

Equity & Social Justice Committee  
Thursday, March 4, 2021 6:00 PM

Harlem High School, Main Commons, One  
Huskie Circle, Machesney Park, IL 61115  
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Machesney Park, IL 61115

## MINUTES

1. Call to Order by Evelyn Meeks, Co-Chair at 6:03 p.m.
2. Roll call – 19 members present: Lisa Clark, Brock Morlan, Dr. Jeremy Bois, Kris Arduino, Dr. Michael Flanagan, Kim Brandt, Nick Stange, Evelyn Meeks, Courtney Korasick, Kaitlyn Hardy, Jill Berogan, Sue Berogan, Sharon Ranieri, Brad Sweet, Andrea Sweet, Dee Johnson, Elana Schelling-Tufte, Kyra Newnam, Jason Mach
3. Motion to approve Equity & Social Justice Committee minutes: January 27, 2021  
1<sup>st</sup> S. Berogan 2<sup>nd</sup> Brad Sweet,  
All voted aye, Motion carried
4. Comments from the Community - none
5. Restorative Justice

**Presenter:** Dr. Michael Flanagan

Presenting: The District is ready for this presentation due to the ten (10) years of equity work that has been going on in the District. Restorative Justice deals with restoring the community. It is a growth mindset and learning opportunity for all.

Equality and Equity examples show that giving the same tools does not mean to get applied in the same way. We need to change the structure rather than the tools.

A Ted Talk was given on Restorative Justice

Bad behavior is a violation of a people and not a rule. Victims are given a role in seeking the justice. We balance the needs.

What restorative justice looks like: misconduct, repercussions, growth in re-establishing relationships. This is 3-5 years of investment to stay the course.

Three ways in which this works well:

1. Mediation
2. Community Group Conferencing – an honest discussion
3. Circle processes – all talk together and become equals

Look through three lenses:

Cultural reform around equitable work for all to learn and be respected

Pedagogical reform, how to teach a growth mindset

Disciplinarian reform

How do we currently deal with mediation

What elements do you see as important

Small group discussion was held for a couple of minutes.

We want to become a system to model for other Districts in the future and for our community.

6. Banner Update - Dr. Jeremy Bois and Kaitlyn Hardy presenting

We want to put a banner on the west side of the building facing Alpine and we will have an event on April 6 to unveil the banner to kick off more of a widespread public and internal equity practice.

We will have banners for each elementary building in the District with one of the high school students passing it along to an elementary student. A Press Release will be done and we hope to have a nice event.

Inside the building we will be doing some murals and continue to empower student voice through messaging.

Kaitlyn who led the team designing the banner addressed the committee. She is part of MSU and is a junior this year. The banner has been a work in process. This was a student led effort so that the project would be completed and it seems more impactful.

A video was shown by a former student Olivia Lewis about her experiences in the District.

Sue asked Kaitlyn if there is more student talk this year than ever before. Kaitlyn noted that there is and probably some of it as a result of what occurred in the summer of 2020.

Conversations about race are taking place in the classroom. Being able to have the conversations is so good. The protests brought attention to BLM and what black people experience every day.

The issue of staff members not being allowed to wear BLM shirts at the beginning of the year citing that it was a political issue and now BLM will be on the side of a building is a vast difference. Elana noted it is due to the policy and a contractual issue for certified staff. We would need to push this as a student spirit wear dress code in order to have it be worn by certified staff as they can wear spirit wear on Fridays.

Kyra asked what the process would be to get it approved for certified staff to wear since it was created by the students and the Union was in favor of it being considered spirit wear. Kyra asked what the step would be to get it going. Dr. Flanagan noted it started with conversation and is the idea of spirit wear the right material or fence. It would be appropriate to put this on an agenda to talk through. Dr. Morris did not see BLM as a political issue. Lisa said there is a BLM Organization that has a lot of hoodies and from what she has heard the organization behind that have some strong political missions or ties so it is not the phrase but the organization behind it. This was her understanding.

On Sports Center there was an interesting piece with Gumbel about BLM and all lives do matter. Gumbel said the NFL wearing pink for breast cancer we don't hold it against prostate cancer. It clarified for her the way Gumbel explained it.

