

ADDISON CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT (ACSD) STRATEGIC PLANNING ADVISORY COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS REPORT - AUGUST 2022

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In November 2021, Addison Central School District (ACSD) began a new, equity-informed strategic planning process by forming an advisory committee that included multiple community perspectives. Strategic plans offer an opportunity for a school district to name priorities, make value statements, and be accountable to the community when working towards those priorities. This report is the culmination of seven months of work by the advisory committee and includes the 5 following recommendations to inform the ACSD school board's work to determine the goals within the strategic plan:

- 1. Prioritize social emotional needs of students and the entire school community.**
- 2. Dedicate permanent resources, staffing and attention to equity work throughout the district.**
- 3. Develop and implement an equity based rubric to help inform decision making and evaluation of programs and practices.**
- 4. Provide leadership that is accountable and centers responsive practices to recruit, support, and retain staff that reflects the diversity of our school community and focuses on the needs of our learners.**
- 5. Work to ensure communication is concise and accessible so that all students, families and staff have the information they need to succeed.**

PROCESS

The district began the strategic planning process by forming a community advisory committee. The committee advised and supported the district in better engaging the school community to encourage participation in the early data/feedback collection stage of the strategic planning process. The committee then created an equity framework they used to help form the 5 recommendations shared in this report. The recommendations are intended to help the school board in determining the goals of the strategic plan. The district hired EMStrategies, LLC to assist the district in designing the advisory committee process, facilitate and design advisory committee meetings, support the committee's recommendation setting process and then support the school board in setting the strategic plan goals. EMStrategies' principal consultant, Emma Mulvaney-Stanak (white, queer woman), worked with consultant Lisa Ryan (Black woman), who offered racial equity coaching throughout the design and facilitation process.

The advisory committee included 3 students, 4 parents/caregivers, 3 educators/staff, 2 community members at-large, a principal and the ACSD Director of Equity and Student

Services. When the district selected the committee, particular attention was given to selecting members who hold underrepresented identities (ex: Black, Indigenous, people of color, LGBTQ+ folks, people living in poverty, people living with a disability, etc.). The committee elected two co-chairs to serve as liaisons between the district, consultant and the committee in between meetings. One co-chair was a high school student and the other was a community member and parent to small children. Both are women of color.

The committee was charged with advising the strategic planning process and board in the following ways:

- 1. Define what equity means as it relates to the committee's work and strategic planning process**
 - a. Create an educational equity definition and framework
 - b. Share and coordinate framework with the administration and school board
- 2. Advise ACSD how to better engage the community**
 - a. Help connect the community to the district, share the work of the advisory committee and district, encourage the community to complete the equity survey, share the equity survey results and committee recommendations
 - b. Invite specific community members to join conversations on certain topics to broaden the committee's conversation and strengthen recommendations
 - c. Provide feedback on ways the district can improve efforts to reach our entire community, including completing the equity survey (January 2022), participating in focus groups, and attending community meetings (Fall 2022)
- 3. Provide input on what data should be collected by the district**
 - a. Review the Hanover Group equity survey
 - b. Suggest additional information the district needs to collect to have a holistic understanding of school community needs to inform the strategic plan
- 4. Work in partnership with the board and staff to develop priorities and how to work towards those priorities**
 - a. Present committee's recommendations to board and administrative staff and discuss priorities to inform the strategic plan
 - b. Work with board and administrative staff to advise on how the district creates action teams to implement the priority areas of the strategic plan, including strategies and activities needed to meet strategic plan goals

Each committee member was offered a stipend for their expertise, time, and expenses (ex: transportation, child care, internet, etc.). Interpretation and translation services were provided to create inclusive meeting spaces. The committee met six times between December 2021 and June 2022. The consultant met twice a month with co-chairs and twice a month with the ACSD Superintendent and Communications Director. The committee also broke into four sub groups during its work to analyze four main topic areas to inform committee discussions. Those four topic areas were:

