

Inclusivity Advisory Committee September 27, 2018 - Minutes

Members Present: Rosabel Antonetti, Julie Barker, Linda Beckford, Patricia Vaughn-Brogan, William Castle, Shana Cutaia, Roger DeBell, Susan Gould, NI, Christie Karpovich, Rachel Kest, Stella King-Turner, RK, Michael Leone, Tamara Minter, Flavia Nobay, Nahoko Kawakyu O'Connor, Maureen O'Neil, Mark Puma, Robin Scott, Kristi Seaver, Hinna Upal.

The meeting was called to order at 3:33. Superintendent of Schools, Mike Pero welcomed the group and gave an overview of the purpose of the committee, which is to review our current culture, climate and systems and make recommendations to him. He is excited about the committee and its work. He shared there are certain non-negotiables in our work. That being that we always put our students first and that all students need to feel valued and appreciated. That there is a great deal to be proud about Pittsford Schools and that together we can seek to do even better.

We went around the room and did short introductions. The group split into four sub-groups and participated in a team building activity. The activity was to allow members of the committee to work with each other and to figure out the meaning of the exercise. At the end the group discussed how the exercise seeks to show that we all have different perspectives, which are important, but that individually we may not have all the information needed to discover the answer. That if we pool our perspectives we have a wonderful opportunity to meet our collective purpose.

We then discussed our collective mission, which is to provide guidance to the Superintendent of Schools regarding systems, structures, policies, regulations and experiences that will lead to an environment of enhanced school/community engagement, respect and connection – where diverse ideas, backgrounds and prospective are tied together in a caring environment. There was discussion about the need to find a way to create a sense of belonging for all students and to do so from a strength based approach rather than a deficit based approach.

The group discussed what should be our accepted norms. The group had consensus that there must be an environment of trust to be successful in our work. A trusting environment allows members to feel safe in their work by knowing they are heard and respected. This environment allows for us to test and build on each other's ideas, as well as leverage the different talents and perspectives of the membership. To build this environment, the group also came to consensus that an important norm is that we approach every conversation with each other believing each of us want to make Pittsford Schools better. Another important norm is that we each commit to listening to each other to truly understand the other person's point of view. The final norm we discuss was around communication to those outside of the group. This lead to a very good discussion around the balance between making sure we are transparently communicating beyond our committee but not chilling discussion among the group during the time that members are engaging in discussion and still developing ideas. We were not able to come to consensus on this item yet, but will continue to discuss it (and any other needed norms) moving forward.

We started to identify what information the committee will need for its work. There was a question about what are the specific concerns that lead to forming the committee. Part of this discussion was that the purpose of creating an inclusive environment is important to all schools. That while we have a number of strengths in our overall social emotional learning that we, as an organization, know we can do better. We rely on our core values and mission statement as we seek to undertake this work, which is to make sure our systems are aligned with our core beliefs and that we identify and remove unnecessary barriers to our students' success. There was a request from the group that perhaps District Planning Team could provide additional feedback about any specific areas of opportunity or focus.

Some specific areas asked about by committee members were, hiring practices, achievement among various identified groups of kids, parental involvement, social-economic impacts on learning, mental health and learning about best practices from others engaged in similar work.

In the short term we agreed that meeting twice a month will best help launch the committee's work. Also, there was discussion of moving the meeting time to a 5:30 or 6:00PM start time. As part of the discussion there was also the idea of alternate start times between 3:30PM and 6:00PM. It was agreed that the co-chairs would send out the question to the entire group. Between now and our next meeting each member is asked to watch the videos on the other members. Also at our next meeting members felt it was important to learn more about each other and why this work inspired joining the committee.

We adjourned at 5:07PM