

## Superintendent's Diversity Advisory Committee Meeting

November 18, 2016

12:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.

MISD Board Room

**Members Present:** Andrew Ackley, Julie Ogata-Ciobanu, Chouchanik Airapetian, Chris Mochel, Irene Rajaopal, Robin Li, David D'Souza, Ed Holmes, Simmi Kher, Alex Hart, Robin Wilt, Wayne Perryman, Ruth Saunders, Benson Wong, Natalie Woods, Steve Pellerine, Erin Battersby, Dr. Gary Plano, Fred Rundle, Craig Degginger.

**Members Absent:** Aisha Jumaan, Ana Simoes, Eunyoung Kim, Jolene Cook, Tumaini Coker, Tahmina Watson.

### **Welcome and Check-in:**

DAC members introduced themselves and welcomed Andrew Ackley and Natalie Woods as new members.

### **Restatement of DAC Norms and Expectations**

To help facilitate an effective meeting, Dr. Plano reread the norms and expectations previously adopted by the committee.

### **Review and approve minutes from the September 16 and October 21 meetings**

The committee reviewed minutes of the prior meetings. Alex Hart and Robin Wilt proposed revisions to the October 21 minutes regarding their comments at that meeting.

4. Discussion on alternative approaches when dealing with race-based discrimination. Changes noted in *italics*.

Robin Wilt expressed the need for *additional resources* when dealing with race-based discrimination.

*Alex Hart shared and discussed personal experiences of racial discrimination that her sons faced in the MISD schools, which included one of her sons being called the "N" word.*

Those revisions were accepted and the minutes of each meeting were approved.

### **Review and approve changes to DAC Role/Purpose**

Additional discussion occurred about Alex Hart's comments and her children's prior experiences at Lakeridge. Dr. Plano talked about the need to correct and address any injustices and violations of nondiscrimination policies, but that these committee meetings were not the best forum to discuss specific individual grievances against the district. He encouraged any person so aggrieved to contact the teacher or school principal or him in order to appropriately investigate and take actions as needed.

Rev. Perryman and Robin Li expressed appreciation for Dr. Plano's recent superintendent's message following the national elections and the District's on-going commitment to valuing diversity, equity and inclusion.

Robin Wilt said we need to understand better where we are along the continuum in terms of institutional racism, and our goals of diversity and inclusion. She said there are many good tools to measure this and how we can address that.

Chouchanik Airapetian suggested could there be a survey done as a starting point at addressing these issues.

Fred Rundle showed the committee a poster that have been in placed in schools featuring 10 languages about how we can better reach out and how we can help families through interpretation or translation.

Alex Hart said parents are looking to the DAC to tell them what to do and that it covers all diversity issues, but its role is to work on school policy, not parent policy.

Robin Wilt said the DAC should facilitate a parents of color group on these issues of diversity.

Alex is in a families of color group and would like to create such a group on the Island, and asked what could be done to assemble such a group or task force not unlike the Green Team. Dr. Plano commented that parents of color are free to form a group on their own and would be fully supportive of such a group being formed.

Ruth Saunders recalled years ago Concerned Citizens of Mercer Island was formed as African American residents felt they were being profiled, and the police chief at the time listened to their concerns and there were no more problems. She said if a new group is formed, it needs to have a purpose or cause to get people involved.

Dr. Plano said the formation of parents of color groups might best be included in in the DAC charter where action steps are listed.

The DAC purpose and role document was approved unanimously.

### **Discussion on Alternative Approaches to Student Misconduct (Restorative Justice) - Possible Action Item**

Robin Wilt and Eunyoung Kim recently met with Dr. Plano to discuss this topic. Further discussion will be saved for a future committee meeting.

### **Diversity and Equity Presentation by School Teams**

#### **MIHS**

Associate Principal Henterson Carlisle and Principal Vicki Puckett distributed the school's school improvement plan as a framework for this work at the high school. The plan includes both implicit bias activities and surveys, and developing and training staff and students in the Cultural Competency Framework to help remind everyone about respecting each other and inclusion.

The school recently decided to unify the color of student graduation gowns out of concern over gender issues. The tradition of boys in maroon gowns and girls in white gowns has been changed so all will wear maroon gowns.

Vicki noted that both students and staff are having a very hard time right now following the elections and healing work is underway. Students have formed an Anti-Defamation League club at the school.

#### **IMS**

Co-principal Aaron Miller and teacher Kathy Shaner distributed agendas from the middle school's diversity team meetings, which include 15 staff and community

members.

One of the committee's ongoing activities is to look at curriculum and see if the curriculum reflects the culture of the school, and for example, are they getting a well-rounded viewpoint in the social studies curriculum.

Robin Wilt praised the cultural inclusiveness around the Halloween activities at IMS and Veterans Day.

### **Elementary teams**

Jill Ravenscraft, associate principal at Northwood and West Mercer, said the schools are using three professional development days devoted to sessions with Dr. Caprice Hollins. Dr. Hollins will be working with the middle and high school teams as well. In addition, teams will check the schools to see if the materials posted on the walls of our elementary schools, including the libraries, are reflective of our diversity.

Jenny McAlaine, principal of Lakeridge Elementary, said students at her school wrote "I Am" stories describing themselves and their cultures, sharing with each other. The school added a lioness to go along with the Lakeridge Lion. The school library purchased books of more diverse titles.

Kristin Kim, representing the Island Park and Northwood diversity teams, said the schools now have language volunteers who make calls to reach out to ELL families. Language Line is also offered, which allows language specific phone lines for ELL families to leave a message in Mandarin, Korean, Spanish and English.

The district has its first refugee student. He attends MIHS and speaks four languages. Simmi Kher shares the student's native language and offered to translate for the district when needed.

The meeting was adjourned at 2 p.m.

Next meeting, January 20, 2017, 12 p.m. to 2 p.m.