- **School and Social Environment**
- **Academic Environment**
- **Staff Perceptions**
- **Engagement & Outreach**

The district hired Hanover Research to administer a school community survey on diversity, equity and inclusion and also conduct an analysis of annual data points collected by the district. More information on the survey, results and participation rate are on page 5 of this document. Formal online surveys are only one way to engage people and they also present structural barriers based on someone's available time to take a survey, internet access, English language proficiency or literacy skills. As such, use of an online survey as a sole source of input would limit one's ability to fully understand the culture and needs of a community. The committee advised the district to add an open-ended survey to be shared multiple times in the spring to collect narratives and additional feedback from students, staff and families. The district also held one-on-one conversations with school community members and meetings with student groups and other stakeholders. The committee had access to the raw data collected from these additional efforts as well as Hanover Research's data analysis.

The committee decided to extend its work into the summer to add an additional meeting to fully deliberate on recommendations. The committee then used the consultant and ACSD Director of Communication's assistance to draft the report and incorporate feedback/edits. Drafts of the report were shared with the co-chairs, subcontractor Lisa Ryan and ACSD Communications Director before sending a draft to the full committee in early July. Committee members had a month to review the report and were invited to add a personal statement on any topics they wished to add or emphasize beyond what was included in the report. Personal statements are included in the addendum of this document.

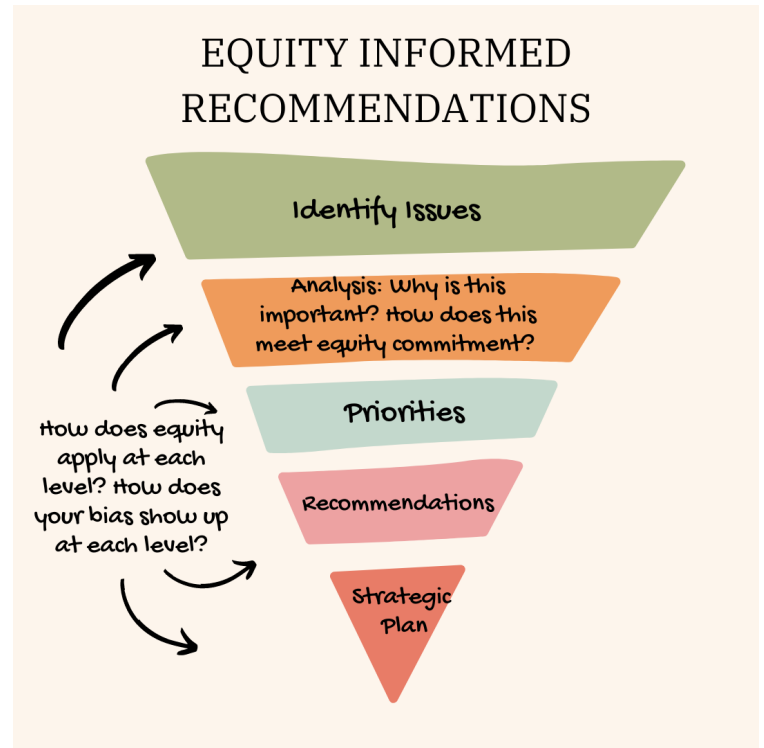
Equity Definition and Framework

This definition was developed by the ACSD advisory committee to inform their work on making recommendations for the focus and goals to be considered in the ACSD strategic plan. Minoritized individuals and communities are those folks pushed to the margins of a community by things out of your own control such as race, economic class, gender identity or disability status (Paniagua, 2015). The committee uses the word minoritized rather than the word minority because bias, racism, discrimination and other systems cause people to be disenfranchised, not the actual number of people who hold those identities compared to others in a community.

Educational equity means that students' identities do not determine their educational experience in our district. This includes a student's emotional and social well-being and academic success. Educational equity means believing the experience shared by a member of our school community. This also includes listening to and engaging with families, students and staff. Educational equity also means committing to removing barriers that negatively impact minoritized individuals and communities.

