

**Revised**

The Regional School District 13 Board of Education Well-Being Committee met in regular session on Tuesday, April 6, 2021 at 4:00 PM remotely.

Committee members present: Mrs. Caramanello, Dr. Friedrich, Mr. Hicks, Mr. Moore and Mr. Roraback

Community members present: Mrs. Olszewski and Mrs. Stephan

Student Advisors present: Nora O'Connell and Gage Rovelli

Teacher Advisors present: Mrs. Schmidt

Teacher Advisors absent: Mrs. Schaefer

Administration present: Dr. Schuch, Mrs. DiMaggio and Mr. Sadinsky

Board members present: Mrs. Petrella

Guests present: Steven Fitzgerald, Michelle Gohagon, Maureen Funke, Anne Koba, Leslie Paoletti and Marie Watson

Mrs. Caramanello called the meeting to order at 4:00 PM.

**Pledge of Allegiance**

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

**Public Comment**

None.

**Approval of Agenda**

*Mr. Moore made a motion, seconded by Mr. Hicks, to approve the agenda, as presented.*

*In favor of approving the agenda, as presented: Mrs. Caramanello, Dr. Friedrich, Mr. Hicks, Mr. Moore and Mr. Roraback. Motion carried unanimously.*

**Approval of Minutes - March 9, 2021**

*Dr. Friedrich made a motion, seconded by Mr. Moore, to approve the minutes of March 9, 2021, as presented.*

*In favor of approving the minutes of March 9, 2021, as presented: Mrs. Caramanello, Dr. Friedrich, Mr. Hicks, Mr. Moore and Mr. Roraback. Motion carried unanimously.*

**Review draft Equity Policy**

Mr. Moore explained that the current version of the policy has gone through the Policy Committee, edited by Dr. Schuch and reviewed by the attorney.

Mrs. Petrella asked to review her proposed revisions and explained that she believes semantics are important and tone counts. She suggested that the title be Diversity, Inclusion and Unity Policy. She added "a community focused on unity" to the first paragraph. She also inserted "unity in a school

community that is inclusive of diversity in race, ethnicity and language.” She also added “that encourage unity” and “ensuring equal opportunities and access to programs and services.”

Mrs. Petrella explained that she looked up definitions of diversity, inclusion, unity and equity and reviewed each of them for the committee. She felt there is a different tone to each of these words. Mrs. Petrella mentioned the push for equity to put transgenders on girls’ sports teams and explained that that recognizes the issues of transgenders but it is detrimental to the biological girls on the team. She wondered how these things can be made equal without marginalizing or being detrimental to another group. Mrs. Petrella also mentioned that the government recently distributed money to poor black farmers, but there are a lot of white farmers who were excluded. Her problem is with how the word equity is being used in society today and would like the focus to be on unity.

Mr. Moore disagreed with Mrs. Petrella and felt that this policy is dealing with longstanding issues of race and differences in sexual orientation and gender. He felt that equity is the protection of those who are discriminated against, the protection of those who have disabilities, trying to be fair to those who have been treated differently and trying for justice. Mr. Moore believed that equity is more important right now, but that unity is a great goal. He felt that the district has to have the ability for teachers and administrators to react to discrimination. He does not agree with Mrs. Petrella’s changes, but the board can act on them in the future.

Mrs. Caramanello understands what Mrs. Petrella means, but also understands what Mr. Moore is saying. She does feel that the district may need to come back to this policy in the future if they don’t include Mrs. Petrella’s suggestions now.

Mr. Roraback thought that they will receive guidance on a national level from Dr. Cardona. He also agreed with Mrs. Petrella’s argument. Mr. Roraback reported that they had a student-generated unity statement at Prince Tech, with all 40 home rooms contributing. They read it during the morning announcements now. He thought it would be a positive for the students to have a hand in this issue as well, not necessarily the policy.

Mrs. Gohagon felt that the use of the word “equity” is important, both now and in the future. She reviewed that all students have different needs and equity would give people what they need. Historically-marginalized groups would get lost with unity and equality and without understanding that, the system will not be inclusive.

Mrs. Paoletti stated that equity is really the key way to go to be sure that all students have the opportunity to learn as much as possible. With the pandemic, some students have gotten very far behind and it may be more equitable to give them some special Saturday or summer programs that other students may not necessarily need. She felt that equity allows a diverse path for people to reach the same bar and felt that equity is key from an educational perspective. She added that the coaches on the field don’t treat each student the same and give each student what they need to excel and the teachers use diverse methods in the classrooms.

