

Board of Education
Diversity, Equity, Accessibility and Inclusion Subcommittee

Minutes of the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Subcommittee meeting held on October 2, 2024 at 6:00 p.m. in the Board of Education conference room, 3 Primrose Street.

C. Gilson, Chair
D. Linnetz
D. Zukowski (virtual)

A. Uberti, Superintendent
3 Public

Mr. Gilson called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Item 1 – Public Participation

Item 2 – Update on Progress Toward DEAI Work Plan

Mrs. Uberti reported that we are entering our third year with Nixon and Company. They joined us this summer for our leadership meeting where they discussed the work they've done to date. One focus of their work is sustainability, building capacity in our schools, and how we maintain the work being done when they leave. We established priorities and spent most of the year getting a common understanding of DEAI.

To make the work actionable for next year we will expand our community of practice into the schools. Each school will set goals around DEAI in their strategic plans. The next level of work will focus on people who have roles that lend naturally to this work. Another big piece was the communication aspect and focused on more external communication to the community. There needs to be district communication at the building level also. For this year each school leader is developing a school strategic plan which will include DEAI. On October 15 the K-6 principals will presented their strategic plans to the Board including their action steps for their buildings. The work plan for Nixon and Company will be a combination of group sessions and more coaching sessions to talk through what they are doing and the needs for their specific school on an ongoing basis throughout the year. They returned in August to meet with her and Mrs. DiBartolo to talk about the strategic plans. They will come back and speak with high school student groups to look at progress and report on attitude. She is sending a weekly update to the district and will incorporate more and more into that until it becomes more normalized. She wants to put out what we are doing in the schools.

Mr. Gilson asked about engaging counselors more.

Mrs. Uberti said we developed a group of knowledgeable people in our buildings and we need to expand that so we have additional staff who can be knowledgeable for their colleagues.

Mr. Gilson asked if they learned enough and are able to coach other staff.

Mrs. Uberti feels they are. The next group we are bringing in are people who have a different view of this work because of the nature of their work. Some areas we need to improve on with the first tenet is the ability to respond but we still have people who don't have that mindset. An important goal is to, if you need to stop and have a conversation, you do and address it. There are still teachers who are unaware and still want to teach a certain way.

Ms. Zukowski asked if there was a method to talk to people about holding back.

Mrs. Uberti noted that it's dependent on the individual. The answer ranges is from believing the way they've done it is the right way and then some don't want to be aware. Change is hard in schools because you're changing their core beliefs in teaching. We have to understand the demographic is different but have to see what they are doing.

Mrs. Linnetz asked how objectives in school strategic plans connect to personal goals. Mrs. Uberti stated that not every teacher is required to have a goal in that area but everyone is aware of the school goals.

Mrs. Linnetz referred to curriculum and if there is still work to be done to update them. Mrs. Uberti stated that we looked at areas where cultural topics might appear and diversified the school libraries. As curriculum comes through, we train the writers. For the K-8 curriculum our goal is integrated with all aspects of culture, race and religion, and human rights issues. Students have naturally connected with it. In social studies we have an outside consultant that works with teachers to try to connect what they are teaching the students.

Mr. Gilson asked how much time in there in class to talk about actual events that occurred.

Mrs. Uberti said when we had outside auditors come in we brought them into classrooms. There have been efforts made to ensure we are covering a wide range of topics. Most of our teachers understand the importance of teaching from different perspectives.

Mrs. Linnetz asked how we will use Nixon and Company after this year. Mrs. Uberti said they will be here monthly, have whole group sessions, and visit the schools. They provided us with a lot of feedback for improvement and last year was very successful.

Mrs. Linnetz stated it is not an easy change for some staff and asked how you will know who is having difficulty.

Mrs. Uberti said some people complain and we are alerted. There are some areas we need improvement and active plans are in place. We modified our PD days to see what they are working on. We are also piloting two new resources for social studies in the middle school and hired a consultant to work with teachers to get them on board.

Mrs. Linnetz asked for any update on the Increasing Educator Diversity Plan.

Mrs. Uberti said it was approved and we received feedback and reconstituted the committee who have been meeting. Suzanne D'Eramo will be bringing the revised plan to the Board at the October 15 meeting. Many districts were asked for feedback to improve their plans.

Item 3 – Planning for Future Meetings

Mr. Gilson asked Mrs. Uberti what she needed from this committee and if we should keep the DEAI subcommittee.

Mrs. Uberti asked for a better understanding of this committee. She feels the update should be provided to the whole Board as now it's only an update for the committee. She asked if there was something the subcommittee should be doing.

Ms. Zukowski said initially there wasn't enough communication about DEAI. We've come a long way from fulfilling the goals of DEAI so that was the purpose of the committee.

Mrs. Linnetz said this committee was making sure things were going along well with Nixon. Maybe we should table any decisions on the committee until after the December meeting.

Mrs. Uberti said that will give a better glimpse in how she is communicating around the work so we could re-evaluate in December.

Ms. Zukowski suggested that maybe there could be a Board member liaison with the district DEAI committee for more of a direct link at the district level.

Mrs. Uberti noted that the high school has it's own DEAI committee. The middle school has a subcommittee of their school climate committee. For the other schools it is part of their school climate committee. We also have a district school climate committee. She wasn't sure if it would work to have a liaison. This should be imbedded in what we do and should be talking about this with the full Board.

Mrs. Linnetz agreed that it's important for the full Board to have this knowledge.

Mrs. Uberti agreed and this would allow the community to see what we are doing.

Mr. Gilson asked that Mrs. Uberti consider where a liaison would be appropriate to discuss at the December 4 meeting so they can report back to the Board.

Mrs. Uberti would still like people to know when we are having sessions, plus the Board will get updates.

Item 4 – Approve Minutes of April 3, 2024

MOTION: Mrs. Linnetz moved to approve the minutes of April 3, 2024. Vote: 2 ayes, 1 abstained (Ms. Zukowski) Motion passes.

Item 5 – Public Participation

Laura Main, 42 The Old Road, spoke about the Increasing Educator Diversity Plan that is required by public act. She provided a data comparison of the educator and student diversity trend and was concerned about the potential of dissolving this subcommittee. She hopes this committee and the Board engages in a discussion about the importance of this work.

MOTION: Mrs. Linnetz moved to adjourn. Ms. Zukowski seconded. Motion passes.

Item 6 – Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 7:08 p.m.