When the committee was reviewing information collected between January and June 2022 from the school community and distilling core ideas and themes, they used the following framework questions to apply their educational equity definition to the recommendations advanced in this report:

1. **Why is this recommendation important?**
2. **How does this help or hinder our educational equity principles within our equity definition?** The core principles in our definition are:
 - Students' identities do not determine their educational experience (academic, emotional and social well being).
 - We believe the experiences shared by our community. We listen and engage our community.
 - We commit to removing barriers that negatively impact minoritized members of our community.



3. **What does the school community need right now? How do we know that?**
4. **What recommendation could this inform the school board? Let's make our statements short, clear, and inspired and about the type of future school community we want in ACSD.**
5. **What are additional pieces of information the board should explore within the recommendation topic?**

Resources, Data and Input Used

School Community Meetings - Six meetings were held with school community partners including ACSD English Language Learner Teachers, Student Coalition on Human Rights (9th-12th graders), MUHS School Counselors, Vermont Department of Children and Families, a meeting of 9th/10th grade students with a subgroup of the advisory committee (summary can be found in meeting notes [here](#)) and a parent/caregiver meeting of families who are part of the migrant farmworker community (summary can be found in meeting notes [here](#)).

School Community Open Ended Feedback Survey - Created in March 2022 and open until June 13, 2022 for feedback from the school community. We received 82 responses from 62 parents/caregivers, 19 staff, 9 students and 7 community members. The survey was shared on our website, in numerous emails to our ACSD community, in our spring ACSD Newsletter, and on social media. You can read a summary of the survey questions [here](#). The survey asked the following questions:

1. *How do students (families/staff) experience ACSD? Is the district welcoming, inclusive and supportive of all students? Examples of what is working?*
2. *How can the district improve and/or remove barriers or end practices that negatively impact marginalized students (families/staff)? Examples of what is not working?*
3. *What is your vision for the district/future students (families/staff)? What priorities should the district consider in the new strategic plan? What should be deemphasized and what should be emphasized?*
4. *Anything else?*

One-on-One Conversations. Throughout the committee process, individual members held one-on-one conversations which they often shared or summarized during meetings. Each communication to the community also offered a staff contact and invitation to call, email or set up individual meetings if a community member wanted to share their feedback instead of or in addition to completing the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Survey or the Open Ended Feedback Survey.

Hanover Research - Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Survey ([Executive Summary, July 2022](#)). A school community online survey administered in February-March 2022 to students, staff and parents/caregivers. The survey had 987 total respondents, which included 530 students from 6th-12th grades (total 899 students, 59% response rate), 297 families (unknown total of families, estimating 3,000 for a 9.9% response rate) and 160 staff (total 388 (FTE) staff, 41% response rate).

Hanover Research - Equity Data Analysis ([Executive Summary, \(April 2022\)](#)). An analysis of other data points to examine ACSD student data from the last five years related to enrollment, demographics, classifications and how it relates to academics, behavioral and program access outcomes.

Hanover Research - Infographic ([Strategic Priorities Data Summary July 2022](#)) A summary and overview of two Hanover Research (Hanover) studies completed on behalf of Addison Central Unified School District (ACUSD) to support its ongoing strategic planning process – the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Diagnostic Survey and Equity Scorecard and Data Dashboard. The findings of these studies can be used by ACUSD to identify priorities and areas of need during strategic planning.

5 RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Prioritize social emotional needs of students and the entire school community.

- Work with the school community to define social emotional wellness and understand needs of the school community (students, staff and families), especially added barriers for people with marginalized identities.
- Work to understand current and potential programming beyond academics that support students, staff and families offered by ACSD.

- Ensure social emotional needs are given the same weight as academic performance.

