A meeting for the EEE committee took place on October 17, 2019, in the Mellon Building Board Room. Committee members in attendance were Angela Ward, Dr. Susan Zola, Dr. Laura Taylor, Andy O’Neil, Orlando Thomas, Sara Sanders, Bruce Brown, Lisa Milkereit, Jennifer Enoch, Bud Windelborn, Alissa Irvin, Rochelle Harden, Stan Yanchus, Grace Kang, Blanton Bondurant (NAACP), Amy Armstrong, Kathy Shannon (for Elizabeth Sotiropoulos), Nadia Berger, Melissa Shungu, David Northern Sr.

Others in attendance were Rhonda Thornton, Mike Lehr, Carolynn Bartolotta, Sharlene Denos, Sheffeia Wright, Viodelda Judkins, Katina Wiltcher, Jonnell Baskett, Laurie Scott

**Introductions & Revisiting Our Purpose and Past**

Mrs. Angela Ward welcomed everyone to the meeting, provided a brief history of EEE for new members and shared the purpose of what the committee is about. The committee is to review and discuss areas of equity that include; race, ethnicity, SES, academic progress, regular education, special education, gifted, AP honors, academic academy, and alternative students along with attendance, discipline and graduation rates. The committee is comprised of the superintendent and two central office administrators, one board member plus an alternate, one principal plus an alternate, a CFT rep and alternate, NAACP representative and at least five, no more than 10 community members.

Introductions were made due to several new community members joining the committee. Angela informed the committee this meeting will cover second-semester data from the 2018-19 school year for Special Education and Culture & Climate. The first half of the presentation was presented at the August 24 meeting and focused on academics throughout each grade level. Copies of that academic report can be emailed out by Liz Smith and Angela will be available after this meeting to discuss further if needed.

**Special Education Data Presentation**

Andy O’Neil presented Special Education data. He defined the term risk ratio as a way to express the probability of one group compared to everyone else. Less than one, there is less risk and if greater than one, there is a greater risk in the group than in the comparison group. In Illinois, ISBE measures risk ratios of 3.0 and above to determine disproportionality findings. Looking at overall Special Education in the district, black students are 1.6 times more likely to be evaluated as SpEd. Most of the other numbers have stayed consistent within this category.

**Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD)** - The districts African American students were 3.68 times more likely to be identified as SLD. This is an area where the district has been cited by the state multiple years in a row. Andy explained the district did not always have this issue until the state changed guidelines on the identification process for what they consider SLD. The district continues to take action in this category and since the district has done that the number has decreased. Continued action is still in progress.
Autism - The district’s white students are 1.25 times more likely to be labeled autistic.

Developmental Delay (DD) - The district has jumped to almost 4 times more likely for a student to be labeled with a DD. Students have to be younger than 9 when diagnosed. Most of our students are in early childhood and early elementary. The district is keeping its’ eye on this number. It is harder to test kids because children are only in early childhood for two years and then leave. This group changes the most and it can be difficult to figure out why the numbers are so high.

Emotional Disability (E.D) - Numbers were above 2.0 but have dropped to 1.54 times more likely for African American students since 2017. In 2017 the district changed the criteria and the way they evaluated students. The district added a speech and language component to make sure it wasn’t a language issue and made sure students were processing correctly.

Q: Mr. Northern stated “Mr. O’Neil mentioned the district changed the way the district evaluates. Is that a state standard?”
A: Andy replied, “There is a state-required definition, but the district is able to come up with criteria to meet that state definition.”

Q: Ms. Irvin noticed the shift in numbers after 2014 and 2016, “Can the committee get some information on what changed and why there is such a jump in the data. What were the interventions or support in 2016 to help?”
A: It is harder to say because students are re-evaluated and tested every 3 years. In 2013 the state changed the rules for how they identified students for SLD. The state took students’ IQ scores and achievement scores and if there was a gap then they identified them as SLD. The district moved to Response to Intervention model (RtI), which is when a student begins to struggle in reading, interventions are then put in place and monitored to see if it helps the student. Students who don’t make progress, are placed on an intervention program.

Kathy Shannon pointed out there is more than just a poverty problem going on. The committee should think about in terms of support for the community.

Q: Rochelle stated it is shocking to see numbers like this. “We have overrepresentation for African American students in this category. Is there something in that process that is causing this or what is missing?”
A: Andy replied, “The state has determined the process in which we find this information is not discriminatory. Maybe sharing this process would make more sense.” Andy can share that information out or at the next SPED presented meeting in April, 2020.

