



DRAFT
NOT FINAL UNTIL APPROVED BY BOARD
BURLINGTON BOARD OF SCHOOL COMMISSIONERS
DIVERSITY & EQUITY COMMITTEE MINUTES

DATE: November 29, 2018

Attending Board Members: Monika Ivancic, Liz Curry, Jean Waltz

Administration: Laura Nugent, Director of Special Ed services

Guests: Christina Erickson (SA PTO co-president), Helen Rock (Hunt PTO president), Christine Longmore (with PYC)

Meeting called to order at 7:02pm

Pre-meeting discussion on DEALT (composed of BSD staff) & explanation by Laura Nugent
In comparison to the DE&I board committee

1. Agenda

A. Motion to approve agenda -> The committee agreed to suspend Roberts Rules and opted for an informal discussion with the public

2. Public Comment

- Christine Longmore shared a description of PYC
- Focus on engaging people one on one, everyone in community; listening campaign to understand issues and help organize people to have impact on change; traditionally marginalized people; economically challenged people
- Helen: we don't see anything about disabilities in document
- Christine: in agreement in including people with disabilities and thanked Helen for pointing out the inconsistency in the info
- Liz: the DE&I committee doesn't take up discussions about students with special needs often enough and we've been doing a disservice by marginalizing this need; has attended community conversations, but still doesn't have direct experience; feels ill equipped to think about what the District needs
- Helen: we tend to think about it when we can see disabilities but in many cases they are invisible

- Laura: we have about 700 students on IEPs in BSD; discussion about F building at BHS; a lot of kids with significant disabilities will stay at high school for up to 8 years. The District is struggling with placing kids out of our town because we don't meet their needs; some are all the way in St. Johnsbury, programs for the deaf in Connecticut (total of \$2 million spent on out-of-District placements); we could meet the needs of some of these kids at BHS, having room with life skills, kitchen, staff for taking kids to store; we need well trained people that can train kids to have job skills
- Christine: or teach them entrepreneurial skills so they can open own business
- Liz: spoke about the special board meeting for budget and noticing a lot of special ed requests (more than she's seen in the past) from all constituencies - parents, teachers & administrators
- Laura: parents with kids with disabilities can't come to the meetings; we need to develop in-District programs since special ed costs are increasing exponentially
- Lack of special educators at middle schools; bubble of special ed needs exists in middle school, currently 7th-8th grade and they're entering BHS next year, so we're looking at developing a life skills program for next year
- Helen: mentoring program in district would be important, especially at BHS & discussion about paraeducators, parents of kids with special needs tend to become paras, so they can take care of their kids; what are we doing as a district to educate and train general teachers?
- Laura: we err on under identifying special ed needs in EL students since it is complex to assess what's going on; passionate about teachers being multileveled and multiskilled; all teachers should also have EL & special ed license (some places do this); if we can create our own training, reading for inclusion at Champlain is one example that is no longer going
- Liz: helpful from a board standpoint to hear this discussion - it is compelling, but hard to bring it to board level; helpful for DEALT team to actually quantify what Laura is talking about and help board member to articulate the needs; if we have data from staff, parents and system leaders and could put it together for presentation - doesn't need to be detailed but just a description about the first building block
- Laura: schools get stuck in a cycle, kids with disabilities and kids of color suspended most frequently; emotional behavioral disturbance is largest growing disability
- Liz: alternative suspension program has been on wish list where students could have a safe space if they have out-of-school suspension, such as partnerships with youth organizations in town
- Liz & Jean bring up list that Board members are working on to ID budget priorities as follow up to special board meeting this past week
- Christine: "perfect is the enemy of good"
- Laura: some of the kids are big and they're crying out for help; if we can create a small program (1 teacher) including a 'safe space', best on BHS campus
- Horizons (Jason Reed) and OnTop back on upswing, becoming better than they ever were; curriculum is stronger with college expectation level work