WHY STATEMENT

A strong focus on social emotional well being will help to build a strong school community and culture. Many students navigate mental health challenges, the stigma of disclosing mental health issues, and disproportionate impact on marginalized identities long before COVID. The pandemic only intensified these issues for students. We know that students have reported bullying based on their racial, sexual, and gender identities. Other students cannot access the same programming and activities given limited staffing to support students living with disabilities in a rural school district. Students who hold multiple identities face even more complexities. We want to ensure that school is a safe and accessible place for all students. The pandemic also negatively impacted the mental health and social emotional well being of our staff and tending to the well being of our full school community will create a healthier, more unified school district.

BACKGROUND

Hanover Research Analysis

- “A greater proportion of student respondents and middle school respondents perceive bullying as a problem at school compared to respondents overall. Accordingly, 60% of student respondents and 76% of middle school level respondents agree or strongly agree that bullying is a problem at their school compared to 43% of parent and staff respondents, 39% of high school level respondents and 27% of elementary level respondents.” ([DEI Diagnostic](#), Discipline & Safety, page 6)
- “Top spending priorities for the one-time ARP ESSER grant funds include mental health and prevention supports, teacher supports to meet increased educational and social emotional needs of a school, targeted behavioral supports, and literacy instruction and supports. Approximately 95% of respondents identify investments in these areas as somewhat a priority or a high priority.” ([DEI Diagnostic](#), Priorities and Overall Perceptions, page 3)

From School Community Open Ended Feedback Survey

- Respondents noted a need to look at the needs of students, especially those in the “middle tiers” and better understand the impact of the social emotional learning environment on their confidence, mental health and success. *“Listening to the youth will be important, especially given the unique times they have been living through... SEL is a top priority, with special focus on DEI. Efforts to make schools feel safe for non-mainstream kids means a healthier environment for everyone across the board...The mental health of so many people, kids AND adults, is in jeopardy and requires constant care.” - ParentCaregiver, April 2022*
- Respondents noted more work needed to create inclusive space, teacher/staff informed practices and curriculum that is affirming of transgender and LGTQIA+ students and address homophobia and transphobia. *“Teachers and students could be more welcoming to queer students. I identify as gender non-binary, but some teachers refuse to call me by my preferred name even after telling them over and over. This kind of feels like somebody stabbing me. I know this sounds dramatic, but when someone says*

something painful on purpose, it really hurts. .” - Student conversations with Advisory Committee small group assigned to academic environment (May 2022)

- Respondents noted more work is needed to create stronger responses to acts of racism and create safe spaces. *“My experience is that some students experience racism and bullying. BIPOC and LGBTQ+ students get treated poorly by some of their peers. This is an invisible problem in our district.” -Staff and Parent/Caregiver (May 2022)*

2. Dedicate permanent resources, staffing and attention to equity work throughout the district.

- Consider forming a permanent equity team (needs to be defined and should involve multiple levels of district, not limited only to a committee) that represents the school community to advise the district.
- Consider assigning equity work to other staff within the district and in each school to create a more expansive and responsive environment.
- Consider forming advisory committees to support the district’s work to support students and families who live with a disability, use the special education program, and hold a marginalized identity such as LGBTQIA+ or BIPOC.
- Be careful not to minimize equity work and instead use an equity framework that centers and uplifts the most impacted, marginalized members of our school community.
- Empower all individuals working on equity to have the authority and ability to support and direct equity work in the district.
- Support all individuals in implementing equity work.
- Offer professional learning opportunities to staff that are consistent and meaningful in supporting equitable learning environments.
- Engage students, staff and families in dialogue to ensure the district stays accountable.

WHY STATEMENT

Equity work is ongoing work. Addressing inequities in the district will take time, resources and dedicated expertise and resources to adequately identify and shift culture, practice and systems. Information gathered during the advisory committee’s process revealed members of our school community experience the school district differently based on their identities, learning styles and school placement. It is important to engage members of the school community in meaningful ways to listen, learn and believe their experience of being a student, staff member or parent/caregiver. The ACSD advisory committee was a good first effort to create a process, group and outcomes using an equity framework to positively impact more equitable outcomes for students. The district is ready and needs more intentional, ongoing focus on equity work.

