

## **Board Equity and Inclusion Committee meeting**

Thursday, April 4, 2024 1:00 PM

Virtual Via Zoom

### **1. Call to Order**

1.A. Board goals assigned to the Equity and Inclusion Committee

1.A.1. Ensure inclusion through implementing our equity lens to achieve equitable district outcomes

1.A.2. Continue to focus and prioritization of regional leadership around equity

1.B. Strategic Plan goals tied to the Equity and Inclusion Committee

1.B.1. Creating a high quality learning experience for all

1.B.2. Operationalizing systems that engage and empower communities

1.B.3. Building a culturally responsive workforce

**2. Review minutes from the March 7, 2024 meeting and report on action items**

**3. Develop a process and guidelines for the Land Acknowledgement/Educational Opportunity**

3.A. Clear guidelines for Board members on topics, time limits, etc.

# Board Equity and Inclusion Committee

Thursday, March 7, 2024

## 2023-2028 Agency Goals

#1 – Creating a high-quality learning experience for all

#2 – Operationalizing systems that engage and empower communities

#3 – Building a culturally responsive workforce

MESD Board Equity Lens-<https://www.multnomahesd.org/board-equity.html>

The meeting was called to order at 1:00 p.m. on Thursday, March 7, 2024 by Committee Chair Ying.

### • CALL TO ORDER

**Present:** Helen Ying, Chair  
Denyse Peterson, Board member

**Absent:** Danny Cage, Board member

**Administration:** Heather Severns, Board Secretary  
Reiko Williams, Director of Regional Equity Initiatives and Partnerships

### Guests:

1. **Review notes from the February meeting-** The committee approved the minutes from the February 1, 2024 meeting.
  - a. Board member Denyse Peterson asked which programs are we not allowed to talk to the parents. Heather Severns will check in with Sascha Perrins to confirm that these are the parents of students in our JDEP and YCEP programs.
2. **2023-2024 committee goals and action steps**
  - a. Continue to review the Educational Equity Policy utilizing the Equity Lens tool.
    - i. On page 1, number 2 the language “while narrowing the gap between the lowest and the highest performing students will be removed”.
    - ii. Committee Chair Ying recommended bringing this policy to the full Board for adoption at the March 19<sup>th</sup> Regular Session meeting.
    - iii. How can we make this policy known?
      1. Invite Marifer to the April Equity and Inclusion Committee meeting to discuss options. How can we make the Board’s values and vision move prominently reflected on our web page? What does that look like?
      2. Should we have a section on the front page of the website highlighting equity? The current position of this policy takes to many steps to get to.
      3. Committee Chair Helen Ying suggested writing some articles to share.

### 3. Develop a process and guidelines for the Land Acknowledgement/Educational Opportunity-

- a. The Committee reviewed the background of the land acknowledgment/Educational Opportunity that committee chair Helen Ying gathered from past board and committee minutes .
  - i. Background: Land Acknowledgement was added to the board meetings on January 21, 2020 as recommended by the Board Equity and Inclusion Committee at the November 19, 2019 board meeting. Board members took turns to present the Land Acknowledgement at the subsequent board meeting.
  - ii. The Board Equity and Inclusion began a discussion in October 2021 on how do we not just have the Land Acknowledgement read at our meetings but to truly realize what is being read in our actions and work. The discussion continued in subsequent meetings focused on how to actualize the Land Acknowledgement in all we do.
  - iii. Core Assumptions
    1. Needs to be an adaptive process
    2. **Growth Orientation**-have we done anything transformative or just checked a box?
    3. We need to **acknowledge that we have limited knowledge and exposure**. Few people can say that their educational experiences prepared them to understand historical or present day issues and concerns as they relate to native communities.
    4. Deeper than land-We are only talking about the land that we occupy.
    5. Cannot be perfunctory, performative, or box checking. Equity Director Reiko Williams discussed an article she shared from a native elder who spoke about how performative land acknowledgements have become. It does not shape any awareness about what has led to the moment and doesn't talk about the current colonialism practices that are happening right now in terms of occupied lands.
    6. **Must include education and action.**
  - iv. Proposal
    1. Opportunities for learning in place of Land Acknowledgement
    2. **Sharing of articles, videos and guest speakers to learn and respond to issues impacting native communities.**
    3. Replace land acknowledgement with educational opportunities.
    4. **Deeper reflection about institutional actions that the Board can engage with and support.**
  - v. Committee Chair Helen Ying piloted an educational opportunities presentation at the January 18, 2022 board meeting. Discussion continued at the committee level. A proposal was made with support from the committee to move away from doing a Land Acknowledgement and moving to an Educational Opportunity in the March 2022 committee meeting. Our hope is that when we do these Educational Opportunities, **we will center what we have learned and**

