

Howard County Racial Equity Task Force
Education Meeting Minutes (Approved)
Chair: Karen Randall
February 8th, 2021

Panelists Present – Karen Randall, Mavis Ellis, Jacky McCoy, Meina Liu, Erika Chavarria, Patricia Silva, Grace Ko, Sabina Taj, Natalie Pretzello, Bitu Dayhoff, Lauren Marra (Facilitator), Ashley Alston (D2), Michael Harris (D2)

Not Present: Ying Matties

Charity announced the meeting is being recorded

Opening:

Karen Randall completed attendance and introduced the meeting.
Karen Randall also acknowledged that they are meeting on indigenous land with a moment of silence.

Discussion Points:

Karen started with the approval of last meetings' minutes

- Moved to approve the meeting minutes from January 11th
 - Second by Jacky?
 - Mavis abstains
 - Rationale: the meeting minutes came back late and she did not have time to go through them thoroughly
 - Sabina suggests delaying approval of January's minutes
 - Karen moves to table the approval of January's minutes
 - This would mean that at the next meeting they will be approving 3 sets of minutes from January 11th, January 21st, and February 8th
 - Patricia asked who did not read the minutes
 - Mavis, Sabina, Jacky, and Erika raised their hands
 - Karen's motion was second by Sabina
 - Approved by everyone

Lauren begins with a change of objectives/agenda

- Brings back up the action plan
 - Different areas of interest
 - Speakers that people suggested
- Go over upcoming events that provide an opportunity for soliciting testimonies from the public
- Discussion asked by Lauren: Why are we pivoting, and what happened?
 - Recap:
 - We got solicited feedback from the group regarding data interest, perspective interest, and potential speakers.
 - Also, feedback around educator pay, employment, hiring, retention, and cultural competency
 - Number of suggestions relating to Student Resource Officers (SROs), disciplinary policies, etc.
 - Additional access barriers
 - Language, etc

- The original plan was to have a discussion tonight on educator employment, pay, and cultural competency; however, when we reached out to HCPSS (who previously have been ready and eager to talk to this group), which is where majority of the speakers are from, they were delayed in replying for good reason.
 - Reasons for delay:
 - Several snow days
 - They are readying to get students back to school in March
 - Superintendent had asked all staff members to have all hands on deck for the reopening process.
- Then they were going to pivot to the SRO discussion. However, the ability to connect with them only came over this weekend. This is the reason the email was sent out so late.
 - Realized that switching the agenda completely would not have been fair
 - Also, some members of the Public Safety subgroup would like to look at the SRO topic as well.
- Tabling these discussions with the special guests for another meeting because of:
 - Speaker availability
 - People's learning and engagement desires
 - Mutual interest across groups
- Clarifying questions
 - Erika- "At what point was it realized that the other subcommittee had the same conversation?"
 - Lauren answered- Probably, about a month ago. But, they weren't planning to discuss it on the same timeline as this group, which is why we thought we could talk about it now with this group. We understand its importance and comfortable with its redundancy and bringing it together later.
 - Erika- When did this become a factor for deciding to change today's meeting?
 - Lauren-That became a third factor. The real factors were wanting to honor different people:
 - Speakers weren't available
 - Wanting to respect different people's learning and engagement interest
 - Erika asked a question regarding process. What is the process on deciding who is speaking with us?
 - Sabina had the same sort of question and asked before the meeting if we could go over the process for selecting speakers and for collecting data. Are there guiding rules in terms of that? Can we agree on that as a committee to figure out how we want to move forward?
 - Patricia was missing an email

Michael shared that he reached out to the BOE today at 1:32 PM to request the same speakers for the March 8th meeting at 5:00 PM to discuss the same topics per the administrators email. Due to budgetary reasons and opening schools March 1st that is why there is a delay with the BOE.

Review of partnership agreements led by Karen

- Respect each other's time, resources, identities, experiences, and expertise
- Please remember to put all tech on silent and stay "checked in"
- Connect to your core values and speak from your heart
- Be accountable to your commitments and honest about your limitations

- Give each other and ourselves grace
- Keep the task force purpose and specific meeting goals in mind

Karen also welcomed Bitá

- Lauren recapped for Bitá
 - The group is focused on sharing back what people shared in terms of speakers identifying what the group wishes to talk about. The focus on the rest of agenda and other action planning will take place for the remainder of the meeting and discuss the plan for upcoming meetings.

