

# Howard County Racial Equity Task Force

## Education Meeting Minutes

### Chair: Karen Randall

### April 5th, 2021 - APPROVED

**Panelists Present** – Karen Randall, Opel Jones, Ashley Alston, Michael Harris, Lauren Marra, Bitu Dayhoff, Patricia Silva, Grace Ko, Erika Chavarria, Jacky McCoy, Ying Matties, Mavis Ellis, and Natalie Pretzello.

**Not Present:** Meina Liu, Sabina Taj

#### **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 the minutes from the March meetings

- Moved to approve the meeting minutes from March 8<sup>th</sup>
  - Second by Bitu
  - Approved by majority
  - Abstained by Natalie
- Moved to approve the meeting minutes from March 22<sup>nd</sup>
  - Second by Mavis
  - Approved by all

Lauren moved forward with agenda

- Topics to be covered
  - (continued conversation) culturally responsive teaching, learning environments, and inclusive curriculum
  - Provision and access to services that supports the needs of children ages 0-5

Lauren introduced first speaker, Dr. Daryl Howard

- Dr. Howard spoke on culturally responsive teaching, learning environments, and inclusive curriculum
- Dr. Howard introduced himself and his position
  - He is an instructional specialist in Montgomery County Public Schools
  - Parent of 2 high school students and a middle school student (all in HCPSS)
- Dr. Howard explained how to approach equity work
  - 3 core/essential questions to ask themselves
    - Learning objectives for all staff across the district
    - Complete race and cultural proficiency work daily
    - Essential question 1 involves professional development that is allowing for self reflection and individual awareness for our educators. They feel like that is most important for any individual who wants to be on an equity journey. You have to

be able to reflect on one's own identity, one's privilege, as well as one's biases. And then how do you serve as an educational leader in our district with that framing?

- This could include workshops like interrupting implicit bias, or it could be an introduction to cultural frames of reference training.
  - Essential question 2 looks at racial and cultural experiences of others
    - They provide professional development in those areas, so people can have some sense of historical and contemporary experiences of said groups
    - What do we know about the racial and cultural experiences of those who are different than us?
  - Essential question 3 looks at being able to create spaces where everyone feels included
    - Staff and students
    - Making sure no one is feeling “othered”
    - What are the practices and policies that allow for creation of those types of spaces?
- Dr. Howard continued presentation
  - His district has been doing a lot of work thinking about the transition from question 1 to question 3
  - Montgomery Public School System is to look at both individual bias and the areas within the system where inequities exist.
  - There will be an anti-racist equity audit
    - Defined anti-racist as one who presupposes inequity and racism exist; explained silence is not a strategy to mitigate or eliminate inequity and racism and understanding the purpose is to fix equity not equality

Lauren opened the floor for questions

- Patricia- What do you think is the turning point for the whole system to understand what is racism and inequity? How can we change that? Is this type of work coming from the community, government, or institutional power? Patricia explains that her question comes from a place where she is representing people who are normally silent and struggles with it.
  - Dr. Howard- The communities drive the desire, commitment, or demand to do this type of work. Some school leaders or district leaders are forward facing and willing to be courageous enough to lead this type of work. He believes that this exists in some degree here in Howard County. However, nothing happens without individuals speaking up for something or desiring change. We cannot do the top-down approach when dealing with issues of equity in the community. It shouldn't be the burden of individuals but unfortunately is. From his experiences, there is increased interest.
- Mavis- Wonders about responsibility of leadership at various levels. Within the schools, where there are principals and administrative team, how are they being held accountable with this? Has the Montgomery County Council been involved in this process, supporting, advocating, and initiating with the school system?
  - Dr. Howard- Supports the thought that this type of work needs to begin with school leadership. From his experience, the schools with the most success are the schools where the principal has taken initiative in positively changing the narrative of the school. From there, that is the way they train their administrators, their staff

development teachers, their counseling team, etc. This past year, they have been moving away from large scale full staff meetings and working with leadership teams and buildings first. They are working on the “Evidence of Equity,” which will walk through a series of questions and brainstorming types of prompts to ensure equity stays at the table. This will allow individuals to have a tool to guide them while in these leadership meetings. He is not certain if the Montgomery County Council has had input in this process.

