

EQUITY COMMITTEE MEETING

Tuesday, March 23, 2021

5:30 PM

Virtual Location:

<p>Topic: Equity Committee Time: Mar 23, 2021 05:30 PM Eastern Time (US and Canada)</p> <p>Join Zoom Meeting https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86946637090?pwd=WXpBVUpHbUFBeWdCbndvTEhFeHY3dz09</p> <p>Meeting ID: 869 4663 7090 Passcode: 949729 One tap mobile +13126266799,,86946637090#,,,,*949729# US (Chicago)</p> <p>Dial by your location +1 929 205 6099 US (New York) Meeting ID: 869 4663 7090 Passcode: 949729 Find your local number: https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86946637090?pwd=WXpBVUpHbUFBeWdCbndvTEhFeHY3dz09</p>

Minutes

Equity Committee Members: Rich Cahoon, Richard Dunning, Janine Lesser, Liz Swan, and Kevin Pobst

Committee Members Present: Rich Cahoon, Richard Dunning, Janine Lesser, Liz Swan, Kevin Pobst

Others Present: Dr. Ann Forrest, Keira Christian

5:30 Elect Equity Committee Chair.

Dick Dunning reported that he wanted to discuss the possibilities of the Education Committee and the Equity Committee joining together as a common committee. Dick said that it makes sense to bring these together at Education and to eliminate another night out for everyone to be at a meeting. He said that he believes them to be one and the same.

Kevin Pobst spoke about prior conversations about having Equity stand on its own. He would be interested in hearing more about it.

Rich Cahoon said that more than any other committee, the Education Committee has a standard annual cycle of curriculum reviews and reviews of pilots and assessments. The agendas tend to be tightly scheduled. Rich said that he does not want the equity pieces to get lost. Second, the Equity Committee took the place of the ATC Committee. ATC was developed because it was important and was an area of focus. It worked. The idea was to do the same with Equity to give it focus and prominence.

Keira Christian said that she would be interested in giving it time before combining. Being on both committees will allow her to see how they shake out. She sees the value in joining them but would like time.

Dick Dunning said that he understood the need for focus on the Equity Committee. He agreed that the ATC brought focus as a result of administration. It reached the point where ATC functioned on its own. Dick said that he would ask the preference of Equity Committee.

Kevin Pobst said that should Equity need to make decisions it would go to Education. There may be times where a joint meeting would be necessary as a result of the topic. Kevin said that he preferred to see it go another year.

Janine Lesser said that we need to identify our goals and follow them through. The Equity Committee needs to focus on a spot. A specific area was recently focused which was helpful with identifying changes and the implications. She would prefer to see Equity function independently.

Dr. Ann Forrest said that she is happy to be a part of these meetings. When Equity was first looked at, it grew out of board goals. It is important to have a focus that we are committed to when looking at equity. She would like this committee to have clear priority areas and goals.

Kevin Pobst nominated Rich Cahoon as Chairman of this Committee.

Liz Swan said that it translates for her to have Education and Equity separate.

Dick Dunning second. Unanimous.

5:35 Approval of [February 23, 2021 Meeting Minutes](#)

Dick Dunning moved to approve the minutes of February 23, 2021. Janine Lesser second. Liz Swan and Keira Christian abstained. All others in favor. Motion carried.

5:40 Review the definition of educational equity adopted by the committee for new members.

The transformed ways in which systems and individuals habitually operate to ensure that every learner--in whatever learning environment that learner is found--has the greatest opportunity to learn enhanced by the resources and supports necessary to achieve competence, excellence, independence, responsibility, and self-sufficiency for school and for life (p. 6).

Dr. Ann Forrest said that when this committee first came together, this definition was decided upon. What makes it stand out is that it talks about the systems as well as the individuals in the systems. Systems, practices, and procedures put into place can contribute to equity or can contribute to inequity.

Rich Cahoon said that he likes it because of the list that closes it. The goal is made clear. It is to bring everyone up to the same level to the extent possible, not down.

5:45 Identify priority topics for the Equity Committee to examine moving forward.

Rich Cahoon said that when the topic of equity was first discussed, the strategic approach about how you talk about these things was part of it. Rich said that when equity was discussed, administrators brought forward eliminating the valedictorian designation. Rich said that this would purely be an annoyance. Rather, he would prefer that the valedictorian did not have the same demographics year after year.

Rich said that there are many years' worth of equity work before this committee.

Janine Lesser asked if there was student interest in pursuing access to the higher-level classes and how it is determined. How scheduling impacts course selection, the impact of year-long courses, and what types of supports are in place for students willing to take a risk on courses needs review.

Kevin Pobst said that he made a list, on which block scheduling is listed when looking at obstacles to access more challenging courses. He would like to continue to focus on that topic. He would like block scheduling to be looked at. In addition, Kevin said that he is skeptical about what appears to be inequitable spending on the elementary and middle/high school as well as between the elementary schools. He is skeptical about the differences between the two middle schools. He wondered why both don't look the same.

Keira Christian said that she has worked at SMS and has a daughter at GBS. She too would be curious about the differences between the two.

Kevin Pobst said that our plan for counseling kids for post-secondary opportunities is of an interest to him. Lastly, Kevin said that he is interested in looking at the impact of class rank leading into post-secondary.

Dick Dunning said that the boards role is a budgetary and policy role and often leans toward micromanagement. He said that scheduling is a domino effect; you adjust one item and it trickles down.

Rich Cahoon added that he is concerned about any student with the ability having the ability to do the highest work. He wants to group by ability.

