award

ASMS will establish this award in honor of Dr. James Njeng'ere, a Biology instructor who passed away in March. Awards will be given each year to two African American students who excel in science, honoring his memory as an educator as well as his legacy as a champion of civil rights. Dr. James broke racial barriers and encouraged Black students to do the same while pursuing careers in science. This award will encourage students to follow in his footsteps.

Action Step 13: Film Studies course will focus on African American films

ASMS will again offer a film studies course in the fall, but this year's class will view and critically analyze eight influential African American films. The course will take a broad view of films that have been relevant to the public discourse about Black existence in America.

ACTION PRINCIPLES

- 1. Listen with Respect:** We must listen and give voice to every member of the ASMS community. Even when we do not agree, we must treat all people with respect and civility as individuals, not just as groups.
- 2. Learn with Empathy:** Our lived experiences shape who we are, how we view the world, and how we interact with those around us. We will share our experiences and tell our stories, and as we do so, we must learn from one another with empathy and understanding as our first reactions.
- 3. AAA (Admit. Apologize. Ask):** We will not all get it right all the time. We will say the wrong thing or do the wrong thing with consequences for our fellow ASMS community members. We will admit our errors, apologize, and ask for forgiveness.
- 4. Quick to Forgive:** When someone has wronged a fellow ASMS community member and asks for forgiveness, may we be quick to give it. Anger is not wrong, but forgiveness will allow for healing in our relationships and in our community.
- 5. See Something, Say Something:** We must hold each other accountable. When we say something harmful or act unjustly, we commit to informing one another, so we can recognize and reorder our actions, reactions, and thought patterns.
- 6. Fair and Equal:** We will administer policies, practices, procedures, programs, and opportunities equally for all community members. We will speak up when they are not being carried out in this way.
- 7. No Tolerance of Hate:** We will not tolerate racism, prejudice, hate, oppression, or violence in any of their forms. Such behaviors are a violation of the student handbook, and community members will be held accountable for them.