

Called for the purpose of discussing the work of the district's Professional Development by the Educator Leaders for Equity.

Members Present: Mr. Kimbrough, Ms. Bowman (ABSENT), Ms. Dexter

Also Present: Dr. Turk, Dr. Adams, Chris Colbath-Hess, Elizabeth Hill, King School (cohort 1; Heba Abu, VLUS (cohort 1); Michael Batt, Amigos; Rick McKinney, RSTA; Dr. Paula Elliott, Instructor; Dr. Kathy McDonough, Instructor; Dan Monahan, CEA President

A quorum of the Sub-Committee being present, Mr. Kimbrough called the meeting to order at 4:58 PM and read the call of the meeting.

Mr. Kimbrough stated that we have had previous School Climate Sub-Committee meetings. Last year in late 2017 the BSU put out a video which concerned some students and parents. Through the Educators in Equity Leaders he looks forward to continued support of this committee and see what work has been done. He turned the meeting over to Dr. Turk.

Dr. Turk stated the work that we will hear about tonight preceded the work that is presently being done under the Nellie Mae Grant and turned the meeting over to Ms. Colbath-Hess who will review how this work got started and will walk us through the PowerPoint presentation (on file in the School Committee office).

Ms. Colbath-Hess went around the table for people to introduce themselves

Educator Leaders for Equity began in 2014 when a district team was formed called Cultural Proficiency. It began with training and collaboration for Administrators, Liaisons and the Cambridge Education Association (CEA). In the Spring of 2015 a survey was done to hear Educators perspectives, experiences and training that they thought they needed. Over half of the Educators and Paraprofessionals participated in the survey. Grade level teams were formed to look at and analyze the data. In the Fall the Cultural Proficiency Educator Team (CPET) of sixteen people representing all staff looked at the results to decide what the educators wanted/needed. The Team made seven recommendations keeping in mind that adults are learners and human beings, that the work was done by the educators, and faculty need to feel safe to be vulnerable. The recommendations were Exploration of Culture, an Exploration of Cambridge, Affinity Groups, Choice Courses, Instructional Rounds, Sharing Best Practices and Book Groups.

In 2017, the Educator Leaders for Equity (EL4E) course has trained 2 cohorts over two years through a 16 hour, 8 session course plus coaching sessions. It is not happening in all schools because schools are at different places. It provides content and facilitation skills so they can go back to their schools and work with the teachers to keep it moving forward. There are 48 faculty members that have been trained (Teachers, Paraprofessionals and school based Family Liaisons). This year there was not a requirement to sign up staff from every school. There are two levels of work what you can see, tangible and intangible. You need to walk the walk and talk the talk. The teams from the schools need to come up with action plans that will fit and move equity work forward because racism is an important step.

Ms. Hill, King School English Teacher in the Chinese Immersion Program. She started as a parent, paraprofessional and now a teacher. She was trained in Cohort 1 and wants to make a positive impact on CPS. We wanted a diverse staff and had collaboration time at our school to move this forward. They

had five two-hour after school meetings to share professional development. She spoke about how they implemented it at their school. They reviewed micro-aggression in the classroom and the district. They used the Southern Poverty Law continuum for how to put areas into practice. The staff feels the work is important but some staff found the work upsetting especially the White staff members but did appreciate it and the learning process. She has taken additional cultural classes and shifted some of her long held understanding and thinks it is crucial for teachers to do the course.

Ms. Colbath-Hess added there are different perspectives at different schools.

Ms. Abu stated her school had eight hours of professional development and a checklist of goals they needed to achieve. How we identify as educators. We had rigid conversations where everyone shared their own experiences, thinking and thoughts on racism and micro-aggressions; Equity lens talks about LGBTQ work and teacher action for things that can happen in the classroom; and Student perspective about their understanding. We are creating small groups where we talk about action, intervention and impact so we can understand, think, act and show the kids that we care about them. We are hoping to invite more teachers of color because it is being taught now by her and two White teachers.

Ms. Colbath-Hess said there is Equity Matters work being done at the high school. Ed and Dacia were part of Cohort 1 last year. How can we get teachers to have these conversations with each other and learn from each other? It was one of the experiences that helped guide Mr. McKinney to this work.

Mr. McKinney, RSTA Culinary Arts Program Chef, has been with the district for fifteen years and spends a lot of time with his students. During the 1<sup>st</sup> year they are together for 90 minute blocks five days a week, the second year he has them for two blocks and it gives us a lot of opportunities to learn about each other and develop pretty close relationships. Students were talking to me about a lot of inequity things. I took courses all summer and one at Framingham State. Cohort 2 is still in the planning stages and developing where we are going with this. A month ago I learned that I could never be a Cantabrigian. There are only five parts of Cambridge that are real Cantabrigians. Dr. Turk interjected only if you were born at the Cahill or Mt. Auburn Hospital. Mr. McKinney continued, I run the Falcons Nest restaurant and interact with a lot of different people. We have been discussing professional development for next year and making interactive equity handbooks for anyone at the school. It is important for us to understand bias, culture and micro-aggressions.

