Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

Date: March 8, 2022
Location: Via Google Meet

Attendance: Charity O’Neill O’Kane, Margot Critchfield, James Mulcahy, Paige Morris, Jeanne Nelson, Becky Milburn, Sarah Murray, Trinity Poon, Carly Smith, Michael Pell, Tessa Cary, Kathleen Reynolds, Sarah Murray, Anna Dunphy, Emily Klablick, Lisa Kent, Connor Green, and guest speaker Julia Wright.

Call to order 6:03pm by Trinity Poon

- Pledge of Allegiance recited
- Group Norms and intent statement read and dates of calendar acknowledgement by Charity O’Neill O’Kane.
- DEI Dates for March: see below (read by Kathleen Reynolds)

Public Forum: None

Guest Speaker: Julia Wright: Topic of Disabilities: introduced by Margot Critchfield.

Julia Wright is a SHS graduate and also a graduate of Harvard. She discussed Disability History and the way that disabilities have changed over time, specifically what Disability History is. In the state of Massachusetts the frameworks/standards are not designed to educate students regarding Disability History. 15% of people are considered disabled. Disability history is not mentioned in the history curriculum. It is important to recognize that disability history is important not only to disabled people but to all people. In Julia’s research she has not found any high schools or colleges that offered Disability History class, only at the graduate level. Julia spoke of how an elective designed around Disability History would be groundbreaking for Sandwich to have and also the knowledge gained for the students would be incredible. It would encourage not only the students who have disabilities but also those who do not. Link copied regarding this topic:
https://docs.google.com/document/d/14bGhcWVe7RHqXfrkLeh4C-ZovblJQRR00kfDDx7KcQ4/edit?usp=sharing

- School Updates from admin:
  James Mulcahy SHS: Mr. Mulcahy started off by stating that the curriculum ideas have been well received. The biggest thing that has come out of DEIAC has been the World of Difference program. He stated that the World of Difference program started today with training of the students in the ADL/World of Difference program in the library. There will be more training opportunities for students, students were able to apply or be nominated for this. Students were then interviewed. 33 students are being trained in the program. SHS is excited to see this happening. The school is currently looking at their handbook and updating this, they are looking closely at all documents, policies and protocols in order to view it with a “changed lens” to ensure that it is accommodating all students. SHS is committed to being inclusive and equitable in all that they do. Becky Milburn asked if students would have input into the handbook update and Mr. Mulcahy stated that would be the case, as well as they are streamlining the handbook as it will be one for both STEM and High school.

Anna Dunphy, Oak Ridge: Anna Dunphy has stated that the DEI team has continued to develop and grow curriculum as well as work with Ruler within their curriculum. The school is also hosting an LGBTQ+ night on March 30, 2022, it is open for Oak Ridge families.
Sarah Murray, Forestdale:
Sarah Murray stated that at Forestdale we are working within the Cares committee to develop units of study that will encourage Women as Change Agents. The Cares committee has combined with the Social Emotional team to continue to foster curriculum, including using Ruler to promote inclusivity and equity within the curriculum as well as in our community.

Charity asked if the admins had any input as to our recommendations. There were not any questions from the administration.

- GOALS/RECOMMENDATIONS:
  1. Charity O'Neill O’Kane asked if there were any goals/recommendations that we would like to bring to the School Committee’s attention. Diana Ganju stated that if there was a cultural or religious reason for an absence that it be worked into the school calendar in some way to insure an absence is not going to hinder an individual in any way, it is already in the handbook, however she would like to see it clarified and being universally acknowledged. Becky Milburn stated that she had found another district that had outlined absences in relation to this, she also stated that it should be acknowledged. Jim Mulcahy stated that there are district policies that are separate from each school, which are worked off of. He stated that perhaps we should start working off of that to include in the student handbooks. He stated that it is dealt with, usually with honoring the holidays and that it falls under an excused absence. Jim also stated that it be highlighted during open house/parent meetings to ensure it is noticed and recognized. Lisa Kent stated that at Forestdale there is more of an awareness due to the smaller group of students seen as opposed to the high school where it might be difficult. Diana also stated that she is hopeful that with more communication it will become more of the norm for students’ to feel comfortable sharing their culture/religion. Becky Milburn asked if there was possibly a way to make a clear section in handbooks that were in regards to absences for religious/cultural holidays, in order to build a clear understanding. Tessa Cary stated that she often will not miss school during her religious holidays due to the fact that she will miss school days and have many days of missed work that she would feel she needed to make up.
  2. Margot Critchfield asked if the schools have been noticing any changes in climate in the schools, Charity mentioned that with the survey results we should be seeing some data regarding that. Becky Milburn stated that when we get the survey back that we would possibly see some data that reflected a school climate recommendation or something along those lines. She also mentioned that with the World of Difference recommendation being put in place, we may have to look at some ideas for k-6. No Place for Hate was mentioned, Diana Ganju pointed out that No Place for Hate was teacher directed, and that we wanted outside experts, so we might want to look at other arenas. Kathy Reynolds stated that she will look at other k-6 programs to see how they are working for other districts.
  3. Communication Updates: Becky Milburn and Emily Klablick are working on this. There are some resources and information that was discussed and reviewed from other districts.
  4. Guest Speakers: Presented by Margot Critchfield. Each speaker will have 20 minutes. Both Emily and Paige discussed the next two guest speakers for April and May. Looking into the possibility of hosting larger gatherings for the community with speakers, Becky Milburn spoke
with Taylor White. It was addressed that if we could get the community to come to DEIAC meetings to hear the guest speaker it would be great. However, these meetings are public and therefore open to the public. Kathy Reynolds stated that she read an article about the School Committee and that DEIAC was mentioned and that it would be great if our name and what we are doing would be widespread news, a PR person would need to be appointed. There was discussion about possibly making out meetings more well known.

- Trinity Poon addressed the meeting notes from 2/8/22. Lisa Kent motioned to approve, seconded by Kathie Reynolds, unanimously approved to accept.
- Public Forum: none
- Any other topics not anticipated:
  None
- Closing Remarks and Thanks by Charity O'Neil O'Kane, she thanked everyone for being here. Diana Ganju thanked Kathy for dropping off snacks, Lisa Kent mentioned that there are some trainings/PDs going on through Lesley University regarding books on anti-racism. Members of Forestdale staff will be attending them.
- Motion to adjourn by Charity O'Neil O'Kane, seconded by Margot Critchfield
- Unanimous vote to adjourn at 7:47 pm

Signed by:

Lisa C. Kent  Secretary

March 2022 Dates

- Developmental Disabilities Heritage Month
- Ethnic Equality Month
- National Women’s History Month, established 1987
- March 8: International Women’s Day: First observed in 1911 in Germany, now a major global celebration honoring women’s economic, political and social achievement
- March 21: International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, observed annually since the killing of 69 people at the demonstration of “pass laws” in South Africa. The U.N. proclaimed the day in 1966 and called on the international community to redouble its efforts to eliminate all forms of racial discrimination.
- March 25: International Day of Remembrance of Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade, first observed in 2008
- Deaf History month
- March 31: International Transgender Day of Visibility, celebrated to bring awareness to transgender people and their identities and recognize those who helped fight for rights for transgender people.

Multiple religions observe holidays in March, including Christianity, Bahai, Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism, Muslim, and Sikh
The DEIAC is aware that this is only a partial list of important dates and events for the month of February. We encourage and welcome the community to aid in educating us and informing us of missing dates or corrections through the public forum.

Sources
https://www.tmcc.edu/diversity/awareness-calendar
https://www.diversitybestpractices.com/2021-diversity-holidays#may