Jacky voiced her concern

- She did not get an email on January 28th and is missing some of the things that were talked about. Also, there are a lot of technical issues getting in the way
 - Lauren suggested setting up a 1 on 1 call with Jacky or with her and the Council staff, so they can address and fix the technical issues. Will email after this meeting to get it fixed.

Erika asked what they were naming the other topic and wanted to clarify the “HCPSS staff” that were invited. She also suggested reaching out to the people who were just recently employed by the school system and went through the hiring process. Would like to honor equity and reflect both the school system’s perspective and the perspective from those with lived experiences. The data needs to be inclusive

- Lauren- HCPSS staff is central office members

Lauren presented the action plan chart

- Reminded the group that she doesn’t want to overvalue efficiency and wants to equally value inclusivity, but she needs people to be willing to volunteer to have outside meetings to discuss
- Limited to 4 speakers in any meeting
- Reviewed “Educator pay, employment, and cultural competency” category
 - Bitá asked a clarifying question- Will it be committee task to select who would speak at our meetings?
 - Lauren answered- In this case, we had conducted this list and Ashley and Michael had the connections, so they were the ones who reached out.
 - Question posed: Is this a list the subgroup is comfortable with?
 - Patricia asked what are their specific roles in regards to “area 3” and “area 1” Are they the community superintendent?
 - Karen answered- All the schools in the County fall under certain areas. An elementary school that feeds into a middle school which feeds into a high school all belong to the same area. Yes, they are the community superintendents.
 - Bitá asked who is responsible for determining pay and sending those policies. Does the BOE play a role in that, if so should there be representation from that group?
 - Karen- From her experience, it is determined in the contracts. HCPSS has a contract with some of the Unions, and then the pay scale is set up that way. So, it determines years of experience and determines what pay you also receive by your degrees program. Pay scales are determined by the contracts.
 - Bitá- Is that contract negotiated on behalf of the BOE members and/or by the staff?
 - Karen- Those contract negotiations go on with the BOE and with their union leaders

- Erika added-The HR Department makes the final determination on where you lie on the negotiated contract. One may believe that they are on one area of the negotiation contract, but they are actually put on another level. There have been multiple times when people had to go back and contest where they were because they didn't know that they were on the wrong level. Yes, the contract is negotiated by the union and employer, but the hiring process is more complicated than that. The data might be skewed
 - Natalie agreed with Erika's point-There are many instances where the County places people on the pay scale and a manner that's different from almost every surrounding county. Teachers who are transferring from different counties will expect to be on a certain scale and find themselves not there because credits are counted differently. Although it is very easy to look up the chart of teacher's salaries, there a lot of people who end up not quite where they expected.
- Lauren recapped and noticed there is a lot of knowledge within the group about this process of pay.
 - Also acknowledged that the speakers who they plan to invite do not have all the knowledge, but they possess certain knowledge that we would like to be shared with the group.
 - Lastly, recognized the experiences shared from the group.
 - Asked the group if the speakers, testimonies, and the group experiences sufficient enough to brainstorm recommendations?
 - Sabina- thinks that we need a more complete picture of data and that the speakers will be able to provide a slice of that. We will need another slice of the picture because there are BSAP and Hispanic liaisons and black affinity groups built into the system. Thinks that we should at least need to hear from people who are hired and being considered for positions who are of color as well those who are making the decisions. We need the integrations. Perhaps, only have David come and he can talk to Kevin, Anissa, and Ron. Ron and Jason are not community superintendents; they are under them. Suggests having HCPSS come with one voice and then hear a second voice from coalitions and black and Hispanic affinity groups in order to have a complete picture.
 - Lauren recapped- One representative from HCPSS (David), Matthew from Anti-Racist Education Alliance, and then 1 to 2 people from Black and Latinx affinity groups.
 - Sabina- Separate the black and Hispanic group because they will be different voices
 - Karen- Realized that cultural competence was not being met. One of the reasons for inviting Kevin Gilbert and Anissa Brown Dennis involved in the conversation. Wants to confirm with the group that right now they aren't talking about cultural competence with HCPSS just employment and pay.
 - Erika-suggested having cultural competence in its own category. We have the diversity, equity, and inclusivity liaisons are in each group as well as groups with anti-racist educational ties. There are also Facebook pages with local groups that could help. On a separate

category put diversity, equity, and inclusion and put Kevin Gilbert, liaisons, and these independent anti-racist groups and have them report on racism.

