

NPCSD REIAC

Meeting Minutes

October 10, 2019

6:45pm-8:30pm

Members Present: Sophia Skiles, Melissa Y. Rock, Reeti Patel, Paris White, Jessy Nativi, Allison Lauchaire, Lilly Andino-Skinner, Cathy Sanchez, Pilar Duvivier, Fredericka Butler, Kristen Masson-Diedhiou, Levi Wyns, Diane Armstead

10/10/19 Meeting Co-Chairs: Levi and Sophia

Intros & Welcome:

Quorum: 16 members total (including Maria Rice is member-at-large), 8 members needed for quorum

Email: a) Communications with Dusti should cc BOE liaison/REIAC members Sophia and Diane
b) Currently the 'global' email address comes from REIAC vs. individual email addresses, current members will be emailed an updated list of REIAC member email contacts.

Co-chairs for next meeting will be Melissa and Kristen. Melissa is taking minutes at this meeting, Kristen is reporting to the November 6th BOE meeting, both will co-chair the next meeting.

Report back *from* BOE:

- 1) Visitor Management System
 - Concerns around a visitor management system
 - Proposed to have a computerized system
 - Currently there is a vestibule system where there is a camera that people show their ID to the greeter
 - The proposed system is Lobby Guard
 - Draws from a database that derives from a government issued ID, thus family members that are not able to acquire government sponsored IDs will therefore not be able to pick up their kids at the schools. This obviously is problematic and needs studying to see how such a system can be operationalized without denying parents/caregivers the ability to pick up their child if they are legally allowed to do so, but do not have a government sponsored ID that complies with this new technology.
 - Onteora school district has adopted Lobby Guard, and has the same concerns about families that do not have government sponsored IDs. Thus, there will be outreach to the Onteora SD to better understand what they have done to address this issue.
- 2) Sophia brought up the possibility that REIAC might want to consider putting out a statement regarding its position on SRO's in the school district.
- 3) It was brought to the BOE that there are so many new REIAC members that it would be useful for members to participate in the Undoing Racism training. The BOE supported the idea, so we polled the membership that was present to better understand who is interested in attending. The following people expressed interest in attending Undoing Racism in the near future.
 - 9 First-timers: Melissa, Cathy, Ricki, Kristen, Reeti, Jesse, Allison, Carlos, Levi
 - 4 Repeats: Sophia, Paris, Pilar, Lily

- (Missing, but possibly interested: Jennifer Barry, Carlos Rodriguez Murcia, Diane came later in the meeting and we forgot to follow up with her)

Review time of meeting: There was a proposal about having earlier meetings in order to make meeting times more amenable to K-12 faculty/staff membership – in an effort to recruit more faculty/staff members. However, schedules were very dispersed – where some student sports would not allow students to attend meetings until 6:30pm. After a couple of minutes the conversation was tabled, to be revisited at a later date.

Code of Conduct: for the last three years the code of conduct has focused on the NPCSD dress code which was successful in developing a dress code that was supportive of students, particularly young women/women of color in the school district whose bodies were disproportionately policed for dress/attire.

Now, after the dress code has been adopted, we can expand our focus on code of conduct beyond the dress code, perhaps to Bias Incident Reporting?

KEY QUESTION to facilitate our work (Levi): Can we have Logs/reports for the past couple of years on incidents that have happened in the school district - so that we have data regarding how many racial incidents, sexual harassment, etc... incidents that have been reported. Otherwise, we are not kept informed of patterns of discrimination/incidences that highlight patterns of bias that we should be aware of in order to offer the best recommendations for our students/kids, faculty, and the school district. Further, can we count on receiving data reports/logs in the coming months and years so that we can track trends.

Possible areas for our next focus:

1. **Referral form** can be analyzed
 - Investigating the language used by a teacher to discipline a student
 - are there vague terms that are consistently used?
 - Is there a system that pre-generates ‘categories’ (ie/ “General Misconduct”) that then gets overused, and are there specific teachers/staff members that consistently report/ have problems with students (or particular students)?
 - How are incidents labeled (ie/ a kindergartener that has a physical altercation – is it labeled as “assault” in the child’s file?)
 - How are these data points documented? How often are these incidents reported out? Who sits on the auditing committee? Can in-school write ups be reviewed – even the ones that don’t rise to the DASA level? Who enters data into the incident report system (in some other school districts, it may not be uniform who enters it, thus there may be inconsistencies in reporting where there is discretion in the reporting language, narrative, etc.).
2. **Code of conduct (CoC)** can be inaccessible, but each school has its own handbook to supplement the code of conduct.
 - The ways that CoC are presented appear to be lengthy
 - It can be perceived as a way to prevent schools from being liable for their kid’s behavior rather than intending to create a community culture of active participants

