

11-3-2020 9 AM

Minutes from All Students Belong/Committee on Equity, Inclusion, Diversity, and Anti-Racism Zoom meeting

Present were: Acting Chair: Michele Aeder, Committee members: Pat Ryan, Kelly Thayer, Sharif Liwaru (advisory member) Carol Mahoney (Board Chair) and numerous former students, school staff, parents, and other interested citizens.

Michele welcomed guests into the meeting from the waiting room asking that they remain muted until called upon. She then read the following statement:

This committee was formed to provide information and resources to the Neah-Kah-Nie School Board on "All Students Matter" and including equity, inclusion, Diversity, and anti-racism.

It was scheduled for today to facilitate getting our recommendations into the board packet for consideration at the November 9th school board meeting. School board committees are required to provide public notice which this committee has done.

Our meeting was scheduled for one hour to facilitate our teacher/member and her work schedule therefore we will conduct business and allow time near 10 am for comments before we adjourn.

Introductions honoring the Nehalem tribes as well as the Killamook and Grand Rhonde tribes.

The decision to elect a chair was tabled until next meeting.

The decision to select a name for the committee was tabled until the next meeting.

Decision to recommend board attendance at OSBA virtual convention was unanimous.

Decision to send Statement of Purpose and Goals to the board was unanimous and is as follows:

Statement of Purpose:

To encourage and promote education that strives to create equity, diversity, and inclusivity for the students of the Neah-Kah-Nie School District with a focus on anti-racism.

Goals:

1. Encourage curriculum that tells the truth about racial inequality and encourages change to reflect our statement of purpose.
2. Change policy committee to include current members as well as this committee and representatives from marginalized groups in our school district, eventually reviewing all district policies.
3. Provide monthly reports to the board and share new materials and information on anti-racism/inclusion with all administrators to promote sharing that information in all schools.
4. Provide suggestions of new teaching materials and suggest speakers for assemblies to promote equity.
5. Embrace diversity by exploring and honoring elements of different cultures.

We ask that the board approve this committee, the Statement of Purpose, and, the goals.

We also invite and strongly recommend the board take advantage of the OSBA online convention on Saturday, November 14th to not only hear a world renowned speaker on bias and equity issues, but to also attend the many workshops on this topic and on the topic of Covid 19 and schools.

KEYNOTE SPEAKER



THE REV. BRYANT MARKS

National Training Institute on Race and Equity founding director and principal trainer; Morehouse College associate professor

We all have biases. Those held by education professionals affect educational practices and student outcomes. Marks' engaging and interactive keynote speech will provide a clear understanding of implicit bias, and describe its causes, consequences, measurement, potential solutions, and implications for school board members, educators and organizations in the age of COVID-19.

Previous discussion were reported:

The elimination of absent narratives of people of color

Liwaru does presentations on equity, etc.

Tie our goals to the strategic plan

Include BLM on website

Liwaru stated this work is not political.

Our next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, November 17th from 9 am to 10 am.

Meeting was opened to public comments:

Marisa asked that folks be respectful in their comments.

Jamie Rhodes offered her support.

Lenicia stated that her father-in-law Earl Duke who taught at NKN wore black face at school.

Cheyenne shared about the amount of inequality experienced at NKN.

Willa talked about conflict resolution for current issues, strong zero policy clauses, non-consensual sexual assault, homophobia, transphobia, and that 15 year-olds noticed things that felt wrong at NKN

Cody stated that the plan for the elementary schools should be equally distributed

Lanecia said we should honor what has happened

Two people shared about anxiety as one administrator entered the chat and then left the chat. It was indicated that person was a source of their trauma at NKN

Marisa shared that the Southern Poverty Law Center offers FREE award winning curriculum on Teaching Tolerance and that she had used some of this in her classrooms over the years.

Barb suggested conflict resolution and that somebody take mediation training. That there be someone willing to help people through these conversations.

Sandy commented that when she has a question she will ask. She said that listening today gave her a better idea about why this committee was formed.

Other comments: How people can say their truth

Office of civil rights

1776 commission?

We should use our pronouns after our names. Liwaru posted a link in the chat to explain that process.

This is not a good meeting time for many people.

Could these meetings be recorded? Michele suggested people may not be so forthcoming with their experience if they are being recorded.

Two individuals sent emails to the district asking that they be included in these minutes. They are attached below.

