



APPROVED BY THE BOARD 8/9/16

**BURLINGTON BOARD OF SCHOOL COMMISSIONERS
DIVERSITY & EQUITY COMMITTEE MINUTES
August 2, 2016**

Attending Board Members: Brian Cina, Kat Kleman, Lauren Berrizbeitia, Liz Curry,
Mark Porter, Miriam Stoll, Stephanie Seguino
Administration: Henri Sparks, Yaw Obeng (by phone)
Guests: Suzy King, Hal Colston (PFC)

1. The Chair called the meeting to order at 7:22 p.m.
2. Approval of Agenda
 - A. *Motion (L. Berrizbeitia/K. Kleman) to approve agenda*
 - B. *Motion to amend agenda (B. Cina/L. Berrizbeitia) to include:*
 - a. *Add update from Board Rep to Restorative Practices Committee (new item 5)*
 - b. *Add discussion about Student Voice (new item 6)*

Unanimous in favor

3. Public Comment:
 - A. Comments and Questions from the Public

Suzy King, ELL teacher, shared concerns about ELL students dropping out of high school. At BHS, she estimates between 7-12 ELL students (Nepali/Bhutanese) dropped out this past year. Reasons were varied: not feeling known, connected; feeling targeted; concerns with relevance of curriculum.

She proposed forming a program specifically designed for ELL students at risk of dropping out, modeled after On Top or Bridge, but with specific considerations for ELL students, focusing on social and linguistic issues. She would need funding and scheduling accommodations. Working on a partnership with Spectrum on a grant. She has met with

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Miriam Ehtesham-Cating but there is no funding for this program this year (cost of \$30,000) and she underscored the need was urgent.

4. Update on September Release of 2015-16 Equity & Inclusion Report

The annual Equity and Inclusion Report for FY15-16 will be presented at September D&E meeting. The District plans to use the data to determine strategies and interventions. In the next few months, the data team will work on improving the consistency of the discipline/suspension data. Given that we have several years of data now, trend data will be included in the report to understand what progress has been made in closing gaps in 5 categories.

The committee also asked the Superintendent for a summary or copy of the report from SROs, as per the District MOU with the Police Department. The report should detail police interactions with students in the last year.

5. Update from Lauren Berrizbeitia on Restorative Justice Committee progress.

Commissioner Berrizbeitia, who serves as a committee rep on the advisory group to the RJ initiative, expressed concern about duplication of efforts between RJ group and District. There is a need for greater collaboration, more involvement of people affected by discipline process, and problems in communication.

Director of Equity Sparks acknowledged concerns and talked about moving from planning room to student-faculty support center as one change that will happen this coming year. There will be an upcoming retreat to review progress.

6. Executive Session

A. *Motion (S. Seguino/K. Kleman) to consider Executive Session to discuss a civil claim against the District where premature disclosure could place the District at a substantial disadvantage at 8:09 p.m.*

Motion (M. Stoll/L. Berrizbeitia) to exit Executive Session out at 9:27 p.m.

A motion (L. Berrizbeitia/M. Stoll) was made, subsequent to executive session, as follows:

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WHEREAS, on June 2, 2015, the Burlington School Board's Diversity & Equity Committee was conducting a scheduled meeting; and

WHEREAS, at such meeting the Committee received a complaint from three members of the School District's Diversity, Equity and Community Partnership Office (DECPO), namely Nikki Fuller, Office Director; Da Verne Bell, Diversity Education Director and Henri Sparks, Director of Equity; and

WHEREAS, the Complaint asserted that the complainants were the recipients of disrespect as well as "outright discrimination and harassment" from their professional colleagues without receiving appropriate support from the District; and

WHEREAS, following an unsuccessful effort by the then Interim Superintendent to address the complaint through a mediation/facilitation process, the matter was contracted out for investigation by a neutral investigator; and

WHEREAS, the investigator's report was submitted to the Board on April 26, 2016; and

WHEREAS, while the investigator's report was not as comprehensive, accurate and definitive in its findings as the Committee would have preferred, it is prepared to work proactively with the report's penultimate conclusions that while there were no specific instances of racially motivated conduct or retaliation found, "there exists a pervasive racism that should be addressed to implement needed changes with regard to changing the culture of the District; and

WHEREAS, the report also notes that in the eyes of the Complainants and many others, there has been much improvement in the culture of the District since the arrival of new Superintendent Yaw Obeng; and

WHEREAS, legal counsel for the Complainants has made a series of demands on the District in order to effectuate a claim;

The Committee adopts the foregoing and recommends the Committee Chair in conjunction with counsel prepare a resolution for the full Board consistent with the discussion in Executive Session.

Vote: Unanimous in favor.

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7. Discussion of Student Voice

The committee discussed the importance of student voice. Commissioner Berrizbeitia agreed to develop a proposal for student voice on D&E committee and to report to the D&E committee at the September meeting.

8. Several items were identified for the September D&E meeting agenda

- Equity and Inclusion Report
- Report from SRO
- Student voice proposal
- RJ presentation
- Diversity Rocks
- Superintendent goals – indicators on goals related to D&E committee.

9. Adjournment

A. Motion (B. Cina/L. Berrizbeitia) to adjourn at 9:42 p.m.

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