

**New Hope – Solebury School District  
Equity Committee Meeting Minutes  
October 26, 2021**

Dr. Lentz called the meeting to order at 6:03 PM. The meeting took place simultaneously on Zoom and in person. There were approximately 33 total attendees.

Members introduced themselves to begin the meeting. Dr. Lentz provided a recap on programs that had occurred since the Sept. meeting. Mary Schwander, HS librarian, reported on the author Kwame Alexander's virtual visits with each building, which took place on October 19. He tailored age-appropriate lessons for each audience. At the ES he discussed what it means to be inclusive and how we learn about others through literature. At the MS students read and prepared questions about poetry. At the HS, 9<sup>th</sup> grade students studied Alexander's work and wrote their own "borrowed poetry." Students and teachers had great feedback on these presentations. The community presentation with the author has been rescheduled for November 15.

Dr. Lentz reported on the Anti-Defamation League's October 19 program on Understanding Bias in your Community. There were 25 people in virtual attendance with excellent discussions.

Dr. Lentz led a discussion on establishing norms for the committee. Breakout groups discussed the question: What do you need from this group/what conditions in the room do you need to be successful? In-person members wrote 5 words/phrases on post-it notes, zoom attendees used a Padlet.

*Unedited/grouped responses and suggestions below:*

Respect – for individuals, for students in particular, for the committee mission as a whole

\*members should be removed from the committee if they do not respect the goals and rules

Kindness

Empathy

Common sense

Trust

Honesty

Unbiased

Active listening

Open-minded/no judgement

Patience

Bravery

Compassion

Humility

Understanding

Hear every voice/engage all members effectively

Safe space to share

People should come without an agenda

Genuine interest in being constructive vs being here for political purposes

Avoid group think

Assume good intentions

Support from school for adherence to protocol

Acknowledge differences of opinion

Focus on equity

Emphasis on gender/sexuality and differently-abled issues  
Concrete action plans toward progress  
More student-led  
Ensure equitable speaking time for all  
People to believe they need to grow  
Belonging precedes achievement  
Be aware of invisible difference  
Value diverse perspectives and hold expertise in equal measure

Following this exercise, members discussed how to keep one another accountable to the norms, once written.

- What is the culture of the room? What do we need to agree? What are the rules of engagement? Agree on how to treat one another.
- There was a discussion of what information would/should be kept confidential. Personal stories stay personal. Stories stay, learning leaves.
- Believe people if they say they have been disrespected. When disagreements happen, consider the “I think/I feel/I noticed” method of discussion. See the best interests of the students. Handle topics with grace, understand people will misstep as they learn.
- How can the committee better communicate out to the public? Board reports and website aren’t having as broad a reach. Members do not always agree on amount of progress made.

Liz Sheehan will collate these responses and send in a separate document to start a draft of committee norms and expectations, to be discussed at the next meeting.

Dr. Lentz led an Identity Activity to illustrate that the equity committee deals with many issues beyond race and ethnicity. Members listed their various identity factors such as race, sexual orientation, country of origin, language, age, socioeconomic status, etc., and then identified their three most important factors; which three they would give up; and which three they would not give up. They were then asked to consider which factors they had had to mask or conceal throughout their lives for one reason or another. These responses were discussed in breakout groups. Takeaways included:

- Equity is multidimensional
- Nothing to mask reveals privilege
- Task was uncomfortable, revealed what we still need to learn – holds up a mirror
- Forced good reflection
- What one might change as a younger person shifts in adulthood – same factor now a source of pride. How do we get our kids to feel pride sooner?
- Teaches you to put yourself in another’s shoes
- How does the district welcome all identities?

Dr. Lentz discussed the district’s Action Plan framework as included on the agenda, modeled after PSBA, and reported that the district has made great progress on many of the elements on the list, including demographic study, professional development (begun and ongoing through the Penn Literacy Network), and defining equity for the community. More work is needed on specific school performance data and better metrics for capturing individual student needs – most metrics show our students of color as “statistically insignificant” due to low overall population. A student commented that our discipline data may be skewed due to low reporting by students, as well as inconsistent reporting by faculty and staff who may dismiss or do not understand the severity of bias-related incidents and microaggressions.

Member discussion noted that the upcoming policy discussion should capture and refine a reporting protocol so that all reports are handled by administration.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:45 PM.

Next meeting on November 30 at 4:00 PM – we will be joined by Dr. Heather Bennett JD/PhD, Director of Equity Services at the PA School Board Association.