



Education Equity Excellence Committee Meeting Minutes December 3, 2013

A meeting of the EEE Committee was held on December 3, 2013 beginning at 4:00 p.m. in the Mellon Board Room. Present: Angela Smith, Lee Ann Kelly, Azark Cobb, Laura Taylor, Sara Sanders, Joe Williams, Justin Uppinghouse, Sujata deo Koontz, Cathy Mannen Judy Wiegand, Mallory Morris (in place of Angelica Franklin), Minnie Pearson, Angela Hassell, Mabinty Tarawallie

Ms. Smith announced a full schedule. She welcomed representation from the middle school administration today, in addition to Joe Williams from Central who is a member of the Committee. Ms. Smith asked members to review the meeting minutes from the September meeting for approval.

A motion was made by Lee Ann Kelly, seconded by Minnie Pearson to approve the minutes with appropriate changes. Motion was carried on a voice vote.

Ms. Smith said a lot of ideas have been created here during the EEE meetings. She also stated that work was done via other District committees like the Parent Advocacy and Transition Committee. The following notes reflect conversations from our last meeting. Ms. Smith said a new members' meeting occurred in November to share data and historical information. "A lot of things have taken flight and have not simply stayed in the room." Ms. Smith said. "The committee should stay committed to our goals." She also stated that we should remain action-oriented as a team.

Student Voice was a subtopic under one of the original four goals. The idea of capturing student voice resulting from a conversation where a member asked, "What about students, what do they have to say?" The committee took that question to administration and several projects came into fruition. This is just one example of the power of ideas. Several ideas have been generated from the EEE Committee.

Ms. Smith explained that middle school administration were present today to share how they have attempted to capture Student Voice. The following are highlights of their presentations:

Franklin Middle School - Sarah Sanders:

Student Voice has been "amped up" at Franklin and kids are loving it and flourishing. A white "Sound-off" board was installed throughout 3 main hallways and every couple of weeks the focus question changes. Kids are responding to the focus question by writing on the board. Questions such as "If you had an opportunity to get a

message across to a large group of people, what would the message be?" and "If you could change something about the world, what would it be?" were used to gain student feedback. The student body "polices" the boards and to date there has been nothing inappropriate on the boards. The boards have been up for almost 2 months. In addition, a new ELA teacher reinigorated the student newspaper and it is completely student driven. Another highlight was the Spoken Word series with Collette Harmon. Following Ms. Harmon's series, the students created a spinoff group that resulted in a student-led poetry club. Ms. Sanders shared pictures of Student Voice projects.

Edison Middle School - Justin Uppinghouse:

Mr. Uppinghouse shared that Edison is focusing on Student Voice and establishing Guardians of Equity Teams. The phrase "Be Heard, Be a Voice, Be Edison!" is being used to encourage student feedback. Students are taking a leadership role. They meet monthly to talk about what to build on at Edison. There is also a "Hands off – Hands on" campaign occurring. Consequently, discipline referrals (DRs) have dropped by 75 %. As a result of this campaign, the focus has shifted to a more academic based campaign. He mentioned the Student Advisory Council is a voluntary committee made up of a very well rounded group up to 25 students. Currently the committee is looking for peers to replace the 8th graders.

A current trend involving girl drama with AA girls has been occurring at Edison. Administration has been working to meet with this group and encourage them to look at more commonalities instead of differences. A Junior Sorority group has been formed and the girls engaged in activities such as crafts and human scavenger hunts were met with good success. Other outcomes/activities of the group have been:

- Giving the students a voice through meetings with admin.
- Making cookies for the group
- Sally Carter from Tap-In and some other AA volunteers participated
- Taking a positive approach instead of saying, "You are in trouble!" they are saying "Here is a way you can improve."
- Reminding and redirecting students. Some of the girls improved their dress. Good personal image is being encouraged by telling students, "When you feel better you do better."
- Focusing on positive attention.

Ms. Smith said she gives a lot of credit to the administration at Edison since it is an all male team.

Mr. Uppinghouse continued that peer recognition has been occurring during lunch. Committee members asked about finding an African American female to facilitate the group. Mr. Uppinghouse acknowledged that this has not been accomplished yet, but definitely is needed. Ms. Kelly suggested contacting the Social Work Undergraduate class at the U of I for someone to fill that role.

