

## Minutes Diversity and Inclusivity Committee

March 18, 2021

The Evansville Community School District Diversity and Inclusivity Committee met March 18, 2021 from 4-6 PM.

Members Present: Melissa Hammann, Barb Dorn, DJ Redders, Daniel Ripp, Heidi Deininger, James Kvalheim, Janessa Katzenberger, Jennifer Braun, Kathi Swanson, McKenna Grau, Sean Mangold. Chip Schuett joined at 4:45.

Absent: Donnetta Foxx and Devon Wolter

Guest Amiee Leavy, Racial Justice Director, YWCA Rock County

Timekeeper: Janessa volunteered

Minutes: Melissa volunteered

Motion by Kathi Swanson, second by Jen Braun to approve the minutes of the February 18 meeting.

Discussion: Two members called after the last meeting with concerns regarding publishing personal stories told during the ice breaker (describe one good experience and one bad experience in school and how did it affect you?). It was decided that we would remove the personal stories and only publish what we learned after Janessa suggested we add one more working agreement of “What’s said here stays here, what’s learned here leaves here.” Consensus to add one more working agreement as stated above. Voted on motion as revised 11-0. Minutes of the February 18 meeting will be sent to the committee members for checking prior to sending them to Lindsay for publication.

Motion by Kathi Swanson, second by James Kvalheim to approve the agenda as presented. Motion approved 11-0.

Melissa introduced Amiee Leavy, Rock County YWCA Racial Justice Director. In an amazing flurry of activity since the last meeting, Jen and Janessa were able to confirm her availability, write a contract and get Board consensus to help fund the project that was described in the grant proposal, even though BASE was not a recipient of the grant. Amiee will guide our meetings and help us create a strategic plan.

Amiee began with questions posed to all members present. What is your connection to the district? Why are you on the committee? What is your goal for the committee? Goals for the committee as expressed by those present included:

- Appreciation for diversity across the community
- 5 year strategic plan
- Safe, welcoming place for all where we can have conversations with all our families
- Want to see actions result from the work we do
- Help provide for my peers opportunities to incorporated diversity in the classroom

- Want the environment to change for future students (student)
- See how we can spread passion for diversity in Evansville
- Changes in the way we teach what we teach through curricular, policy and procedural changes.
- It's about students. Make sure they're heard.
- Change has to occur.
- Action oriented creating a rich diversity with a 5 year plan that incorporates the survey data.
- Create and implement a strategic plan that truly makes a difference.

## **EQUITY VS EQUALITY**

Began content discussion with a conversation regarding Equity and Equality. Equality is defined as providing all with equal resources and Equity is defined as providing resources as needed for all to reach their full potential.

Reviewed slides that illustrated Inequity vs Equality and Equity vs Justice

Discussion: A bent apple tree was shown with many apples on the side closer to the ground and few on the higher side. Inequity is shown as a kid getting an apple dropped from the apple heavy side while the child on the apple light side is still waiting for an apple to drop for them. Equality is illustrated by giving each child the same size ladder that reached the low side but not the higher side. Comments indicated the apples are opportunities. Folks who are in the vicinity of opportunity have a better chance of having opportunities fall to them.

The same tree was shown to illustrate Equity and Justice, where Equity was demonstrated by giving the kid on the high side of the tree a taller ladder to access the apples. Justice is shown as the tree having been trained over time using boards to prop it up on one side and a rope to pull it to the opposite side to straighten out the tree, which makes the apples evenly distributed across the tree. Both kids have the same height ladder and same bag to collect apples. Comments were made that indicated we have to go through equity to get to justice, where the systemic inequities are fixed and we can reach more kids with the better system. A caution was given that some of the real work will be with those who disagree with giving different resources to different groups based on need. Some have trouble believing that inequities are systemic. You will have to convince those people in order to successfully implement racial and social justice.

Amiee then stepped the group through real world scenarios that illustrated equality vs. equity. The first scenario had to do with a community which had to make budget cuts. The first way that was done was to equally cut services across all community centers (equality). The second way to cut costs was to evaluate the center use and cut back hours at the less utilized centers (equity). Amiee wanted to know how we related to those scenarios. Nobody replied so we went to the second scenario. That described one district that had equal hours and access to the computer lab for all schools. The second district increased access and hours to the computer labs in the low income areas of the city. Analogies were made regarding the horrible internet access in rural Wisconsin and how the district had to provide hot spots for many of our rural students. That was an example where a district provided for those who needed. We need to meet kids where they are

and get them resources as needed. A caution was made not to automatically mingle certain groups as one. (Example given: the black community is not the same as the low income community). A third scenario compared approaches to a community meeting about an environmental hazard. The community citizens are about 25% English as a second language folks. The equal treatment approach is to offer all meetings in English and the Equity approach is to either have translators at all meetings or offer some meetings in the alternate language. Discussion indicated that we didn't have a great deal of experience with this subject, but that some native Spanish speakers in ECSD have noted our materials translated to Spanish are sorely inadequate.

### **DPI Slide of Equity initiatives checklist.**

See the link on the DPI website for details <https://dpi.wi.gov/rti/equity>

Amiee took this list and created questions to answer for every marginalized group we want to answer the question for. As a group we went through the questionnaire for LGBTQ+ students.

1. Based on lived experiences, which groups of learners do not feel heard, feel safe or feel affirmed?  
LGBTQ+
2. What or where are the inequities?  
Fellow students mocking and making fun of a LGBTQ+ student wearing a dress to prom.
3. Specifically, what evidence-based strategies will you use to increase access by these learner groups? What human skills will be used to address this situation?  
In this case it was a failure to reach the student body on expectations.
4. What can be done differently? So in this case, when there is a failure, what is our response? Improve our education model. We trained the teachers on use of pronouns and respect for all groups, misuse of dead names, etc., but not the students. When you fail, you have to give the opportunity for trust to form and grow.
5. How have you engaged stakeholders who are members of the communities impacted by your work? Create an environment where there is affirmation of the harmed individual. Are you alright? What can I do to help?
6. How will you continue to partner with diverse stakeholders to ensure educational equity for all students? The big challenge is to change the culture of the buildings, the district and the surrounding community. To repeat the story of the crooked apple tree, not everyone believes in systemic inequities, so you have to work on changing that dynamic through use of data and evidence.
7. What is the first step you can commit to support your desired outcome? How have you engaged students to hear their voice? We have a member of the committee also active in

the school GSA. They can bring student concerns from that group directly forward to the committee. Kathi noted that we can listen to students. Amiee noted that it is essential to listen without outward evidence of judgement in order to build credibility with the student addressing a concern, no matter how foreign it might be to one's life experience. Resist the urge for surprise to show on your face. Director of BASE noted that they could discuss with staff how to improve the education piece to include students.

**Assignment to complete by April 15 meeting is two-fold:**

1. Answer question 8 on the list: What will you do in the next 3-4 weeks to actively serve the LGBTQ+ students?
2. Complete a full set of answers to questions 1-8 for your group of choice.

Motion to adjourn at 6:05 PM by Jim Kvalheim, seconded by Barb Dorn. Approved 11-0.