- Lauren- What is the anticipated timing of the release of “Evidence of Equity”?
  - Dr. Howard-Probably during the summer
- Karen- If you have a school leader that is not onboard, how is that dealt with? Do you know if there are any repercussions? Could people report it?
  - Dr. Howard- It does become tough when the administrative team is not on board. There is an expectation of professional growth standards for any educator in the building to make sure they are meeting certain expectations of their job. Everyone gets evaluated as an educator, principals and administration are no different, so there is some level of oversight. He encourages the schools that he works with to have groups. These could be racial literacy groups or some type of diversity committee and equity team. Typically, they are encouraged to not be composed entirely of administrators. Make sure that you are listening to those who are working with students every day (grading, teaching, etc) because they can provide insight to how the school functions, what the students are saying, etc.
    - Lauren- Suggests that the group investigates the lens of budgetary approval of the Board when making recommendations for County Council since that is in their legislative authority.
- Erika- As an educator in Howard County, she understands none of these trainings or equity work are mandatory for teachers, and that is the problem. If it is not mandatory, then there is no incentive to do it. How involved is your work and your department’s work with the HR department in ensuring that the hiring processes hire people who are racially aware and intentionally anti-racist in their work? How are we holding our educators accountable?
  - Dr. Howard- Agrees that there are people doing harm to young people (students) every day. They have two voluntary classes per summer centered on race and equity. The training on implicit bias this summer will be required. They have done others that have been required as well. Agrees that many of the individuals who attend are committed to the work. But not everybody does or believes this. They are measuring what progress looks like and thinking about what their level of patience is. It will not be easy process, it is a journey. As for workforce diversity, they have done training with HR to level set with them about the expectations around equity, anti-racism, and cultural responsiveness practices in the classroom. They are trying to make sure people know that this is the new standard for Montgomery County Public Schools.
  - One of the efforts he is involved in is focused on getting more male educators of color. They are also building affinity groups that help recruit and retain educators
- Ying- How do you define the destination of equity work? How do we know when we achieved equity in schools or other areas? Not everything’s quantifiable, but some are
  - Dr. Howard- In the way that he teaches, there is no destination. His goal is to help individuals no matter where they are to move towards critical consciousness, meaning that you are continuously thinking, reflecting, and trying to do better as it relates to this area. Whenever he is teaching, he asks individuals to have a growth mindset. The same expectation of students should be adopted in the adults. There is a lot of un-learning

that needs to be done to move forward. Anti-racism makes you step off the fence of neutrality.

- Patricia- How do we intentionally know others when they are not included in the conversation? Do you use language accessibility or cultural elements?
  - Dr. Howard- Teaches two courses called, “Ethnic Groups in American Society” and “Education is multicultural.” The demand for those courses is always high, so they are always looking for new teachers. He hires teachers where they can bring a different element and experience to the course. He wants to uplift voices, not to drown out others, but to level out the foundation. Others in his department are interested as well. They host different forums that allow different voices to be elevated.
  - He describes one class for example, where the teacher speaks only in Spanish for the first 10 minutes to allow people to feel a little bit what it may be like for people where English is not their first language. By doing this, people are forced to be in a space to think about those who are not like them. How are we creating the messaging/language to ensure that people have access?
  - Unless you are challenged or put in a position where you must experience in order to develop a level of empathy, then you won’t have it.
  - They always try to ask themselves how is inequity existing in this process, practice, and policy?
    - Inequity is there, all we must do is look for it

