



BSD Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Committee Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, May 12, 2026 at 6:00 PM

Sustainability Academy - Library 123 North Street

Commissioners Present: Polly Ericksen, Jeannie Waltz

Staff Present: Sparks, Maria Davies

Guests: Monika Ivancic

1. Opening

- A. Call meeting to order 6:01pm
- B. Suspend Robert's Rules

2. Public Comment - none

3. Discussion

- A. **1.** Update on BSD Community Schools Initiative with Maria Davies, Community Schools Coordinator:

Now in her second year, work based on Community School Pillars, aligned to the district strategic plan priorities

Community School Pillars:

- 1. Integrated Student Supports
- 2. Expanded and Enriched Learning Time & Opportunities
- 3. Active Family & Community Engagement
- 4. Collaborative Leadership & Practices
- 5. Safe & Inclusive Learning Environment,

The initiative emphasizes reducing siloed work, connecting existing programs, and strengthening partnerships between schools, families, and the broader community.

Year 1 work focused on creating a district-wide needs and asset inventory assessment Grades 9-12. :

- Reviewing extensive district climate survey data
- Mapping current programs and initiatives across departments
- Conducting in-person interviews with:
 - Students
 - Families

- Educators

Worked closely with the Department of Multilingual Learners. Multilingual family engagement was supported through Multilingual Liaisons (compensated)
Interviews were intentionally concise (6–7 questions) and in person.

Interview topics:

- What programs/classes are working well
- What needs improvement
- Student engagement
- Existing gaps
- Changes already made
- Student experiences and perceptions

The assessment document was shared with the board & BSD cabinet for review. Maria noted that Pre-K still needs to be incorporated before the document is considered to be a district- wide final draft.

Key Themes Emerging from the Work

1. Relationships & Belonging-

- Students consistently emphasized:
- Wanting stronger relationships with educators and school leaders
- Feeling heard, valued, and connected
- Needing trust and belonging to engage meaningfully in school

Maria emphasized that engagement is rooted in relationships with *both* students *and* families.

2. Community Schools as Connectors-

Maria described her role as:

- Identifying gaps
- Bridging disconnected efforts
- Building collaboration across schools and departments
- Connecting schools more deeply with greater community

Program/Project Highlights:

Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR)

At Eagle Bay, Maria facilitated a Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) team where students and educators reviewed school data together and identified areas needing improvement.

Concerns collectively raised:

- School food quality
- Engagement
- Feeling othered

In response to student feedback, Eagle Bay launched a humanities/cooking course called Global Eats from Local Streets.

Features of the Program, Students:

- Explored foods from different cultures
- Learned cooking skills
- Connected food traditions to local community resources
- Took field trips to local businesses and markets

Community members and district staff taught cooking lessons (e.g., making chicken satay)

Maria shared outcomes:

- No incident reports during cooking weeks (dispersed over the course of a couple months)
- Increased student engagement
- Expanded family involvement
- Opportunities for experiential and culturally relevant learning

The program also explored how culturally reflective meals could improve school food and belonging district-wide.

Arts, Math & Universal Design for Learning

Math-through-art programming

Outside consultants teaching math concepts visually and creatively

Murals designed by students in partnership with the city and mayor's office

This work supports Universal Design for Learning and alternative ways students engage with difficult concepts.

Student Public Service Announcements (PSAs)

Students created PSAs on topics such as:

Suicide awareness

Bullying and harassment

Vaping

Plagiarism

Body shaming

Produced with support from Burlington Tech students and videographers (paid gig)

[Published on the district website](#)

Intended for future professional development use so staff can hear directly from students

Side note: Body shaming emerged as a significant concern in district survey data.

Family Engagement Efforts

Examples included:

- Workshops for multilingual families
- Paid family liaisons/translators
- Childcare and meals during events
- Community-based support efforts:
- Food distribution
- Bikes and helmets
- Holiday gifts

Maria stressed that family needs directly impact student engagement and success.

Sparks: Rethinking the Community School Model, a major discussion point, shifting away from expecting families to always come to school buildings.

Proposed

Holding meetings, conferences, and events in neighborhood community spaces

Bringing educators into communities like Franklin Square and Northgate

Making schools more visible and accessible in neighborhoods

This was framed as a deeper, more authentic Community Schools model centered on meeting families where they are.

Grants & Future Planning:

Maria shared updates about-

a statewide Community Schools/Fannie Mae grant initiative

A new “community design team” formed with stakeholders and partners

Planning for a potential grant proposal of up to \$500,000 (BSD was the first district to organize the required collaborative team structure!) July 6: RFP release, August 2:

Application opens.