Nick Stange noted that Olivia and Kaitlyn are not bringing up the BLM Organization. He is disappointed that we have to have 20-year-old students teaching us about BLM. Change does not come quick. Does this District want to be a teaching point that we learn and evolve racial justice as to BLM. He noted that he cannot believe we can't wear BLM wear to school. Jill noted that this was not brought to the Board but the buck stopped with administration. Not everything is the way it seems and even though the Administration has done a lot of great things, there are a lot of things that the Board should have been involved in to support staff and students. There has been a major disconnect. Nick noted that staff all has the BLM shirts and if the Board is supportive why can't we get it approved and moved forward. Evelyn noted that she loves everyone coming together. If Martin Luther King were alive right now he would be ashamed of everything. People are scared of the unknown. We need to get over the past and correct things now to make it better. There is a lot of history in the African American culture. We need to get together and talk so there is no more disconnect. We need to stop blaming each other.

How do we go about doing this now. Sue noted that if it was brought to the Board if anybody wanted to wear Asian Lives Matter, Hispanic Lives Matter, would they need to prove why they wanted to wear the shirt and in comparison, to the BLM shirts. How is this going to be equal. The attorney advised us that we needed to look at what the policy says. We need common ground and to discuss things to know what we are talking about. Kim noted that we need to make it clear to our staff that they can come to the Union to let us know what they want to do. The door has always been there but they are afraid to use it.

Again, Evelyn repeated that we need to discuss and move forward. Sue noted that it was questioned as to why is the Board wanting to be involved with equity and social justice and she responded that we don't hear anything about it and when it was brought up to get the committee going she personally took flack. We need to hear from you and be involved on what is going on. It has been a little unfair as to how the system was set up. We came forward to ask for this committee so we have meetings like this but we were questioned. Jill noted that they were sent an informational email that BLM was not an approved spirit wear so it was not brought to us to discuss with students and staff so we could make an informed decision. Kyra noted that she does not want to blame certain people but it is clear that there is a lack of communication so she would like to see how we have this conversation now and a next step for a definitive answer. We want to wear these shirts to show support of our students and community. There are a group of kids who are not comfortable here and wearing that shirt will let them know they can talk to her. How do we move beyond. What is next.

Sue noted that you need to bring information to the Board table.

Mike noted that there were two communities in Harlem and now we will become one. He would like this to bring to the Board and comments from the community can be submitted. It could then be an agenda item for the following meeting and action item. This Board wants positive change for the community as well as the staff wanting the same so we are all on the same page, and we need to allow this to unite us and it will be quick. His role is simple. He stated as the Superintendent he is to be here to support you no matter who you are or where you come from. You can talk to him and you are safe. This happening tonight is beautiful. We need to hear, listen and act.

The next step is to act in a powerful way but presumes that change is coming and we need to stand up for what is right and lead with our hearts. We are here for each other and if you feel divided he is sorry that is the feeling. Overtime you will be able to trust this.

Evelyn noted that some people are afraid of the unknown and do not take the time to find out what BLM means. They need to see a definition of it so they don't take it as a racial thing. If we can let the people know what it actually means as it is the history and we are here.

Dr. Flanagan stated that it needs to go to the media. Mr. Stange stated that Nick Talon is the person to have handle this as he is a former Harlem student and works in the District in Technology. He is amazing and be the best person for this. Courtney noted that it could be pushed out to the other schools at the elementary level so teachers can explain the message. Kyra noted that there will be more videos.

Dr. Flanagan noted that the Board is hearing this for the first time and it is different than what has been sent to them previously. We need to let the same things unite us and he will never divide you.

Sue noted that the videos need to be on our website and involved with our media to get the community involved.

Dr. Flanagan noted at the next meeting he would like to have people email him, Evelyn and Patti any agenda items you would like to see for the next E & SJ meeting.

Brad noted the Board meeting is at 6:00 p.m. on Monday and PTC ends at 6:00 p.m. Sue asked if we could get students out to the meeting. Kris noted it is too late for the agenda but you could bring comments also under Announcements and Discussion if needed.

Motion to adjourn at 7:56 p.m.  
1<sup>st</sup> S. Berogan 2<sup>nd</sup> Lisa Clark  
All aye, Motion carried

The meeting adjourned at 7:56 p.m.

7. Adjourn

Respectfully submitted,  
Kris Arduino