# CITY OF SAN JOSE
## CAPITAL OF SILICON VALLEY

# *Memorandum*

**TO:** NEIGHBORHOOD SERVICES
AND EDUCATION COMMITTEE

**FROM:** Jill Bourne

**SUBJECT: EQUITY AND INCLUSION
SERVICES REPORT**

**DATE:** December 22, 2021

Approved _Angel Rus_

Date
01/06/22

## RECOMMENDATION

a.  Accept the report on the Library's equity and inclusion services, including efforts to strengthen departmental capacity to advance equity and inclusion services, understand the use and access to Library services, reach hard-to-reach populations through various efforts including a special focus on disability/adaptive ability access efforts, and the development of the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Quality Standards for all City sponsored programs.

b.  Refer this report to the February 7, 2022 City Council meeting for Council consideration and adoption of the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Quality Standards.

## OUTCOME

The Neighborhood Services and Education Committee will be informed about the progress to date on the San José Public Library (SJPL or Library) efforts to advance equity and inclusion in all aspects of programs and services, as well as the proposed Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Quality Standards that have been developed by an Ad-Hoc Committee with cross-sector representation. The Committee will have the opportunity to provide feedback regarding the proposed Standards and make a recommendation regarding their referral and possible adoption by City Council.

## BACKGROUND

On May 7, 2018, the City Council unanimously approved the Education and Digital Literacy Strategy[1] and provided direction that the Library work with partner departments and agencies to lead the development and implementation of a comprehensive educational policy and workplan.

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[1] City of San José - Meeting of City Council on 5/7/2018 at 9:00 AM (legistar.com)

The San José Education Policy 0-30[2], approved by City Council on February 11, 2020, delineates the City's commitment to ensuring quality educational programming for its residents. The Policy establishes Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) as an expectation of City programming that intentionally monitors outcomes and removes barriers to ensure community access. In alignment with the Policy, the Library led the development of Quality Standards for Early Education,[3] Expanded Learning,[4] College and Career Readiness,[5] and Digital Literacy[6] in order to establish parameters for developing, assessing, and reporting on program quality. As part of the Education and Digital Literacy Strategy, SJPL's programming underwent a variety of changes to ensure that high quality learning experiences are offered for all and are centered on equity. From programming in multiple languages to new technologies and creative outreach methods, SJPL continues to remove barriers and develop programs that are responsive to changing needs.

Library staff have been leading a series of projects to create a more inclusive library system, including developing a new programming framework. In addition, a new website section highlights the Library's equity-focused services and programs, including resources and materials to foster further learning. Four staff-led equity working groups, with support from the Community Programs Administrator (CPA) for Equity and Inclusion Services, have advanced projects in support of removing barriers and creating more inclusive spaces for people with intellectual and learning disabilities, communities of color and LGBTQ+ voices. Staff have also adapted Community Conversations to create more spaces for learning and dialogue with the community.

In accordance with the Policy, the Library most recently engaged a cross-sector Ad Hoc Committee (Attachment A) to lead the development of a set of proposed Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Quality Standards (EDIQS) to provide the framework through which programs will be assessed for centering and advancing equity.  Committee members provided subject matter expertise and guidance for community considerations and EDI best practices. They also recommended literature, resources, and processes to inform program design and evaluation.

Beginning in April 2021, a team of Library staff compiled research and best practices in EDI from other library systems, as well as public and private sectors. Committee members met in September and October 2021 to establish the scope, criteria, and quality continuum by which a program's effectiveness towards achieving EDI is evaluated.  Committee members assessed each of the Quality Standards and provided inputs to consider for a program achieving Advanced-level performance for EDI (Attachment B).  Library staff held individual follow-up meetings and

[2] Education Policy approved by City Council on February 11, 2020
[3] Early Education Program Quality Standards approved by City Council on March 26, 2019
[4] Expanded Learning Program Quality Standards approved by City Council on May 07, 2019.
[5] College and Career Readiness Program Standards approved by City Council on December 01, 2020.
[6] Digital Literacy Quality Program Standards approved by City Council on May 19, 2020.

correspondence for Committee members who wished to provide additional feedback outside of the Committee meetings.