Lauren transitioned to next topic

- Jacky and guest, Bonnie Bricker present together
- Jacky introduced Bonnie
  - Bonnie has been working in special education for many years and has now increased her efforts to advocate for engagement with children 0-3
  - She is the leader of “Talk with Me Howard County”

Bonnie began the presentation

- **Refer to presentation**
  - First talks about the many “gaps”
    - Kindergarten readiness Gap
    - Opportunity gaps
    - Gaps of various populations of students and how well they are doing academically
  - The Gap between existing information and programs for child development
  - No one seems to have the job of helping the parents know what helps their children develop
  - Similarly, there are many programs in Howard County that are helpful, but there is gap between these programs and the communication between the parents and the community
  - Bonnie shows graphs that demonstrated the kindergarten readiness disaggregated by race, income, and disabilities from 2019-2020 and 2017-2019
    - Some groups are steadily declining (low-income and English learner)
  - Talked about brain development
    - Brain begins to develop at a young age
    - Developmental gaps are clear by age 2
    - Showed a video about brain development

- The importance of toddler chats
  - The more toddler chats, the higher the IQ, regardless of socioeconomic class
- Impact of lack of socio-emotional, cognitive, and physical skills
  - Children who enter kindergarten not demonstrating these skills may continue to struggle academically through their school years
  - Language pushes cognitive abilities along
  - Graph depicting the long-term impacts of educational/developmental gaps on cognitive skills
    - Gaps continue to increase
    - Interactions matter
- Conclusions drawn “More Ready” connection
  - Positive early interactions are readier for school
  - More kindergarten readiness leads to success in school
  - Success in school have better life outcomes
- Barriers to Access
  - Transportation
  - Internet
    - People who cannot afford internet or data plans
    - People who are not proficient in technology
  - Culture
  - Immigration Status
- Programs in Howard County that work with the Early Childhood Development Advisory Council (Bonnie is a member)
  - **Refer to presentation for specific programs**
- We need to ensure access and opportunity to all programs
  - How do we get the word out?
  - Who is accessing the information?
- Think about multiple touches to create change
  - Socio-ecological approach
  - **Refer to presentation for examples**
- What can Howard County do?
  - Provide access in multiple ways
  - This has been stated before in 2015 and 2019

Lauren moved towards Q&A

- Karen- With Covid-19, how do we have those connections? What suggestions do you have for society, so these connections can occur for younger children?
  - Bonnie- They need a plan that is multifaceted. Newsletter, online, bags, etc. Public service announcements either social media or even billboards. Layer our efforts.
- Patricia- In terms of language accessibility, have you encountered this as a barrier? What are your thoughts?
  - Bonnie- A lot of this is a funding issue. From her experience, if she needed something translated by the County, there are a lot of people who are ahead of her who would receive priority. This is true for many of the programs that she works with. Spanish is not much of barrier because they have developed paralleled programs for Spanish speakers. For languages that she does not have a volunteer for is the real challenge.

- Erika- Could you give your analysis on standardized testing as it relates to early childhood development? If you were able to testify at the County Council for the issues that you are facing, what would be your top three priorities that you would request to the Council?
  - Bonnie-There are limitations to standardized testing. There are extra imitations when you are testing a child not in their native language. From her experience, the way testing is looked at is with a grain of salt. People have a more reasonable way of looking at testing. Standardized testing in the early childhood space can only test for the things they are good at measuring. There are a lot of subtleties that are never addressed because the research isn't there yet. However, a seasoned early childhood teacher could pick up on these subtleties.
  - If she were speaking with decision-makers, she would try to talk about the importance of interaction with young children and recognize that no one has this job
    - TALK WITH ME
    - You are building layers of knowledge and is why the cognition increases

