

# Council for Diversity and Inclusion

**June 4, 2020**

## Meeting Notes

The Council for Diversity and Inclusion met on June 4, 2020.

Council members are included below. Not all were present at this meeting.

- Charles Lowery, parent, Charlestown Elementary School
- Rob Goldstein, teacher, Charlestown Elementary School
- Marshall Hoffritz, administrator, Great Valley Middle School
- Dana Mohamed, parent, General Wayne Elementary School
- Sarah Slaybaugh, teacher, General Wayne Elementary School
- Lisa Phoenix, teacher, General Wayne Elementary School
- Cristina Juisti, parent, Sugartown Elementary School
- Ashlyn Llerandi, teacher, Sugartown Elementary School
- Christina Ensling, teacher, Sugartown Elementary School
- Shannon Maroney-Garrett, parent, Great Valley Middle School
- Tia Jiles, parent, Great Valley Middle School
- Ila Awasthi, parent, Great Valley High School
- Diana Tiburcio, student, Great Valley High School
- Kevin Fitzpatrick, staff member, Great Valley High School
- Sharon Webster, Great Valley Community Member
- Victoria Morris, administrator, K.D. Markley Elementary School
- Kyle Hammond, administrator, Sugartown Elementary School
- Heidi Capetola, administrator, Great Valley High School
- Jason Rasmussen, administrator, District Office
- Abby Linderman, administrator, District Office
- Karen Taratuski, administrator, District Office
- Samantha Jouin, School Board, GVSD
- Jennifer Blake, administrator, District Office (facilitator)
- Joanna Wexler, administrator, District Office (facilitator)
- Regina Speaker Palubinsky, administrator, District Office (facilitator)
- Daniel Goffredo, administrator, District Office (facilitator)

The goals of the Council are:

1. Fostering a safe and healthy school climate where all students feel they belong.
2. Promoting an inclusive culture that engages and appreciates the diverse assets of students, families, staff, and community members.

3. Encouraging and expanding the District's conversations about topics related to equity and social justice.

4. Eliminating systemic inequities and disparities in student achievement and belonging in our schools.

Dr. Regina Speaker Palubinsky opened the meeting with a welcome to members. She shared that Dr. Daniel Goffredo joined the Council and will be the new superintendent when she departs Great Valley in July. The Council also thanked graduating senior Diana Tiburcio for her service. The high school is currently working to recruit new student representation for the Council.

The Council reviewed the meeting agenda, norms, and its goals. As part of the meeting, Council members spent time reflecting on the past year, including some of the information that was learned and some of the new questions that have been raised as a result of the Council's work. The council spent much time over the past year reviewing qualitative and quantitative data to identify areas of focus.

Dr. Joanna Wexler provided an update about the pending district-wide equity audit. The audit will be conducted by Penn Coalition for Educational Equity. District data has been provided and a team is being gathered. The timing of the audit will depend on when schools can reopen as it relies heavily on classroom visits and interviews. CDI members will be included in the interviews, as will staff and students.

The Council was also provided an update about work that's happened district-wide during the 2019-2020 school year to advance its goals. One of the district efforts that was highlighted was the development of a committee of teachers and administrators who began meeting last fall to focus on hiring, recruitment, and retention of diverse teachers. Members of that committee attended several forums hosted by Villanova University and The Delaware Valley Consortium for Equity and Excellence which addressed ways to promote greater diversity in hiring practices. Additionally, the committee met with a consultant to help hone its approach to hiring more diverse candidates.

In addition, the Council received an update about other district-wide efforts this year that focused on diversity and inclusion. Those include:

- Curriculum work to embed units in grade 8-12 English courses, and the development of a new high school English elective focused on diverse voices;
- Preparation for the implementation of Responsive Classroom in the 2020-2021 school year;
- Increased professional opportunities on equity through a partnership with Delaware Valley Consortium for Equity and Excellence;
- Revisions to gifted screening;
- Increased translation for communications; and
- BASIS (Belonging and Sociocultural Identities in Schools) training for stakeholders.

Council members worked in small groups to reflect on the past year. Specifically, they were asked to consider:

- Has your perspective about the District changed in any way as a result of your participation on the Council?
- What new ideas or learnings did you gain as a result of our work this year?

- What elements of our work to date do you think are important to expand or share with the community?

In the large group, Council members shared their perspectives and suggested the following moving forward:

- Would like to see a more aggressive/assertive approach push folks into discomfort in order to generate momentum for change
- Manage the discomfort that people experience when speaking about these issues
- Have the conversations and push outside the comfort zone
- Speakers at schools, Heritage Night
- Delve deeper into data, start where it's worst
- Proactively hire diverse employees
- Diversity plan with concrete steps
- Curriculum review
- Appoint a Director of Diversity
- Form a "Resources" subcommittee. This would be responsible for identifying resources, for every reason and at every grade level, that project and support diversity, i.e. books for 2<sup>nd</sup>-grade reading nooks; speaker on a variety of topics who reflect a variety of experiences – not just suburban Philadelphian experiences.
- Work with HS students to bring the student voice to our work.
- Interview students and minority parents about their experiences.
- Examine demographics for all staff
- Consider a hotline to report racism/discrimination
- Think about how schools can address topics related to immigration that are not commonly talked about as a way to support students/families.

An area of effort next year will be to form subcommittees that will report back to the whole Council. Members suggested subcommittees be considered for the following: curriculum review; suspension/discipline; equity of opportunity for all students; hiring. The Council also suggested that it set a number of participants for each committee so that each is manageable and productive. Questions were raised about how we will set a common language/understanding for committee members and our work.

Moving forward, the District will continue to conduct BASIS training for all staff. Meetings of the Council will resume next school year. Finally, work in the 2020-21 school year will include the development of a comprehensive communications plan that informs and involves the Great Valley community and promotes the work happening district-wide to further the Council's mission.

The meeting adjourned.