## ANALYSIS

More than 19 months after the onset of public health measures due to the COVID-19 pandemic, San José grapples with a myriad of challenges. The pandemic has impacted communities of color, disproportionately affecting the social, financial, and emotional wellbeing of those in the local Black, Indigenous/Native communities, Latina/o/x, Asian and Pacific Islander communities, as well as low-income, unhoused, and other historically underserved communities. While the pandemic did not create the disparities, they were exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Understanding the emerging needs in these communities, rebuilding relationships, and creating supportive programs and partnerships is critical to ensuring the City's pandemic recovery efforts do not reinforce inequities.

SJPL is incorporating an inclusive, equity-driven approach to Library operations, services, and programming. After more than a year of incorporating rapid adjustments, new initiatives, and transformation of its service delivery model in response to the pandemic physical restrictions, the Library's recovery efforts are directed towards advancing inclusive opportunities and supporting equitable outcomes for all San José residents.

**Quality Standards**

The Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Quality Standards are comprised of six (6) areas:

Program Quality Standard Areas

1. Anti-Racist Approach: Programming addresses biases, counters power asymmetry, and provides learning opportunities about structural and institutional racism. Program adopts an intersectional lens to identify and address other forms of exclusion. Resources are prioritized to historically underserved communities.
2. Inclusive Programming: Program acknowledges and supports different learning styles and needs by creating curricula tailored to diverse communities.
3. Data Collection and Analysis: Program utilizes data collection and analysis tools to determine demographics to inform program design, identify opportunities to expand needed programs and prevent reinforcing disparities.
4. Culturally-Relevant Pedagogy: Program values the culture and histories of participants to foster learning, nurture identity formation, build relationships, and infuses culturally relevant activities to enhance participants' experience.

5. Community Involvement in Programming: Program recognizes community members as experts in their own needs and proactively includes them in planning and designing high-interest, authentic, and meaningful experiences. Program builds continual points of engagement with community to assess impact and refine implementation.
6. Outreach as Key to Inclusion: Program prioritizes inclusive outreach based on intentional relationship-building efforts with community partners in order to better reach targeted communities.

The Quality Standards for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion will provide the foundation for developing quality improvement plans to identify outcomes, indicators, and metrics in alignment with the Education Policy and City Council direction. Upon adoption by City Council, the standards will provide consistent guiding principles as well as clear requirements for assessment and reporting of outcomes.

Between November 2021 and February 2022, Ad Hoc Committee members will contribute additional resources and training materials on anti-racism, developing core cultural competencies, disability awareness, trauma-informed care and other key elements and skills-building opportunities to complement the EDIQS. They will also recommend quality assessments and experience surveys to collect data and inform future decision making. These materials will lead to a set of recommended learning opportunities that will build the capacity of programming teams in incorporating an equity lens. The resource list will be included as part of the EDIQS materials available to all City departments in order to strengthen equity efforts citywide.

**Equity Index**

SJPL continues to make necessary adaptations in programming and overall service delivery based on available information and engagement with the community. To meet community needs, especially the historically underserved, staff developed the Equity Index ("Index"), a screening tool to visualize areas of higher disparities and access to services and amenities. The Index combines Library data points, census information, and San José's Social Progress Indicators to visualize geographic areas that are facing disadvantages relative to the rest of San José. SJPL utilizes the Index to identify a range of needs across the City and guide strategic responses, intended to close need gaps, improve availability of local service providers, and enhance the impact Library operations.

