



**Racial Equity Subcommittee
Framingham Public Library - Costin Room
August 5, 2019 at 3:00 p.m.**

Open Meeting Minutes

PRESENT: Gloria Pascual
Tracey Bryant
Beverly Hugo

ABSENT: Noval Alexander

ALSO PRESENT:

Dr. Tremblay, Superintendent
Donna Wresinski, Director of Fine & Performing Arts
Amy Bright, Assistant Superintendent of Elementary Education
Najee Nunally, Executive Assistant for the Office of Equity, Diversity, & Community Development
Joseph Corazzini, Assistant Superintendent of Equity, Diversity, & Community Development
Christine Robinson, Consultant
Tiffany Lillie, Director of Community Resource Development
Laura Spear, Director of Special Education
Inna London, Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources
Judy Styer, Director of Health and Wellness

Call to Order

The Chair called the meeting to order at 3:02 p.m.

Motion: To Open the Meeting

Moved: Gloria Pascual

Seconded: Tracey Bryant

Vote: 3-0-0

The Chair Ms. Pascual welcomed everyone read the Racial Equity Subcommittee was created to provide a safe space, free of retaliation for the school district administration, teachers, staff, parents, and community stakeholders, to hear about concerns across the districts of inequities. She said that the subcommittees goal is to receive regular reporting and updates from Mr. Corazzini Assistant Superintendent of Equity, Diversity, and Community Engagement on the

district's equity goals, initiatives across the district and regular reporting on all grievances reported to the Department of Elementary Secondary Education, Title IX complaints, Office of Civil Rights complaints, the Massachusetts Office of Discrimination complaints, and or any lawsuits of discrimination filed against the Framingham Public Schools. The Racial Equity Subcommittee's next step will be to ensure the district creates a sustainability plan for equity across the district through the immediate implementation of evidence-based practices across the district to address the several areas of concern that have been brought to our attention from parents, teachers, staff, and community stakeholders. This will only be successful if we are measuring, monitoring, and consistently overseeing the implementation and progress of these programs, policies and practices. We will need to immediately put in place the necessary mechanisms to monitor the equity work we are putting in place. This should include a strategy and a strategic plan data collection system and analysis, smart goals, and clear communication to everyone.

Dr. Tremblay said that the spirit of this meeting was to be a workshop that bridged the Racial Equity Subcommittee along with the Senior Leadership Team to talk about next steps, where we are, and to have our consultant, Dr. Robinson, walk us through some of the work she has been facilitating in the District over these last few months.

Overview on Equity Presentation

Christine Robinson went over Equity, Education, and Inclusion slides that were provided. She said this presentation includes terminology (particularly opportunity gaps and education debt), the over-representation of students of Color in special education and placement issues, the school to prison pipeline, and some racialized concepts of goodness and smartness, as well as looking at how education is right in the middle of these topic matters, and looking at intersectionality and collective identities. She said that the bottom line of this work is: leadership mattering, being responsive, inclusive, building a strong team, beginning to prioritize how you are going to all work across the systems, having adequate resources to do the work, and letting those who have expertise contribute, and inviting families and parents into the school.

Framingham Public Schools Commitment to Equity

Dr. Tremblay said that there was a need for an office that was really dedicated to this work and focused on the equity lens as we create an opportunity for students, so they created the Office of Equity, Diversity and Community Development. He said that it's not only this office's work, as everyone shares the ownership in the work to some level as it benefits our students.

The Vision and Mission Statement of Equity for FPS

The Assistant Superintendent of Equity, Diversity and Community Development Joseph Corazzini said his office has been reviewing district policies and practices, conducting investigations specific to students, providing professional development related to equity, developing infrastructure committees, and focusing on strategies and community partnerships. He said that their mission is to advance inclusive practices in all aspects of Framingham Public Schools; recognizing the inherent dignity in all people, and valuing inclusion and perspectives in

culture in the district, while working to eliminate bias and discrimination from impeding success for all. He said that they want to see equity infused across the curriculum and for staff to be representative of the student body. He said they have established an Operational Committee that will meet monthly, and work on policy and budget work, and the actual work of system change and development of systems.

Overview of FPS Department Priorities FY20: Director Presentations

Christine Robinson said due to being short on time they asked department heads to only give three to four priorities, but it doesn't mean that they are not doing much more than that. Ms. Pascual asked that the master plan is to be shared with the Racial Equity Subcommittee.

Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources Inna London says they are working on championing a culture of belonging through open and inclusive dialogues, and by proactively seeking feedback from the missing voices to obtain different ideas. She said that their goal is to be able to have more feedback from various groups more consistently throughout the school year, and to use the data to assess consistency in equity and the valuation of teachers, in order to create total alignment across all departments and schools to support teaching and learning goals. She said they are also going to collaborate with other departments to establish a visiting teachers program with Brazil in order to enhance the linguistic, cultural and racial diversity of our staff.