- Many kids/parents may perceive the CoC similar to a technology/app download... you must sign and agree to get to the next step.
- Ricki will bring examples from other schools that have 1) lengthy code of conduct, and 2) an abbreviated one for students (both are consistent with each other, but the abbreviated one can get to the core point). She will find and distribute websites examples for our review and discussion.
- There was discussion about tying a code of conduct to a responsive community approach/model.
- Kids should be made aware of their rights as students. And in order to access their rights, they should also be aware of their responsibility as community members.
- Cathy mentioned that NYC has some CoC examples that have good visualizations/flow charts.
- Kristen mentioned that Kingston school district sent a bunch of teachers to a training on restorative justice, that focused on ‘circles’ *after* a harm was committed. It has already made an impact with respect to how incidents are being handled. Though it is early, it provides support for teachers/principles/students as well.
 - ✓ Ricki added that if ‘circles’ are incorporated into school districts at the early grades (K-2... on up), then it can be a really powerful tool, skill set, community building asset to support its integration within the overall school district.
 - ✓ Question for Ricki, regarding restorative practices, what are the hurdles of implementing them in this school district?
 - Often if teachers are not adequately trained or understand the practices, they don’t have buy-in. So, until they have buy-in, they may resist the implementation at their school.
 - Jessy shared that he had an experience in 5th grade with ‘pretzel’ time – where kids would get a set amount of pretzels and then during ‘pretzel time’ would be able to give a pretzel to someone who did a nice thing, but could also take a pretzel from someone who wronged them.
 - ◇ He said it was often a positive experience, and while people did take other kids a pretzel, it was facilitated well so that only/‘mostly’ legitimate grievances.

3) Faculty/staff training

In November 27th 2018, the cultural proficiency trainings resulted in a problematic definition of systemic racism. The following is the definition created by members of the pilot group of teachers and administrators in the Cultural Proficiency training which was then circulated by email to the NPCSD teaching faculty:

“Definition [Systemic] Racism is a socially constructed system in which laws, policies, economic structures, norms and values of the dominant group attach meaning to certain physical characteristics (including but not limited to skin color, hair type, eye shape, lip thickness) and determine that these features predict to intelligence, character, and disposition., which are justification to maintain power and keep non-dominant groups oppressed.”

- Cultural Proficiency training pilot cohort (Fall 2018)

Lily was part of the first cohort that did the Cultural Proficiency training that came up with this definition of racism but was not present the day they generated the aforementioned definition. After the email was sent out to the entire school with the definition of *systemic racism*, Lily responded by offering up two established definitions of *Systemic Racism*.

The second is a rephrasing of the first a more detailed definition created by Joe Richard Feagin, a U.S. sociologist and social theorist who has conducted extensive research on racial and gender issues. He is currently the Ella C. McFadden Distinguished Professor at Texas A&M University.

“Systemic racism includes the complex array of antiblack practices, the unjustly gained political-economic power of whites, the continuing economic and other resource inequalities along racial lines, and the white racist ideologies and attitudes created to maintain and rationalize white privilege and power. *Systemic* here means that the core racist realities are manifested in each of society’s major parts [...] each major part of U.S. society--the economy, politics, education, religion, the family--reflects the fundamental reality of systemic racism.”

Joe Feagin- *Racist America: Roots, Current Realities, & Future Reparations*

“Systemic racism today is composed of intersecting, overlapping, and codependent racist institutions, policies, practices, ideas, and behaviors that give an unjust amount of resources, rights, and power to white people while denying them to people of color.”

Nicki Lisa Cole, Ph.D.

These definitions highlight the lack of understanding regarding what systemic racism is, as well as questions why someone felt there was a need for developing a definition of systemic racism when there are many that are firmly established that do not rely on racial tropes, but instead identify relationships of power and privilege in society that perpetuate systems of oppression throughout American society and institutions – including within our schools.

Regarding Hiring/Supporting & Retaining – how much do we have impact on that? We recommendations can we make?

- How can REIAC support the CARE WORK needed to support faculty that are possibly marginalized?
- Is there a way for teaching faculty/staff to share experiences of micro-aggressions (perhaps anonymously)
 - There is an anonymous tips link on the website
- Our challenge: We are not empowered as a committee, but have the trust of the community

4) Curriculum

Proposal to focus on:

- Racial Curriculum Maps – we have a lot of resources to respond to what’s being offered so that faculty can actually utilize them in the classroom.
- Money has been spent (on the Cultural Proficiency program), so we have to work with it.

- ✓ But, we *can* recommend a current curriculum audit. (Diane is going to be recommending a curriculum audit for/from the audit committee).

Next meeting: November 12th

Public Comment:

Maureen: I think you guys are terrific and believe you are doing the work that needs to be done for this district.

Executive Session:

We went into Executive Session to discuss matters of confidentiality. The general topic related to REIAC members signing confidentiality agreements regarding matters and information that members we may be privy to, but which should be kept confidential.