

Howard County Racial Equity Task Force  
Education Meeting Minutes  
Chair: Karen Randall  
March 31, 2021 - APPROVED

**Panelists Present** – Karen Randall, Grace Ko, Ying Matties, Natalie Pretzello, Meina Liu, Ashley Alston (D2), Michael Harris (D2), Lauren Marra (Facilitator).

**Not Present:** Erika Chavarria, Bitia Dayhoff, Sabina Taj, Jacky McCoy, Mavis Ellis, and Patricia Silva

**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 introduced the guest speakers, Ebony Langford-Brown and Dr. Razia Kosi

Ebony and Dr. Kosi had a joint presentation

- Dr. Kosi introduced herself and her role in HCPSS
  - She is the coordinator for culture, responsive practices and anti racism development.
- Dr. Kosi shared an overview of what they will be sharing in the presentation
  - Professional learning taking place
    - What are the different aspects that we're working on?
  - Educator demographics at different schools and
  - Curriculum and instruction
- Dr. Kosi gave an overview of the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and what they work on
  - Creating a culture of belonging
  - A climate of belonging
  - Culture of dignity with a racial equity lens
    - Restorative justice is also included
    - Cultural responsive practices
    - school climate and culture
      - centered in all that is their strategic call to action.
  - Work to help both students and staff success
  - Look at the barriers present and try to find ways to dismantle them
  - Mostly building upon the practices they had before, such as cultural proficiency
  - They acknowledge that no one practice alone will get them to where they need to be in terms of racial justice
  - They are creating new professional learning
    - Looking at the history of Howard County and counter storytelling with Black voices.
    - Looking at immigrant trends in Howard County and xenophobia throughout US history
    - Conversations with staff about race and racism

- Working with API staff and students about the API incidents both local and national
  - Book study-New Jim Crow
  - Cultural responsive teaching and the brain intergenerational and racial trauma
- Dr. Kosi talked about demographics of school
  - Disclaimer: the pdf she shared has the demographic breakdown of certified teachers, so it will not show para-educators (referring to page 50 for elementary schools).
  - As of now, overall in the Elementary schools: **(information is from the HR report to the Board of Education last year)**
    - Less than 5% of teachers who identify as American Indian, Alaskan, or Native
    - Less than 5% of teachers who identify as Asian
    - 9.3% of teachers who identify as African American or Black.
    - Less than 5% of teachers who identify as Native, Hawaiian, or Pacific Islander
    - Less than 5% of teachers who identify as 2 or more races
    - Less than 5% of teachers who are undeclared
    - 81.6% of teachers who identify as White
  - As of now, overall in the Middle schools: **(information is from the HR report to the Board of Education last year)**
    - Fairly like the elementary schools in terms of the less than 5% for most of the groups that were identified earlier
    - 12.2% of teachers who identify as African American or Black
    - 79.3% of teachers who identify as White
  - As of now, overall in the High schools: **(information is from the HR report to the Board of Education last year)**
    - 10.7% of teachers who identify as African American or Black
    - 79.6% of teachers who identify as White
    - With the other racial/ethnic categories, it is less than 5%
  - For information regarding demographic breakdown of administrators, leaders and the special schools, such as Cedar Lane or Homewood, **refer to page 51 and appendix B of the pdf shared**
- Ebony began her portion of the presentation regarding curriculum and instruction
  - **Refer to presentation**
    - Overview of some of the work that has been occurring:
      - Began working on a more inclusive curriculum in 2014 after the diversity, equity, and inclusion advisory committee
      - In 2018, they started using a rubric to evaluate components of our curriculum and for the 5 elements of diversity and inclusion.
      - The next step in that for us was to move towards some peer review and feedback as well
        - Due to the Pandemic, the work of systemic review of the curriculum was halted
      - They were able to start the work with the texts in the English Language Department and texts in the media center
        - This was implemented in both the secondary and elementary school level
      - Used funds in operating budget and grant funds to purchase more diverse materials.

- Board has to approve materials
- Create new lessons for teachers
- Began collecting input from high school English teachers
  - ITL are also looking at 9-12 literature as a whole
- Anti-bias curriculum
  - First group of students that will participate are 8<sup>th</sup> graders (at the end of this year).
  - 4-week unit
  - Taking a deep dive into elementary level curriculum as it relates to anti-bias and belonging
    - Began filling in these gaps, but then had to stop due to the pandemic
- Dr. Kosi showed her slides
  - **Refer to presentation for specific details and data**