Dick Dunning said that he is an advocate for any student who is willing to take the challenge and be supported. Every kid deserves the opportunity.

Rich Cahoon said that teachers deserve the opportunity to not be punished if some of the risk kids take does not work out. There is a one-week window for a student to figure out if the course is a good fit before the ability to withdraw without penalty.

Kevin Pobst said that a flaw with block scheduling is that you have to have a place to land if you don't make it in a course. Block scheduling does not always allow a safe place to land.

Dr. Forrest said that the intent was to continue the discussion from last meeting to this meeting, but it is vacation week with staff off. Those people that are off are important to the conversation.

How do we measure equity and how do we know if we are headed in the right direction?

Dr. Forrest said that certain percentages of Free and Reduced Lunch (FRL) and other measures should be present in Advanced Placement (AP) Courses and other higher-level courses. Does the group achieving higher level represent our demographic make-up? When we get into honors and FRL we do not see students with IEP's or FRL etc. The system does not help students access these courses. Themes came out of looking at equity within departments. What are the barriers? When we look at systems, there were themes e.g. scheduling, guidance when creating schedules, support moving from grade 8 to high school, and supports for kids who are struggling so they are prepared to move to the next level etc.

Ann Forrest said that she hears people use equity and equality interchangeably at times.

Rich Cahoon said that aptitude is an actual thing. What matters is that anyone who has the aptitude has access to the opportunity. Rather than 42% of students are present in AP Classes if the FRL rate is 42%. It should not be proportional, just not zero.

Years of experience and educational attainment of teachers was looked at. In the past, if you have been a teacher long enough, you got to pick which courses you taught and which students. Rich Cahoon said that he wants this on the list for review.

Kevin Pobst spoke about a teacher teaching multiple levels rather than a first dibs option.

Does this committee focus primarily on the high school level? Keira Christian shared thoughts on looking at the elementary and middle school leading up to high school. Are we looking to make sure the structures are in place at the earlier levels?

Dr. Forrest said that there has been a strong focus on instructional strategies. The levels of intervention and support that we can provide struggling students has been a focus. Conversations, as a result of COVID, have not taken place. They will continue.

Kevin Pobst said that he wondered about the challenge of focusing on high school and middle school, wondered if we should look at the continuum K-12. Ann Forrest pointed out that administration and staff have always focused on foundational instruction strategies, levels of intervention and support. They have made progress on reading and math, main areas of focus, especially at the middle schools. How do we build multi-level support? Conversation about how looking at a 5th grader can predict how successful they would be in high school. Others said it could be a third grader or younger. The focus should not just be on high school or middle school.

Rich Cahoon pointed out the need to reorganize/consolidate the elementary schools in order to offer an integrated and supported approach. Kevin Pobst noted that the towns must be prepared with tough love to help them understand the need. Rich noted that we have to be careful not to exacerbate the inequities that exist, because we economize in the middle schools and high school because we cannot in the elementary schools.

Kevin said we enable the small schools by continuing to give them more than their share of resources, we need to deal with the towns who are getting more than their share of resources-- "they have to live with what they are entitled to."

Rich Cahoon noted 6 potential priorities for the year, and asked questions about those priorities to whittle down to a manageable level. Is the plan to continue the work of the past year and apply the set of examining questions to a new department at the high school?

Ann Forrest saw clear themes emerge from this work, and would like to move the process into the K-6 curriculum review process, rather than looking at another high school department.

Dick Dunning said that he would like to look at block scheduling and its role in limiting access to higher level courses. Ann Forrest noted that Heather McKillop had several groups of staff at the high school looking at different areas, one is block scheduling. Dick noted that if they are looking at it, would they share what they learn? He noted that if changes were to be made, they should come from staff and administration, not the Board, and it would be a long transition.

Rich Cahoon said that he wondered if we would be helping or hindering the process by getting involved. Ann Forrest said that she would like to talk to Heather about what she is doing. Rich said that he would like to check in with the exploratory groups, wants to talk about more than block vs. another type of scheduling, all have their pros and cons everyone agreed. We must also see stronger parts.

Dick Dunning said that he would like to look at the use of PLC's, or the use of professional learning communities to bring about change. Ensure opportunities for teachers to look at their own instruction, what works, what doesn't. It must be scheduled.

Conversation about why Algebra I is scheduled differently in the high school and middle school. Ann Forrest said that we are not the only high school that schedules this way. There is no Honors Algebra I, and why we have a whole year of Algebra I, 88-minute blocks.

Rich said that band is another problem area that can limit scheduling opportunities. Noted that hybrid models are a tough place to be. Ann Forrest noted that there is no perfect schedule, but some models are better suited for types and sizes of schools.

Kevin Pobst said that he would like to know to what extent the elementary schools get involved in scheduling with the middle schools, and the middle schools with the high school.

Rich pointed out that there is no high school math credit for Algebra I taken in the middle school, only elective credit. If taken in high school, it carries math credit.

Rich asked if consolidation will be covered in the strategic plan. Kevin confirmed.

Final three focus areas:

- scheduling and its effect on limiting access to higher level courses and other opportunities
- the programmatic differences that still exist between the two middle schools
- the district guidance/counseling program and how it functions to inform and widen opportunities not limit: how are we introducing program of studies and selecting courses; are we supporting the transition from 8th to 9th grade; the role of teacher recommendations--Heather and Tim working on making this more transparent

6:30 Other

None.

Next meeting - Tuesday, April 27, 2021

Meeting adjourned. Second. Unanimous.

Respectfully submitted,

Brenda Marschok