

AAMAC COUNCIL OF ELDERS UPDATE

DECEMBER 2018



Welcome to this first edition of the AAMAC Council of Elders update! The Council of Elders have been visiting the three pathway schools (Leschi Elementary, John Muir Elementary, and Orca K – 8) for approximately one month now and we thought that you would like to hear about their work.

The role of a Council of Elders member in a school building is to provide insight as to whether SPS initiatives currently underway – most importantly the Welcoming Environment tenet in School Board [Policy 0030 Ensuring Educational and Racial Equity](#) – as well as initiatives defined in the [AAMAC Recommendations](#) – can be observed. It is important to state clearly that an Elder is **not** in the position, or has a purpose, to evaluate. Council of Elders members have been trained repeatedly on the importance of understanding and following this. We are grateful to the three schools who have been willing to welcome the Elders and form a partnership.

This is a work in progress and everyone involved in this process is learning as we go. At the November AAMAC meeting, members of the community from the Seattle Council of PTSA and the Southeast Seattle Education Coalition were invited to hear about the first visits. In turn, the Elders heard from parents about their experiences in our schools. The dialogue helped the Elders to frame their visits through the lens of family engagement. Future meetings will include subject matter experts who will share what it means to create a culturally responsive environment as well as the pathway

UPCOMING MEETINGS

*All meetings are
4:00 – 6:00p.m. at the
JSCEE. Check the [AAMAC
website](#) for room location.*

January 24, 2019

Council of Elders sharing
with Subject Matter
Experts (SMEs)

February 28, 2019

March 28, 2019

Council of Elders sharing
with pathway principals +
school staff

May 2, 2019

Council of Elders sharing;
work begins on creating
best practices for
Welcoming Environment

June 6, 2019

Finalize work on best
practices; present results
to Superintendent Juneau

principals. By working on a continuous improvement cycle, we hope to learn effective strategies and refine current practices for creating and sustaining welcoming environments.

Council of Elders members use a formatted guide to help them organize what they see during a school visit. The latest update of this guide can be found on the [AAMAC website](#). As with the work at hand, the guide is also a work in progress and will continue to be refined. The guide looks at three specific content areas: relationships, environment, and the classroom. Elders have been instructed to begin in common areas in the schools (hallways, lunchroom, playground, etc.); entering into classrooms will begin only when an Elder has established a mutual relationship with a building educator and is invited to enter a classroom. Again, Elders are not evaluating but rather observing, with a specific focus on how a school's overall environment may be impacting African American males. Below are some of the thoughts that the Elders shared from their initial visits. Three of the Elders completed one visit in each of the pathway schools. Elders will continue their visits when school resumes in January 2019.

We will continue to share updates with you. If you would like more information about this project, please contact Jeanne Suleiman at jmsuleiman@seattleschools.org

from Leschi:

"I found a palpable sense of warmth and closeness at Leschi"

"Witnessed alert, engaged adult support to the kids"

"Specific/consistent routines in place that support a healthy environment"

from Orca:

"There's a wonderful feeling of intimacy and security between students, staff"

"Strong cultural presence on the hallway walls"

"I'm impressed with the arts atmosphere of this school"

from John Muir:

"Kids appeared to be happy in school....and staff seemed to know all kids by name"

"Exceptional warmth and care for students and staff throughout the building"

"This building does a great job of displaying artwork"



Artwork from a fabric mural at Orca K - 8

African American Males are the Architects of their Own Dreams