Ms. Colbath-Hess remarked that Mr. Batt has done this work for a while and in 2015 helped create the content for this course, however, Dr. McDonough and Dr. Elliott have flushed it out a bit.

Mr. Batt explained that his school is a lot smaller. I have been looking at learning how to better educate our kids and trying to empower them. A couple of years ago my Smart Goal looked at how IEP's are written and I did a Student Empowerment Survey for 8<sup>th</sup> grade kids to find out if they needed more information and if they rely on what they learned in 7<sup>th</sup> grade about race, identity and gender. It will serve as a student centered measure by embracing their core values and indispensable attributes of their success and they have agency in their own education. He gave examples of questions on the survey, what does Micro-aggression mean to you? How do you feel validated in this school and in this society? The last three questions are a learning partnership question. How do you feel about a learning collaborative with teachers? Is it a facilitative relationship? Last year a survey of students was done answering questions and was very powerful to hear actual kids voices.

Ms. Colbath-Hess elaborated as a result of this course, we now have all the resources used in the course and access to the exercises so they can bring them back to their schools, highlight student voice so we are all talking the same language and aimed at breaking down the walls that our system has created. We haven't had these conversations that we are having now. It prepares people to engage on deeper levels. Some schools that are not represented here have taken the whole concept of equity and married it with Loretta Hammond's work and added it to ILT planning.

The internal work is where you look at yourself and your responses and decide if I'm better at being uncomfortable, having patience, understanding, and helping others open up. We practiced having cross cohort hard conversations, the impact has been eye opening and needed. What's next? Building a district wide team of educators to take the leadership and help guide this work move forward so they can share, coordinate and connect content district wide and to survey and monitor progress. We are extending learning to our district and school based coaches to strengthen their tool kit.

Mr. Kimbrough thanked everyone, it's not easy work. We all need to have safe spaces to have these conversations. I was hoping to hear from the facilitators.

Dr. McDonough stated It has been an honor to be involved with this in Cambridge. The foundation work about what the conflicts should be is complex. Our charge is to create critically conscious educators in a society, how we are lead to believe and act. Work has to be internalized. Content and facilitation can't be done if you don't know that. We always focus on the power of relationships across groups to be able to do this work.

Dr. Elliott added we're trying to teach the content and have people practice it. Another aspect of the framing of the course for teachers and the broader community is understanding the oppression on a functional level, ignorance, or ill-will. Our society will prioritize the individual around race and racism, it is the structural assumption of privileges of certain groups over other groups. Getting forward motion is an important challenge in the foundation because it bumps up against the norms. It's about the larger society. For many people coming into this work to be able to navigate the individual interpretation of racism based on gender identity that's never going to be the norm. The challenge is really essential to lay the foundation to be able to move forward in the schools with this. Last year we got statements from people that were going to take the class and saw the broad view of everyone. People recognize themselves as new and the ones that had some experiences as being more sophisticated, the structure becomes a touchstone. We have come to have a real regard for the people that have participated.

Ms. Dexter thanked everyone, she is grateful for them doing this work. Is there a bibliography people can access online? Regarding structural systematic racism, what kind of structures are emerging around the experiences kids are having?

Mr. Batt said in the course we spoke about White fragility, walk the walk and experience these difficult conversations and implicit bias has been helpful for teachers to understand that it is very impactful for working with kids.

Ms. Abu emphasized we tried to share models of stereo types, micro-aggression and real life situations and think about kids in similar situations.

Mr. Batt stated as a society we are very defensive, no matter how difficult, it is important to push the envelope.

Ms. Colbath-Hess added some of the structure is White people expect people of color to do the work. Some come in and have never engaged in this work before and it can be uncomfortable. It is hard to see people cry. We have been able to do the work together and members of the group have taken it to heart.

Ms. Liss joined the meeting at 5:55 PM.

Ms. Colbath-Hess continued people think this is backwards because we are not talking about students. We have to practice having difficult conversations and own where we are to be able to hear what kids are saying to us in a non-defensive way.

Dr. McDonough added one of the greatest challenges is going back to participants thinking about themselves as good white people, we get stuck but we teach how to get unstuck and their colleagues work to go through it together.

Ms. Abu stated our data shows kids are not happy at our school. We try to make our work more relevant.

Dr. Elliott added in Cambridge in terms of multi-ethnic, multi-linguistic, multi-cultural diversity is held up as something to be proud of and at the same time people see those as contradictions. For teachers of color it can be harder to name because of the reputation of the city/school. There has to be honest recognition of standards of professional growth.

Mr. Kimbrough asked Ms. Colbath-Hess why all schools are not involved with this professional development, is it a structural or a personnel challenge. It seems the educators are learning.

Ms. Colbath-Hess replied she does not mean to indicate that it is not happening at all schools. There are many schools doing this work at different levels. Some schools that had done equity work feels like it is double doing the work. At some schools there was not staff availability so not everyone has a full team trained, it is just circumstances that have impacted it.