The floor was open for questions

- Ying- What scope of evaluation has been done in terms of what students are exposed to, or what the media center have displayed front and center? Has there been any system-wide evaluation, including teachers as well?
  - Ebony answered- This evaluation is mainly through the English and Language Arts classes at the Secondary level. They look at the syllabi and the books that will be read in class. There is an expectation that there are diverse materials. Data is also collected from performance tasks. There has not been an evaluation of media centers of how those materials may be displayed. However, they can look at the circulation of the materials.
    - Ying asked a follow-up question- Are all the teachers required to answer these questions or whoever is willing to share?
      - Ebony- Clarifies that they are not collecting feedback from teachers; instead, they are collecting the syllabi that each teacher uses at the beginning of the year. On the syllabi there is required text read by students listed.
        - This is a requirement for all English teachers in grades 9-12
    - Ying- Has there been any effort to look at other materials in other classes?
      - Ebony- Yes, the curriculum leaders have looked at the materials list and added more diverse representation. There is variety of ways they acquire new materials. There has been an emphasis across all content to look for diverse materials, but there are some limitations due to short staff in the curriculum office (2-3 staff members per content area).
- Meina- wondered whether there has also been effort to look at how those materials [referring to diverse material] have been taught.
  - Ebony- There are a variety of ways in which we are supporting teacher use of diverse materials. For the English language arts for grades guide through 12, all the diverse materials that were provided the new titles that we provided. They have been spending

time writing curriculum resources to match those, so teachers have those at their disposal.

- With the diverse materials comes professional learning to ensure that the teachers know and understand the content of those books and the best approach to teach them to students.
  - The curriculum staff writes lessons for teachers. One of the expectations is around inclusive pedagogy. Using different methods for discussing such books.
  - Teachers receive ongoing professional learning, especially at the secondary level (middle and high) around controversial issues so that they are approaching diverse texts and complex issues in a way that aligns to the expectations outlined by the board of education.
- Ebony acknowledges that they have a long way to go in terms of observing teachers when they are using the materials, continuing to modify materials accordingly so it reflects an inclusive pedagogy, and continuing to provide professional learning for teachers.
- Meina- Would like to know how they could collect data from students and teachers. What is the process?
  - Ebony- There is typically not as much alignment as we need to have between the written curriculum, the taught curriculum and the assess curriculum. They have materials and lessons included that represent the diversity of Howard County. Also, regarding diverse perspectives related to social studies, science, etc.
    - There is a disconnect between what teachers decide to use and how it get translated to students as well as the assess curriculum
    - They have had conversations about collecting data from teachers and students. She will take this back with staff about collecting more data.
    - They have a process called “piloting” where focus groups and surveys test out the new curriculum. Students also pilot new curriculum.
- Karen- Educators of color are discriminated against by their white administrators, which make up majority of administrators. Some feel as though that they are required to do more than their Caucasian counterparts. Educators of color are held at different standards. When these educators try to bring up the issue to the administration, they are told to “let it go.” These instances happen at many of the schools. Many educators of color want to go to other counties, where they feel they will be more respected. What is the plan to address equity with regards to the expectations, tolerance and support of our educators of color?
  - Dr. Kosi- Her office has been meeting with different groups to try to understand and address some of these issues. They are working with other people to ensure that their experiences are valued. They do not want the educators of color to leave and they want them here. She will take this back to her office and continue to talk to her director.
    - Karen- Notes that there has been request of these issues resolved from local minority affinity groups.
- Natalie- Does Howard County have a long-range plan to help, make teaching staff the teaching staff look more like the student bodies that they serve in terms of a school by school level, a department level thinking about some subject areas, administration, non-teaching rules, like psychologists and counselors and health staff, and other positions within the building?
  - Ebony- Yes, HR does have a strategic plan that outlines diversity of staff from the system level and work directly with principals. They have created partnerships with HBCUs ad international network.

- Ebony notes that she cannot speak the specifics of the plan, for she only knows the peripheral level. She suggests inviting HR to come and speak with this group. This information may be on the website as well.
- Meina- Are VISA holders eligible for teacher and staff positions in HCPSS?
  - Ebony- This would be a question for HR. She thinks that there are programs that allow teachers to be on VISA
- Lauren invited Grace to ask questions
- Natalie- (Referencing Slide 4 of slideshow) Since principals can sign their schools up for professional development opportunities, how is this marketed to teachers? How is it decided which ones are mandatory for all staff to complete and which ones are optional? Are there opportunities for staff to participate if, for example, their administration chooses not to sign the entire school up for a book club?
  - Dr. Kosi- Currently, they are reimagining what can be done regarding professional development opportunities since the pandemic.
    - Previously, we had school teams go through a lot of cultural proficiency trainings that were level 1, 2 and 3. They came in teams, and they became somewhat leaders in the schools to help do these. They would do project-base, change, action, and research. Some would facilitate these discussions as well.
    - The newer modules that they are creating (i.e. book study, articles, videos, etc) ask reflection and implementation questions on ways they can improve the school.
    - They have always offered CPD credits, which are outside of work hours. People can take it like a course and earn credit towards their licensure teacher certification.
    - Individuals can take these courses/trainings for their own learning, and many have been.
    - Staff discussions that dive deeper into race and racism have been taking place, especially after the murder of George Floyd and everyone's consciousness being more aware of racial and social issues than before
    - Restorative justice starts with book study, but there is much more formal training that is not available to everyone due to capacity and budget.
      - For intergenerational racial trauma, individuals can take this on their own without going through their school administrators
    - The type of professional learning that works best is when they are embedded and ongoing
    - Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Liaison at each school, where they are people with much higher training in this subject area. They lead school-based efforts
      - Working towards all schools being able to do the professional learning/development by themselves
      - Teaching teachers how to be comfortable with being uncomfortable
- Meina-How diverse and inclusive is the DEI Committee? Is it possible to have different task groups to provide recommendations related to different races and ethnicities (example: AAPI Advisory group)
  - Dr. Kosi- The DEI Committee is diverse. When it was created, they looked at religious and racial background. Also, LGBTQ+ is represented as well. Three areas that they look at is workforce diversity, curriculum instruction, and professional learning. But there is