The district will continue to look at the numbers. The experience in which students are exposed can make a huge difference. Learning the context, understanding and looking at the assessment would help understand these numbers.

Culture & Climate Data Presentation

Mr. Orlando Thomas presented data for Culture and Climate from the second semester of the 2018-19 school year.

All campuses have a multi-tier system of support. 80% of our students meet school wide expectations, which is Tier 1. Tier 2, 15% of our students respond. Tier 3, 3-5% according to the state. 2% of our students are Tier 3 students. 88% are Low SES, 72% of them are males, and a large percent are african american. We are doing what educators ask us to do and that is to respond to the data with support. Research shows kids involved in activities do better. We
encourage students to get involved with extracurricular activities.

Some activities within the district are as follows:

- **Summer Youth Employment** - we guarantee a student with not just a job but a career exploration in a field they are interested in.
- **Lead4Life** - teaching kids how to set goals, how to achieve goals
- **Op Hope** - year 10, focuses on education, provides exposure with college tours, 3 graduates working at the campuses they visited.
- **Goal Getters** - year 3, targeted group of students who were problematic, set goals and put things in place for them to turn their lives around.
- **Restorative Practices** - repair the relationship, own their behavior.
- **Alternative to Suspension program** - ACTIONS - Direct social skills instructions. Teaches them strategies to handle their anger. Direct access to their homework so they are not behind when they return to classes.
- **READY Program** - Alternative Placement. READY Program is for 6-12 grades. 18 students from Unit 4 walked the stage at READY last year due to this opportunity.

Variety of reasons why students don't respond to supports; mental health, housing, neighborhood, etc. Something the district can try to impact but does not have control over.

98% of our students have done what they need to or responded to an intervention. 2% of those students need help with, but our district can not do it alone.

A dramatic decrease shown on District Suspension trend data is due to change at the state level, the district has a program called ACTIONS (alternative to suspension program), which is a program students can choose as an option to serve their suspension. If the student does not choose to attend ACTIONS, they will be at home during their suspension, counting as an out-of-school suspension. Overall district suspensions are down from 502 to 402. Elementary suspensions have increased from 316 to 324.

78% of the districts’ suspensions come from black students. ‘Physical confrontations with students’ continues to be the highest percentage with 106 students. 97% of students have never been suspended. 930 students, or 58%, took advantage and attended the ACTIONS program.

READY is the alternative regional safe school offered to Champaign County students grades 6-12 and ran through the Regional Office of Education. They offer all courses as a regular middle school/high school. Smaller classrooms, smaller school settings. When a students expulsion is up and if students believe they can be successful they are able to stay at READY and finish through high school.

**Q:** Mr. Bondurant stated, “Has there ever been an attempt to bring in all the day care providers to inform them of the district’s expectations and how we can implement them so there is consistency from day care all the way through graduation?”

**A:** The district has teamed with Carle to start Healthy Beginnings, United Way, CommU and put bags together for small kids with information regarding these needs, practice work, etc. Dr. Zola agreed the sooner we can intervene with an early childhood experience the better the child is in the long run.

Alissa Irvan mentioned the high suspension rate for elementary students shows concern. She mentioned seeing a gender breakdown and racial breakdown for who is being affected and can we adjust them differently? Do the teachers have enough support in the classrooms? Are we being culturally cognizant? Alissa offered to embed some of the training she teaches at ISU into the first
two SIP days for new teacher orientation with Orlando Thomas.

**Q:** Is CFT doing anything with equity training?

**A:** CFT is not involved directly but teachers are on equity teams. This year is the first year principals had to have a full equity plan.

Grace Kang stated she and ISU would love to come and collaborate with training for teachers. Are there interventions in place for elementary? The gap is happening at the elementary levels.

Nadia Burger added, “I know the district has done some training in this, but if there is a way to get the student out of survival mode you can greatly decrease the level of aggression. Survival skills for your neighborhood are not the same as survival skills in school. The issue is how do you explain that difference to a six year old.”

Dr. Zola thanked everyone and the community members for their commitment and participation with this committee.

Angela Ward closed out the meeting stating as we think about the students in the gap, consider some of the things this committee can do with students who are in that mold, using physical confrontation as a way to resolve. What can we do as a community for those students in the district? Brainstorm and bring some ideas back.

**Takeaways**

Work needed in the district

1. Communication; the real story
2. Trauma within our students

*Next meeting is February 27, 2020*

*Respectfully submitted by:*  
*Liz Smith*