BACKGROUND

Hanover Research Analysis

- “Most staff (64%) and parent (55%) respondents agree or strongly agree that teachers are engaging students in meaningful conversations about diversity compared with 46% of student respondents. On the other hand, 54% of white respondents agree or strongly agree that teachers are engaging students in meaningful conversations about diversity

compared with 38% of non-white or multi-racial respondents.” ([DEI Diagnostic](#), Academics & Instruction, page 4-5)

- “Fewer than 30% of respondents indicate students engaged in classroom conversations about social justice (29%), systemic discrimination/institutional racism (21%), social action (20%), diversity (20%), race-related topics (19%), or implicit biases (18%) often or very often in the week prior to the survey.” ([DEI Diagnostic](#), Academics & Instruction, page 5)
- “62% of white student respondents agree or strongly agree that adults in their school understand their culture and background compared with 45% of non-white or multi-racial student respondents. 54% of white staff and parent respondents agree or strongly agree that adults understand students’ experiences and backgrounds compared with 26% of non-white or multi-racial staff or parent respondents.” ([DEI Diagnostic](#), School Environment, page 6)
- “Over half (56%) of white respondents agree or strongly agree that all students face the same consequences regardless of their background compared with 48% of non-white or multi-racial respondents.” ([DEI Diagnostic](#), Discipline & Safety, page 7)
- “Fewer than half of staff respondents agree or strongly agree that their school/district schools provide enough quality professional development on equity related topics (26%), support teachers and their struggling students (39%), work to reduce the effect of implicit biases and systemic discrimination on school decisions (40%), provide staff time to collaborate on strategies for equitable instruction (44%), or support for culturally sustaining practices and pedagogies (49%).” ([DEI Diagnostic](#), Academics & Instruction, page 5)

From School Community Open Ended Feedback Survey

- Respondents noted a need to expand training for staff, including on gender and sexual identity racism, and bias.
“Often educators are white and come from (or are in) the middle class. We don’t always have access to training to examine our own biases and as such we teachers as we have been taught and exclude students and families of different races, ethnicities, socio-economic, ability groups without realizing it.” -Staff, Parent/Caregiver and Community Member (May 2022)
- Respondents noted a need to focus on retaining qualified staff and supporting existing staff. *“Work on current situations at hand with students/faculty and retention.” - Parent/Caregiver (May 2022)*

3. Develop and implement an equity based rubric to help inform decision making and evaluation of programs and practices.

- Define the rubric and protocol. Consider using something similar to the Advisory Committee’s equity definition framework and make it easy to use.
- Define what the type and level of decisions would use the rubric.
- Define when programs would be evaluated using the rubric. For example, use the rubric when evaluating existing programs when being considered for renewal, major changes or termination.

WHY STATEMENT

An equity based rubric will develop awareness and, hopefully, different outcomes in decision making by the district by encouraging inquiry on impact, bias and how a decision supports or hinders equitable outcomes for students. Using an equity tool in evaluations of programs will also develop ACSD leadership and staff's awareness of the impact of existing programs and where inequities exist in current programming. School community members, especially students, will feel more seen and heard when decisions are required to be made using a transparent, consistent, and equity-based framework. Using an equity rubric will also increase the district's awareness around racial, gender/sexual identities and students living with disabilities. It will also help encourage student-based inquiry.

There are resources within Vermont as well as nationally that the district could consider using to define the rubric and protocol. The State of Vermont Office of Racial Equity uses [an equity assessment tool](#) when state agencies or departments are forming a new program or requesting a new budget item. The [National Equity Project](#) also offers tools and examples of education-based equity tools and frameworks.

