



BSD Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Committee Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, January 13, 2026 at 6:30 PM

Sustainability Academy - Library 123 North Street

Commissioners Present: Monika Ivancic, Jeannie Waltz

Staff Present: Sparks, Michelle Meola

Guests: Polly Ericksen, Kathy Olwell

1. Opening

- A. Call meeting to order 6:29pm
- B. Suspend Robert's Rules

2. Public Comment - none

3. Discussion

- A. Follow up on Omega Jade presentation at December's DEIC meeting

Sparks: what are next steps?

MI: we need to connect Omega Jade with new Dir of Expanded Learning

JW: Omega Jade had proposed a 6 week program

KO: Dacia Ostlund is the new Dir of Expanded Learning

MM: Dir of Expanded Learning office is at Central Office

Sparks: Omega Jade's program costs \$12k for 6 weeks

JW: I pictured her going to different sites

Sparks: the afterschool budget would have to pay for this, ie. it would come out of their budget

MI; the DEIC could be supportive of Omega Jade's program

B. BSD progress on Priority Area 4

Figuring out what is best way for Michelle's to present (she will talk about it and then attendees will ask questions)

Exit interviews: normally conducted by HR office, but office staff is supposed to keep info neutral and confidential; outside vendors are cost prohibitive; GM (Global Majority) staff does participate in these interviews, they are asked to participate in additional Qs to figure out why they left; last year two GM people left due to culture; two GM people last year left because of family issues; there's a 90 day probationary period, some laid off before that; the GM folks have been forthcoming with us; old HR department wasn't viewed in positive light, some folks still feeling that; there's a fear of retaliation sometimes

JW: similar to employment interviews, are there things that you can and cannot ask in exit interviews?

MM: no demographics questions; Qs about age or how they identify; exit survey that we send out has a quantitative rating, but we also need a qualitative rating, so we follow up with phone calls

retention: we should be focused on all GM employees; we are working with Office of Equity (OoE); onboarding is an important piece in getting new employees to feel accepted

and comfortable

JW - I worry that on boarding is when you're teaching them about the code of conduct, check your bias stuff, they need to uphold that to create a welcoming place

MM - onboarding should extend the entire first year, check ins by HR happen at 60 days, 90 days, 120 days and so forth; we pair them up with a buddy, so they have someone to ask basic questions; for GM that also means looking at current employees, could be at a different school; bring them back together, so that we build community; HR and OoE have meetings once per month; Mika (BSD Restorative Practices coordinator) gives me a lot of input; we have a hiring work group, which Mika will join, to help with specific things; onboarding really starts with the interview! BSD is building a culture of collaboration and community

KO- seems to me there needs to be a whole lot of onboarding at each schools

MM - the Principals play an important part, so we check in with the Principals that they ensure the onboarding/welcoming is happening

JW - there was a push to improve culture before Tom started; we're focused on student experience, did BSD drop the ball?

Sparks - absolutely not, not when it comes to students; but ITO GM employees we need to make sure that Principals know how to address racism; in the past a lot of the racism wasn't being dealt with aggressively

KO - are we training the Principals on how to do this?

Sparks - we've done a lot of work over the last 7 years, but we also need to make sure that the teachers are trained

MM- I have a good working relationship with the BEA Prez and VP, and school reps; we're looking at working with BEA using RP and anti-bias training; the BEA would be on board when it comes to this; they understand the necessity, since 40% of our students are GM students; if we focus on employee well being, this will impact the students and how they feel

JW - this work trickles down from Principals to teachers; how is this effort measurable?

MM - in Equity Policy there's training included as part of this policy; one of the things we will be working on diversity training for everyone; we have to figure out the strategy; when we started RP, we spent a year on training;

KO - seems to me that the training needs to go on continuously;

Sparks - we did almost 6 years with the Washington consultancy group

talking about some history around when the Equity report first started in 2012

In PA#4 - why do we say 'educators who look like our students'

MM - not sure why and how to explain this

JW - let's start looking at % in our student body; 40%+ are students of color or GM

MM - there is a diversity within the GM, so how do you say what is meant, 'educators of the global majority'; balanced with legal consideration, especially looking at federal level; I like the idea of keeping this phrase, I don't want us to be losing our money

PE - the kids get to interact and see folks who look like them with all staff

MM - teachers and principals are licensed staff; others are support staff; the reasons we incorporate Principals, because they are great examples for our students; gives an example of an employee driving here from Plattsburg; our numbers are starting to creep up, we're starting to see more applicants of the GM

this year; we've also discussed "grow your own", but I won't get too into this;

there's now an apprenticeship program through the AoE (VT Agency of Education); they don't have to have a college degree, they get a mentor teacher, who gets paid through the Dept of Labor and the AoE

money allotted to PA#4

MM - money is not specifically set aside; we realized with Nate that we need to do this; I use some of my recruiting budget; this is a priority and it's important to me;

MI - example of last year's trip to Howard U to recruit people of the GM;

MM - Diversity in Ed is a 'job board' of sorts and they interviewed us and posted it to LinkedIn; we're going to be interviewed, out of EMS, a Special Ed person from Mexico and we supported her work visa; but the interview may be done with the 2 principals instead, due to the current political situation

achieving BSD's PA#4 goals:

What does someone need to become a teacher? What does it take to get licensed? Encouraging GM folks to advance their careers; provisionals are for 2 years, and can be extended to 3

years; new mentorship program through NEA

KO - brings up GM people who are teachers in their previous country, it would be great to get them into our classrooms

MM - we need their transcripts translated, and they need to go through an AoE review; gives an example of a ML (Multilingual Liaison) who is working on her Masters', which is easier than getting a teaching certificate; I've been working with Miriam on this

JW - are we asking for a commitment from these employees?

MM - essentially yes!

MI - asking about affinity groups and dinner for the GM

Sparks - we had a dinner for GM Administrators

MM - TalentEd (Powerschool) specialist Mark Benjamin, multiracial, Korean, has joined Educators of color affiliate network of Vermont, will partake in the retreats

C. Finalize goals of DEIC for '25-'26 school year

JW - would like the DEIC meeting to start earlier; restructuring based on who is participating

Sparks - what are goals that we want to carry on and continue, PA#4 and #5 should stay, but pick some sub categories; how is DEIC going to handle the Equity Policy; holding BSD accountable

MI - DEIC should still hold this

Sparks - check out the tracker, each department has a section of the work; this ensures the work is happening and being done

MI - we should invite the Exec Dir of School Leadership and also Maria Davies who leads the Community Schools Initiative

Polly - mentions her connection to UVM and UVM's efforts in helping younger Vermonters

Sparks - is concerned that the accountability won't happen without the DEI committee

JW - looking at the tracker could be a helpful way for the DEI committee to decide who we should be inviting to meetings; as a way to provide oversight/hold accountable/stay abreast of the district's Equity policy work

4. Adjournment

8:03pm