

DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION TASK FORCE

Education Subcommittee

TELEPHONE: (508) 841-8508

FAX: (508) 842-0587

deitaskforce@shrewsburyma.gov



TOWN OF SHREWSBURY

REMOTE MEETING

Google Meet: Dial [1 314-730-0978] Pin #: [132 365 765#]

Richard D. Carney Municipal Office Building

100 Maple Avenue

Shrewsbury, Massachusetts 01545-5398

MINUTES

Monday, September 27, 2021 at 7:00 PM

Important Notice: Pursuant to Senate Bill 2475 signed into law by Governor Baker on June 16, 2021 Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A, §18, this meeting of the **Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Task Force – Education Subcommittee** will be conducted via remote participation to the greatest extent possible. All meetings and hearings listed in the agenda will also be done so through remote participation. Specific information and the general guidelines for remote participation by members of the public and/or parties with a right and/or requirement to attend this meeting can be found on the town's website, at www.shrewsburyma.gov/coronavirus. No in-person attendance of members of the public will be permitted, but every effort will be made to ensure that the public can adequately access the proceedings in real time, via technological means. In the event that we are unable to do so, despite best efforts, we will post on the town's website an audio or video recording, transcript, or other comprehensive record of proceedings as soon as possible after the meeting. To listen to this meeting, dial [1 314-730-0978] and enter the following pin: [132 365 765#]. Please mute your device.

EDUCATION SUBCOMMITTEE

September 27, 2021

Present: Beth Casavant, Amy Cloutier, Deb DelDotto, Maura Egan, Lynsey Heffernan Barbara Malone, Adeola Mbaneme, Joe Sawyer, Priya Rathnam, Rajesh Velagapudi, Helen Horan Winn

Meeting was called to order at 7:05 pm by Chairperson Maura Egan. Maura shared the notice provision in regards to meeting virtually during COVID-19 pandemic.

A motion to accept the meeting meetings from September 7, 2021, was made by Lynsey Heffernan. A second was made by Rajesh Velagapudi. The Education Subcommittee approved the minutes as written.

First item of business

Public Safety committee explain their reasoning for the recommendation about the SRO

-No member of the Public Safety committee could attend the meeting this evening.

-The SRO recommendation is as follows; it is their draft recommendation.

#3 – END IN-SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICER (SRO) PROGRAM

- The Town of Shrewsbury has two (2) designated School Resource Officers – 1 for the elementary and middle schools and 1 for the high school. The National Association of School Resource Officers (NASRO), a trade organization for SROs defined the role as encompassing three responsibilities: law enforcement officer, counselor, and teacher.
- The prevalence of SRO programs has expanded over the past few decades, but despite millions in federal funding and local taxpayer dollars research overwhelmingly suggests that the presence of SROs has had no measurable impact on school safety. In fact, among certain demographic groups – including females and African-Americans – students report feeling less safe with SROs present.

2

- The link between SROs and the School to Prison Pipeline is definitive and one which is highly racialized. The presence of an SRO in a school increases the likelihood of expulsion due to disciplinary action (Pigott, 2016) which disproportionately affects students of color, specifically Black males. This trend holds true in Shrewsbury as “students who are economically disadvantaged, students with disabilities and black students are suspended at the highest rates” (Assabet 2020). The presence of SROs directly contributes to the criminalization of children of color as schools with SROs more frequently refer students to juvenile justice involvement even for non-serious, non-violent offenses (Nance 2015).
- We recommend ending the in-school resource officer program and instead focus on creating an alternative school safety/security plan and investing in new strategies and programs to foster positive Police-Youth interactions.

Discussion following review or recommendation

-With the exception of one member of the Public Safety Committee, all others voted in favor of the above recommendation.

-Beth C. shared the recommendation will go through the process after being presented to the Town of Shrewsbury Board of Selectman Thus no abrupt ending. The School Committee would also evaluate the current program.

-A national pole of SRO’s comes in negative, Lynsey shared

-SRO was not part of the Education Sub Committee work but the Committee members wanted to share the recommendation with the Shrewsbury School Administration to keep them informed.

-Beth C. is on the Public Safety subcommittee and she voted to keep SRO in our district. She also explained not all recommendations from the subcommittees will be implemented. Also, not all areas are under the School Committee and the town has been addressing DEI for over a year.

- Joe Sawyer gave appreciations for all the work the Education Subcommittee has done and all other subcommittees. The recommendation regarding the SRO will not be a simple process to address. Joe will discuss the recommendation with his administrators and the police chief. To date; No one from the Shrewsbury School Committee has talked to Shrewsbury school administrators regarding SRO. The school department will send information to the Board of Selectman regarding the recommendation i.e. how the SRO works in Shrewsbury. This will then be taken under advisement. Joe again shared his appreciation of the sharing with the Central office administrators.

-Amy understands how one might want to act on national data regarding SRO's but, we need to look at local data and take this into consideration.

-Maura, all are recommendation and will take time to review and implement. The DEI committee will be continuing.

-Rajesh, we need to review what we do on a local level and what our data tells us.

Beth Casavant left the meeting at 7:22. She was thanked for her participation.

2nd item of business

Sharing of the Education Subcommittee Recommendation

-Maura, Recommendations to work in partnership with the school department and it will take time to implement partnership. The goal is to have equity and belonging for our families and students.

