

# CONGRESSIONAL SCHOOL

## DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION COMMITTEE

January 21, 2020

### In attendance:

#### Parents

Johanna Bell

Mena Burke

Deirdre Gallop-Anderson

Caroline Katzin

Servio Medina

Caroline Soberanis

Jeanette Taylor

Crystal Willis

Brian Woodward

#### Faculty/Staff

Ru Buttner

Tinelle Davies

Lizzie Doerr

Mirella Gaines

Edwin Gordon

Rebecca Ginnetti

Gretchen Herbst

Brent Hinrichs

Sara King

Emily Manes

Desmond McGlone

Silvia Moore

Kim O'Neil

Chris Pryor

#### Students

Michael Bicksel

Kate Kiriakou

Kamryn Sauri

Vabees Qudus

Dr. Edwin Gordon opened the meeting at 8:21 am and referred to the Agenda for an overview of topics.

### Welcome

Edwin welcomed the Committee. He is committed to supporting the efforts of the Committee and has four overarching goals he hopes to become the strategic plan for DEI work:

1. *To create an inclusive and equitable campus climate.*

This means that in all of our efforts in this community our campus should be welcoming and supportive of differing perspectives and contributions that are sought out and valued. Everything that we do should be inclusive of other ideas.

2. *To recruit, retain and develop a diverse community.*

This is one which we are very busy doing now as we look at searches for faculty and staff. This does take focus efforts especially when we are looking for diversity in faculty (of color, different sexual orientations, and different ethnicities, etc.) as well as in the student body. These are very critical. We are going to work to build a more diverse faculty and student body on this campus through targets of opportunity. For faculty/staff targets of opportunity are those candidates that we know because of their experience, race, ethnicity, and so forth. For the student body, we have been busy looking at ways in which we can connect more in a more diverse community, such as through different

organizations (for example: Mocha Moms, Jack and Jill, etc.) and going to those communities that we have not gone to in the past.

3. *Supporting an innovative and inclusive curriculum.*

One in which we are working on every day but may not appear to be. This may be one of the most difficult areas. Most of this may not be that apparent. Because teaching with diversity in mind is something that is embedded into the curriculum. This is something that we can be more intentional about. Where we can be intentional about teaching in a more diverse way, to diverse audiences, as well as enhancing our curriculum, enhancing our pedagogy, we will do that.

4. *Enhancing the experience that our students have.*

Very happy to see students that are part of the LEAD program join others at St. Stephens and St. Agnes in the Fall with hundreds of other students to talk about these issues. This is really the future of our efforts.

### **POCC Report**

Desmond McGlone, Mirella Gaines and Edwin Gordon attended the People of Color Conference (POCC) on December 4-7, 2019 in Seattle, Washington.

Mirella reported about her experience at the conference first. She reflected on how the conference taught her how important it is to use our heritage and values to guide the next generation, "This is why we need to constantly educate ourselves." She went through a PowerPoint presentation (attached) and discussed activities that she has brought back to her Preschool classroom.

Desmond reported next about his takeaways from the conference. The first question he asked himself was how he felt about his affinity group. There was a deep social acceptance being around people who looked like him, who talked like him, where he could really be himself. He was at home and could carry himself in a way that he wanted. Now as a black man in an independent school, there are not many, and being in his affinity group, there was a deep respect for each other. They could come together and connect with others. He wasn't too prone on stepping forward toward inclusion and equity but now he sees it as his responsibility. He has this mission that he is pushing the DEI work forward as it is extremely important. One of the most important things, the people who were not people of color at the conference, where white allies. We need these people, these people who are going to stand up and defend inequity and inequality and use their white privilege.

### **LEAD Update**

Rebecca Ginnetti and Desmond McGlone lead the student LEAD group. The LEAD leaders are Kamryn Sauri, Vabees Qudus, Kate Kiriakou and Michael Bicksel. The LEAD leaders reported on what they are currently doing. This Friday they are going to speak about Martin Luther King Jr. Day at the assembly. They made a script to present a slideshow and watch a video about Martin Luther King Jr. Next month is Black History Month where there will also present at an assembly to raise awareness.

