

Tuesday, September 24, 2019

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF AD HOC COMMITTEE OF GREAT CITY SCHOOLS/MALES OF COLOR OF THE BRIDGEPORT BOARD OF EDUCATION, held September 24, 2019, at Bridgeport City Hall, 45 Lyon Terrace, Bridgeport, Connecticut.

The meeting was called to order at 5:50 p.m. Present during the meeting were Chair Joseph Sokolovic, Dr. Melissa Jenkins, Martin Rubin, Ricardo Alvelo, JoAnn Kennedy, Sana Shah and Dr. Carmen McPherson.

Mr. Rubin moved to approve the committee's minutes of February 15, 2019. The motion was seconded by Mr. Sokolovic and unanimously approved.

Mr. Sokolovic moved to approve the committee's minutes of April 23, 2019. The motion was seconded by Mr. Alvelo and unanimously approved.

Mr. Rubin moved to approve the committee's minutes of May 7, 2019. The motion was seconded by Mr. Sokolovic. Corrections were noted. The motion was unanimously approved.

Mr. Rubin moved to approve the committee's minutes of May 14, 2019. The motion was seconded by Mr. Sokolovic and unanimously approved.

Mr. Sokolovic moved to approve the committee's minutes of June 11, 2019. The motion was seconded by Dr. Jenkins and unanimously approved.

The next agenda item was an update on the committee's white paper. Dr. Jenkins said she had provided an outline. She said Dr. McPherson has added some ideas focused on mentoring. She said a section on challenges needed to be added. She noted there has been a lot of discussion about the court cases affecting the district, including the *Crumpton vs. Chop* case of 1975. She added that in 1980 a hiring order provided preferential hiring for minority teachers. She said this section could be quite lengthy and the committee will have to decide what to include or not.

Dr. Jenkins said a white paper is supposed to be a short call to action to get people's attention around an important issue.

Dr. Jenkins said there had been a lot of conversation around an equity audit, advocating for implicit bias training, and race-neutral policies. She said Ms. Shah has suggested looking at policies through the lens of males of color. She said there was a discussion of providing professional development on biases and ideologies, hiring practices, race-conscious policymaking, and making sure we have curriculum relevant to males of color.

Dr. Jenkins said each section in the outline had to be fleshed out. She said the most challenging section would for her is the overview section on topics like homogeneity, anti-racism, white adjacencies, and systemic racism, because they are very broad topics.

Ms. Kennedy said Ms. Baraka suggested using hyperlinks for those topics. Dr. Jenkins said she could not synthesize the broad concepts in this section.

Mr. Sokolovic suggested the residual effect of these themes be incorporated into the paper.

Dr. Jenkins said perhaps Mr. Walden could elaborate on the impact of the *Crumpton vs. Chop* case.

Mr. Rubin said the overview might have a more humanist view. He suggested telling the story of the committee and its identification of problems seen by it as community members. He said in some cases he sees little appreciation for education in his students because their parents and grandfathers were also failed by the system.

Ms. Noel said she viewed the white paper as a product to provide to the Board of Education to give them information and the call to action. She suggested making it very clear to the board what we are advocating for.

Mr. Sokolovic said the board does not act without pressure. He said if the pressure just comes from the committee it will not be enough.

Ms. Kennedy said the committee should push for the district's staff to reflect the community. She said if males of color saw more males of color in the district it would change things overnight.

Dr. Jenkins said Dr. McPherson had emphasized mentoring, while Ms. Shah emphasized race-neutral policies, and she was now hearing hiring practices being talked about. She suggested the committee decide what on they want as an ask.

Dr. Jenkins said synthesizing the views of the group is a major challenge. She said the data and what was said at the

forum is simple, but summarizing the work of the committee is more difficult. She said Mr. Walden or others who have grown up in Bridgeport describing the effects of *Crumpton vs. Chop* could be another approach.

Mr. Sokolovic said he was concerned about getting the paper before the board before December, when it changes after the election. He noted the committee was almost dissolved by the board and it might have been dissolved if people did not like the person trying to dissolve it.

Ms. Kennedy and Ms. Shah said they supported Dr. Jenkins's suggestion of narratives provided by committee members. Dr. Jenkins said Mr. Walden should write on *Crumpton vs. Chop*. Mr. Rubin said such a narrative would cover a lot of the topics previously discussed such as redlining and white flight.

Mr. Alvelo said he would be willing to contribute on magnet schools.

Ms. Shah said friends suggested looking at reparations in education. She said the data indicated male teachers of color are doing more than other teachers. She said teachers of color should be paid more.

Mr. Sokolovic said he would handle the systemic racism narrative.

Dr. Jenkins said the narratives were a soft way to approach issues such as white supremacy or white adjacency.

Ms. Shah said she would take white adjacency.

Dr. Jenkins suggested Ms. Noel handle mentoring.

Dr. McPherson said she would create a narrative based on *Sheff vs. O'Neill*.

Mr. Sokolovic asked that the contributions by the committee be sent via e-mail by October 17th, in advance of the next meeting on October 22nd.

The next agenda item was review and discussion of suspension and expulsion data.

It was noted the 2018-19 data was broken down by school. Mr. Sokolovic suggested each member take a page of the data for homework. Each committee member was assigned a page to study. Dr. McPherson asked if it was possible to obtain the data for all males for the past five years.

Dr. Jenkins cautioned that percentages of suspensions masks that the fact that the amount of incidents are quite low in some schools.

It was noted Bassick had a high rate of Hispanic female suspensions.

Ms. Shah said when she has looked at the data she thinks about who the administrators are.

Mr. Sokolovic said he did not believe females misbehaved as adolescents any less than males. Dr. Jenkins said she did not see high out-of-school suspension rates for females.

Mr. Rubin said his students were begging for the mentorship program to come back and asked what funding would be available this year. Dr. Jenkins said the numbers of students needed to grow in the mentorship programs.

Mr. Rubin said last year it seemed like the funding appeared out of nowhere. He said the funding was invaluable in the mentorship program.

Dr. Jenkins suggested Mr. Rubin continue to recruit students, but a funding amount has not been shared yet. She said recruiting high school students is very important to the superintendent.

Mr. Sokolovic said he anticipated having a meeting with Mr. Testani. He added the middle school program had difficulty recruiting mentees.

Dr. Jenkins requested that Mr. Sokolovic ask data management to aggregate the data for the district.

The next agenda item was on the last forum. Dr. Jenkins said Conan Harris was a great speaker. The committee members said they would like to do another forum. Ms. Shah suggested a student panel at the next forum.

Ms. Kennedy moved to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Mr. Sokolovic and unanimously approved.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

John McLeod

*Approved by the committee on October 22, 2019*