

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSIVITY COMMITTEE – June 17, 2021 Meeting Minutes

Melissa called the meeting to order at 4:04 pm

Attendance: Melissa Hammann, Kathi Swanson, Janessa Katzenberger, DeeJay Redders, Barb Dorn, Cory Neeley, Amiee Leavy, Jim Kvalhheim, Donetta Foxx, Susan Neeley, Heidi Deininger

Community Participant: Jeff Porter.

Minute Taker: Janessa Katzenberger

Timekeeper: Barb Dorn

Moment of silence for the continuing racial and social injustice in the world as well as restrictions regarding curriculums.

Motion to approve May 20 minutes as presented. Kathi moved and Cory seconded to approve the motion. Unanimously approved.

Discussion: none

Approve agenda. Motioned by Kathi and seconded by Barb. Unanimously approved.

Discussion: none

Melissa foreshadowed the importance of looking at policies moving forward.

Update Regarding Incident Brought Up at Previous Meeting:

Discussion: Janessa explained to the committee that, due to the small number of BIPOC students at ECSD, any time we reference a specific building or specific incident involving a student of color, it is a breach of confidentiality to discuss even if in generalities. Janessa explained the high school's process and procedures for racially driven harassment or discrimination. Administration always conducts an immediate investigation and police are involved when there is a physical altercation. The police conduct their own investigation to determine charges, if any. Administration attends municipal court hearings each month to speak on behalf of students charged.

Amiee provided a refresher on Tone Policing.

Tone Policing. When you shut down the messenger because you don't like the message or dismiss the content because you don't appreciate the way it's presented. This can be intentional or unintentional.

Discussion: A comment was made regarding intolerance of people who are angry and use profanity. Amiee clarified the difference between setting boundaries and tone policing.

Structural Racism: Complex ways in which history, public policies, institutional practices, and cultural representation interact to maintain racial hierarchy outcomes.

Affirmation Action: addressing group based discrimination

Individual level racism: addressing one person to another

Institutional level racism: (Systemic racism): discriminatory practices in institutions

National values: dominant lens

Opportunity domain: More opportunities for one group over another

Racial equity: distributions of opportunity and responsibilities not tied to race.

Racial justice: dismantling root causes of racism instead of symptoms of racism

Racism: Use of power to further racial inequities

Amiee displayed a variety of quotes and asked for thoughts from the committee. Members described why certain quotes resonated with them.

Discussion: A participant made a comment regarding it being unnecessary to have this committee focus on the color of people's skin claiming racism is not a problem in Evansville. Committee members explained their (or their child's) personal experiences with racism in Evansville both in the schools and in the community.

Applying structural racism lens allow us to see and understand:

1. Racial legacy of our past
2. How racism persists
3. How racism is transmitted
4. How individuals internalize and respond

White Privilege:

Quotes provided from a white person's perspective. I.e. "I am never asked to speak for all the people of my racial group". "I do not have to educate my children to be aware of systemic racism for their own daily physical protection", "I will feel welcomed and 'normal' in the usual walks of public life, institutional and social".

Members explained why/how these quotes resonated to them from a BIPOC perspective and from a white perspective.

Discussion: A participant questioned why the committee felt it important to intentionally look at race. Amiee explained that seeing somebody's color matters as it is a part of a person's identity.

What does systemic racism look like in our schools?

[Video clip "The consciousness gap in education - an equity imperative | Dorinda Carter Andrews](#)

- Importance of examining power to close achievement gaps in education

Three big ideas:

1. Culture of power
2. Cannot be colorblind or color-mute
3. The “American Dream” Is a myth

How can we address systemic racism in our schools?

1. How do I/we begin to have conversations about systemic racism in our schools and in our community? (When would these conversations take place? What would they look like? How often?)
2. How do I/we begin to have conversations about systemic racism in our schools and in our community?
 - a. **Discussion:** A participant claimed systemic racism does not occur at ECSD. Janessa provided some data regarding race at ECSD; ECSD does not disproportionately label students of color with a disability, ECSD does not disproportionately discipline students of color, and ECSD does not over identify black students with an emotional behavioral disability.
3. How do I /we discuss racial and social justice when there are member of our schools and community that will be defensive?
 - a. **Discussion:** Suggestions were made to have students and community members provide personal stories. i.e. This is what happened to bring awareness to those who are not experiencing racism and therefore believe it does not exist.
4. My community doesn't have a lot of racial diversity. Should I/we address racial and social injustice? Why?
5. How should students be involved in conversations about racial and social justice?
 - a. **Discussion:** Provide students of color with a platform to share their experiences throughout their educational career versus when it's become disciplinary. Some students of color to not report racially insensitive jokes or racial slurs.

[Video: Systemic Racism Explained](#)

Racism is not “one size fits all”

1. **Internalized Racism:** our own thoughts, feelings and actions (conscious and unconscious) as an individual i.e. stereotypes, denying services based on skin color, or denying that racism exists
2. **Interpersonal Racism:** acts of racism between one person and another (how we are taught to see racism) i.e harassment, discrimination from a boss, a racism rant caught on a video. Racism is not the exception to the rule. Racism is the norm.
3. **Institutional Racism:** The policies and practices that reinforce racism standards within a workplace or organization. i.e. discriminatory hiring practices, silences of black voices in the board room, or work culture that prioritizes a white point of view.

4. **Systemic Racism:** Racism embedded in our institutions, policies, and practices (How other three dimensions are allowed to thrive in society - openly or discretely). i.e. health care, education, housing, government etc. collectively upholding racist policies.

Discussion: A participant stated that Critical Race Theory is a cover to create divisiveness in our school district and spoke out against implementing such theories in ECSD's curriculum. Janessa explained that the district's goal is to ensure all students are welcomed, included and a sense of belonging in our district and community. Other committee members expressed their gratitude to the district regarding their efforts for bringing in Welcoming Schools and excitement regarding Laurie Burgos as our new District Administrator given her strong background in equity work.

No motion to adjourn made.