**use that to help us be better informed and ground ourselves in the work we do as the MESD Board.**

- vi. The Committee proposed to the Board at the March 2022 board meeting that instead of the Land Acknowledgement that we move to an Educational Opportunity. The Board made the decision to make this change permanent.
  1. Committee member Denyse Peterson asked what can MESD do, and what is it that we are trying to change by reading the Land Acknowledgement. What can MESD do? Committee Chair Ying's response was that we are continuing to educate ourselves, these are opportunities to learn and at the same time take what we learn and consider how we turn it into action. We are making the guidelines so that each of these opportunities that we take time to share at our Board meetings will have the impact that is intended.
  2. What brought us to this discussion of having some guidelines is because it has been inconsistent. In some cases some of our Board members just share from personal experiences. This does not really help, it is great to learn about personal experiences but then what does that do in terms of helping us to arrive at intended outcomes to help the Board to have a deeper reflection and action that we can engage and support. Also, to center what we have learned and be better informed and ground ourselves in the work we do. How do we connect those points? What are some tangible guidelines that we could provide for the Board members to use when they prepare for the educational Opportunity segment?
  3. In addition to the bolded language in the materials that Chair Ying provided perhaps we should also add to the educational opportunities that aligns with our educational policy.
  4. Director Williams added that this is a problem that we are trying to solve in 5 minutes. How do we become aware of the discrimination and layers of issues with respect to the indigenous communities that occupy the land we are on? One of the issues is we solve problems about things we don't know a whole lot about, or we are given this tremendous responsibility to solve problems that we don't really understand and no amount of talking about what you know and what the tribes occupy this land since time in memorial will solve. How are we connecting with native communities? How are we as an organization building relationships and bridges to native communities? The problem is there is a finite amount of time being devoted to something that needs to be a much deeper comprehensive discussion. Committee Chair Ying pointed out that this segment of the meeting has been expanded over time to not only include the native community, but expand to other folks that have been discriminated against and have experienced the impacts of colonialization. We are not trying to solve all the problems in 5-10 minutes, but bring

highlights of examples such as why it is so important that we make efforts and ensure that the content standards of ethnic studies are actually taught in our classrooms. The Oregon department of Education has expanded the content standards to include holocaust and genocide.

5. How do we succinctly make a presentation in our guidelines? We are trying to provide a model to help people to hone in on while we have so much to cover. We are asking people to hone in on the one thing that you think will make the most impact at this particular presentation. That is what the guidelines are made to do.
6. The problem we are trying to solve is that the Board has moved away from Land Acknowledgement to more of an education piece, but the educational piece has not been used with specific parameters around what that education might look like. If we ask Board members to do an educational piece that we have established/developed some parameters around that are communicated with them to help prepare that segment. If we talk about what we are learning and also what we are involved in that has significance in terms of oppression and discrimination and also not just that but triumph over discrimination and oppression that would be helpful as well on this path of gaining more knowledge.
7. Each person has been asked to bring five must have items for the guidelines. Some examples shared were:
  - a. Contemporary issues, these are shaped by historical things, but what is happening right now with underrepresented communities.
  - b. What data can you share to shed light on this?
  - c. How do you make meaning of this? Don't just report the data, explain the why.

#### 4. Action items

- a. Bring the revised Educational Equity Policy to the Board for approval.
- b. Each member of the Equity and Inclusion Committee needs to bring five ideas for the Educational Opportunity Guidelines to the next committee meeting

### **Adjourn**

There being no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned 2:00 p.m. The next meeting of this committee will be April 4 at 1:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Heather Severns  
Executive Assistant/Board Secretary