BACKGROUND

Hanover Research Analysis

- "...equal access to all courses, to high-quality resources, and to all extracurricular activities. Overall, just under 80% of all respondents indicate that equal access in these areas is a high priority or essential....Just under 24% of staff respondents agree or strongly agree that resources are equally distributed across all district schools." ([DEI Diagnostic](#), Priorities and Overall Perceptions, page 3)

From School Community Open Ended Feedback Survey

- When asked in open-ended questions what is working and not working in the district, 33% of respondents recommended evaluating the IB program and to look for more inclusive ways to deliver and resource academic programs to benefit both students and teachers. Sample statements:

"I don't feel the new IB program is inclusive to students who have 504, IEP, EST plans or any student who has [fallen] back or any student who struggles academically or who doesn't learn in the traditional way." - Parent/Caregiver, March 2022

"I think the IB program is centered towards students that are already exceeding the standards of normal and will take the initiative to seek higher course levels...I have students who are hands-on learners, they function very well in the career center...I have a student on an IEP and thankfully he is otherwise he would never be able to graduate high school with the IB curriculum." - Parent/Caregiver, March 2022

4. Provide leadership that is accountable and centers responsive practices to recruit, support, and retain staff that reflects the diversity of our school community and focuses on the needs of our learners.

- Administration should engage in an evaluation process that includes accountability, collaboration, focuses on needs of the learners, and creates a process to report when this is not happening.
- Examine current recruitment and retention policies, practices and protocols to understand trends in staffing and gaps in representation of our school community in staff roles.
- Support the growth of leadership of faculty, staff and students by working to create opportunities to empower them to be leaders.
- Connect this recommendation to the equity rubric recommendation by using an equity-informed framework to accountable leadership structure and practices.

WHY STATEMENT

Creating responsive, accountable, transparent leadership practices will better support our employees, enable them to better support our students, and improve the culture and climate of our district. When decisionmaking and processes are clear, we will all benefit from improved employee wellness and increased recruitment and retention. When employees and the community better understand leadership practices, everyone will benefit from increased trust, professional growth, and student success.

BACKGROUND

Hanover Research Analysis

- “Most parent, staff and high school student respondents do not agree that the district schools/their school/their child’s school hires or retains teachers from diverse backgrounds. Just 20% of these respondents agree or strongly agree that the schools hire teachers from diverse backgrounds and fewer (17%) agree or strongly agree that schools can retain teachers from diverse backgrounds.” ([DEI Diagnostic](#), Academics & Instruction, page 5)

From School Community Open Ended Feedback Survey

- Respondents requested a need for stronger leadership in the district to support staff and to also specifically address incidents of racism in immediate and courageous ways.

5. Work to ensure communication is concise and accessible so that all students, families and staff have the information they need to succeed.

- Utilize existing communication points and new two-way avenues that are responsive, authentic and adaptable.
- Be clear and direct in language used to be accessible to people with a range of literacy skills.
- Consider increasing permanent resources for language translation and interpretation.

WHY STATEMENT

We serve a population with diverse communication needs. Several of our families speak primary languages at home other than English. Families currently experience language, connection, and comprehension barriers that prevent them from fully understanding and participating in their child(ren)s learning. When every family receives clear, timely, helpful communication about their child's education and the life of their school, they will be supported to understand and engage in their child's learning. Clearer and more concise information and communication practices better serve everyone in our school community. Communication is also more than written and verbal information sharing. It also includes building meaningful relationships with each other.

BACKGROUND

Hanover Research Analysis

- 54% agree or strongly agree that the district communicates well with parents.
- 47% agree or strongly agree that their school works with parents to reduce barriers to parents' participation in school activities.
- 44% agree or strongly agree that their child's school provides translation services to all who need it.

