

## November 2022 – Diversity and Advocacy Committee Meeting Minutes

Present: *Abby Pater, Aimee Ditmer, Ami Taylor, Carissa Woodwyk, Chelsea Reed, Doug VanderJagt, Greg Molchan, Jacob Lenhart, Jennifer Brummitt, Jennifer Dougherty, Jordan Beel, Joy Hemmes, Louise VandenHuevel, MacKenzie Stefanich, Mandy Thomas, Marc Arnoys, Nate Hoekstra, Paul Raschke, Ryan Crete, Steve Burns, Zach James*  
Absent: *Cara Riley*

### Introductions

Since the start of the year, there have been three changes to the Diversity and Advocacy Membership. Each time this has occurred, we have returned to the membership selection criteria to select new members. This has looked like identifying the factors that the outgoing member represented, and referred to the original membership applications to identify a current parent/guardian that would meet those same representation factors. These factors included: northside/southside families, children in elementary/middle/high school, gender, and most importantly, survey results. Outgoing members included: Juanae Barkley, Ranjit Gill, and Kayle Ogrodzinski. New members include Greg Molchan, Nate Hoekstra, and Zach James. *An updated membership list has been posted on the website.*

### Reflections from October's Discussion

There was appreciation for the open dialog around gap statement selected/rated as the top concern/priority from the committee's ratings. The themes in this discussion were:

- concerns about whether this statement conveys agreement with or celebration of LGBTQ+ students;
  - Words matter – when talking about how we would want for students to be treated or aspects of diversity to be discussed, words like tolerate and celebrate mean different things to different people. For example, one member expressed that they would not want for LGBTQ “lifestyle” to be celebrated because did not align with their values. Another member shared that they did not want for students to feel tolerated but rather accepted. The group discussed how we all read and interpret these words differently, based on our experiences and viewpoints.
- concerns about this statement failing to capture bullying or harassment experienced by students outside of a protected class;
  - Some on the committee don't want people outside of the protected classes to be forgotten. All students should be considered.
- a desire to see a proactive versus reactive approach to this issue;
- equipping teachers with tools when they see or hear harmful statements or gestures towards students based on their individual differences;
  - Members expressed that there is fear relating to this this topic for some teachers and administrators. They fear having their words or actions misrepresented to others; for others to view their actions or words as controversial and consequently speak poorly of them openly and publicly. They fear of being part of an incident, either positive or negative, and how that is received in that situation and in public opinion.
- explicitly teaching students how to engage in dialogue with others that have differing views or backgrounds.
  - Want to be proactive on how to help kids talk to one another or speak to harassment in general.

- The words “protected classes” are part of the discussed problem of practice statement. There are varying beliefs and values about specifically addressing protected classes, but all agree that these students should not be harassed.
- All students should have a sense of belonging.

#### New learning/Group Discussion:

In terms of policies, the district handles the reactive part very well when addressing reported instances of harassment. Some members are concerned that this statement specifically narrows in on supporting students of protected classes. A member shared that in reviewing policies for harassment, there is an approved board policy that is clear and applies to all students and does not specify classes. Because this policy is approved by the BOE, shouldn't our problem of practice be in alignment with that policy? What is our measure, how are we measuring, and where do we want to go?

#### Define consensus

The group began to discuss what criterion would be used to determine consensus. Understanding topics such as these, we may not reach 100% on major decision points; however, we believe the process can move forward with support when consensus is met by a lower percentage point. As the committee moves forward, it is important to have a set metric for “consensus”. Is it unanimous or simple majority? Committee members participated in an exercise to define consensus. Do we need 50% up to unanimous? One comment that stood out was, “Don't let perfect get in the way of good”. Absent members need to vote on consensus.

Some members expressed concern that if the group does not move forward until the group is unanimous on a decision, there was concern that our proposal would be a watered-down version of a solution or not hold any meaning or impact for our students. Other members voiced that a higher percentage, including a unanimous vote, could also be seen as compromise. A member shared that a higher threshold shows unity. A member voiced concern about the number of staff members vs. parents. There are currently 10 parents on the committee, 6 administrators, and 6 staff members. A parent noted “my job isn't impacted by the way I vote. Parents that are not staff members are free from district influence.” Concern is that staff members may vote the way they think their superiors in the room want them to. A staff member stated that they would vote based on what is best for the children. Several staff members on the committee noted that they felt comfortable sharing their genuine opinions to the committee and were not concerned that they would be treated adversely by their co-workers or administrators.

#### Revisiting problem of practice

The committee was asked to review two statements and indicate if they could support either statement as the group's summary statement, before moving to “phase two” of the committee process. Committee members were able to vote for both options if they agreed with both statements.

- Instances of discrimination based on protected factors are occurring in our district. Instances of harassment & bullying also occur that are not based on these factors. Our laws & policies require us to create an anti-harassment learning environment for all learners. With this as our starting point, we seek to gain feedback from relevant stakeholders & explore options to address this issue. (16 votes for this)
- Discrimination/Harassment based on race, religion, disability, and sexual orientation is occurring. Our laws and policies require us to create an anti-harassment environment. How can we close this gap? (11 votes for this)

Committee members were encouraged to come back next month with ideas. They were asked to bring a solution about what could be a problem of practice statement that could bring a higher level of consensus and/or identify a statement that has already been discussed and their rationale for supporting that idea.

#### Meeting Attendance and Onboarding New Members

A committee member expressed interest in further discussing if there should be a new expectation around meeting attendance. At present, the ask is that members attend all meetings, but there is no minimum expectation. If a member misses two or more meetings, a committee co-chair will reach out to discuss. When a member has indicated that they are no longer able to commit, a new member has been selected (described above).

A concern expressed was that new members have missed a lot of information/background and conversation. At what point does the committee stop adding members as people leave the committee? The group discussed how should we go forward with this, and landed with the current process would continue to be used until a time when the committee wished to revisit this process based on how far the committee is in the process.