- Lauren stated -taking this suggestion, but the group would have to choose to volunteer to meet in between meetings to cover this because there isn't time to bring this up in the monthly meetings.
 - Erika- Because of the OMA would these extra meetings have to be recorded?
 - Ashley- Per OMA, if it is a quorum, then it must be recorded. However, if it is just 2 or 3 people meeting, then it does not need to be recorded for public record.
- Patricia- Cultural competency is a big issue and this task force and to focus on the racial aspects. It is important to work on cultural competency.
- Patricia asked if the subgroup was going to look at HCC too
 - Lauren- For coordination matters, economic workforce is engaging in HCC in a meeting in later February.
 - Patricia- Do we have access to other subcommittees' meeting dates?
 - Lauren- if you congregate in a group larger than 5 people, then it's considered a quorum. But if you are meeting in a small group, it's considered private and you don't need to keep notes. We would probably have people learn in private/small groups, do research, and then bring the information they discovered as well as recommendations to the group. So you wouldn't be part of the learning process, but you might be a part of the sharing to the large group. The reality is that there is a lot to uncover and we need to divide up the work in order to be able to write recommendations by July.
 - Patricia- Will the subgroup vote on the recommendations or modify?
 - Lauren- We will talk about this process as a group and establish criteria for the recommendations. But, we haven't gotten to that part yet.

Lauren goes over plan for March 8th

- Focus on educator pay and employment
- Speakers from HCPSS
- Matthew
- Sabina, or others, can make recommendations for 2 separate speakers from affinity groups to invite
 - Sabina is willing to work on this with Erika
 - Sabina asked Mavis which group Dr. Martirano started

- Mavis-She doesn't know if he really started any group and she also questions the fact that Matthew is here because he does not work in Howard County. He now works in Montgomery. So she is not sure if he is still a part of the alliance
 - Erika- Matthew does work in Montgomery County and formally worked in Howard County for about 10 years as a reading specialist. He is the CEO and Founder of the Anti-Racist Education Alliance in which many members are HCPSS employees. In fact all of the members are HCPSS, so if Matthew wasn't able to speak here himself, his directors would be able to.
 - Sabina? - Could Erica, Mavis, Patricia, and I meet offline and come up with a list? Open to anyone else who wants to join
 - Karen- The affinity spaces that the County are having are now being started by at the level of Howard County Education Association, and is being run by the Minority Affairs Committee
 - Erika-That is in question because that would be considered a caucus
 - Sabina will set up a private group (2 groups if necessary, so they are not in violation of OMA). Let's people know to just email her if they are interested. She also shares her gratitude and appreciation for BOE member Jen and Councilmen Dr. Jones
- Ashley or Michael will confirm David for March 8th
- Sabina, Mavis, Patricia, and Erica will identify speakers and reach out as needed.
 - Lauren- Are we confirming Matthew or not? It seems like you all will think of the 3 speakers that are needed. Tells them to get back to the group with who the remaining speakers are.

Ashley reminded everyone of the time

Lauren begins the second phase of the action chart: broadening the issue of cultural competency

- During the first hour of April's meeting, we could allocate that time to cultural competency and the latter half will be for recommendation conversations.
- Potential Speakers:
 - Kevin Gilbert
 - Meina suggested Ming Woo (in charge of international students and family services in HCPSS)
 - Meina will reach out
 - Meina suggested Kimberly Eggborn
 - Meina will reach out
 - Patricia suggested Daryl Howard- they have a huge initiative around cultural competency
 - Mavis- He is good to have because he works in Montgomery County, but he lives in Howard County
 - Sabina suggested inviting one of the DEI liaisons who works at the schools and implements this work
 - In the interest of time, she would like to see our DEI office and DEI's from surrounding counties. There is an equity directors group that meets with all the counties. Have a conversation with Daryl
 - Sabina/Patricia suggested Razia Kosi
 - Erika recommends inviting Dwanna Nicole (Restorative Justice Partnership)

- Patricia asked about inviting neighboring counties to speak, those who have experience with cultural competency.
 - Lauren- Yes, it is possible to reach out to other counties
- Erika would like to refer it as cultural responsiveness instead of competency
 - Meina- The reason people use the term “cultural competence” is because it refers to changes at all 3 levels, including cognitive, attitude, and behavioral. People need to be aware of racial issues (like sensitivity), but at the same time, there needs to be effectiveness, meaning attitude change like compassion. It also plays into whether people are knowledgeable of the skills of the things they should do in order to be effective. There are multiple dimensions, so she would like the group to be more careful/mindful in changing the term.
 - This discussion will be returned to at a later time
- Speakers finalized:
 - Kevin Gilbert/ Razia Kosi
 - Ashley or Michael will reach out
 - Ming Woo
 - Ashley or Michael will reach out
 - Daryl Howard
 - Patricia will reach out
 - Dwanna Nicole
 - Erika will reach out