The equity index was created to inform Library service delivery and resource prioritization using data that demonstrates or indicates where concentrations of the community may experience barriers to accessing Library services. The data is organized at the census tract level and compiled in a weighted index and includes information on a variety of demographic factors such as age, income, education level, among other variables. Since its creation in 2019, the tool has been adapted to support the Library for a range of considerations, such as the placement of

lactation pods, hotspot and device distribution, and the branch hour reductions adopted by the City Council in 2020-2021.

SJPL also incorporated use of the Index in the City's equity-based budgeting approach. From rolling out digital connectivity support, to determining Library branch hours and staffing allocations, the Index is a tool that helps question assumptions and better inform staff about community needs. SJPL will continue to adapt the tool as needs evolve to guide the strategic and equitable distribution and location of additional services and programming.

**Tiered Programming Framework**

In fall 2020, SJPL staff began developing a new framework to guide system-wide programming strategy and priorities. This adjustment is meant to centralize resources and streamline opportunities in order to reduce duplication of programs while strengthening volunteer and community partner programs and overall outreach. The move to a more centralized approach focuses on equity in program design, prioritizing resources and opportunities for historically underserved communities. Through this approach, programs will be better positioned to meet the evolving needs of the library system, community, and staff.

The tiered programming framework consolidates work around the Education and Digital Literacy Strategy's main programming areas, as well as cultural programming and enrichment. The framework also introduces additional tools and data collection in support of increased accountability, moving away from quantity-driven measurement towards an impact-driven analysis. By incorporating a data collection plan for participant demographic information such as zip codes, languages spoken and age, SJPL will better understand who we are serving and identify opportunities to deepen engagement. Results of these demographic data points will be analyzed and shared annually with protocols and safeguarding practices to ensure an individual's right to privacy and confidentiality in their library use.

**Creating a More Inclusive Library**

Community Resources for Inclusion

In October 2021, staff launched a new section on the SJPL website.[7] The new web section outlines SJPL's commitment to Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Anti-Racism, which is defined as follows:

- **Equity**: We recognize each person is unique and with different needs. We strive to provide everyone with what they need to succeed.

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[7] https://www.sjpl.org/equity-inclusion

- **Diversity**: We see and try to understand our differences. This includes race/ethnicity, language, abilities, age, gender, sexual orientation, and other traits. It also includes different ideas, views, and values.
- **Inclusion**: Everyone belongs at SJPL. We value the uniqueness of each person. We support building connections with each other. We commit to remove barriers to our resources and services.
- **Anti-racism**: We work to eliminate policies and practices that unfairly impact Black, Indigenous, and People of Color. We must actively work to fight against racism. This includes recognizing personal biases and learning how to overcome them.

Staff created a specialized resource page on anti-racism to deepen individuals' understanding of racism and recommended organizations leading anti-racism efforts. Librarians developed book recommendations for children of various ages and caregivers, as well as teens, adults, and educators.

The web section also includes information about inclusive Library programs and services, such as Library-by-Mail for individuals unable to visit the library due to a disability, programs for historically underserved communities, and resources to technology devices and skills-building opportunities. Staff will continue to create additional specialized resource pages for diverse communities.

Staff-led Working Groups

As part of the internal infrastructure working to advance equity for diverse populations and needs, the following projects were completed by staff-led equity working groups:

The Disability Access Committee (DAC), established in January 2020, makes recommendations based on the evaluation of equitable disability access to services, resources, technology, and staff guidelines at SJPL. During FY 2020-2021, the DAC undertook four main projects – developing content for the Accessibility page on the SJPL website[8], launching the -by-Mail service, expanding wheelchair accessible workstations and video transcript editing for SJPL videos.

The new online Accessibility page highlights SJPL's full range of materials, services, programs, and adaptive technology for people with disabilities. Launched in July 2021, the Library-by-Mail service provides books and other library materials to SJPL members of all ages living in the City of San José and who are unable to visit the library due to a temporary or permanent physical disability. The Library-by-Mail service is available to eligible individuals who complete a certification process, either online or via paper application. During summer 2021, DAC also led the expansion of wheelchair accessible/reservable computer stations at all locations which were

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[8] https://www.sjpl.org/accessibility

available once the Library re-opened indoor access to the branches. In an effort to promote continued learning in virtual settings, a team of volunteers supported SJPL in transcribing 141 hours of programming videos which are available on the Library's YouTube channel.