more of an emphasis on workforce diversity and curriculum instruction. Also, reviewing policy 1080.

- At this point, they are not doing separate task groups. Dr. Kosi will keep that idea.
  - Ebony- Each curriculum office, has an advisory. There are community members that are part of those teams. There is also a text review committee as well. Ebony will send that information to Michael. They welcome anyone to join.

Karen thanked Dr. Kosi and Ebony for coming

- It was stated that the schools with higher number of administrators of color (non-white) have a higher staffing of minority educators in their buildings. Has HCPSS looked at this? This affects the numbers of minority educators and in turn affects the students.
  - Ebony- They can give more info from the County. HR has been doing work around looking at the diversity of teaching staff and instructional staff. This information is not directly found in her office. Ebony again suggests to talking to HR.
    - Dr. Kosi- Her office has 3 coordinators. She is one of them, there is one for restorative justice, and another one for school climate and culture. They talk about what/how it feels when you walk into the school, how are they treating people with accents, how are they treating people, etc. They look at the patterns

Lauren closed out the discussion with Ebony and Dr. Kosi

Lauren suggested for the information found within HR, that small groups gather this information

Lauren moved to wrapping up the inclusive curriculum questions

- Meina would like to chat with Dr. Gilbert about making the survey for high school students optional
  - Karen- any survey sent out to students must be approved by HCPSS. It must go through a panel from Central Office
    - Lauren-Asks Michael or Ashley to find out the intensity of approval for administering survey on the students. Afterwards, we can determine if this group has the time to do so.
    - Natalie- Policy 3030 is posted on their website and addresses the survey topic clear.
      - Lauren- They will allocate time to talk about the survey process during the next meeting and determine if they have time to pursue it.
      - Question- Does policy 3030 give you an idea of how long it takes beyond the process steps?
        - Natalie- Yes, but will check to confirm
        - Question- There will be a degree of separation between what this group recommends and what the school system will be doing. The goal is to make sure that the curriculum is taught at the student level at every school.

- The demographic question may be sensitive even though it is anonymous. Suggests removing that question
- Natalie provided brief overview of policy 3030
  - There isn't a specific timeline, but they will approve high quality research. This group would be considered "unsolicited research proposal from external researcher" and data collection that is considered that may or may not be considered a part of a research proposal.
  - This would go to the superintendent or his designee for approval after screening and evaluation.
    - From Natalie's research, that process alone could potentially take up to 6 weeks
  - For a proposal to be approved, it follows a standard IRB. This is typically based towards collegiate level or professional research groups
    - This would be a hurdle
- Lauren summed up overview and talks about practicality
  - Meina asked- If we get the superintendent endorsement of the surveys, could they still try to send out to students?
    - Natalie-It is a formal process
      - Meina- Basically, we should give it up
        - Natalie- We could recommend it, but not implement it
      - Meina- Recently, she has talked to one of the BOE Members and they are in full support of inclusive curriculum efforts as well as the superintendent. So, it sounds like they are willing to support. Meina will personally try it out even if the group can't do it.

Lauren discussed timeline

- Breaking out into small groups
- Groups will meet during non-whole group time to discuss recommendations by topical area
- Everyone will bring draft recommendations to the May meeting
- Discuss drafts during May meeting
- Office of Law will also provide feedback to ensure that it is feasible and within the Council's legislative authority
- In June, there will be a vote on recommendations and report content
- 2 to 3 people in each small group (4 areas of interest and 12 group members)
  - Groups:
    - Educator, employment, and pay
    - Educator cultural responsiveness, competency, and inclusive curriculum
    - Supporting the needs of children ages 0-5
    - SRO and restorative justice practices
  - Information will be shared again on April 5<sup>th</sup>

**Karen thanked everyone and adjourns the meeting**