Director of Health and Wellness Judy Styer said that they are rolling out an implementation of a District Tier One Social Emotional Learning Program, which is going to look different at different levels. She said they are also reviewing and revising their code of conduct, starting with looking at data, including discipline data. She said that our data reflects the national trend, which is that it's disproportionate for African Americans, Hispanics, and students with disabilities. She said they are looking to create equitable approaches to kids, and a tiered approach with support to interventions, rather than punitive and zero tolerance policies.

Assistant Superintendent for Elementary Education Amy Bright said they have done a lot of work around infusing a data literate culture and providing support on how to interpret that data. She said they are developing instructional leadership of the administrators through targeted time during their elementary principals meetings. She said they will be looking at the entire experience for students and making sure they are aware of attendance, discipline referrals, tiered interventions or not, and holding administrators accountable for knowing the student experience in their building for all students. She said that they are also working on cultivating professional relationships.

Assistant Superintendent for Secondary Education Anne Ludes said they are looking to support school principals in their ability to be an instructional leader as well as a building manager, and reducing suspensions and student absenteeism. She said that this past year they completed a math curriculum review, are continuing a history curriculum review and for next year will be entering into an English Language Arts curriculum review that starts with a review by the John Hopkins Institute for Education Policy. She said that they are conducting classroom visit rounds where all of the department heads and administrators of the Middle Schools and the High School are coming together and are also working on vertical alignment. She said that they are

becoming more consistent about what their expectations are and what instructional practices are expected, such as the components of a lesson plan, to lead to a belief that all students are capable of high quality learning. She said that the high school will have professional development on Universal Design for Learning, to help to show how to provide access and a challenge for all students. She said that they are looking at their college prep courses and how to support students to move out of those courses. They are also becoming more data literate; looking at english learners, students with disabilities and them moving forward, targeting suspension rates, attendance rates, what levels of course they are in, what kind of grades, and how big their classes are.

Director of Special Education Laura Spear said that her department really works collaboratively with the Bilingual Department; they have 400 students who are dually identified as special education and receiving bilingual programming. She said that the challenge from her department is that the referrals happen before special education gets involved, so they have been trying to give data and have conversations around the data to staff at the building level who are involved prior to the special education referral taking place. She said they are expanding the details that they are pulling out of their referral data. She said that they were focusing a lot on kindergarten referrals because they were high; over 25% of students have not had preschool experiences, and have a lot of kindergarten students who are newcomers to the United States. She said that they are going to be working on program analysis and making sure there are not just certain subgroups of students being referred.

Mr. Corazzini said the Director of Bilingual Education Gen Grieci was unable to attend, but her department is looking to create a welcoming environment in all of our schools for all bilingual, multilingual families and students, and to support our culturally responsive methodology in our district curricula and approaches to teaching diverse learners. They have the Bilingual Parent Advisory Council back in action, and looking at expanding the dual language programming.

Director of Community Resource Development Tiffany Lillie said that one of their goals is focused on increasing scholarship funds by at least 10% at each location to provide increased access. She said they are also looking to finalize an inclusion policy as it has been unclear in the past, especially if a student has behaviors needs but not on an IEP or 504, in order to make sure if a student needs additional support regardless if have IEP or not, there is a clear process in place. She said that they are also standardizing their data evaluation process so that they are measuring the efficacy of all their programs and standardizing it across the board.

Director of Performing Arts Donna Wresinski said that she thinks the teachers are the biggest resource she has in trying to make everything as equal as she can for students; she said that this they are making sure that the teachers are reflective about their work and their practice, and you can't really study the arts without studying culture. She said that the K-5 visual arts teachers will participate in a yearlong professional development in culturally responsive literature and arts classrooms, and they are working with FSU bringing in an illustrator and an author. They are looking to make sure all the art and all the books they read are responsive, and reflect the students that are in our classrooms. She said that they are having the Berkeley Arts institute and Special Needs Institute to ensure that music and arts are in the lives of individuals with special needs, and this was something that the teachers asked for.

Mr. Corazinni gave an update on the Grants Department - he said they are making sure there's an equitable distribution formula per school for the districts portion of Title One funds, as well as they are assisting local agencies, private schools, residential facilities and McKinney Vento partners. He said they are looking at how do we leverage money so that Title One isn't providing something that we ought to be providing as a school district; how is it augmenting it or creating additional opportunity, or helping to improve groups that have been historically marginalized or disadvantaged.

Mr. Corazzini gave an update on the Finance and Operations Department - they are looking into assuring that their fiscal resources are allocated and aligned with equity priorities, as well as to assure that physical plants and spaces are available, safe, appropriate and meet the needs of our growing and diverse student population. He also gave an update on the Technology Department and said they are looking to ensure that the ratio of students to Chromebooks is equitable across all schools, they are looking at how to use the City as a bridge to leverage a conversation with cable providers to create more opportunities for families to have affordable internet, and are looking at district data.

