



Forward in Excellence

SEEAT

Meeting Highlights

Date: September 23, 2019

Time: 4:00 – 6:00 PM

Location: Somers Middle School Room 246

Attendance

Parent Members	D.Szanto, K. DeRosa, L. Calderon
Student Members	N. Todo, S. Graham
Administrators	Dr. R. Blanch, J. Gherardi, J. Spirelli, M. Benedetto, P. Rodrigues, L. Belger
District Faculty/Staff	B. O’Shea, K. Brill, K. Gordon, B. Buerle, E. Wright, K. Merille, K. Castaldo, M. Bangdash, R. Kaishian

Introduction

- Dr. Blanch welcomed everyone and thanked attendees for their time and dedication to educational equity work for our district. All attendees introduced themselves and welcomed new members to the group.
- Dr. Blanch reviewed the SEEAT Mission Statement:

The Superintendent Educational Equity Advisory Team provides direction and leadership in culturally relevant professional learning, as well as district practices. The Team serves as the “educational equity lens” of SCSD and strives to provide positive change for all.

- Dr. Blanch reviewed last year’s work by the SEEAT Committee, including the creation of a list of essential glossary terms, No Place For Hate work throughout the district, and use of Project Implicit by members to recognize personal bias. He reflected on the reading of an article titled “Unconscious Bias” which was read by committee members in the dark during last year’s destructive microburst. The district will be adding phonetic spellings of student names in Infinite Campus to enhance the correct pronunciation of student names.

Review Goals and Actions 2019-2020

- I. **Goal: Curriculum and learning activities that reflect the range of diversity in our district/community.**

M. Benedetto discussed the aligning of the Social Justice Standards to read aloud books and activities done at the elementary level to assist students in seeing themselves and their world reflected in literature. They are continuing to look for new books to continue building their libraries. K. Merille discussed *The Name Jar* and using it to have students share the story of their names. In order to raise awareness and display approaches to what and how we are teaching educational equity, updates to curriculum maps is an ongoing process throughout the district. Several teachers and administrators from SMS and the district will be attending a MYP workshop in Charlotte in November on Learning Diversity and Inclusion. There are approximately 50-60 peer leaders currently at SHS and the district is planning additional peer leadership training opportunities.

II. Goal: Develop organization structure that reflects the collective value of educational equity

Dr. Blanch discussed review of the current code of conduct to ensure equitable practices match the values of SCSD. For example, how to address bias related comments and determine if there are differing levels of bias like vaping issues (tobacco vs. marijuana). B. O'Shea asked about the review of dress codes. Hiring practices are being examined to increase diversity. For example, review of where we are posting outside of OLAS. The sorting process of applications was mentioned as a piece to review. P. Rodriguez shared recruitment information from a school district in Oregon that uses language that promotes candidates to apply for a job in their district even if a potential candidate doesn't feel they meet every qualification listed. Discussion also revolved around improvement of parent communication. The district has purchased a transmitter system to use for translation purposes. Student involvement in providing translation using the transmitter system during concerts, large meetings, etc. is a goal for the year. The SCSD website can translate all the site pages to multiple languages. The potential for the website to be able to also read the website in multiple languages is being explored. The SCSD new phone system provides a Spanish option.

III. Goal: Provide professional learning opportunities that enhance the knowledge and skills of our faculty, staff, and families to better meet the needs of our diverse learning community

This year all our schools are implementing lessons based on the district-wide read book *Schooltalk* to explore what we say about and to students. Dr. O. Dibinga will be returning to presenting to faculty/staff on October 15. Then district is exploring the possibility of recording his presentation for the community to view; information will follow regarding access to the presentation. Positive feedback was shared regarding his previous visit to SHS. He successfully opened the eyes of students regarding bias and the evolving world of diversity. At SHS, 11th grade Sociology lessons centered around Native American culture and involved Spanish teachers. N. Todo, a student from SHS, expressed interest in assisting with cultural training and felt other students could benefit from reading personal essays centered on culture. The district wants to research providing conversational Spanish and cultural training to staff and faculty. Parent committee members would like parents from the community to be involved in

the training as well to better connect our community. Other follow up actions include investigating if Dismissal Manager could have Spanish as a language option.

Schooltalk Update with Activity

- J. Gherardi and K. Brill shared the 6 learning objectives of the Schooltalk Lessons being presented to staff over the course of the school year: Group Talk, Inequity Talk, Smarts Talk, Culture Talk, Data Talk, and Life Talk. The SEEAT committee participated in a mini version of Lesson 2: Inequity Talk. They looked at labels given to students, such as difficult, talented, etc. and chose one to delve into deeper with a partner. Groups discussed how a child who is labeled a bully, for example, may be trying to protect himself from being made fun of for not having the “right” clothes or is struggling with accepting his parents divorce and is taking his anger out on his peers. Another example was how the label talented may discourage other students from attempting work because they don’t think they have an innate talent, or for the child labeled talented, they may feel people don’t see how often they practice their skills to become “talented” in an area.

Relevant Links:

Article

Unconscious Bias: When Good Intentions Aren’t Enough

https://www.responsiveclassroom.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Unconscious-Bias_Ed-Leadership.pdf

Take a Test

Project Implicit

<https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/selectatest.html>

Presenter

Dr. Omékongo Dibinga

<https://www.upstanderinternational.com/>

The next SEEAT Committee Meeting is on Thursday, October 24, 2019 at SMS in Room 246. If you are interested in participating in the committee, please contact Nancy Corrado:

NCorrado@somersschools.org.