Dr. Turk agrees there is some level of work happening at every school but people are at different places and looks very different. We requested this year that every SIP Plan include equity access.

Dr. Adams said the students at CRLS have led the work. Having people hear about what others are doing will be really powerful. A lot of schools are using the Hammond text with ILT this year and plan to use it for two years to dig deeper so they don't rush through it, this is not just another initiative.

Mr. Kimbrough asked what is the smart goal for this work? If I am a teacher that has gone through this program what am I supposed to be able to do around interactions with a colleague or student? How do we measure if it is working? What is the data? We want to continually work toward anti-racism. Cambridge is no different than any other system. The educator work should be trickling down to students and see outcomes if racism is one of the things we can see that is impacting the academic results of students.

Ms. Colbath-Hess responded how do you measure someone's internal system especially if you think I am not a good person is a tricky line. I am raising that with the people we are working with. One of the

people that went to Cohort 1 is not doing her action plan but every time she is having a conversation with a special educator and hear something she can say hey did you realize.....That's the shift.

Dr. Turk added we are not at a place to have a smart goal for the district. SIP goals have to do with the work that is happening with the adults but has not trickled down to the students. By the end of whatever they are working on they can see stereotypes that they have felt and cultural competence. The Cultural competency contingency is where they look at themselves and move from group to group so they have a better sense of themselves. The conversations they are having about students begins to look different between teachers, students and caregivers.

Ms. Dexter wants all adults of color to be comfortable and hiring more teachers of color is needed to move forward.

Mr. Batt has four student advocacy groups at his school. We are moving in the right direction with civics and social justice based courses.

Ms. Abu stated when teachers have high expectations for students of color, they do better. We have a Black student group and they share their experiences with everyone. We are doing some experiments to bring courageous conversations about different interactions so they feel safe enough to engage in those conversations.

Ms. Hill added one of the challenges is to have a smart goal for everyone to do good in math. Cambridge has silo programs but can work toward making it a valid structural smart goal. Are you working on gender orientation, it is structural? Not how this work is moving all of us forward. What steps did you take as a community and how many staff are involved in the building? Choice courses are not total training. We should look at smaller measurements. Right now this work is with teachers but the system does not run only on teachers; it is our support staff, custodial staff and kitchen staff.

Mr. Kimbrough appreciates your sentiment and the strategic outcomes the system has set. Having shorter increments and goals along the way feels like an important piece. There are micro-aggressions that are taking place in our schools. He wants to be able to say this is what Cambridge is doing in professional development and what we expect our schools to be doing. What can parents expect from our schools while recognizing that some families don't have an understanding of this. As a parent we want to believe we are making progress with measurable outcomes.

Dr. Turk added this reminded me of what some of the CRLS students said regarding the micro aggression steps. They asked how are we going to know if this is working? How will we know and what is the evidence? Are there clear guidelines for reporting micro-aggressions? Is it talked about at Community Meeting and New Teacher Orientation?

Dr. McDonough remarked how to measure individual growth is challenging because faculty of color leave the district and we don't get valid data of why they leave because they don't want to say why. I don't know how Cambridge as a district works but what about school outcomes, what is an area that is problematic?

Dr. Elliott asked what does it look, sound and feel like and not use any formal language. And believe that the teacher really wants to extend themselves. We don't need more confidence training what we

need is more arrogance reduction. What does it look like when someone is checking their arrogance or assumptions regarding race and equity?

Mr. McKinney stated I'm a vocational teacher and we look for a direction and a way to get there. I went thru the Educator Leaders for Equity Program. What if we had a program for the kids? They could work with the elementary schools and up. Little kids listen to 15 year olds better than they listen to us. I developed a program similar to this for the eighth grade kids telling them about RSTA Programs. If we send a group of students there the smaller kids could get excited and would build a better understanding of equity.

Mr. Kimbrough thinks that is a great idea having older students mentor younger ones. Our educators are employed and I want to be sure the educators are taking responsibility and doing the work. I am hearing from families that it's not other students that are making it uncomfortable for their kids to come to school, often it is adults. The kids are great.

Mr. Batt appreciates the social emotional learning in the district. The kids are relating without any expectation and are not measurable relationships with adults but are measurable with their peers

Ms. Dexter replied this is a lot of scaling up, one measure would be how many staff have taken the course.

Dr. Adams remarked that next year we will be working with the anti-deformation league around peer mentors. Kids have strong relationships with each other.

Dr. Elliott mentioned that it is really wonderful to hear from folks that have taken the course and I'm starting to get a sense of what it looks like on the ground.

Mr. Kimbrough appreciates the leadership of central administration, it can always be hard to hear the pain of families what has happened regarding race in our schools and show as a district we are making an effort to make a change. Kids and families know their concern is being heard, respected and that we're working towards doing something about it.

Ms. Dexter motioned to adjourn at 6:44 PM seconded by Mr. Kimbrough.

Respectfully submitted,

Terry Gist

Documents on file in the School Committee Office:  
Educator Leaders for Equity Presentation