

CONGRESSIONAL SCHOOL

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION COMMITTEE

November 19, 2019

In attendance:

Parents

Vielka Asia Williams
Johanna Bell
Mena Burke
Sandra Buteau

Darcy Franz
Deirdre Gallop-Anderson
Servio Medina
Caroline Soberanis

Jeanette Taylor
Brian Woodward

Faculty/Staff

Ru Buttner
Rebecca Ginnetti
Edwin Gordon
Gretchen Herbst
Brent Hinrichs

Stefanie Hjalmervik
Sara King
Emily Manes
Maithili Mankar
Silvia Moore

Alyce Penn
Mar Ramirez
Andrea Weiss

Students

Michael Bicksel
Kate Kiriakou

Kamryn Sauri

Vabees Qudus

Silvia Moore opened the meeting at 8:21 am and referred to the agenda for an overview of topics.

Welcome

Silvia gave an overview of the DEIC mission statement and explained that cultural competency is about understanding and having empathy for people that are different from us, about understanding how to interact in a world with diverse learners, religions, cultures, sexual orientations and people who look different from us. It is about getting past those differences and seeing the inside of people.

She then raised the question, what are our next steps? The committee was then asked to write down their opinions/ideas on what diversity, equity, and inclusion means for Congressional and what they would like to see Congressional do around it. She will report back once all of the ideas are compiled.

If someone does not have access to the DEIC google drive folder, please let Silvia know and she will give you access. There are several different folders with information such as previous minutes, resources, working group goals, etc. This committee is facilitated by some but owned by all of us.

Student DEI Group Update

Rebecca Ginnetti, School Counselor, reported that she and Desmond McGlone, Middle School Math Teacher, are working with a group of 20-25 students called LEAD (Leaders in Equity, Advancement and Diversity) on A days during lunch. Last Friday, November 15, several students from this group visited St. Stephen's and St. Agnes School to attend their School Diversity Conference.

Michael Bicksel, Kate Kiriakou, Kamryn Sauri and Vabees Qudus gave an overview of the activities they did, what they saw and what they learned at the conference. The students then conducted an activity that they had experienced at the conference. The students asked yes/no questions. Everyone was asked to stand up if they felt the question applied to them.

When the activity was complete, the students asked why the committee thought they did this activity. Responses included, "to get to know the group better, to learn about each other, gives the committee information on areas where we may need improvement, and gives discussion points." The students closed by saying it was to learn what we need to work on as a group.

Rebecca concluded that LEAD members did the same activity during lunch yesterday. Everyone has responded so well that they've thought about bringing it into the entire middle school during recess or a flex period to possibly bring it out onto the field. They will talk about bringing it down to lower levels but will have to tailor it accordingly.

Book Talk

Silvia conducted a quick debrief about the books we read over the summer:

- *Blindspot: Hidden Biases of Good People* by Mahzarin R. Banaji and Anthony G. Greenwald
- *Waking Up White: And Finding Myself in the Story of Race* by Debby Irving
- *Real American: A Memoir* by Julie Lythcott-Haims

She then asked the committee the following questions:

1. Describe using a word how these books made you feel?
Aware, perspectives, raw, challenging, intent, thought provoking, emotional and reflective. These books represent a spectrum and we need to understand that the work of DEI is good work but we're all not in the same place. Some of us are just starting our journey and some are further along. There is no end and there will always be new things to learn.
2. What topics came up to you after you read these books? What differences in you did this promote?
Vielka stated that she read Blindspot which was very thought provoking. It made her realize a lot of the biases she has and that she is a lot more careful now. She is learning about other cultures by watching different shows and seeing how different cultures do things differently.

Deidre mentioned the fact of having the courage to look within yourself and look at how you've been raised and even though you were raised one way, it's okay to say "I am going to raise my children differently."

Implicit Race Bias

The committee discussed the implicit race bias test that everyone took. It was mentioned that this test seemed like just another test that was black and white and showed no bias. Silvia said that we tend to say something but do different which is why DEI work is so important. We need to not only talk about it but find age appropriate ways all the way down. We want to erase those lines.

Working Group Goals

The committee broke out into working groups to discuss how we are applying what we are learning to the broader community.

Working Group Report Out

Each working group reported out:

Parent Support/Awareness Working Group

Servio Medina reported on the Parent Support/Awareness working group. This group wants to encourage parents to share experiences that they've had within the committee so it's tangible. There needs to be examples to get others to open up. Awareness is still very new at schools and so being involved can help shape how we look at it. A first step would be to create a book club and hold a coffee social around DEI. Find parents that have competencies that can be used during these events to raise awareness.

Recruitment and Retention Working Group

Mena Burke reported on the Recruitment and Retention working group. They need to gather better data for the school. It will help families make decisions on whether or not they want to be part of our community if we have actual numbers. Transparency is a benefit to the school.

Curriculum Working Group

Deirdre Gallop-Anderson reported on the Curriculum Working Group. Teachers are developing their curriculum maps around DEI so the sense of awareness is pervasive within each subject here at the school.

Student Experience Working Group

Jeanette Taylor reported on the Student Experience Working Group. They talked about doing year-long campaigns for students. The first could be, "do you hear my voice?" It would be yearlong activities around can you hear me/can I speak up? Some other campaigns to think about would be color me blank, see no color, are you looking at me. These would span across color, disability, sex, etc. Have the students really own this. Have a student committee so that other students can bring their issues to them. Learn self-resolution.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 9:50 am.