Mr. Roraback then presented the student-run announcement at Prince Tech. Mrs. Petrella did not want anyone to think that she didn’t understand people have different needs. She was a special education teacher for 14 years and understands that. She wanted to be sure that other groups aren’t marginalized or discounted in the name of equity. She hoped that the focus could be on what unites us while appreciating the differences. She explained that her biggest objection to the word equity is how it is used in society today and in government. Dr. Friedrich summarized that Mrs. Petrella wants to make sure that equity is

done fairly. His issue with the word unity is that is what the segregationists wanted in the South. They wanted the oppressed black people to shut up, stop complaining and just be in unity with everyone. He summarized that all of these words have baggage.

Mrs. Caramanello agreed with Mrs. Petrella and gave an example of her daughter who runs track with a number of very talented girls, but there is also a transgender boy running with them. She wondered if trying to be fair to that group is fair to the rest of the students. Mr. Roraback likes the idea of identifying similarities and felt that the students would be more engaged with that. Mrs. Paoletti liked the notion of involving students, but the main thing is that everyone has the opportunity to do their very best.

Mr. Moore explained that the Policy Committee will bring this to the full board in May and Mrs. Petrella will have a chance to amend the policy.

### **Discussion of art, music and concerts at all schools**

Mrs. Schmidt explained that students at Strong are preparing music, but she wasn't sure how that will be shared. She is not entirely sure what that will look like. Mr. Sadinsky added that he has not yet had the conversation with the music teachers regarding their plans for presenting music. He will talk about possibly outdoor venues. The art department is working on a mosaic that will be displayed in the high school library, but he does not know if there will be any public art show this year. They are also looking at various end-of-year events.

Mr. Fitzgerald noted that the music department is rehearsing in the cafeteria and they have been talking about starting a jazz program. Gage Rovelli added that Mr. Fisher has been talking about jazz band at the high school and they may also play in a concert.

Dr. Schuch complimented the committee and the district as a whole on its commitment to the arts, music and outdoor activities. He felt that there are many districts who decided to focus only on core academic subjects and he notes that the arts are alive and well in this district. They are also being done safely and within the state's and health department's parameters. Dr. Schuch does feel that this contributes to the students' health and well-being.

Nora O'Connell stated that she is in chorus and Gage is in band and they will be having a concert in late May. They are happy to have something to look forward to and hope to have a music trip next year as well as a show. Mr. Moore hoped that the festivals at the elementary schools can continue as well.

### **Discussion of spring sports at CRHS and Strong**

Nora O'Connell noted that the high school just came back from a 10-day quarantine, went to school for two days and are now on another 10-day quarantine. They can't go back to sports until April 14<sup>th</sup>, but everybody else is in sports and it seems to be going well. Sports provides a little bit of normalcy for them. Gage Rovelli stated that they need about 10 practices to go to a meet and they have only had two. The coach did get permission for the athletes to do the practices at home so they can compete when they come back.

Mr. Moore stated that his two granddaughters are playing a softball scrimmage today so that has started as well. They got a notice that fans can attend games if they stay at the fence and not in the bleachers. Mr. Sadinsky also reported that both boys' baseball and girls' softball tryouts and practices started today.

They plan to carry a few extra players per team this year because not every team in the conference is playing this spring.

### **Ongoing wellness activities**

Mr. Fitzgerald reported that they continue to have lighter lessons on Fridays with story-telling and other ways to have everyone take a breath and reset. Mr. Sadinsky added that they end their day twice a week with flex time, with one of those on Friday. They are considering having a kickball tournament on Fridays and they will also use the shortened Wednesdays for testing days, with time before and after each session for wellness activities.

Mrs. DiMaggio stated that the SLC ambassadors that Mrs. Curry-Sartori spoke about at the last meeting are going to be approaching the principals to provide suggestions for activities next year. Mr. Fitzgerald explained that they have set meetings for each building on Wednesdays.

Dr. Schuch added that one of the pieces of advice that everyone has gotten is to try to get outside whenever there is an opportunity. A number of the schools have taken advantage of having tents and going outside as much as possible.

### **Public Comment**

None.

Mrs. Caramanello asked about having a May meeting and suggested maybe moving the meeting to 4:30 or 4:45 so that Mrs. Schaefer can join in. She suggested May 4 or May 11 and it was agreed to have the committee's next meeting on May 11<sup>th</sup> at 4:45 PM.

### **Adjournment**

*Mr. Hicks made motion, seconded by Mr. Moore, to adjourn the meeting.*

*In favor of adjourning the meeting: Mrs. Caramanello, Dr. Friedrich, Mr. Hicks, Mr. Moore and Mr. Roraback. Motion carried unanimously.*

The meeting was adjourned at 4:49 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Debi Waz

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