Mr. Uppinghouse said in 2010 Edison started College Bound Boys Group. He shared it was a hand selected group that could turn it around. The group: a) created a crest and t-shirts, b) established career goals linked to peer accountability, c) toured EIU and U of I to name some of the activities. They were matched with the major they selected at EIU. This has now been bumped up to include females as well. Justin commented he heard one of the student leaders say, "Dress nice, play the part." Girls have done a service project and boys center around

energy and self-respect. A suggestion was made to also look at the trades as well as college programs. A member reminded us to also consider Parkland as a possible partnership with the trades union. Angela Hassel said she loves the idea -and especially the college trips, noting these activities deal with cultures in a very creative way and show students life beyond the norm. "When you broaden the scope you are turning on a light for them. It enables them to envision a future for themselves." Ms. Hassel said.

Discussion followed about reaching out to parents and explaining the reasons behind these activities. It was mentioned that some parents may not even know these are options. Getting parents on board would be helpful.

Jefferson Middle School - Mallory Morris:

Ms. Morris said she was representing Jefferson on behalf of Angi Franklin. She said one of the biggest goals at Jefferson this year was to get a chance to interact and speak with *all* students. Administrators plan to meet with everyone in the building talking about expectations, talking about issues of respect and climate, and about value systems. Since that conversation administrators have been running student lunch groups. Jefferson also worked on a "Sound-off" board. They wanted to recreate the big board that is downtown in Champaign, posing life questions and big ideas. Ms. Morris said one of the biggest successes is Jefferson's Student Journal. Writing teachers have selected a diverse group of students to write about what is on their minds. Writings are proofed by the teacher and then placed in the weekly school paper. The ELA department has taken the new curriculum and shifted their focus back to the true writing process. In addition, Jefferson has been working on an equity focus with Eddie Fergus – trying to help shift the entire staff perception about discipline, honors enrollment, etc. Jefferson's girls' group and guys' group is something we definitely want to restart.

Ms. Smith said the goal of bringing building reports on "Student Voice" is to make the committee more aware of what is being accomplished at the schools. She wanted EEE to understand that they are making a difference and results are coming from ideas generated during meetings. Admin is responding –not just checking a box. Ms. Smith said she felt some really deep work has been done with some of the four goals. She said the EEE Committee has to have continual buy-in and drive the selected areas of focus. Ms. Smith said some of the best ideas come from the committee. Many of these initiatives change and shape our schools. She mentioned the Kindergarten Readiness Bags and some of the Middle School Transition efforts have had a great impact.

Ms. Smith went on to give an analogy of the work being done by EEE. She stated that we are doing our part like teams of workers who are building a sculpture. Although some may be working on the arms, hands, or feet -in the end, a masterpiece is the result. We all support one large vision. The ideas that come from EEE are a huge part of the foundation. At this point, Ms. Smith asked the Committee to break out in groups and decide which pieces of the foundation we want to lay next. She asked Committee members to revisit each area and look at some of the things we have accomplished and also look at new ideas that make you say "Hmmmmm." There were posters and artifacts around the room which included parent hand outs, a new logo and other campaigns. The team moved around the room dissecting each old and new possibility. They talked with their group and marked posters with new ideas.

Later, the team came together to discuss 1 or 2 new goals they felt were a priority. It was suggested to keep the goals to no more than 2 instead of 4 like last year. Discussion was not conclusive as to whether this would be the direction of the Committee.

Ms. Smith said the Committee will decide/share feedback at the next meeting. Next steps include:

- Ranking and selecting the next new goals
- Establishing one new campaign that supports each goal
- Placing options on a ballot
- Breaking into task forces around new goals
- All agreed that Goal #3 should be a priority

Finally, Ms. Smith said last year the Committee met monthly. She said she wants the schedule to be manageable and asked for input. The Committee agreed to continue with monthly meetings, setting the next meeting for Tuesday, January 14, 2014 at 4:00 p.m. The Committee will meet again on February 11, 2014 at 4:00. There will not be a meeting in March and future meetings will be determined.

Respectfully submitted:

Gayle Griffin Jordan
Record Secretary