Christine Robinson said that we don't always use the same words to mean the same things; and terms such as stereotypes, prejudice, discrimination and implicit bias are sometimes used interchangeably but they are all four different constructs. Mr. Corazinni said they are looking at professional development for administrators and educators, specifically around terminology as a sort of beginning to lead to deeper conversations.

Mr. Corazinni said that the plans for the upcoming year will all be influenced or supported through the audit, as well as there will be additional pieces that will need to work on outside of the audit. He said there is a vision of equity framing in public schools; school culture, academics, policy and community partnerships. He said they are working on additional support from partnerships through an outside organization, most likely a higher education institute.

Audit Update

Mr. Corazzini said that they have made modifications and updates to the request for quotes, and this document will be voted on at the August 7, 2019 School Committee meeting.

Approval of July 23, 2019 minutes

All members agreed for more time to review these minutes, and to approve at the next meeting. Ms. Hugo said at the last meeting they discussed how to present information they received at the Equity Symposium. Ms. Pascual suggested bringing up at the School Committee meeting so that all members who attended would be able to contribute.

Public Comment

A member of the public asked for an update on the listening forums that happened, and how the data collected from those are incorporated into this plan. Mr. Corazzini said they had eleven and have two more scheduled, they are keeping a running document on what the concerns are, and then looking at what we are doing in terms of addressing it.

A member of the public said given the events of this last weekend, she was reflecting on how it's important for us to be explicit about structural racism, and she thinks that the district is still missing this. She said that we are seeing the impact of white supremacy showing up everywhere and she thinks it is a problem of toxicity that we are just not talking about. She said some of the goals sound great, but if we are really talking about doing equity work she doesn't think it can happen without being explicit about it. She said she doesn't think we should wait until after the audit for it to tell us the things that we know.

Ms. Bryant asked about putting things in place, such as no school being better than the other, and to what extent the district is going to go in terms of the same level of programming versus the individuality of schools. Dr. Tremblay said one of the challenges is funding and space, a lot of these programs were put in place because at the time space was available in a certain building. He said the idea is to make every school more desirable, and a little different; with some autonomy of difference, but a baseline of expectation of what every child is going to have. He said that there are a lot of ways that we can integrate this into our schools without dubbing one specific school one specific thing.

Ms. Bryant asked if at Fuller there was ever a disparity with losing their social studies component at one point. Ms. London said that four years ago there was talk about them losing a social studies teacher, but they did not, the students always had a certified middle school humanities or social studies teacher teaching history. Ms. Bryant asked what percentage of students of Color are in theater arts. Ms. Wresinski said that is one of the challenges she has been working on. She said they are doing whatever they can so kids can themselves on stage including varied plays. She said that they need to continue to work with Mr. Corazzini and Ms. Lillie to get out to the community and ask what can we do to make sure your kids stay after school to be involved in programs.

Jim Hanson said that students in our schools are having a really hard time of this. He said that the school schedule matters, and a lack of recess matters, and there are not enough physical breaks in the schedule. He said it doesn't take very much implicit bias for a teacher to go from a student needs a motion break to that student is a bad kid or referred to special education. He said that he thinks that a reason to why there are so many referrals, because there are a lot of kids who have this neurological incapacity to sit still for so long.

Ms. Hugo asked when the results of the John Hopkins curriculum review for biases will be shared, and if they are looking into support for students coming in after the ninth grade to feel like they belong. Mr. Corazzini said they will have the results before the end of September, and they are looking at affinity groups for the high school. Ms. Hugo said that one thing to look at is stopping the gap before it begins by Pre-K expansion. Mr. Corazzini said that they piloted a program this year, specifically identifying pre-K students who did not receive any sort of Head Start or Pre-K programming. Ms. Hugo said that she would like to ensure that all staff take part in the cultural sensitivity training. Mr. Corazzini said they have to work on that with contract negotiations, they can offer professional development, but the actual idea of the district taking the step and saying this is the professional development that every adult that's going to work in our district is mandated to take, that has to be a policy, and it's got to be written into the actual contract negotiated with the union.

A member of the public said that a big piece about structural racism is having teachers, particularly white teachers, explore how they contribute as human beings to structural racism. She said if you get it to the point of having 30% of teachers doing this it becomes the culture of the district. Another member of the public said that there is a sense of urgency, and that the access to information and education of parents is important.

Adjournment

Motion: To adjourn.

Moved: Ms. Pascual

Seconded: Ms. Bryant

Vote: Unanimous

Meeting adjourned at 5:05 p.m.

Meeting Materials

Agenda

Equity, Education, Inclusion Slides

EDCD Mission and Vision Statement

Terminology and Definitions

Equity Framework

These minutes were approved in the Racial Equity Subcommittee on October 15, 2019.

These minutes were sent to the City of Framingham for posting on October 18, 2019.