In winter 2022, DAC will launch an accessibility user survey to better understand the needs of this community and identify opportunities for the Library to support. Plans are also underway to increase the number of adaptive tech stations to more branches throughout the system. Currently the Library has six (6) adaptive tech stations, all of which are based the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Library (King Library). Because not all Library users may be able to travel to King Library, DAC members will use the insights from the survey to determine the need for additional adaptive technology equipment investments for Library branches.

The INSIDERS committee was established in 2016 and includes Library staff leading programming for teens and adults with intellectual and learning disabilities. Prior to the pandemic, nine (9) Library branches had active programming. However, many people in this demographic fall in the "high risk" category, facing a variety of barriers to virtual and in-person participation. The INSIDERS committee focused this past year developing pre-recorded programs which have had a total of 1,256 views.

SJPL staff are planning two (2) key events: a resource fair in March 2022 and Disability Awareness Day in October 2022. The INSIDERS committee will also collaborate with partner organizations to plan additional events throughout the year. Past partners have included Inclusion Collaborative, State Council on Developmental Disabilities and Parents Helping Parents.

SJPL's Racial Equity Team (RET) works to deepen conversations and increase racial equity in library service delivery. This past year, the RET undertook a series of projects including piloting racial/ethnic Affinity Groups, developing safety training and protocol recommendations, as well as leading several learning sessions for SJPL staff throughout the year.

A total of five (5) Affinity groups were piloted in July 2021 for staff who identify as Asian, Latinx/Hispanic, Indigenous/Native, Mixed Race or Black, as well as a White Learning Ally group. The groups are open to staff of all classifications and their participation (an hour per month) is included as part of their work time. The groups are facilitated by RET members who attended trainings during the year and collaborated to prepare a Facilitator's guide, discussion questions, and reading material on the history of each of the communities of color. The first months of the Affinity and Ally group meetings have been focused on building trust and identifying what the groups would like to prioritize. A member of the Library's Executive Leadership Team and the CPA for Equity and Inclusion Services serve as liaisons to the Affinity and Ally groups for cases that may require more in-depth support.

Another large project undertaken by the RET was the development of protocols and training materials for responding to and reporting on behavioral incidents. RET's Tools and Data subcommittee developed recommendations for standardizing responses to behavioral incidents, reducing implicit bias in reporting, and increasing overall staff development and community engagement. The RET members also denoted qualifying behaviors for emergency and non-emergency situations, including resources for alternatives to law enforcement. These recommendations and materials will be shared with SJPL's Safety and Security Committee and consultants.

During the coming year, the RET will continue to focus on Affinity and Ally Group development as well as supporting professional development opportunities and growth pathways for employees of color and entry-level staff. The RET members will also prepare additional staff learning spaces, including reflection exercises around the library's collections and how to enhance racial/ethnic, social, ability, and linguistic perspectives.

The LGBTQ+ Committee was formed in September 2021 to amplify LGBTQ+ voices and experiences throughout the year. The committee will meet quarterly to plan programming around key dates, such as PRIDE, National Coming Out Day, International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia, and Biphobia, among others. Staff will also recommend trainings and other learning opportunities for SJPL staff to better understand and support LGBTQ+ lived experiences.

Community Conversations

Community Conversations are kitchen-table style chats facilitated by trained library workers. Since 2018, SJPL has been hosting Community Conversations each quarter to gather community feedback, concerns, and programming suggestions. Over the years, dozens of community members have contributed ideas and feedback that have shaped our Library service model.

