

Equity Working Group Minutes

Feb 12, 2019

9:45 – 11 am

Underwood School

Present: Kathleen Smith, Christine Dutt, Kerry Prasad, Kathy Shields, Maggie Schmidt, Andrea Steenstrup

Note-taker: Kerry Prasad

Debrief about Focus Groups held on 2/5/19 and 2/7/19

NB: Items written in **green** are ideas taken from the focus groups. Items in black are EWG responses, reflections and musings on these ideas

General takeaway- the focus group members were thankful after focus groups; grateful that we heard their voices

Equity Working Group Transparency

EWG Meeting Minutes

Several requests that equity working group minutes become publicly available

People did not feel heard when Equity Policy was put into place

We will request that School Committee give us a place on their page to post EWG minutes

On Agenda for next meeting: Approve 2.12.19 EWG meeting minutes for publication

There is a sense of suspicion about what the Equity Working Group is doing

There is a perception among some people that we formed because we all want pooling to happen and that is part of the reason why there is so much resistance

We should be transparent about who is on the EWG, how were we chosen;

The Equity Committee put together an equity working group (EWG). The members represent different geographical areas, PTO spending abilities, school building age/condition

| | |
|------------------------------|---|
| 1 School Committee member | Kathy Shields |
| 1 member of Equity Committee | Christine Dutt (Burr) |
| 2 administrators | Kathleen Smith (Underwood), Orla Higgins-Averill (Angier) |
| PTO reps | Maggie Schmidt (Zervas), Andrea Steenstrup (Cabot), Kerry Prasad (Countryside) |

The task of the Equity Working Group is to determine what is best for the district in order to achieve equity; pooling might not be the best solution

Technology

Across the board, focus group participants feel that PTOs should not be buying technology
However, among some there is the question, "If PTOs don't pay for tech, who will?"
Feeling of anger that PTOs pay for tech, but fear that if PTOs stop, kids will not get tech

IT and Library Services made their report to the School Committee at last night's meeting (2/11/19); this document shows the inventory of devices at the elem schools
<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1O-g0WgHFEVT9YGMESOmP11VDuetw4l0U>

Zervas, Angier and Cabot have not spent at all on tech in past 3 years, tech standard was not in place in 2014; we just don't have a lot of data like we do with CAS

Technology has gotten cheaper, Chromebooks are an inexpensive way to meet educational needs

If technology had been around when the Equity Policy was originally made, it would be something we could not purchase; technology does not meet the intent of the Equity Policy
A School Committee concern is that 85% of NPS budget goes to people; it's hard to stretch that remaining 15% any more

Although it would be hard to convince NPS to purchase the tech, it is absolutely worth mentioning that the people do not think PTOs should be buying it

Fundraising

People give because they feel like there is a direct benefit to their child;
this was expressed differently in each group

Giving to your school makes you feel good, giving to your cause makes you feel good
You could market equity as a feel-good

Feeling that too much time spent fundraising; fund-raising is a full-time job and puts a lot of stress on certain people in the PTO

Some higher spending schools said they think of fundraising and community building as same thing; community building events have fundraising component

Maybe this is a reflection of the spending power of this group

"Help thy neighbor" was a theme

Concern that some people might not want to help neighbors; real worry that giving PTO funds to other schools' PTOs might make people stop donating altogether

Library

PTOs are often called on to purchase books for the school library

PTO purchases all the library books for a school

PTO spend on library ranged from \$130-\$4100 in FY _____

Maybe we should consider each item under the equity cap separately; ie- cap for each line item
Maybe schools should be funding library books
Librarians are starting to talk about equity; Maggie will circle back with Zervas Librarian

Books

PTOs are often called on to purchase books for classroom libraries and guided reading libraries
Elementary schools always need more books
Level- Children need 10 to 15 books a day to make gains at early levels
Interest- children need to have books things they actually want to read;
Diversity- children need books with characters who resemble them
Old books do not align with curriculum anymore

Ways to achieve Equity: Ideas from Focus Group Participants

Limiting spending on curriculum-related items does not make it equitable
Limiting the top is not helping the bottom; the cap is not the best way to achieve equity

Relative to enrichment, Equity is not just a dollar amount

“**OneNewton**”- members from each PTO work together on a fundraiser for curriculum-related items; money divided per head

Luxury tax- For every dollar over 35 you have to put in some proportion of that to the equity fund; you could have a super-cap

This is a way to incentivize at indiv PTO; idea that if \$ contributed to PTO did not go to your child

Percentage Pooling Proposal- a small percent (ie: 5%) from each PTO goes into a pool for equity; one participant ran the numbers for this

Centralize Creative Arts and Sciences

Curriculum enrichment fee similar to music program

PTO committees that work together, MS group; in elem form that ms bond, think about it as phasing in a fund-raiser

Had a couple of frs organized by MS, then you are developing relationships\

It is not just money but community that affects kids education

Creative Arts & Sciences Equity Subcommittee

Brief recap of the CAS Equity Subcommittee report made at the 2/11/19 CAS Committee meeting (Kerry)

New per pupil pricing structure for Concert Series that will go into effect in Sept 2019
Kerry will request that CAS Equity Subcommittee write a summary and brief to the EWG

Maybe CAS could be taken out of the equity cap if it is managed correctly and work is done to make it more equitable

Eg: 3 presenters per grade level, equal pricing for all presenters

Group negotiation/ block-booking would be a good pooling of resources

Currently, successful grants are available on CAS Google drive for all schools to use as a guide for their grant applications – that is a good example of schools working together

Moving Forward

Once we have gathered all the information and opinions from the community, we will propose several options to the School Committee, the options and ideas that have risen to the top, our proposal will include ideas and questions, ie- the pros and cons of all ideas

The School Committee is delegating this work, so they should be the body that chooses the direction taken

For our next meeting-

Finish and get out Treasurer's Survey

Mon, 2/25 8:45 at Angier; if Orla is available; Christine will check with her

Tues 2/26 8:45 is second choice

Christine is willing to meet on Treasurer survey before that