

Superintendent's DEI Committee Meeting
December 17, 2017
Zoom meeting

Draft Minutes

Committee Members in Attendance

Dave Werner, Tiffany Testa, Marie Ramas, Gerrell Smith, Andrew Scott, Caitie Parikh, Diane Marsolini, Superintendent Corey

Call to Order – 6:30

Motion to approve minutes - Superintendent Corey reminded the group that we needed a motion and a second to put the motion on the table. Member Ramas moved and Member Smith seconded the minutes. Member Smith clarified that he did not believe that competition was essential for students and athletes and wanted that correction made to the December 3rd minutes. No other alteration/corrections were provided. Member Werner expressed his concerns regarding the minutes from the previous meeting not being available. He understood the formatting issues but felt strongly we should not be adopting these minutes without the others. He formally objected to the process and felt that tonight's minutes were contingent on the others. He cited RSA 91A and informed the Committee that we have many laws and policies on the books that address DEI. He informed the group about the Governor's commission and stated that he believed we were trying to solve a problem that didn't exist. He stated he felt that Robert's rules were not being followed. Member Ramas stated that she did not feel that Robert's Rules were being correctly applied. Superintendent Corey informed Member Werner that his objection would be noted. The Committee voted 7-0-1 (Member Werner abstaining) to approve the minutes.

Member Smith informs the Committee that he has a conflict regarding another meeting and will be leaving the zoom call shortly. Member Smith states that he is trying to create the best environment for kids and then apologizes for having to leave at 6:46.

Member Tests shares her screen and reviews the agenda and the group norms. Superintendent Corey reminds the committee that Principal Barnes is working with a group of students and will be invited to a future meeting to provide input to the committee.

Member Testa informs the Committee and members of the public that she and Member Scott will be working together to gather the public input. Member Scott informs the group that everyone will be given an opportunity to speak. He asks that community members keep their statements short and that he will give them a reminder when their time is winding down. Member Testa informs the group she will be unmuting people and if they do not wish to speak they can pass. Superintendent Corey reminds members of the public that they need to state their name and address for the minutes. Member Testa informs everyone that she will simply go through the list of participants as she sees them on the screen.

Public Input

Anna Birch 16 Broad Street, Hollis - Thank you to the committee for working on this document. She is comforted making this a part of the strategic priority. School is leading on this and supports DEI being included in the strategic plan.

Brooke Arthur, Hollis - Brooke is in support of the document, she has been following the committee and is in awe of the work. She feels the dialogue is a model for our students and is interested in next steps.

Beth Gilday, 22 Ames Road, Brookline - Beth stated she approved the highlighted changes to the document

Aaron Penkacik, 133 Dow Rd, Hollis - The graphic in the document is unclear and open to several interpretations and should be removed. It is also much less precise than clear text that would make the point unambiguously. One interpretation could be that all of the bikes in "Equality" are the same which disadvantages all but the woman second from the right. The intent of the DEI policy should be that all students receive equal opportunity, which the top of the graphic could be viewed as representing. The bikes in "Equity" are all different and, though all cyclists are efficiently cycling, the outcome in terms of cycling performance would vary by individual. That's not equity. Equity would be that all of the cyclists have equal outcomes in terms of cycling performance. The graphic also fails to capture the concept that equity requires taking from one person to give to another in order to achieve equity. We should not change the definition of equity as used in this context. Here it means that everyone has the same outcome regardless of ability or effort. That is fundamentally wrong because it means taking from one individual who has earned it and giving it to another who has not earned it. Alternatively, equality in this context means that everyone is provided with the same opportunities to excel and can do with them what they desire or are capable of achieving. It is good to provide certain students with special needs who should receive the help that they deserve. We should be trying to equalize opportunities, not outcomes. Aaron's zoom connection created issues at times and Superintendent Corey instructed Aaron to email his comments.