Beginning late 2020, SJPL modified its Community Conversations format to focus on specific themes and emerging issues. Each quarter, SJPL staff work in district groupings to facilitate conversations, occasionally incorporating guest presenters. As part of SJPL's equity approach, separate sessions for Spanish-only and Vietnamese-only speakers are also included. The transition of SJPL's Community Conversations, including logistics, creation of standardized templates, and system-wide coordination was led by the Equity and Inclusion VISTA Fellow with supervision from the CPA for Equity and Inclusion Services.

The themes for Community Conversations since this intentional pivot have included:

| December 2020 | SJ Access/Digital Divide |
|---|---|
| January-March 2021 | COVID-19 vaccine information featuring presentations from local medical professionals |
| April-June 2021 | Preparing for indoor Library access to the public |
| July-September 2021 | SJ Access/Digital Divide |
| October-December 2021 | Race and Inequity, featuring guest speakers' work to advance racial equity and support for communities of color |

In total, 212 community members have attended the Community Conversations since the pivot was introduced in December 2020 through early December 2021. Over the course of this past year, community members expressed deep appreciation for the digital devices available throughout the Library system and shared some of the financial and infrastructure barriers faced in their households, while also learning about the City's 311 resource to connect with the variety of City services. Members of the public were able to ask questions regarding vaccine safety, health concerns and clarify misconceptions about the Covid vaccine by engaging with medical professionals. As Library staff prepared to re-open indoor access, community members reinforced the enthusiasm of being able to browse Library materials indoors but also requested that virtual programs remain an option as it provides the flexibility to continue learning from home or work or other considerations. Library staff will provide a fuller update on the race and inequity conversations once the series is completed by the end of December 2021.

Upcoming quarters will include sessions on climate change, housing, and other issues cited by community members. Community Conversations are also a Volunteer Away Your Fines opportunity, providing patrons with the opportunity to have up to $20 applied to waive overdue fines for their participation.

**FY 2021-2022 Projects**

The CPA for Equity and Inclusion Services will continue working with staff-led groups in advancing the projects identified for the coming year. Upon approval of the EDIQS, staff will complete the list of recommended trainings and materials to be included in the EDI framework. With additional resources, staff will collaborate with contractors to lead staff-wide trainings on key equity concepts, including unconscious bias, anti-racism, conflict de-escalation, and trauma-informed approach, among others. These trainings will also be adapted and integrated for new employee onboarding. Staff will also continue expanding on the Equity Index, including additional adaptations for emerging needs, developing presentations for staff as well as for other stakeholders.

## CONCLUSION

The data collected in the first year of the Tiered Programming Framework will be critical to assess gaps and opportunities for deeper engagement of historically underserved communities. Staff will also continue to serve on a variety of working groups at City-wide, regional, and state-wide levels, such as the City's Equity Council, to share best practices, emerging models, and other efforts to advance equity.

## EVALUATION AND FOLLOW-UP

In accordance with the Education and Digital Literacy Strategy, staff will continue to track the progress, and implementation of the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Quality Standards, and assessments and will report back to the Library and Education Commission and the Neighborhood Services and Education Committee on an annual basis.

## PUBLIC OUTREACH

This memorandum will be posted on the City's Neighborhood Services and Education Committee agenda website for the January 13, 2022, meeting.

## COORDINATION

This report has been coordinated with the Office of Racial Equity.

## COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION/INPUT

The Library and Education Commission has reviewed the Standards and updates to various programs as part of the Education and Digital Literacy Strategy Initiative. The Commission recommends their approval to the Neighborhood Services and Education Committee.

## CEQA

Not a Project, File No. PP17-009, Staff Reports, Assessments, Annual Reports, and Informational Memos that involve no approvals of any City action.

/s/
JILL BOURNE
Director, Library Department


For questions, please contact Karla Alvarez, Equity and Inclusion Services Manager (Library) at karla.alvarez@sjlibrary.org.

## **ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment A: Project Advisory Ad-hoc Committee Membership
Attachment B: Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Quality Standards