

Committee of the Whole Minutes
Wednesday, April 9, 2025 4:30 PM

Harlem Administration Center
8605 North Second St
Machesney Park, Illinois 61115

EQUITY MINUTES

7. **EQUITY:** (Approximately 60 minutes) Began at 4:40 p.m.

Administrator: Jason Blume, Assistant Superintendent for Communications & Community Relations

7.A. Roll Call: Evelyn Meeks, Jason Blume, Terrell Yarbrough, Kris Arduino,

Union: Elana-Schelling-Tufte/designee (Melissa Jordan)

E Team members:

Loves Park Mike Valentine

Machesney Abbi Edwards

Maple Emily Bjork

Marquette Brock Morlan

Olson Park Marya Nelson

Parker Center Erin Anderson

Ralston Holly Perino

Rock Cut Ryan Reinecke

Windsor Kasie Kosinski

High School Jeremy Bois

Middle School Margaret Sholl

7.B. Meeting Minutes Consensus: unanimous yes

7.C. Public Comments (if any) none

7.D. Goal Statement

7.E. Discussion Items

7.E.1. a. May Equity Theme: Reflection

i. Presenter: Parker Center

Erin presenting on Reflection with monthly lessons that are focusing on a two to three year rotation. Other things are being done to insure there are diverse toys in classrooms, books and materials. We have an adversity toy checklist which must be in the play area, including adaptive equipment and multicultural foods. With the help of the high school welding department there will be two core boards placed on the playground. We are celebrating inclusion right now with autism and making sure all students are reflected at school.

Videos for Hispanic Heritage Month were done for word of the day.

Kat Henson was the author and came back and shared a book she had written regarding the Forest City and about visiting the Philippines of which each student received a copy.

7.E.2. b. Building Equity Highlights

Maple – Emily noted that they are doing a school-wide lesson plan as to what they can do

Ralston – went through several library lessons highlighting Women in History for March. She does read aloud and brings in the equity themes. The GPA staff take over bulletin boards doing a bullying board and what in Rock Cut – Celebrating Ramadan and teaching lessons so that students are included and not uncomfortable and other students know what they are doing.

Windsor – Kasie noted they are doing autism acceptance and awareness month. Over the summer she and Terese created a motor classroom where students can go in for sensory issues or feeling anxious or overstimulated. We also have the occupational therapist in this space to do more activities. In April 23 do a coin drive but this year we are raising money to purchase more for the sensory motor room. Shannon and Heidi have given us some grant money as well. Classroom activities with students in STP going up to gen ed. This month all of the gen ed teachers are taking field trips to the STP classrooms. A technology board has tons of resources for students to learn about autism. As a whole school activity we do morning announcements and every staff member has created an Autism is Growing Tree to be inclusive of all students.

The goal for raising money has not really been set but there are some items we would still like to purchase such as weighted vests and blankets. We need some rubber stool covers for chairs and building some more permanent structures.

Olson Park – Marya noted we are doing activities for Women's History Month, making a quilt for the individual they choose and putting together for a quilt.

Harlem Middle School – SET identified women throughout the month

Harlem High School – trying to focus on our student voice and celebrated women's history month and also celebrate student voice through their artwork

Loves Park – bulletin board is accessible for all students and several teachers have done activities for women's history month.

Marquette – through discussion and activities students came up with 4 languages they want to learn, Spanish and they are learning that right now.

Machesney – SIP team focused on community and making all feel a part of Machesney. During the last SIP day, our Hola taught beginning Spanish to other teachers and feedback was very positive.

Terrell asked to be invited to this.

7.F. New Business

7.F.1. Other Items

One of the things we have been doing is having a District Equity Leadership Team and discuss things going on in the buildings and one thing that comes up is the current state of things in the country and some of attacks on DEI work and there is a lot of concern. We have talked with legal and we are continuing doing what we are doing and believe it is not

in misalignment with law. We have assessed our work and we feel strive to be inclusive of everyone.

Terrell noted the power point just shown highlights all of our equity work and that is who we are is grounded in each other. He also noted that our student voices are woven into what we do. Spaces are created for students to feel comfortable and we have support at the Board level as well.

Terrell noted the attack on DEI you need to think of the opposite of diversity or equity would be exclusion so the conversations you hear want to get rid of things that are good.

Mike interjected that there is a misconception on what happens at Harlem and his response is do you enjoy Harlem and what we do. Our teachers, support staff and students is so engrained from pre-school to the high school we are going to keep doing the goods things and stay the course. Kurt noted we need to spread the word and explain things to people to demystify what is in people's minds. It is a conversation per Aaron. Evelyn noted that when you see someone opposite of who you are and they are going out of their way to appreciate everyone they are also putting themselves out there and how you treat you people. She noted her admiration of all and what is done every day. Look at people as people and that comes from your heart. Megan noted that research facts and conversation, reading is important to be armed with the factual researched information and not what you read online. Not Facebook or Tiktok for their main source of news. It comes down to DEI and having women at the table, persons of color, our superintendent, DEI is the majority of this room. DEI is also not to indoctrinate anyone but just have the LBGTQ community to be able to live their life and be happy. Aaron added that communication is key with people that are different than yourself including race, LBGTQ, and with all of us having different beliefs having conversations about it. You just need to find common ground.

Melissa Jordan noted that it is important to bring out the fact that this work does save lives.

7.G. Announcements & Updates

Megan noted that the Equity & Social Justice meetings have been wonderful.

- a. Next Meeting Date: May 14, 2025 with no theme for June.
- b. Equity Monthly Themes

7.H. Adjourned at 5:13 p.m.

Notes taken by Kris Arduino