

# HUDSONVILLE PUBLIC SCHOOLS DIVERSITY AND ADVOCACY COMMITTEE MINUTES Administration Building, 3883 Van Buren, Hudsonville, MI 49426

**December 5, 2023**

**4:15 PM**

**Committee Members Present:** Abby Pater, Carissa Woodwyk, Chelsea Reed, Greg Molchan, Jennifer Brummitt, Jennifer Dougherty, Jordan Beel, Joy Hemmes, Jacob Lenhart, Louise VandenHuevel, Mackenzie Stefanich, Marc Arnoys, Nate Hoekstra, Mandy Thomas, and Steve Burns. **Absent:** Aimee Dittmer, Ami Taylor, Doug VanderJagt, Paul Raschke, Ryan Crete, Zach James, Tracey Weberg **HPS Board Members Present:** Greg Chanski, Mark Davis **Minutes by:** Stephanie Fast

Facilitator Thomas called the meeting to order at 4:15 p.m.

## **Approval of Minutes**

Motion was made by Stefanich to approve the Nov. 1 minutes. Woodwyk seconded. All members present voted in favor.

## **Group Work**

The Information Gathering/Data Group and the Brainstorming/Research Group each met to discuss and review what they had discovered. Each group prepared to report their findings back to the committee at large.

## **Group Summaries**

Information Gathering/Data Group:

Thomas indicated that a question that had been raised in the prior meeting was related to if the data pertaining to the incidence of harassment and discrimination had changed since the last time it was reviewed by the committee. The group reviewed the 2022-23 data alongside prior years, and the number of total incidents of harassment/discrimination towards a student of a protected class had increased from 50 (2021-22) to 95 (2022-23) incidents relating to student harassment. The group explored the proportionality of the data and would like to examine the total harassment trends and proportionality statistics in comparison to the total student body.

Some committee members expressed that they had many questions unanswered by the SOAR data. They have interest in doing another survey but are unsure on the best timing. They want to know if over time, the committee is making a difference and see the continual review of data for the purpose of improvement as a core piece of the problem of practice statement selected by the group.

A committee member shared that while the data isn't yet complete, there is enough to get started and support forward movement in brainstorming/research. They indicated that they felt we should use the data currently available to start, knowing that they can make adjustments as new developments occur. The sub-group reported they would be interested in gathering this data from younger grades if the survey could be digestible for them.

## Brainstorming/Research Group:

Woodwyk indicated that each person had contacted other schools that were similar to HPS, and some had success. The BE NICE program had many good pieces but tends to lean more towards a specific piece of mental health related to suicide prevention. The sub-group had a conversation regarding the changes that have taken place in our community and country since the COVID pandemic. They noticed many issues became magnified. They wondered if because we were such a steady and consistent district with big issues, maybe we didn't have a lot of practice having tough conversations. The sub-group wondered what we could be doing as a school committee to improve in that area. A member shared that at the Dream Center, they help to build relationships and trust. They referenced a Love and Logic/Loving our Students on Purpose program that they have found to be helpful. A member pointed out a person has to be skilled in relationships to be able to love others who are different from them, and a lack of connection skills could contribute to problems.

Woodwyk shared that Zeeland has a student advisory committee that is holding panels four times a year. She indicated that such a practice could help us be more relationship focused and the students may feel their voice is valued. She stated that since we came from a stable place into a major national shake-up, we don't always know how to do hard conversations or how to repair damage, so we approach each other with correction. She pointed out we need to create a better culture of trust and connection with students, teachers, administrators, and the community.

Beel indicated that while BE NICE has a lot to offer, it doesn't address the committee's problem of practice. He stated that HPS already has some mental health services to support students, such as the Arbor Circle practitioner. He felt the BE NICE acronym focuses on components of noticing the withdrawal or potential isolation of individual students, which doesn't necessarily align with the group's focus. He suggested they look at furthering the subgroup's knowledge related to Loving Students on Purpose.

A member asked if there were not more programs available. Beel shared that there were not many pre-packaged programs and that many were home-grown. Another member stated the demographics have changed a lot in Hudsonville, so the connection piece could be better. Beel pointed out that while technology improves, we are losing human connection. Students know how to text sorry, but perhaps not to truly empathize with each other.

Thomas shared an example shared by another subgroup member related to the recurring issue of middle school students asking for a pass to be able to say the "n" word, potentially indicating that some students don't understand why it is disrespectful to use such language or follow the example of others when they engage in that behavior. The sub-group shared that while it makes sense to work towards being a community, they wonder if that will ultimately address these types of concerns. Another member shared the importance of staying connected to the story of the individuals behind the data points. A member stated we may need to add nuance and customization through teamwork to any type of program or plan another school or district may have implemented.

Thomas ended the meeting at 5:45 pm.