([Hanover DEI Diagnostic Dashboard](#), page 13)

From School Community Open Ended Feedback Survey

- Families who are also members of the migrant farm worker community held a meeting in March and shared communication works well when relationships are built and conversations happen. When communication shifts to only written information, families cannot actively communicate back and forth with the district due to language barriers. Families shared stories of their children being bullied and feeling uncomfortable in the community due to racially motivated harassment. Some of these families also struggle with isolation due to lack of transportation and language access so direct connection and relationships are even more important with the district. (*Meeting with ACSD migrant farmworker families, March 2022*)
- Respondents noted a need to improve communication and engagement with families. This includes listening to parent/community concerns. *"We need to continue to engage all families in their child's education in a way that feels proactive and not only when problems arise."* - Staff, Parent/Caregiver and Community Member (May 2022)

"Improve two-way communication with students, parents and community members. Collaborate more openly with community organizations and other school districts. ACSD is not an island!" - Parent/Caregiver (June 2022)

ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

ACSD Advisory Committee 2021-2022				
First Name	Last Name	Town	School	Role
Amanda	Gomes	Middlebury	Middlebury Union High School	Student
Addison	Copeland	Middlebury	Middlebury Union High School	Student
Abigail	Sunderland	Bridport	Middlebury Union High School	Student
Christal	Brown	Middlebury	Middlebury Union Middle School	Parents/Caregivers
Ruth	Shattuck Bernstein	Shoreham	Middlebury Union High School	Parents/Caregivers
Liam	Battjes-Greenwood	Vergennes	Middlebury Union High School	Educators/Staff
Claire	Benjamin	Middlebury	Cornwall Elementary School	Educators/Staff
Christina	Wadsworth	Weybridge	Weybridge Elementary School	Educators/Staff (New Seat)
Michael	Little	Middlebury	Middlebury Union Middle School	Community Members At-Large (also parent/caregiver)
Jessie	Witscher	Bridport	Middlebury Union Middle School	Community Members At-Large
Alejandra	Perez	Bridport	Middlebury Union Middle School	Community Members At-Large (also parent/caregiver)
Esther	Charlestin	Middlebury	N/A	Community Members At-Large/Elected Leader
Justin	Campbell		Middlebury Union High School	Principal
Nicole	Carter		Central Office	Director Equity and Student Services

NON VOTING PARTICIPANTS IN COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Peter	Burrows		Central Office	Superintendent
Emily	Blistein		Central Office	Director of Communications
Fernanda	Canales		Salisbury Elementary School	Interpreter/Principal
Lisa	Ryan	Rutland	N/A	Racial Equity Coach for EMStrategies
Emma	Mulvaney-Stanak	Burlington	N/A	EMStrategies consultant

PERSONAL STATEMENTS BY ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERS

This past school year was exceptionally difficult across the ACSD, pandemic notwithstanding. Administration responses to staffing issues and student behavioral needs fell short. Students, families, and teachers experienced varying levels of trauma district wide, but particularly at MUMS. Discussion of and planning for a more equitable district is important and necessary. And, we do not want the work or the ideas and vocabulary to become cheapened by inadequate training, staffing, or administrative commitment and capacity. Administrators have received a great deal of feedback from families, students, faculty and staff. The feedback is clear: the timing of the 6th grade move to MUMS was a mistake; behavioral systems are not in place and/or not working; IB implementation is not meeting the needs of many students. Key to moving forward with equity work in an open, honest, and authentic way is rebuilding trust. Part of rebuilding trust requires administrative humility, public acknowledgement of shortcomings, and public statements about next steps to ameliorate shortcomings.

Christina Wadsworth

I am grateful for my experience on this committee. I gained a deeper understanding of equity from listening to the ideas and experiences of others in the room. I have confidence in the recommendations set forth in the above document. I also want to express my concern about the Hanover Survey's effectiveness at gaining accurate insight into the district's relationship with equity. I, and many others on the committee, questioned how and why the Hanover organization was chosen, how much they were paid, and whether it is really the right way to pursue these issues in the future. We expressed these concerns and questions and did not receive any direct response from the district. These and other concerns and suggestions pertaining to the survey are included in https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1xsQcl_cvTuaTaODcuqBGcnLbg6YO5S2iC_j5cZv1TuY/edit#slide=id.g12aecfc0a66_0_78.