Overall Takeaways

BSD Community Schools Initiative is focused on:

Student voice and engagement

Relationship-centered education

Community partnerships

Family inclusion

Culturally responsive programming

Expanding learning beyond school walls

Much appreciation for Maria's leadership and enthusiasm for expanding Community Schools in the district

- B. **1.** Update on work with Global Majority leaders in BSD with Sparks, Dir. Office of Equity:

Ongoing efforts to support Black leaders and educators of the global majority (GM) within the District focused on:

- Racism and microaggressions in the workplace
- Retention and support of educators/leaders of color
- Accountability structures
- Anti-racism training
- Gaps in district infrastructure and implementation

This year, Sparks has been regularly meeting with Black district leaders over dinners and informal gatherings to discuss:

- What is and is not working in the district
- Experiences with racism and discrimination
- Professional support needs
- Retention challenges
- Leadership development

Current participants include several Black leaders and administrators across the district.

Key concern, Sparks stated that BSD lacks a real infrastructure for supporting and retaining people of the global majority, despite equity goals being in place for years.

He expressed frustration that "Priority Area 4" (focused on hiring and retaining educators of the global majority) has not accomplished enough, including actions that would not require additional funding.

Reports of Racism and Harm/Experiences Shared: Sparks said conversations have revealed

Microaggressions

Overt racism

Lack of accountability mechanisms

One example he shared involved a Black leader asking a white employee to clear supplies from a hallway closet. The employee reportedly dismissed the request and walked away. He described this as an example of disrespect toward black leadership, unequal treatment compared to how white administrators would likely be treated, a lack of systems for immediate accountability and lack of support structures.

There is no clear process for leaders of the global majority to address racist incidents in real time.

Reporting systems rely heavily on HR processes that may not feel responsive or supportive.

Educators and leaders of color are often isolated in buildings without peers who share similar lived experiences.

Sparks compared this to the district's understanding that students of the global majority should not be isolated in classrooms without support systems.

Future Goal

Next year, Sparks hopes to create a formal cohort for leaders and educators of the global majority that would:

- Meet monthly
- Build peer support networks
- Focus on retention and upward mobility
- Develop leadership skills
- Provide space to process experiences with racism
- Anti-Racism Training & Professional Development
- Concerns Raised

The committee discussed the district's uneven implementation of anti-racism work.

Concerns included:

- District leaders received intensive anti-racism training over several years but there was little follow-through at the building or departmental level; Staff-wide implementation has been inconsistent.
- Departments have not consistently reported progress.

Committee questioned:

Where accountability exists

How progress is being measured

Equity Policy as Accountability Tool

Sparks repeatedly pointed to the district's equity policy as an existing mechanism for accountability and encouraged board members to review the policy.

The policy:

Requires anti-racism training for educators and staff

Holds the superintendent accountable for implementation

Serves as the foundation for the district's Equity Report

Regarding the Equity Report to be presented at the 6/2/26 full board meeting (report was delayed from April to June due to board scheduling issues):

It's structured around the equity policy

Is intended to provide measurable accountability

A major theme was that equity work cannot focus only on instructional staff or administrators. Sparks emphasized the need for system-wide anti-racism practices.

Training across all departments. He stressed that every employee interacts with students, families, and staff and therefore impacts school culture.

Including:

HR

Payroll

Food Services

Property Services

Operational departments

Discussion raised questions about accountability-

Is there an equity component in principals' evaluation

In what ways are anti-racism expectations measurable

How departments document and communicate progress

Whether updates are occurring regularly enough

There was discussion about proposing/requiring:

Annual departmental presentations to the full board/Public evidence of progress

More structured reporting and transparency

Restorative Practices & Leadership Development

The conversation also touched on:

Developing anti-racist leaders who can mentor future educators, building restorative practice skills

Supporting leaders in responding to racism in real time

Overall Takeaways:

- Anti-racism training must come first before restorative leadership structures can fully succeed.
- Frustration with slow implementation of equity commitments
- The emotional burden carried by leaders of the global majority
- The need for stronger institutional support

- The importance of accountability beyond policy language
- The need for anti-racism work to move from theory into daily practice

Proposed Direction/next steps included:

- Formal support cohorts for leaders of the global majority
- Stronger accountability systems
- More transparent departmental reporting
- District-wide anti-racism training
- Better mechanisms for responding to racism and harm
- Clearer implementation of the equity policy across the district

4. Adjournment 7:27pm