Lauren introduced next presentation with Tracy Broccolino and Bitu

- Tracy introduced herself and her position
  - Director of Early Childhood Education at Community Action Council of Howard County (CAC)
- Tracy began her PowerPoint
  - **Refer to presentation**
    - CAC of Howard County at a glance and brief overview
    - CAC serves the most vulnerable communities in Howard County, those living on or below poverty line as well as the ALICE population
      - **Refer to slideshow for specific data**
    - CAC wants to help close the early childhood education/development gap
    - Explained the role of CAC and Early education
      - Headstart programs
      - New facility in Long Reach Village Center coming soon
    - Headstart benefits
      - **Refer to presentation for short and long-term impacts**
      - Helps both the child and family
    - Statistics of currently enrolled families and children
      - **Refer to presentation for profiles**
      - Majority of children served are minority populations
        - Almost a quarter of children are non-English-speaking
    - Barriers to accessing early childhood education
      - Transportation
        - **Refer to presentation for specifics**
        - Number 1 barrier
        - CAC buses aren't adequate for all 300+ families
    - Encourages everyone to continue to advocate on this issue
    - Long-term impact of poverty: student performance
      - **MSDE report from 2019-2020**
      - **Refer to presentation**

Lauren opened the floor for questions

- Karen- With the passing of the recent member, how would this affect the Headstart program?
  - Tracy- They are funded at the federal level of Headstart and through MSDE. They are hopeful that the commission of mandatory Pre-K will allow CAC to expand their program.
- Patricia- How do you have access to the families with language limitations? Do you encounter problems with that? Is there room for improvement?
  - Tracy- They use language line and use translation services through FIRN to translate any information as needed. Funding could be challenging at times. Most of the families speak Spanish, but there are other languages as well. They have family service workers who are social workers (They seek to hire bilingual people).
- Jacky- Wanted to talk about access and the importance of getting the word out. She lives close to the new Headstart facility that they are opening, but she did not hear about it until she started working with this group.
- Mavis- From her experience with Howard County, there is a lack of translation for their community members. In Montgomery County, she always had access to communication with parents. Transportation in Columbia and transportation in other areas of the County are two different issues. She has had experienced with Headstart while in Chicago. People have had a reality check.
  - Bitu- For so long this community and other communities have talked about what the barriers are, but there has not been a consistent investment in mitigating these issues.
- Patricia- Let's focus of something systemic and go beyond partnerships. What does the program envision as the best solution for the transportation issue?
  - Tracy- Public transportation so they can reach beyond Columbia. They have a partnership with HCPSS, where they are transporting children to Headstart programs. Helpful to have both partnerships and public transportation

Lauren concluded listen and learning and moves forward with agenda

- 3 key dates:
  - From here on out, they will break into small groups and work on recommendations for topical area
  - Complete first draft by April 28<sup>th</sup>
  - TBD Early May meeting about reacting and responding to recommendations (Public Testimony)
  - Share and review drafts during meeting on May 10<sup>th</sup>
  - Refine recommendations and bring them back for June
  - June will compile and vote on recommendations
- Criteria for recommendations:
  - All recommendations that make the main body of report needs to be in the Council's legislative authority
    - Law Office will help with feasibility
  - The recommendations not deemed in Council's authority will still be in the report, but in the appendix.
  - Prioritize those that are in authority, but share all ideas
- Data can be quantitative, qualitative, and testimonial

Lauren shared her screen about small groups

- Patricia asked about the topical area that Lauren was referring to regarding the public's reaction
  - Lauren- We will compile the top line of recommendations for public hearing. The reason for the public hearing so that people can provide testimony and reactions to hear people's support or disagreements
- Lauren requested that everyone emails back that they have read this document
- Karen- For clarification, when is the cut-off date to change the small groups?
  - Lauren- By this evening
- Lauren reviewed next steps again
- Patricia- For small group meetings, are you providing support via zoom?
  - Lauren- We are hoping that you have access to conference calls or zoom platforms on their own
    - Grace- Google Meet calls are free and unlimited
    - Lauren- You can use Google documents within your small groups (share with 4 or less people)

**Karen adjourned meeting**