



Education Equity Excellence Committee Meeting Minutes May 21, 2013

A meeting of the Education Equity Excellence (EEE) Committee was held on Tuesday, May 21, 2013 beginning at 4:00 p.m. in the Mellon Board Room.

Committee Members present: Angela Smith, Angela Hassell, Cathy Mannen, Minnie Pearson, and Dr. Laura Taylor

Also present: Dr. Susan Zola

Absent: Amy Armstrong, Gianina Baker, Jamar Brown, Sujata dey-Koontz, Sarah Evans, Karl Radnitzer, Dr. Judy Wiegand, Joe Williams, Stanley Yanchus

Welcome and Introductions-Angela Smith:

Ms. Smith opened the meeting at 4:00 and welcomed the Committee. There was some discussion about not having access to data (graduation rates & other high-school information) for final reporting. Members were uncertain if the term was 1 year or 2 years. If the term was 2 years, members agreed to have their last meeting after data is received in the fall.

Review of Meeting Minutes-Angela Smith:

Ms. Smith asked members to review the March EEE Committee Meeting Minutes contained in their meeting packet. After minor corrections, the motion was made by Laura Taylor and seconded by Cathy Mannen to approve. Motion carried by voice vote.

Update on Social Justice Work-Dr. Laura Taylor:

Social Justice is a framework by which people come at things. It examines who sets the norms and rules and recognizes cultural expectations and differences and forces us to ask those questions. We each come from our own framework and can't always see what framework others have. Meetings through the year (Poverty simulation, white privilege, LGBTQ students, Latino resiliency) help us to see this. Sometimes, as educators and caring people, we tend to lower expectations and not recognize the brilliancy of what children bring with them.

- The draft definition is as follows: Unit 4 understands social justice as a continual commitment to thoughtfully consider and actively challenge social norms that privilege some and not others.
- Examples of issues: citizenship, appearance, age/grade, SES, sexuality, religion, race/ethnicity, language, household living arrangements, gender identity and disability.
- Parts of the system: curriculum, discipline, facilities, grades, human resources, food, instruction etc.
- Considerations: who benefits, what concerns, who is engaged, what does full engagement look like, who is having fun, traditional power & authority

The Social Justice Committee is working to set up a structure that is accessible for all without singling out any student and working towards making this consideration a part of everyday culture. There is one meeting left for the year and minutes are on line for all meetings. Next year it will become more of an educational committee with more professional development.

Ms. Pearson agreed that religion should be on the list because Sunday is such an important day in our community. People are all in their “own” place, students go to one church and teachers to another. She’s tried going to other churches and hasn’t always felt the welcome spirit. Laura agreed that sometimes familiarity makes it harder. You can’t tell a student their behavior/experience/family is “not right” and leave them wondering what is wrong because the family/background they came from is their norm.

Ms. Smith talked about what social justice looks like in our schools, a building level understanding and what the letter of the law says. Everyone starts in the same kindergarten, but our framework makes that a different experience for everyone. She continued that we have to find ways for everyone to co-exist while maintaining those differences. Ms. Hassell, said in coming from a DCFS perspective, there are lots of reports breaking down who is calling, looking at indicated/unfounded reports. She said in this community especially, police & schools are the highest callers, but the reality is that only half are indicated. A disproportionate amount of these calls are reported for African American families and they are working on how to address the community, because it’s a community issue. The issue is how to address this and to examine the expectations we have but don’t say or give. What is it that we are seeing that causes a concern? Ms. Smith agreed that including the parents in these unwritten rules has to be part of the goal as well as looking at discipline numbers. The community and parents who have been a product of this community must be involved to work together to move in a better direction. Dr. Taylor shared that Radicalmath.org is a good resource for integrating this information in the classroom to bridge the gap between teachers, students and parents.

Summer Work-Angela Smith/Committee:

Four areas for continued summer work include:

Goal 1: “The K-3 literacy gap. When does it really happen? How can we support our children at home, in the community, in school? How can parents know what to do at home? How systematic is RtI and how should it look?” There are 800 incoming kindergarten students and 300-400 CECC students for the 13/14 school year. With Ms. Pearson’s help 800 bags with resource materials were provided to the library. There has been excellent feedback on this program. Ms. Smith said this spikes awareness for what should be on our radar for our students. Dr. Susan Zola said each building is using information gained through kindergarten screenings and evaluations to give parents an idea where their student stands and providing lots of supports for literacy and math. The at-home family advocacy is just starting. Ms. Pearson said she is really proud and the feedback is outstanding and the community sees that Unit 4 has gone to another level to reach out. Each effort and initiative has just risen to a new level, and you know that we are doing something right when there aren’t any complaints and that there is good in place of bad. She said “It’s really moving and I like it!”

Goal 2: “By grades 3 & 4 we can see that we’ve already left a significant number of African American males behind. Statistics predict they may never rebound. Why? What can principals do? Where do schools need changes? What practices and pedagogies help keep them on target? How can we dismantle this current trend? What can parents do to help? Ms. Smith said this is an area that needs to be revisited.

There is work to get AVID in buildings. The middle level has created an AVID summer camp to help with organization & learning strategies. Ms. Smith said the middle level curriculum for summer school has been redesigned to support a creative learning environment rather than just a holding pattern. Summer school should get them up to speed rather than leave them lagging behind.

Goal 3: “The top 25%- how do we keep the on our radar? How do we keep the top performing students accelerating?” Principals are revisiting AP/Honors supports.

Goal 4: “Parent participation- how are parents perceived? How are they welcomed? In what ways do parents feel they can contribute? How do schools want parents to participate? How can we help parents navigate the school system?” Ideas for discussion were how are parents being a partner, providing more professional development for our office staff (Customer Friendliness training), but it was agreed on that we can do better. This is where the committee started and still has work to do (middle school transitions, SPED parents being better advocates)

Feedback-Feed Forward-Angela Smith:

Dr. Taylor asked if a different time would allow more committee members to attend meetings. Ms. Aguero said she feels like spring is a terrible time because of activities. There was also agreement among the group that June & July would be bad times for meetings, but that during the school year meetings should be monthly to get the most work accomplished and agreed to revisit in the fall. Dr. Taylor suggested that meetings should be put on the calendar now and then adjusted as the year continued. Ms. Aguero asked if it was possible for the district to host online meetings or if access was an issue could there be a combination of live & online meeting format. There was some discussion of the mechanics of this, because the district doesn't have a large meeting room with this capability it doesn't seem a possibility at this time. Ms. Smith thanked the team for staying involved and working so hard for the committee/community.

EEE Graphic Selection-Megan Brown:

There was a vote for the logo; there were 6 votes for #2, two votes for logo #4 already. .

Meeting adjourned: 5:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Melissa Vessel
Recording Secretary