When no one else needed to share the meeting was adjourned at 10:36 am

Attached emails:

From: **Yvette Clark** <bluefishout@earthlink.net>

Date: Tue, Nov 3, 2020 at 9:55 AM

Subject: All Students Belong Meeting Nov. 3, 2020

To: <paule@nknsd.org>, <kathies@nknsd.org>, <david.white@oregoned.org>

To Whom it May Concern:

I'm grateful for the step of the school board hosting a public meeting to discuss equity and inclusion. However, I must take pause and note that this meeting is handicapped in the following ways:

1. This meeting was not widely publicized. I learned about it online. Many, many, many people do not have internet, computers at home, direct connections to NKN's social media account, or a comfort level online meetings. The challenges of the digital divide within education have been in play for over twenty years. Ample solutions for a simple public communication exist and need only be exercised.
- 2.
3. The meeting had a single day's notice, that was less than 24 hours total.
- 4.
5. The meeting was scheduled on a critical election day when most people are occupied with an unstable societal system that could escalate.
- 6.
7. The meeting is scheduled for 9 am, which is very inconvenient for people that work. Even if one was able to adjust their schedules, 9 am would remain one of the busiest hours of a work day and is least desirable for a public meeting.
- 8.
9. There is no descriptor of the meeting within the notice. Thus, the general public can not determine the importance of the meeting.
- 10.
11. There is not a stated intention of the meeting within the notice. This allows for zero expectations of what this meeting will accomplish or when. Again, this prohibits public understanding and engagement.
- 12.
13. There is no request for public involvement in the meeting, aside from this being a "public notice." Clarity must always be offered for optimum results.
- 14.
15. There are no instructions for public involvement in regards to the meeting, attendance, letters, goals, results, etc. Again, clarity must always be offered for optimum results.
- 16.
17. There is no direct contact information for the school board members or a particular representative. Ease of access and involvement by the general public would make an excellent FIRST agenda item.

I thank the board for the effort of holding this meeting. I request that the items listed above be taken into careful consideration before scheduling the next meeting and that the board, as well as it's individual members do everything within their power to provide ease of access to this conversation for the public which will ensure robust commentary and involvement by any, and all, parties.

I further request that a copy of this communication be printed and placed within the minutes of the meeting.

Kind Regards,

Yvette Clark



Benjamin Nason <benjaminhnason@gmail.com>

Greetings Neah-Kah-Nie School Board members:

As an alumni of NKN High, I am writing to you with the hopes that you will take my experiences to heart and hear my plea for drastic change in regarding social justice education at my old alma mater.

I request this email be printed and placed on this mornings (11/3/2020) meeting minutes, as I am unable to join the ZOOM meeting on such short notice.

I have been unpacking a lot of trauma since COVID began, and the hard truths I have been forced to face about the origins of my mental health struggles have been intense- most of which I have traced back to my time at NKN high school; and all the ways the school district stood idly by as students were left traumatized.

NKN is by no means unique in their handling of students; but that doesn't give any institution a pass simply because students face a similar reality elsewhere.

The racist culture I witnessed in the student body (and staff) at NKN was absolutely staggering.

As an extremely white county and school district, it becomes all the more important to address institutionalized/systemic racism in the school curriculum; considering there are few other options in the county to get such education aside from the internet.

Addressing the subtleties and many masks of racism (homophobia/transphobia/misogyny) would be extremely beneficial for students before (and far after) graduation.

When I moved to Portland, I began making friends with BIPOC folks for the first time. As a result, a singular phrase became increasingly common:

"Portland is Racist."

Imagine my shock! Portland?! The same city that was my saving grace; my open-minded, Queer home-away-from-home, was racist??

Even though it was a phrase I heard often from racial minority groups; I always brushed the idea off- that all these people didn't know the real Portland.

In reality I was the one with my eyes shut.

If I had understood the complex insidiousness of racism; instead of just assuming that everybody was exaggerating, and if I had understood racism as a FEELING and not just conscious thoughts, my life (and the countless BIPOC folks who generously spent their emotional capital on me to help me to reach this conclusion) would have been positively changed.

As far as how the district personally traumatized me...

I went to school every day hating myself. A hatred which I saw echoed back at me every day by the student body and the staff. Being gay was always either a laughing matter or simply repulsive. It was NEVER talked about in any *formal classroom setting. That silence screams louder than all the times I heard 'faggot' wandering the halls. That silence is worse than when I overheard my teacher laughing with the rest of the class about 'the gays' in Brokeback Mountain. The silence hurt more than the countless days spent fearing PE; for I knew the verbal assaults would be too much to bear in that locker room. There's a reason I never took a shower- I was too scared of what would happen to me.

I knew kids who left the speech team because the bullying about their perceived sexuality was too much to bear.

As for me? I have spent the majority of my adult life trying to understand why my day to day life was so much more difficult for me than that of my heterosexual peers. I realize now (some) of my trauma is centered around shame. I was so ashamed of myself I still struggle getting through a single day without having my childhood trauma come back and negatively affect my interactions with the world.

The culture at NKN High is toxic. Unfortunately it is a toxic environment mirrored all across the United States, but if NKN School District is actually interested in finally addressing these social ills, then my hope is the school board takes this issue extremely seriously and will take the necessary steps to ensure ALL students feel SAFE, HEARD AND RESPECTED.

A good stepping stone would be to require classes on the realities of racism/homophobia/misogyny in our society; taught by an instructor whom understands the grave need for such an education.

Neah-Kah -Nie High School was a major player in sowing the seeds of hatred I had for myself and my identity through their continued silence and bizarre ambivalence.

Help these kids BEFORE they have to ask for help. Because some never get the chance.
R.I.P.

Sincerely,
Benji, class of 2009

Sent from my iPhone