Joe Garruba - 28 Winchester Drive, Hollis -

Removing the reference to SB263 I think the language referencing SB 263 should be removed. State RSA gets revised and changed continuously. For 2020 SB 263 will be reassigned to a different bill. In addition, the language of RSA 193 may be changed in the future. I think what we are trying to do here is outline the concepts with which our district will operate. It is a given that we will follow the law. In our equity section of the resolution we say almost exactly the same thing as the language of SB263. We state "We are committed to a policy of equal opportunity for all persons and do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, etc...The repetition adds confusion. For these reasons I think that the referenced legal language should be removed. Removing the SB263 language will also require removing the first sentence of the following paragraph which references it. Removing the Picture I recommend removing the picture. It is a good method of starting a discussion but it does not belong in a resolution as it can be interpreted in many ways by many people. Graphics are great for presentations, and this one in particular is a great choice, but including any graphic in a written resolution runs the risk of misinterpretation at a later date. We are

here in order to make a clear statement and the picture will not mean the same thing to all people and its interpretation is not under control. I think the graphic is attempting to convey that "Hollis will take individual students' abilities into consideration and provide resources fairly so that all students can reach their full potential." and rather than leave that to interpretation I think we'd be better served including that wording explicitly. Spelling it out in words should make the graphic unnecessary.

Donna Lavasseur, 70 Depot Road, Hollis - Donna thanked the committee for their hard work. She likes the document as written but is concerned with the highlighted portion - seek equity in the education statement. Member Scott asks Donna for clarification and she replies she does not believe the highlight should be included as it is someone's opinion and does not belong in the resolution.

Heather Neibel 13 Milton Place, Hollis - Heather thanks the committee for their efforts. States as a teacher she understands this work and then states she will pass on further comment

Leslie Stokes 25 Summer Lane, Hollis - This is the first meeting Leslie has ever attended. She stated that the graphic was what made her read everything. She informed the committee that her child benefited from assistance and felt strongly that the image represented that point. Leslie stated she 100% agreed with the work and that it meant a lot to her family.

Julie Ledoux, 64 Dow Road, Hollis - Julie informed the committee why her screen name was Mama J - she often chats with children on socialist countries and privacy and screen names are monitored so she must be careful. She reminds the committee to be careful how we use the word equity. Causes constitutional concerns for her. People of power decide everything and do not want diversity used against people. Be very careful. Julie appreciates the hard work. The work is emotionally based but should be founded in the constitution. Definitions are important. Julie noted her concern about the process. Minutes are important and secrecy makes the process a concern. Process, language and law matter. Julie reminds the committee there are many laws on the books. What problem are we trying to solve? Concludes by stating she likes the words the committee has arrived at.

Mark Ledoux, 64 Dow Road, Hollis - Mark congratulates the committee on attempting to capture the spirit of the community especially with DEI a focal point in the workforce and in schools. Mark informed the committee that he has been a pilot for thirty years and verbiage we use is important because there are certain truths. He uses an example of telling a young child not to touch a hot stove to solidify his point regarding truth. He states that the entire community has to support this work, not just one group. He feels less is more and would appreciate the committee scrubbing the document again.

Member Scott asked for clarification on verbiage and certain truth related to the document. Mark clarifies that he was talking about language in our group norms.

Melanie Levesque - 2 McDaniels drive, Brookline - Melanie thanks the committee for their work, states it is important for our children to see us doing this work. He informs the committee that her daughter graduated from HBHS as a person of color. The statement is important. She

has liked how we have listened as a committee. She used our discussion regarding competition to emphasize her point on including that reference. She looked forward to moving the document to the Board and understood that the Board could choose to remove or add items to the document. She stated she was proud of the work and wished everyone Happy Holidays.

Mark Longtin - 60 Dow Road, Hollis - Mark informed the committee that he runs a non-profit and appreciated our efforts. He wanted to raise two points. He believed that the highlighted portion needed to be removed as it potentially took academic freedom away from our teachers. He wanted to reduce the mandate in the resolution. Mark also stated he was concerned about funding. If we choose outside consultants that would potentially become too expensive and take away resources from students.

Michelle St. John - Thanks to the committee for the great work so far. Michelle is in support of the graphic - provides context for visual people. She is in favor of the highlighted area. She felt it was fully honest and challenged the committee to not be burdensome to the teachers, but acknowledged history and diversity and what people bring to the table. She then stated a quote from recently deceased republican politician Bill Bullard is this: Opinion is really the lowest form of human knowledge. It requires no accountability, no understanding. The highest form of knowledge is empathy, for it requires us to suspend our egos and live in another's world. It requires a profound purpose larger than the self-kind of understanding.

Member Testa calls on two attendees whose screen names had only first names. Neither person responded to her request for public input so member Scott returned to Joe Garruba to continue his points.