I believe equity happens when everyone has the opportunity to get what they need. In order to know whether this is happening or what is missing, there needs to be an accurate and inclusive way to access and measure people's experiences in a way over time. I strongly recommend using mixed methods research that combines elements of quantitative research (like survey questions) and qualitative research (asking open ended questions to gain understanding around emotional experiences, race, relationships, goals, challenges, ect.) . We need to ask questions, listen to answers and have a way of reporting this data. The open response survey brought up important issues (ex. bussing to sports, equity issues with the IB program) that would have been missed in the Hanover survey alone. There are many qualitative data survey tools to choose from and I strongly believe that it is worth looking into sooner than later, as the data collection process continues to improve as it is used.

Thanks for listening and good luck with this ongoing and important work.

Jessie Witscher

Equity is the heart of public education and why we all do what we do. It is a privilege to be part of the conversation. Below I have outlined a few key points to add to—or reiterate from—this document. These are the major points I heard in our meetings and the open-ended survey responses:

Staffing levels were the most important issue identified in the survey. Direct student contact staff are our most valuable resource. Quotes from the survey: “[we need] smaller team sizes, smaller groups, more adult contact for struggling children; my vision: 15:1 student teacher ratio and/or 2 trained adults in all elementary classrooms at all times; teachers need support staff; focus on the people in our district- prioritize hiring the best teachers and keeping student teacher ratios in a good place; prioritize hiring direct student interaction and less coordinators and high level positions not administration who don’t work directly with children; don’t cut paraprofessionals; teachers and staff feel too spread thin; [we have an] unsafe atmosphere due to lack of staffing.”

Other themes and ideas that were repeated over and over again: evaluate IB (and other changes); enhance support for those students who are not prepared to be in the classroom; emphasize the mental health of students; prioritize students from lower socio-economic status, regardless of race or ethnicity; make sure all pathways for students feel respected and resourced; admit and address challenges openly (ex. difficulties with the 6th grade move); incorporate anti-racist, trauma, poverty, and restorative practices trainings; consider a late bus; recognize that community based education is greatly valued; reach and support all families, but especially those who have the hardest time connecting (perhaps negative experiences of their own); and use clear, concise communication in all situations (school to students and school to families).

Lastly, a structure (equity committee?) should be created that 1) dynamically continues this equity work and 2) provides meaningful dialogue and avenues for feedback (such as the open-ended survey used here). These steps will facilitate a culture of trust and working together.

Ruth Bernstein

ADDENDUM

Advisory Committee [Meeting Notes](#), December 8, 2021

Advisory Committee [Meeting Notes](#), January 31, 2022

Advisory Committee [Meeting Notes](#), March 7, 2022

Advisory Committee [Meeting Notes](#), April 4, 2022

Advisory Committee [Meeting Notes](#), May 16, 2022

Advisory Committee [Meeting Notes](#), June 6, 2022

Advisory Committee [Recommendation Brainstorm on Initial Recommendations and Post it Images](#), June 13, 2022

Advisory Committee Small Group (Academic Environment) [Committee Presentation](#), May 2022

Advisory Committee Small Group (Community Engagement) (no powerpoint, but see [committee notes](#)), April 2022

Advisory Committee Small Group (Social Emotional Learning) [Committee Presentation](#), May 2022

Advisory Committee Small Group (Staff Perceptions) [Committee Presentation](#), March 2022

[ACSD School Community Meetings Summary](#), February-April 2022

[ACSD School Community Open Ended Feedback Survey Summary](#), March-June 2022

Hanover Research, [Executive Summary: Diversity Equity and Inclusion Diagnostic](#), July 2022

Hanover Research, [Executive Summary: Equity Data Analysis](#), April 2022

Hanover Research, [DEI Diagnostic Dashboard](#), July 2022

Hanover Research, [Infographic](#)