

Equity Task Force Meeting

April 7, 2022

6:00 pm – 8:00 pm

PRESENT: Dr. Dena Keeling, Jason Johnson, Kara Stewart, Kumar Sathy, Charlene Martin-Klein, Caroline Ketchan, Latandra Strong, Lisa Volaric, Mariela Hernandez, Jason Knapp, Katie Harper, Connor Cannons, Sandra Blefko, Valerie Futch Ehrlich, Tony Widder

Dr. Dena Keeling began the meeting at 6:07 pm by sharing her screen for the presentation and welcoming the team to the meeting. Dr. Keeling read the Community Agreements and opened the floor for discussion. There was none. Dr. Keeling told the team about upcoming Board meetings and Board committee meetings and encouraged them to attend if they could.

Charter members of the Equity Task Force were not present on the call at that time so Dr. Keeling moved to the Review of the OCS Equity Policy agenda item which was facilitated by OCS Equity Task Force member Kumar Sathy.

Review of Policy 1030: Equity in Education:

Mr. Sathy shared his screen and began by having the team identify how they were feeling as they prepared to review the policy. Mr. Sathy showed the first paragraph of Policy 1030: Equity in Education and posed the question to the team: **What is the power and purpose of the policy beginning with “Orange County Schools acknowledges persistent racial intolerance, inequities and academic disparities.”** Responses and discussion points included:

- It is important to name inequities. You cannot address what you don't name
- Acknowledging harm that may have occurred is part of repairing the harm.
- Defensiveness is a tactic to avoid acknowledging but that we must plant seeds since this is the first that some people have heard about this and that we must not meet defensiveness with defensiveness
- The damage of jumping to action before acknowledging harm.

Mr. Sathy then asked the team to look at the next sentence of the policy, *“The Board establishes this policy in an effort to eliminate racial intolerance, other forms of intolerance, inequities of opportunity, and academic disparities in our district,”* and posed the questions: **Can we eliminate without first acknowledging? What is the differences acknowledging and acknowledging with an intent to eliminate?** Responses and discussion points included:

- Acknowledging without intending to eliminate never really addresses the problem. For example, you can acknowledge a parent has a concern but there's no purpose to that acknowledgment if it isn't linked to eliminating the problem
- Acknowledging without intending to eliminate is performative. You can talk about racial inequities but are you actually working to eliminate them?
- Acknowledging with the intent to eliminate requires getting at the root causes of issues
- Is *eliminate* the right word? Will we ever eliminate inequities? Perhaps prevent is a better word, so that it is fixed and never happens again

Mr. Sathy then had the team look at Section A Definition of Equity in the policy and posed the question: **What is the difference between equity and equality?** Responses and discussion included:

- Equality means everyone getting the same. Equity means giving student what they need
- Is “giving students what they need,” a sufficient definition? Giving students what they need is the goal, equity is the vehicle. It requires eliminating barriers, like was discussed in the previous discussion
- “Need,” seems to imply just resources. There are some students of color who have financial resources, but are faced with racial inequities in their schools.

Mr. Sathy then directed the team to Section B Mission and posed the question: **What does it mean to “*disrupt all forms of discrimination*”?** Mr. Sathy showed the team the dictionary definition of disrupt: To throw into confusion or disorder; To interrupt or impede the progress of; To break apart or alter so as to prevent normal or expected functioning. Team members discussed these definition.

- To actively look for it in order to stop it

Charter members of the OCS Equity Task Force:

Ms. Latandra Strong discussing how the Equity Task Force was initially formed. Ms Strong discussed why the work of equity and the OCS Equity Task Force is still needed in OCS. Ms Strong and other team members explained that racial incidents and other equity issues continue to occur in schools. Some team members were not aware of some of these inequities within the district. One team members asked if the district was acknowledging these incidents and inequities and suggested having people present their stories. Other team members explained that there was an awareness in the district and there was now a need to move to eliminate.

Dr. Keeling concluded the discussion by asking team members to continue to reflect on what is being reviewed and discussed in each meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:03 pm

Next meeting: April 20, 2022 from 6-8pm (virtually)

Attachment: [Meeting Presentation](#)