



Orange Unified School District

Equity Task Force

Meeting Notes

Wednesday, February 24, 2021

3:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Virtual Meeting

Facilitator Dr. Steve Regur of Educators Cooperative welcomed and thanked everyone for taking their time to participate in the *OUSD Equity Task Force*. He explained that the forum would provide some context for the group of the initiatives that have transpired surrounding equity and access across the district. He further explained that input would be gathered from all participants in order to determine what main focus areas the task force wanted to address moving forward. Input would be gathered through various question prompts throughout the presentation, as well as through the opportunity to share thoughts at the end of the presentation. Dr. Regur emphasized that the interest in the task force has been huge, which is a great problem to have as it brings varied perspectives, which is something that is needed when interacting with the topic of cultural proficiency.

Assistant Superintendent of Educational Services, Cathleen Corella, then provided some background on the intentional cultural relevancy journey that the District Office has facilitated with the implementation of the AVID Pathway PD offering called ***Culturally Relevant Teaching: Transforming Educators***. It is a full two-day institute that has been offered to teachers, administrators and district office leadership with the underlying focus of establishing a framework of effective methodologies that validate and celebrate the culture of all students. Educational Services was very fortunate to find an outstanding national expert in the field of cultural relevancy named Dr. Eduardo Ochoa to lead the pathways. OUSD has offered 14 cohorts of this institute the last one actually being facilitated virtually for the entire Villa Park HS staff, including all classified personnel.

Assistant Superintendent Corella further shared that many of the principals continued to ask for further in-depth professional development in cultural relevancy pedagogy. When the opportunity for a two-year certificate program called ***Leading for Access and Equity*** was presented to the Educational Services staff a team was comprised that included the Assistant Superintendent and both elementary and secondary principals. This team became the ***Educational Services Equity Task Force*** and last year joined the other three Educational Services Task Force; Academic, Community Engagement and Wellness in addressing how staff

collectively build systems of support that eliminate barriers to student success. Assistant Superintendent Corella recognized the leaders of the task force for their passion and positive growth mindset that they consistently evoked during the two- year program. She further emphasized that equity work is difficult, particularly during the past few years as the subject of race and diversity have been largely magnified at the local, state and national level. Leaders on the task force included:

- Connie Smith, Principal of Taft Elementary
- Jeff Morgan, Principal of Portola MS
- Lisa Ogan, Principal of Cerro Villa MS
- Justin Stanfield, Coordinator of Parkside Alternative
- Jana Saenz, Principal of Chapman Hills Elementary

Assistant Superintendent Corella then overviewed the underlying purpose of the Equity Task Force, which is to build systems of support by altering any negative mindsets that inhibit individuals from establishing and fostering culturally relevant environments for students, staff and community. She expanded that the board adopted strategic plan, the OUSD EDGE, consists of four focus areas. Each of these focus areas has identified strategic initiatives. Strategic Initiative 3.3 specifically calls out for all of us to engage in a growth mindset to provide culturally relevant learning environments that attend to the needs of the whole child. The task now is to identify those specific actions to achieve this. So collaboratively the task force will lead all stakeholders to the following:

- Learn to view Cultural Proficiency as a shared priority
- Learn to experience Cultural Proficiency as both personal and professional work
- Learn to use the Lens of Cultural Proficiency as a guide with all stakeholders in addressing access and achievement gap issues
- Learn to use the Tools of Cultural Proficiency to build professional capital for changing conversations

Assistant Superintendent Corella expressed that the above tasks are difficult tasks as they will center on sensitive topic areas. She then went on to share that the Equity Task Force Team in their two-year program were led through a myriad of discussions, reflections and activities on how they could overcome the barriers to becoming that culturally proficient educator. The conversations and activities that they interfaced with were deep yet, they really made each of them reflect deeply on themselves. The Equity Task Force members then provided a brief overview of each of the barriers and after each overview Dr. Reuger posed a reflection question for all to answer. These answers were then gathered into common themes. It is important to know that these common themes will of course help us set the direction for our work moving forward. Below are the reflection prompts with some common themes:

How has systemic oppression or systemic privilege impacted your life?

- I was reminded consistently growing up that I was not “White”
- I felt pressured to be someone I am not
- I often feel that I must stay silent
- I have used my privilege to advocate for others
- Less pay, fewer job opportunities due to my gender
- I and others were/are oblivious to these barriers
- Assumptions & stereotypes were made about me
- Positively, opened doors to opportunity
- Makes me question if I know or can relate to some of my students
- Educational opportunities have not been equal
- Made me feel unsafe

What privileges and entitlements may be impacting equity in our schools?

- Students feeling it is ok or funny to disrespect someone’s ethnicity
- Historical practices/protocols that do not serve all student demographics
- Grading policies that favor only some student groups
- Staff not fully aware of student/family dynamics
- Positive growth mindset is lacking
- Lack of teacher/support staff diversity
- Lack of awareness & understanding of our LGBTQ+ population
- Assumptions/limitations regarding achievement outcomes & rigorous options

What are some effective practices/protocols to increase the awareness of the need to adapt?

- Curriculum that is inclusive of authors of color/culturally relevant
- Professional development focused on unconscious bias
- Data driven protocols
- Restorative Circles
- Equity based grading protocols
- Diversity recruiting/hiring
- Reflection that leads to honest, transparent dialogue
- Feedback from students
- Cultural proficiency embedded in all professional development

Why is there resistance to change and how can we support the change that is needed?

- Lack of awareness amongst staff
- Mandatory cultural relevancy professional development for staff & students
- Resistance is equated with a loss of power & control
- Change requires work & commitment
- Provide ‘safe spaces’ to reflect and dialogue openly
- Change brings about anxiety for people
- Build systems/protocols on our OUSD Core Values from the top down
- Facilitation of a culturally relevant/ethnic studies curriculum TK-12

Recommended areas of focus for the Equity Task Force

- Culturally relevant/ethnic studies curriculum
- Cultural relevancy professional development for staff & students
- Explore Diversity Recruiting/Hiring Protocols
- Equity Based Grading Practices/Protocols
- Developing a *Districtwide Equity Lens Approach Protocol*