

## **Social/Racial Justice Meeting Minutes December 5th, 2022**

Attending: Denise Webster, Maria Davies, Jan Epstein, Betsy Goodman, Bethann Pirie, Jenn Hulse: parents from Cambridge Jen Smithers, Christine Hutchins, and Todd Roleen

Called to order: 5:05pm

All three parents attending are parents of minority children. Christine (parent) asked what is in place re: minority child, wants assurance that if an incident does occur that systems are in place to prevent it from happening again. This parent has had some incidents happen, and would like to know what is in place and to be involved in decisions. If something is said to one of their children, who do they go to? Who are the parents supposed to go to? She stated there have been 2 incidents with her son, one in July during summer school, one just a few weeks ago. What education is in place for students, and what are the tools that are in place? She stated she has gotten a letter with resolution, but what else can be done to educate the students?

Bethann explained she works at the high school. The first thing is repair the harm, educate those involved, and prevent it from happening again. She is trying to teach what perspective is, help them understand what harm was done. We need to be less reactive, more proactive. She meets frequently with kids who may not understand what harm is being done, hopefully to prevent harm from happening within the community. She said it changes student by student.

Betsy agreed with Bethann that it changes with each grade and each individual as to what they can understand. We need to start with Pre-school and Kindergarten, adapt it in the later grades. She wants to see more education for teachers, so they know how to adapt when an incidents arise.

Jen Epstein states that staff in her Elementary School have been working on restorative practices and circles, any child can use them. The approach is more global. What does it feel like when you cause harm to another person? They have spent a lot of time repairing harm. The kids have already been given the skills to work with.

Denise asked if closure for COVID affected the kids learning in restorative practices?

Bethann stated that being home during COVID shut-down, students were at home on social media and were able to do harm without follow-up from us.

Todd (parent and educator) stated that in Enosburg years ago they started a GLOW group, which also includes supporters as well.

Maria stated that all the administrators champion this work and try to push DEI into their schools.

At Cambridge Maria and Mary are trying to start a gay/lesbian alliance. They are still trying to figure it all out. She has shared information on how to teach diversity to the teachers.

Betsy thanked the parents for joining us, and giving us their perspectives, because it will help us to grow.

Todd asked while we're educating students, what is the SU doing to overcome the community/family influence on kids?

Betsy states the librarian in their school is going over books in their school and having the school board review those.

Bethann stated that high school students are starting to things they may be doing that are causing harm.

Maria stated that we talk a lot about leaning into a conversation; sometimes it works, sometimes not, and we can't argue with their family's beliefs, but try to help them understand that small things like jokes, etc. can cause harm. Sometimes families look at that as shaming. We are making changes, but a little at a time.

Maria's update.

-She has gotten a stipend for setting up teams of teachers at each school, they're now trying to figure out when we can start that (? in Feb), ? try to do during school day using someone to run events for us. Cat is working on something to get out to staff before the holiday.

-Wendy also let her know there is some funding to have more artists come in.

-Betsy says that therapeutic theater is going pretty well. Maria stated she would like to see more of it.

-LUMS had 2 visitors speak from a Holocaust survivor group, which went very well. The high school is working on matching students of color, LGBTQ, and/or disabilities to discuss what is happening in school and how to make things better.

Meeting adjourned at 5:45pm