Question regarding speakers for school climate and safety asked by Erika

- Michael explains- As to why Towanda Brown and Stephanie Wall are listed, him and Ashley thought to have the conversation on SROs. Then the BOE said that they were focused on vaccines, budget, and reopening of schools March 1st, so SROs were then next conversation. They thought that the best thing would be 3 prongs. On Friday, the Council received outreach from the Council of Elders of the Black Community of Howard County, and he reached out to them and asked if they were interested in speaking to the education subgroup. The Council of Elders said yes. Then, Michael added onto that subgroup.
 - 3 prongs would give an overview of a well balanced conversation. These include:
 1. Erika (a teacher who deals with SROs throughout the process)
 2. Community
 3. An actual SRO, a former SRO, or someone who manages SROs
 - Patricia asked Michael- Shouldn't this idea be brought to the group before you started to add them, so we could vote on it?
 - Sabina agrees that having a voice not defined by this committee is problematic
- Mavis points out that there needs to be student voices involved in the discussion of SROs
 - Include students who have been to Homewood or accosted by SROs
 - Include students who would like to become police officers
 - Include students who do not aspire to be police officers as well
- Natalie agrees with Mavis and want to include the student voice, especially middle schoolers
- Erika wants to plug in Monesha and Avery who are public defenders who deal specifically with youth who have gone through the juvenile justice system because of their interactions with SROs. It would be important to have the legal perspective, not just generalities about the law but those who are in the trenches day to day.
 - Also, would like to echo Natalie. Reminds the group that equity does not mean equality. We have already heard an abundance of pro-SRO people, and it is about time to have a panel with speakers whose voices are often silenced.

Ashley reminds the group to be mindful of time

Lauren asks the group if there were volunteers to determine who those speakers are and to speak that back to us

- Jacky asked if this was about student voices or if she was referring to the people on this list
 - Lauren- These are not necessarily the only people that we will listen to. These are people that might have data or experiences that we want to bring to the forum, honoring that we bear witness to experiences as well.
 - Jacky thinks that Erika's suggestion was being overlooked. She is asking if we can hear from the voices that are not normally heard
 - Karen wants to be mindful that we hear from all voices from an issue not just one, we need a balanced conversation. Another reminder to be mindful of time
- Erika suggests having Jacky, Sabina, Natalie, and herself to determine which subgroup members wish to invite. Erika is willing to step back if not needed.
- Lauren- the sooner we decide on the speakers, the better. She will work with Karen, Michael, and Ashley; then the rest of the group can decide when the right time to meet is.
- Meina asks for clarification: does inclusive curriculum falls under one of the topics
 - Lauren- It is not currently listed. Does it fit around cultural competence? Suggests that Meina could have her own subgroup and do research and share with the group.

Lauren does a grand overview

- Cadence of the group going forward:
 1. Speakers on a topic
 2. Create space for discussing recommendations
 3. "Spin out" into groups that meet offline
 4. Draft recommendations
 5. Bring back to the group for discussion
 - Learning will be altogether and then bringing back recommendations
- Homework:
 - If you are interested in categories 0-3, email Lauren with some speakers that you are interested in.
 - Lauren will collect them and share them out. We will not pursue with them until they are shared out. We will decide if it is a main meeting or a sub-meeting
 - Jacky- sent 3 students to Lauren
- Various people will reach out to speakers and communicate back with us
- On March 8th, we will discuss educator employment and pay from 5:00pm-7:00pm
- During April meeting, we will talk about cultural competency/responsiveness
- Future meetings will discuss SROs

Upcoming events:

- Public hearing will be on March 4th from 6:00pm-8:00pm to share testimonies
- The library will hosting listen and learn sessions outside of the Racial Equity Task Force (February)
 - All of this will be emailed out

Ashley and Michael will follow up with Jacky with WebEx issue and 0-3 issues

Erika reminded the group that there are bills at the state and county level regarding SROs that we could possibly endorse.

Karen adjourns meeting