## Inclusion Video and Discussion

An inclusion video was shared with the group. The inclusion video can be found here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pBBirlVxVsg&feature=youtu.be>. Discussion followed:

1. *One word to describe how you feel after watching the video?*

- Reflective
- YES!!!!
- Woke
- Inspired
- Proud
- Reminded to stop stereotyping people and it's important to ask questions

2. *How do you/your family feel about inclusion at Congressional?*

- People ask why did we chose Congressional. With all due respect, the question is... "Why are we staying at Congressional and this is one of the reasons (DEIC)."
- Congressional is progressive? in accepting everyone and celebrating everyone through innovation night as well as in the classroom (Hanukah, etc.). As well as the efforts from DEIC in hiring and creating a student body.
- Congressional is trailblazing, not only in the private school scene but in the public school scene. We are not trying to get together to only check boxes but to move and create spaces for people to open up.
- I feel like we have made enough progress, it's not necessarily the fastest but we have. We still have a lot of work to do.
- As someone who is very new, I am very pleased with what I see. I do see a community that is forward looking. I have been happy to find this. I would say, looking back at our celebrations in December, we are still very mainstream in how we celebrate (for example, Christmas). There are opportunities. The positive, I see is a desire and growth that is there and it is wonderful.
- Proud of the work that teachers and faculty have put in. We are taking steps, we have not arrived, nor will we ever, but the education piece and desire for people to want to learn and ask questions. There is a desire to want to improve and learn more.
- Went to a public school. In Chorus, we do not do Christmas songs, but instead we do winter songs to include everyone. In public school, everyone did Christmas, we put trees on doors. My mother is Jewish, we do not celebrate Hanukah. Now that I am here, we see many different holidays celebrated.
- There could be a little bit more dialogue around different sexual orientation and genders. Just really being mindful of being all inclusive of people not being included in the gender binary or heterosexual orientation.

### 3. *Where are the opportunities for growth?*

- Here on campus, we're supporting each other. What happens when my 6 year old goes to a playground and is hanging out with others? For her, it is matter of fact but others may not understand/interact with the same DEI lenses. How are we empowering growth that extends beyond our safe space?
- One thing, I would like to see. As a black parent, we are the minority here. It's a safe space but we are the minority. If we had activities outside the safe space where others were the minority, would they come? We need to extend the opportunity to those and not be afraid to be turned down.

**A challenge was raised from these discussions:** Each and every Committee member invite someone to our next DEIC meeting.

### **Updates**

We soon will be recording a DEIC podcast. Servio, Mary Beth and a few faculty/staff will be on that. It will come out in February. We have also talked about a podcast with our LEAD group at some point this year.

Ru and Tinelle have been working to update the career section of the school website. It is almost there. It will probably go live within the next few weeks. It was a goal of our Recruitment and Retention Working Group and it's almost finished.

### **Working Groups Time**

The Committee broke out into working groups.

### **Working Group Report Out**

Each working group reported out:

#### Parent Support/Awareness Working Group

Servio Medina reported on the Parent Support/Awareness Working Group. Having a parent assembly and encouraging some parents to present. It is open ended on what they present, a performance, an experience, etc. Encouraging parents across different grade levels to interact with one another. We have buddy systems with students but what about parents? How do we get more parents involved? We have all these wonderful events; International night, Back to School Night, and the Gala. The Gala is another example on where we can encourage it to be more DEI. All ideas are welcome. How do we enhance things we already have?

#### Recruitment and Retention Working Group

Tinelle Davies reported on the Recruitment and Retention Working Group. Edwin and Brent will be attending the Potomac School Diversity Hiring Fair on February 1. If you know anyone that is looking for a teaching position they should attend. It is a great fair. There are already have two positions open, a PE teacher/coach (who will be teaching toddlers and coaching middle

schoolers) and a middle school physical science teacher. Edwin sent out the email last week about Andrea Weiss leaving, she will be a Head of School in Maryland. We are looking to fill that position and will send out information at some point on that. There are three things you can share with other parents for this initiative if they are not able to come to meetings:

1. What connections do you have in your life that you can share with the school to be able to help with recruitment and retention?
2. How can we expand that?
3. What are other ways to get others to step into this initiative?

#### Curriculum Working Group

Johanna Bell reported on the Curriculum Working Group. Look at teaching for tolerance and see if that is something we want to adapt here for approval. It has already been vetted and researched but we need to look at it to see if it reflects Congressional. Another aspect is to provide professional development, want to go survey the faculty and see what opportunities they would like instead of suggesting. Start to think about how those can be laid out on the calendar and what resources are need. Our teachers are finishing up curriculum mapping this year. Over the summer, DEIC will be looking at the maps through the DEI lens. That initiative is ongoing.

#### Student Experience Working Group

Jeanette Taylor reported on the Student Experience Working Group. They talked about making sure their voices were heard. The 7<sup>th</sup> graders are going to the Holocaust Museum on Friday. They discussed maybe a cross over with books and movies. They would read a book, have dialogue, watch the movie, and then have more dialogue. It would give two platforms for discussion.

#### **Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 9:55 am.