- Christine: PYC could tie into these programs; talks about son's case
- Laura: special educators are required to tell teachers which kids have special needs but when teachers have 22 other kids in the classroom and they know a student with special ed needs has a paraeducator support, hard for them to adjust the class to include that student
- Helen: training for teachers on ableism this fall (2 days), hasn't happened in decades; and staff was told there would be a follow up, but there has been none. A decision at District was to restorative justice trainings only for the remainder of the year. When will there be more trainings and specific policies in place to ensure true educational access and inclusion for people with disabilities?
- Liz: barriers exist, we need more training if teachers are tending to put responsibility on para in charge of student with disability; some people on board advocating for overachieving kids, gifted & talented kids and this is a need but it may be easier for a teacher to assign more challenging work than adjust lesson to include students with special needs; legislative mandate to meet kids needs by meeting them where they are at, through proficiency-based learning (act 77)
- Christine: PYC can bring parents and students' voices into the process. PYC supports parents in showing up at the board meetings; child care, transportation, too. PYC has budget and we mobilizing people in the community
- Laura: has been in BSD for 12 years and is grateful for her position; this is what she studied for; we have trained our parents to squeak but this year they are shouting - have not seen this volume of budget requests; important to her to work equitably; we do better than some but not as good as others
- Helen: shared that she heard some surprising comments from teachers at parent-teacher conferences at BHS this year regarding their preference for AP classes which sound easier to manage
- Liz: it would be great to send teachers feedback via email. The challenge is with creating mechanisms to support collaboration since we all want the same thing for all of the kids, but chronic shortage of resources hurts efforts to engage teachers outside of classroom time to talk about solutions.
- Laura: public schools need to meet the needs of everybody
- Jean: talks about her experience at Rock Point
- Liz: asked if meeting attendees could bring conversation to actionable steps; maybe too late for this years' budget: perhaps DEALT team could put something together that describes building blocks for better SPED programming
- Christina: shared practices at Champlain College for kids on neurological spectrum - developing teaching tactics that work well for everybody; universal design which is really teaching style; program at Mansfield hall provides supportive living environment for all higher ed students in Burlington area no matter where they attend school; founder is expert who speaks all over the country
- Laura: academic and behavior coaches there to implement 'universal design' through one-on-one training with general ed instructors

- Helen: suggestion out of Hunt meeting, having a universal design coordinator - someone to visit every school to make sure every building & all grounds truly support all students
- About meeting needs of kids, working with teams, what works in classroom, indoor learning environment; attuned to socio emotional needs of kids
- Liz: studies on lighting in schools affecting kids' learning
- Laura: cultural shift needs to happen; e.g. SA treehouse discussion as example
- Monika: question about building F at BHS
- Laura: F taken over by BTS and special ed squeezed out; OnTop and Horizons building ON campus would be wonderful
- Monika: BHS ReEnvisioning the school should have room for these programs
- Laura: On Top exclusively for kids with emotional barriers to learning
- Horizons regular high school but for kids with inability to learn in classroom in traditional way
- Helen: absence of ADA swing on new SA playground
- Jean: asked about making a policy that any new playground is ADA accessible; create inclusion in all district capital projects we need 'adaptive design'
- Helen: disabilities not discussed when it comes to bullying, hazing and harassment
- Liz: explained that BHH policy is statutory document that sets standard for when BHH behavior is categorized and investigated as bullying/hazing/harassment. There are a range of bullying and harassment incidents that don't confirm to the Policy/statutory standards that District does not appear to have the tools to resolve. There is also the unconscious bias factor at play.
- Two actionable projects 1. Capital plans 2. Need for training
- Laura: special ed parent advisory committee; fizzled out; different needs
- Helen: program called 'world of difference'; 10 years ago (from Bonnie Johnson Aten); need systemic fix not a one off; funding ran out

3. Discussion about SRO's (Safety Resource Officers)

Conversation with DEALT team member Sparks that recommended presentation by SRO's

Monika & Liz: tracking arrests in vicinity of schools did not break out data for which arrests were students v. general public

Liz: when started down the road of tracking data cops couldn't give numbers of students that were arrested or cited when officers called by school, issue was confidentiality problems

Monika: what is SRO's role at schools?

