



**J. Michael Clára**  
Salt Lake City School Board  
District Two

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3 June 2014

**Hand Delivered**

Kristi Swett, President  
Salt Lake City Board of Education  
% Salt Lake City School District  
440 East 100 South  
Salt Lake City, UT 84111-1891

**Re: Associate Superintendent of Educational Equity & Diversity**

Dear President Swett,

On behalf of the residents and students that I represent, I am submitting this letter to express my support for the Salt Lake City School District creating the new position:

**Associate Superintendent of Educational Equity & Diversity**

The idea for this position within the organizational structure of the district had its genesis in two recent community/school meetings. The attached picture is a few of the participants (Senator James Evans, Mr. Archie Archuleta, Ms. Jennifer Sanchez and Michael Clára) that attended the meeting on May 1, 2014, held at the Salt Lake City School District's Westside Community Learning Center.

This meeting was facilitated by Ms. Rosa Salamanca who is a conciliation specialist with the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) out of Denver, Colorado. The stated purpose of the meeting:

**To Identify and Address Educational Access Concerns  
For Race and Ethnic Youth Attending  
The Salt Lake City School District**

**"Local school boards are the bedrock of our society, yet they are invisible to the public"**

Señor Florez -Deseret News

In this meeting, and in conjunction with the district's recently reconvened **Equity Leadership Team** (see attached) that met on May 22, 2014, we concluded that beliefs in educational equity, no matter how powerful or how compelling, make little difference in the absence of practices that translate those beliefs into day-to-day reality in our schools.

We also established the need to develop a district-wide approach in which all schools, not just isolated campuses, are places in which children of color experience the same kind of school success that most of their peers have always enjoyed.

*"Rather than focusing reform efforts primarily upon the building as the focus of school change, a district-level approach acknowledges the critical role of the central office and school board in making learning improvement. The strategic linking together of many institutional elements can support improved learning outcomes."*

*(James Berry and Charles Achilles, 1999)*

A recent article by the Salt Lake Tribune (June 2, 2014), highlighted this very point:

### **Latino Students Boast Highland High's Top Graduation Rate**

The subtitle of the article states:

*"Latinos aren't singled out by special programs; rather, programs help all students..."*

That was one of the questions raised in the May 22, 2014, **Equity Leadership Team** meeting; which school programs and philosophies contribute to student success and which ones do not? It is difficult to make that determination because there is currently a patchwork of programs and initiatives throughout the district that make for an inconsistent application of processes and policies. Additionally, our current practices leave unanswered questions as to why school policies apply to one group of parents but not others i.e.:

### **Clara: Salt Lake City Minority Parents Left Out of Principal Selection**

Salt Lake Tribune, May 14, 2014

Another recent example, there appears to be confusion on the district level as to what is a "gang prevention" program and what is not. This type of confusion then spills over into the schools in my community as local administrators and parents struggle to make decisions on how to keep our schools safe.

On today's school board agenda, the Utah Consolidation Application (UCA) is listed on the consent agenda.

The UCA states that in order to respond to **Achievement Gap Disparities**, the district will “*Conduct equity audits of various district programs and practices*”. In the year and half that I have served on the school board, I have yet to see a copy of an Equity Audit. Are we even doing them? How often do we do them? Who sees them? etc.... It now appears that the administration is having difficulty providing me with copies of the Equity Audits that have been conducted to date. I have requested that the item be transferred from the consent agenda to the action agenda.

To that end, I am fully endorsing the recommendation that the district elevate the current position of Assistant Superintendent of Equity and Advocacy (Director I, same level of a principal) to that of an **Associate Superintendent of Educational Equity and Diversity**. This will then allow for the implementation of focused equity practices throughout the district. I am convinced that this position would go a long way in addressing the issues of inattention that I have cited above and that I have attempted to address over the past year and half of service on the school board.

The latest enrollment numbers, shows the Salt Lake City School District with a population of 24,723 students, ethnic minority student’s account for 57% of that number. Yet there is reluctance on the district’s part to address the unique issues facing our students of color.

Many community and educators in our diversity-enhanced schools want to move beyond blame and want to continue the work to transform our district to serve all of our students. I am convinced that we will see rapid change and get on the path to collaboration if the school board will take the bold step of elevating the current position of Assistant Superintendent to that of Associate Superintendent of Educational Equity & Diversity. Creating this new position will serve to demonstrate the school district’s commitment to addressing the unique unmet needs of 57% of our current student population.

Shalom,



J. Michael Clára  
Board Member, District 2

