

A special meeting of the Board of Education of the Oak Park and River Forest High School, was held on January 30, 2018, in the Multipurpose of Roosevelt School in River Forest, IL in a joint session with members present from the River Forest Elementary School Board District 90, River Forest Library Board, the Village Board and Oak Park Elementary School Board of District 97.

Call to Order

President Moore called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. A roll call indicated the following Board of Education members were present: Fred Arkin, Matt Baron, Jennifer Cassell, Thomas F. Cofsky, Craig Iseli, Dr. Jackie Moore, and Sara Dixon Spivy. In addition, Greg Johnson, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction; and Gail Kalmerton, Executive Assistant/Clerk of the Board of Education and FOIA Officer attended.

Also present were Nathaniel L. Rouse, Principal; Greg Johnson, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction

Visitors

Wendy Daniels, Joan and Joseph O'Connor, Tom Smedinghoff, Kathleen Fleming, C. Cersini, Keecia Broy, John Duffy, Gina Harris, Laura Hardwicke, Sheryl Mariner Terry Keleher, Karin Grimes

Welcome & Introductions

Mr. Martire opened with introductory remarks. He stated that the communities need reassurance that systems will change and that the schools will provide a quality education to every student. He acknowledged the library board being in attendance. All students will perform better with appropriate pedagogy. This is a pathway to excellence for all students and the community needs to be supportive of this. He thanked the public for attending.

National Equity Project

Kathy Oasta, Rodney Thomas, and Linda Ponce Deleon from the National Equity Project introduced themselves and shared their mission and a history of NEP. This meeting is meant to be a learning session to build a shared language and skill for talking about and working toward equity in each district and community.

NEP has tried to rethink what type of leadership is desired to include multiple voices at the decision-making table. Most people do not change other people's minds, but their stories do. As such, NEP asked people to participate in several activities. People were asked where they grew up, what kind of students they were in high school, how did that affected their ideas on education now, how they identify racially, and 5) how that impacts their experience in the community. The participants were encouraged to move around the room answering each question and noting that they are each the expert of their personal story. During the activities, participants were asked to:

- 1) Notice moments of discomfort and stay curious
- 2) Listen fully with ears, eyes, and heart
- 3) Speak their truth without blame or judgment
- 4) Be open to the experience of this session and each other

NEP led a listening activity to focus on being a constructive listener. The participants broke up into pairs and were asked to listen to the other tell their story for two minutes without interjecting. It was noted that sharing can be a healing process for some and that people are capable of solving their own problems.

Additionally, it was noted that cognitive and affective processing could increase understanding. Over time, this type of communication could build friendships and trust.

Before people can do the work, they need to define what they are doing. Therefore, the definition of equity was shared as promoting just and fair inclusion, as well as creating conditions in which everyone can participate, prosper, and reach their full potential. How could this be used communitywise?

Margaret Wheatley's quote was read: When we begin listening to each other, and when we talk about things that matter to us, the world begins to change. Everyone has the capacity to be able to figure out how to make a difference. Listening and talking to one another heals divisions and makes people brave again.

All levels of a system must be addressed individually, institutionally, and structurally.

The word "Situatdness" was shared, meaning the culture is mirrored depending on how one is situated. Situatdness can cause inequitable outcomes. The problem with the situatedness piece is that policies do not take into account the context in which people are living.

Implicit Bias was defined as the process of associating stereotypes or attitudes towards categories of people without conscious awareness. It was suggested that the unconscious mind is most of what is going on in our minds. The unconscious mind is where most decision and action take place. The brain takes in about 11,000,000 pieces of information a second and yet it is only aware of 40 to 50 of them.

The participants were asked to consider how what they were absorbing were now affecting how they respond. Several examples were shared (police officers, standards for dress in a professional woman, etc.), and it was suggested that people make decisions that are at odds with their bias and goals. It was suggested that people need to put structures in place that build equity and counteract implicit bias. Suggestions included:

- 1) Create human connections
 - Children, if they feel connected, are more likely to learn
- 2) Recognize what is going on, calm your “lizard brain” and prime it with an intention
 - Calm it with a stereotype replacement
- 3) Create new narratives and using counteracting tools intentionally
 - Minority, disadvantaged, transfers, other
 - Consider our students
- 4) Change the structure
 - Consider using The Annie E. Casey Foundation’s Race Matters Toolkit

Participants were asked to share one thing that they were either going to do or think more about because of this meeting. One thing that was mentioned by some that it was important to get the student voice, as it is powerful. It was noted that there were no students nor educators in the room. The three school districts are doing this work independently and that included student and educator voices.

The book, *Making up a Second Ghetto*, by Arnold R. Hirsch was recommended, noting that there is never any guarantee of victory in history.

Participants were encouraged to commit to loving, serving, and understanding each other, recognizing that they are far more alike than different.

Adjournment

At 9:02 p.m., on Tuesday, January 30, 2018, Dr. Moore moved to adjourn the Special Board Meeting; seconded by Mr. Baron. A voice vote resulted in all ayes. Motion carried.

Dr. Jackie Moore
President

Jennifer Cassell
Secretary