Helen: at Hunt they get to know the kids which is very useful; better than not having those connections; great for kids to be familiar with a police officer

Liz: function over time became the solution when school personnel lacked skill level or were faced with serious legal threat (guns/violence/drugs), would call police repeatedly, trends nationwide, started including cops at schools; history of funding the SROs - BHS admin were

crossing over into using SRO's inappropriately and creating hostile environment in high school for students of color

Christine: feeding the school to prison pipeline

Helen: at Hunt, kids who know SRO they have lunch with them, it's a good thing

Christine: police show a force; influence safety

Liz: have normalized presence of police; it's become a default; asked Sparks if we can imagine an alternative that would involve de-escalation tactics when problems begin (e.g. were there opportunities to de-escalate earlier in the evening at Hunt dance prior to police being involved);

4. Equity Report Card review

Monika: Motion to table item until Sparks is available to discuss

5. Follow up to Hunt dance incident discussion

Discussion of needs for training in de-escalation

Hunt PTO -

Sparks has been meeting with students - Lisa Bedinger has met with 14 kids

Sparks meeting with BA and Assist BA to address accountability

Burlington & So Burlington CJC's met with students today (11-29-18)

Ongoing investigation and restorative work happening with one student's family and students.

Helen: shared that what people didn't know is that there were police on Hunt grounds earlier in the evening b/c a kid from Colchester was on campus and refused to leave the grounds. Police continued to monitor the area. When the police were alerted to events unfolding at the school later that evening, multiple units arrived. Jim's intent was protecting physical safety of students. He asked kids to go to auditorium with intent to calm everyone down. Students were not calm and started leaving.

Jean: one of main rules of de-escalation is divide & conquer

Helen: dance was over staffed with two admin, teachers & parent chaperones

Christine: talking about SROs and how they behaved when they came into school

Helen: police did not go into the school

Liz: multiple dimensions to Hunt dance

Christine: training and stuff needs to be done with SROs

Liz: Sparks has expressed District's desire to promote a restorative city, want RP 24/7 when dealing with kids under 18

Helen: police need training of kids' development

Helen: Mattie said that Lisa Bedinger and Rachel Jolly talking with 14 students and meeting with these outside organizations to support them; they would like principals' actions accounted for; not ready to have community conversation yet, so had to slow down the process to truly hear students. The community is anxious to support this and for students to be heard; scheduling meetings and trying to bring in families

Liz: Sparks said the DEALT team restructured RP resources to direct only at middle schools this year

Helen: what's happening at Hunt is happening at every single school; Edmunds has issues too and would love to work with us; we could do this work together

Jean: could PTOs apply for grants with PJC?

Liz: suggested PTO's talk to Rachel Siegel or someone else; Rachel sent the proposal to have Disrupting Racism workshop (cost is \$2100); speak with Bonnie Johnson Aten who would design stuff for the district

Helen: built in PTO budget line specifically for diversity, equity & ableism

Christina: basic workshop from Peace & Justice Center Seeing & Disrupting Racism at SA PTO; Ita Meno (code enforcement for BTV) & Karen (teacher in another district) led the workshop; strong message was 'we white people should do this work'; could be worth it for training at other schools; SA PTO want to be as inclusive as possible and how can we do what we can to be as most inclusive as we can; cultural awareness nights

Helen: PTO sponsored and did SA staff or administration attend?

Christina: we wanted to make it a 'safe' learning environment; all parents - and LaShawn attended. SA PTO respectfully asked to keep our training to SA families.

Monika: shared efforts at IAA on starting discussions on race and racism

Unified PTO's want to work together on training and skill development

Helen: Hunt PTO discussed having community dinners with other PTOs/families

Christina: loves the idea! Especially cultural nights, sharing

6. Identifying bullying, hazing and harassment data baselines
Some discussion on this embedded in previous topics

7. Meeting adjourned at 8:59pm

Respectfully submitted,
Monika Ivancic & Liz Curry