Joe Garruba, 28 Winchester Drive, Hollis - Lack of affirmation of the student's freedom of speech. The language of this resolution does not clearly affirm the first amendment rights of students. I think this is important since I do not want this concept of the resolution to harm students' ability to express themselves. For example if a student's nickname is stretch or shorty or lefty is that discrimination? Would a student be prevented from using those terms? They are just observations of physical characteristics yet all of those categories are covered in our diversity resolution. If a student objects to those names would that be considered discrimination and subject to discipline? I think the resolution needs to affirm student's first amendment rights. How about if a student were to wear a Cavalier for Halloween and a student who was born in England was offended because the term Cavalier is associated with royalist supporters in the English Civil war. Our resolution would seem to define this as discrimination on the basis of national origin. Would the costume be permitted? Shouldn't we affirm that this resolution is not intended to limit the first amendment rights of our students? Hollis Brookline schools value the concept of free speech and the first amendment rights of the constitution since we feel that freedom of expression is critical to providing a quality education. Definition of diversity I'm concerned that the resolution speaks of a list of types of diversity, but I feel that the list should extend the concept of diversity to honoring all students equally instead of enumerating a list of students with special status. I recommend adding the words we commit to honoring diversity, which is expressed in many forms by all students in Hollis.

At 7:47 Member Scott ends public input by thanking everyone for attending and participating. Member Testa shares the document with the committee. Member Testa reminds the committee our focus was on the highlighted area and that we had reached consensus on the majority of the document.

Member Scott stated that he believed based on public input that the highlighted statement should be out. Member Parikh stated that she felt the highlight was limiting and thus agreed with removing it. Member Marsolini stated that she agreed the highlight could come out. Member Ramas echoed the statements of other committee members and supported the removal of the highlighted area. Member Werner stated he had done a ton of research - RSA 193 - mandates an adequate education for all students- since he felt it was already mandated then the statement was redundant.

Member Testa does not support the highlighted area because it is an action or an ask and didn't feel that was the committee's role. She stated the highlighted section was work that would be done when the curriculum was reviewed. That work was not for our committee and she supported removal of the highlighted section. Member Testa then followed up with Member Werner asking if he wanted the highlighted area out. Member Werner stated he had no support of any of this. He had raised many points about the document. He stated he had expressed concerns about the proceedings from the beginning. He had concerns about DEI and when he raised it he was told "ouch" by committee members. He is not in support of everything and does not feel he has been heard. Member Werner stated he felt his research was disregarded. Member Werner stated he had reviewed school policies and wanted Superintendent Corey to know what we have in place covers it brilliantly and succinctly. We have a policy for 193E; we have a curriculum on DEI, policies for students with different talents. Member Werner informed the committee that our special education policies cited both state and federal statutes. He touched upon RSA 186, mentioned administrative code 1100 and federal laws that dealt with discrimination. He again informed the committee that the Governor had a commission on DEI at the State level. He does not know why we want to change everything. He believes we should have consulted policies before working on resolution. He stated that SAU 41 policies are excellent. They are well thought out. They pull together Federal, State and administrative codes. They are good policies, the best he has seen during his lengthy career as an attorney. Member Werner stated he had reached out to the Governor and that he had spoken to someone at the state and wanted us to wait and see what the state was doing. Member Ramas mentioned that in her faith they have a process known as the pruning process. The goal of the pruning process is to always be trying to improve. She stated that the document was an affirmation of the district trying to get better. She referred to it as self-reflection for the community. She stated the process makes us better to compete in the real world. Member Werner thanked Member Ramas and informed the committee he is only trying to do his best from his vantage point. Member Scott thought the committee should circle back on January 7th and again review the document based on input from tonight's comment period. Superintendent Corey stated he will try to incorporate specific comments into the document which may help facilitate our discussion. Member Scott stated that our work has been all about having difficult conversations. These conversations need to happen. Frustration and tension have value and Member Scott appreciated Dave's input and experience as a lawyer. Member Scott also recognized that Dave's comments on SAU 41 policies were very complimentary. There is great

value in what we are doing here and having the ability to agree to disagree will result in a document that most in the community can really support. Members Testa, Parikh, and Marsolini spoke in support of member Scotts statements. Member Testa stated she was proud of our work and thanked everyone for providing their voice to the discussion. The meeting was adjourned at 8:22.