

**Equity and Inclusion Council Minutes**  
**Wednesday, April 21, 2021, 6:00 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.**

*I. Welcome*

*II. Celebrations: Lifting Up Recent Examples of Work*

- **The Memorial Middle School Newspaper - MMS Times**  
Shared a recent edition of the newspaper with article, “Reflecting on Black History Month: Past, Present and Future”
- **Student Author/Illustrator, Mary Vas**  
Mary Vas, a senior student at PHS, shared via video her experience in writing and illustrating a book for children in our community which was then shared with her sister’s 2nd grade class at GES. Copies of the book have been made available to each of the elementary schools. The book is based around cultures and food, and celebrating how we are all different and we can celebrate our differences.
- **STEM PANEL, Scott Grant and Francesca Sergei:**  
On 3/25/21, a committee of 10 community members organized the first STEM professional panelists webinar. The event was recorded and accessed [here](#). There were 38 community members in attendance, in addition to 2 moderators and 4 panelists. Positive responses were received from all participants. Future considerations would be to expand to include math in the future and to have panelists speak on the inspiration of their jobs. Overall it was a successful event and happy to be a part of it.
- **QPR Training, Heather Rodgers:**  
A total of 21 individuals, including students, staff, parents, and community members were engaged in the event held in March. QPR stands for Question, Persuade and Refer. Thank you to SMART and Western CT Coalition for helping to facilitate Western CT suicide prevention training.
- **PHS Embrace Diversity Committee: Amanda Victorian**  
Amanda Victorian, a PHS junior, shared her recent presentation to the high school’s Embrace Diversity Committee. Speaking on behalf of the Asian American Pacific Islanders (AAPI) Community on Racism she shared her powerpoint and spoke to the history of anti-Asian racism; Shared photographs from Japanese internment camps; Stereotypes (model minority, gendered/sexualized racism, food, name calling, etc.), Anti-Asian hate crimes; and strategies to employ if you are in a situation where racism is present.
- **Tribury Reads Together: Tribury Reads Together website**  
Trevor Noah’s book [Born a Crime](#) (and [young adult companion text](#)) was the inaugural winning title for our communities-wide read. Registration is open, and all interested 6-12 grade students and adults are invited to participate. [Register here](#). Approximately 54 individuals are currently registered. Books are available through interlibrary loan via Southbury and Woodbury Public libraries. Expected plan is to read book during the month of May and have book discussion in June. Continuing to look for additional

opportunities for read alouds and authors and study-guides. Please contact Tara Beall-Gomes if interested in facilitating, [tarabeallgomes@hotmail.com](mailto:tarabeallgomes@hotmail.com)

- **Embrace Race Workshop Update: Deb McCloghry**  
Attended workshop re: Breaking down structural and systemic racism in our children. Shared information on the process on how to do this and ways to share information with children, noting that white teachers are a product of this system and we need to learn together. Information can be found at [www.embracerace.org](http://www.embracerace.org), Recommended book: "The Cycle of A Dream" - A Kid's Introduction to Structural Racism in America", by Kimberly Narain. Recommended website: [pollyannainc.org](http://pollyannainc.org) - which has free racial literacy and assessments and workshops for K-8
- **CES Presentations: Mike Syrotiak**  
At the end of March Stacy Clark, Liz Burgess and Mike Syrotiak joined teachers from surrounding districts to discuss some of the topics and strategies we use in our classes. They were part of a panel of teachers that shared stories from their classes to answer questions from how should we prepare to teach about race, to how to deal with specific student questions, to some of the satisfying moments we have had as teacher. Takeaways included: the need for teachers to have a support system of colleagues and administration and to utilize resources (the courageous conversations protocol came up again!) and to remember that one of the agreements was to accept and expect non-closure. Discussing race, identity, equity and inclusion is so important; however, racism and discrimination is a societal problem. Teachers cannot be expected to solve a societal problem on their own yet teaching about these topics is an important step.
- **Cultural Arts assembly at MMS: Jennifer Murphy**  
Sponsored by MMS PTO, Karim Nagi, an egyptian performer, presented on music, dance, history of Arabic music and geography. It was a successful performance done through google meet. Noted how Arts can transcend culture and bring us together.
- **Toward Culturally Relevant Instruction: Dr. Erin Birden**  
Shared examples from K-8 Literacy lessons that were shared with educators K-8 across Fairfield county with culturally relevant pedagogy. Shared ways to transform K-8 ELA classroom materials and instruction to be more culturally relevant and responsive. Shared examples for 2nd grade teacher, using the text "The Oldest Student, How Mary Walker learned to read," which required students to define freedom and the spirit of learning that were prominent in the text and think critically about why life is easier and harder for other: Based on the work of Gholdy Muhammad, a professor who promotes literacy lessons grounded in history.
- **George Floyd Case: Dr. Ramos**  
Dr. Ramos shared remarks regarding the recent verdict of the George Floyd case and the value of this council's work.

### ***III Synthesis of work from last meeting: Hiring Region 15 Administrators***

Following the last meeting, members of the council were given the interview questions related to diversity, equity, and inclusion that were reviewed and discussed in groups during the March council meeting re: Hiring in Region 15 Administrators. Council members were asked to vote on and select the top 5 questions to be part of Region 15 Administrator Interviews. Those questions can be accessed here.

1. In your experience, what are the challenges faced by members of historically underrepresented/excluded groups in the workplace? What strategies have you used to address these challenges, and how successful were those strategies? What will you do moving forward?
2. Tell us about a time when you responded to a colleague or student or a parent, who made an insensitive remark. Describe the situation, the actions you took, and the outcome.
3. Considering the developmental level of students, explain your thinking on the importance of including cultural competency in curricular planning/practices and what you have done in your current role to support this?
4. What would be your vision of diversity, equity, and inclusion in a district with demographics found in Region 15? In this role you are interviewing for, how would you contribute to/promote this vision?
5. In what ways do you feel it is appropriate to incorporate topics related to diversity and social justice into the curriculum? How would you lead this work with your staff? How would you support your staff if there is resistance from the community?

#### ***IV Continued Conversations on Region 15 Hiring***

Council members met in groups to review sample questions that could be asked related to diversity, equity, and inclusion for teachers and other hires.

#### **JAMBOARD**

Concluding group discussion included comments re: the language used to structure questions; how candidate backgrounds may result in different responses; and how to best evaluate candidate responses.

Additional time was offered at the next council meeting to continue discussions regarding interview questions, as well as time to select questions to be part of the Region 15 interview question bank, that will be used during the interview process when hiring new Region 15 staff members (teachers, paras, etc).

**Next Meeting is scheduled for May 19, 2021 at 6:00pm**