



LAWRENCE PUBLIC SCHOOLS USD #497  
NATIVE AMERICAN STUDENT SERVICES



# NASS Newsletter

Info & Updates

November 2016

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## NASS Reminders

### NASS tutoring for 6th –12th grades

Continues to take place, 6pm to 8pm, Tuesdays, Wednesdays, & Thursdays in NASS office. You can log in to school computers or print out papers as well as receive academic assistance.

### School Supplies for Projects

Additional supplies like poster board and tri-fold cardboards for displays are available. Stop by or call to see if we have what you need for class.

### High School Clubs

Are being assisted by Kelly Walker this year. She can be reached at [krwalker@usd497.org](mailto:krwalker@usd497.org)

### Seniors & Juniors

- NASS is paying for your caps & gowns
- If you want a cap ahead of time (for beading) please contact Jennifer Attocknie by November 30
- NASS will pay for ACT/SAT testing. Bring us receipts and we will reimburse you.

### Calculators

If you need a graphing or scientific calculator for class, you may check them out from NASS. Please remember to bring them back at the end of the year. Because we offer them for checkout, we will not pay or reimburse for this expense.

#### NASS contact info:

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# *Racial Equity & NASS*

*a letter from Jennifer Attocknie, coordinator*

Recently, our communities, national, tribal, and local, have been rocked by racial tension. I understand that some parents may be uneasy. I would like to share some work that is being done to combat racism and inequities.

There have been cases where I have been asked to attend meetings held to address racial and/or cultural misunderstandings, micro-aggressions, and inappropriate curriculum use in the classroom. Most often, I am invited by the parents or family members, but sometimes the principal or teacher invites me to the meeting because they are aware that they may have deficiencies in understanding Indigenous ways. I have become aware recently that many families do not know that I am available in this way. So, I'm sharing some "for instances" with you in the hopes that if my assistance is needed, NASS parents feel comfortable asking for a liaison to attend, intervene, monitor, advise, or even just follow up.

The following scenarios are just a few examples of ways that I can assist. Each case is different. If I am personally unable to help, I will work with you to find someone that can.

## **Attend Parent/Teacher conference with a parent.**

If a parent feels uncomfortable talking with a teacher alone (for whatever reason: past negative experiences with the teacher or school, unsure about procedures, or even just wanting an extra ear there to hear what is said; or the parent may be nervous, or the teacher or parent wants my input as far as what resources NASS can offer the student), I am available to go to parent/teacher conferences. I can go to the regularly scheduled meetings in the fall and spring that are already set up, or we can make an extra effort to make a separate meeting with the student's teacher or even their team of teachers.

## **Attend IEP meetings/consultations.**

If I am invited to these Special Education meetings, I generally go to offer what services and resources NASS can provide as well as to add a cultural perspective to the accommodations that are made for the students that have IEPs or 504 plans. If a principal, counselor, or teacher, or someone else from the school contacts me about attending an IEP meeting, I will always contact the NASS parent involved before going. I consider myself to work for our families, so I will not just show up without the permission of the NASS parent.

## **Cultural misunderstandings.**

We've had instances where the school didn't understand the relationships of our families. For instance, once there was a multi-generational family that lived under one roof, and the mom and the grandma were the primary parents. In this particular case, the school had a really hard time understanding that the mom/aunt and the grandmother were the main caretakers and made the decisions for the kids in the household (the kids were brothers, sisters and cousins in the eyes of the white school administrators, who didn't understand the tribal relationship between cousins in this case saw themselves as siblings). After many misunderstandings and mistakes, I finally asked the family, principal, the school counselor and one of the teachers together for a meeting, where we all sat down and explained the make-up of the family was "normal" for the family and that the school needed to accept it as is. This particular case was the beginning of an overhaul of understanding for this school to ask for my help in increasing their awareness of Indigenous cultures, and their intentional learning and exposure to different perspectives. In the long run, this led to a change in attitude for the whole school, and we've been building on that ever since.

## *letter, continued*

If you feel that you or your student has been mistreated by an individual at the school building, there are procedures in place to address these incidents. If something unfortunate were to occur, I am available to assist in whatever ways I can during this time.

In addition, the school district has been working steadily towards some racial equity goals. One of the tools in place to guide school staff in terms of race is the Courageous Conversations about Race (CCAR) protocol. You may have heard about it. There are several elements involved with this protocol and I would be happy to clarify in more detail if you like. But, in general, there are basic aspects of the protocol that all teachers, principals, and staff are required to be trained in. They include:

**Compass:** identifying which quadrant we are coming from at any given time, that is made of

- Feeling
- Thinking
- Believing
- Acting

**Four agreements:** These are the basics of what two individuals agree upon when entering a conversation about race

- Stay engaged-we agree to talk and not walk away and continue this conversation
- Speak your truth-we agree to speak from our own personal experiences, using "I" statements, not "they" or "we" generalizations
- Experience discomfort-we recognize that this conversation may be uncomfortable and awkward
- Expect/Accept non-closure-we understand that not every problem will be solved in every conversation, we may have to come back to this issue at a later time.

There are more concepts that folks are trained on, and I would be happy to meet with individuals to explain further. The initial training is a two day session called, Beyond Diversity. Then there is Beyond Diversity II, National and Regional Summits that include additional learning. Each building has an E-team (Equity Team) that guides their colleagues in continuing education and deeper learning. Additionally, there is a district-wide equity council that I participate in, that is made up of administrators including assistant superintendents, department heads and principals. It is called DELT (District Equity Leadership Team). I share this structure with you so that you can see how committed the district is to racial equity. In the near future, we are opening up the trainings to parents and community members. Please let me know if you would like to be involved.

If there is a breakdown in communication, or if an individual teacher or staff member makes mistakes regarding race, I feel pretty certain that it will be addressed. One of the tenets of this racial equity work is to embrace the messy parts, because that is where the learning is. If we are not addressing our breakdowns and weaknesses, we cannot grow. If you feel that a breakdown has happened, I would like to try to help and solve it. Another tenet of our racial equity work is to examine our own prejudices and through this personal growth and examination, use that energy to enact change on a systemic level. I have seen it work. I have seen white administrators be confronted with their own biases and grow from their personal self-examination; and in turn, create policies and procedures that address and help all students.

Urah,  
*Jennifer Attocknie*