-A copy of the four recommendations we sent in advance to the Amy, Barb, and Joe. And they were also shared on screen during the meeting. Priority levels will be removed before moved forward to the Select Board.

-Maura shared recommendation one on the screen and read it aloud

Recommendation One

Increase diversity in all staff across Shrewsbury Public Schools

Priority Level: High

Problem Statement

Ensure that all children and families feel included in all places and spaces in public schools and other Shrewsbury departments.

Solution or Recommendation for Plan or Approach

-Provide ongoing Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging (DEBI) training for all staff and new hires including anti-racism training- offer differentiated training opportunities

-Recommended antiracism training for new hires

-Consider adding a line in new contracts to disavow racism and bias

-Include a section in the employee handbook that disavows racism and bias

Deliverables and Success Criteria

Result #1: Beginning in 2022-2023 for the next five years increase the diversity of the candidate pool by 5% year over By the 2025 -26 school year, at least 40% of candidate pool will be diverse with the goal to hire a diverse staff, a 5% increase year over year yearly increase for the next five years

Result #2: By January 2022, inclusive language is used for all job postings

Result #3: By September 2022, conduct a comprehensive review of documents including staff handbooks and employee contracts (when in negotiations) to ensure language disavows racism.

-Barb thanked the group for our work. Increasing diversity of staff is important. Her department has been working on this for a few years and changes are ongoing.' Job posting language has been changed.

-Barb asked the Education Subcommittee if we have any suggestions to add to language in job postings.

-Lynsey, if change have been implemented, then progress has been made.

- Barb offered to meet with Lynsey to review current/recent job posting

-Maura questions asked during interviews are important

-Adeloa saw a recent posting on School Spring and liked it. Are there other sites/places to post positions and look for candidates?

-Barb, there are postings on college campuses and DESE is forming a committee to increase diversity.

Barb, final candidate pool is more diverse but overall applications for positions had decreased.

Recommendation Two

Focus on all families in Shrewsbury Public Schools

Priority Level: High

Problem Statement

Ensure that all children and families feel included in all places and spaces in public schools and other Shrewsbury departments.

Solution or Recommendation for Plan or Approach

Implement strategies which engage families and make all families welcome

Building principles should encourage diverse participation at PTO and all school events

Provide language translations for all reports shared with families to ensure full participation

Include interpreters at all family events when possible

Ensure all meetings which involve SPS include translations and close captions

Include more multicultural events in the schools and PTO meetings

Review fee structure for all school and town activities to ensure all families can be included

Offer a sliding scale fee for students on Free and Reduced Lunch program for school and town activities

Solicit donations and/or use monies donated to Colonial Connections Fund to be use for families who cannot meet the fees for school and town activities

Deliverables and Success Criteria

Result #1: Reduce overall fees charged to families, develop a sliding scale fee structure for all school district fees for the 2022-2023 academic year.

Result #2: Conduct a review of the current language access plan 2022-2023 school year and present finding to the school committee for recommendation and improvement.

Result #3: Create a pool of parent volunteers willing to assist with translation at various school and district wide events

Result #4: Building principal and PTOs shall review measures to encourage increasing participation by diverse families.

-Maura shared recommendation 2 on the screen and read it aloud

-Joe made a correction Colonial Fund, remove Connection. It is important to make families included and it is important to the school administration and will take this recommendation under advisement and explore were we can do better. There is currently a sliding scale for music lessons. How can we make sure we are getting the message out? The district has improved language access, there are more tools being utilized. Joe appreciates both areas are being address.

-Lynsey, recommendation 2, this lands on the School Committee. Fees can be a barrier and it needs to be readdressed, along with other spaces in the community.

-Priya ask a question regarding the ELL Director positon and has it been filled? Amy answered, the position is currently being filed by an interim this year. Christina Manos is the interim ELL Director. Amy will send contact important to Priya.

Recommendation 3

Focus on all students in Shrewsbury Public Schools

Priority Level: High

Problem Statement

Ensure that all children and families feel included in all places and spaces in public schools and other Shrewsbury departments.

Solution or Recommendation for Plan or Approach

Equal access to all curriculum by general education students, special education students and English language learners

Regularly engage with students regarding the climate in their schools, classrooms, and school activities

Continue to collect data on who is receiving special education services, participating in sports, on the honor roll, taking AP courses, participating in clubs

Continue to review and adjust curriculum materials to ensure diverse voices are present

Deliverables and Success Criteria

Result #1: All students receive ongoing anti-bias and implicit bias training by 2022 -23 school year

Result #2: Diversity Equity and Inclusion added to all harassment and bullying policies by 2022-23 school year

Result #3: Data collected shows an increase in diverse participants in sports, the honor roll, AP courses and clubs by 2022-2023 school year

Result #4: The district shall develop a plan to ensure that age appropriate anti-bias and implicit bias curriculum, components are added to the K-12 curriculum and shall report our annually to the School Committee

-Maura shared recommendation 3 on the screen and read it aloud, any questions or comments?

-Amy, acknowledged the Education Subcommittees hard work and care in their crafting of action steps

-Joe there is overlap the school district is doing internally. We are currently in year 4 of our 5 year strategic plan. We will build on this for 2023, as we look at the data collected.

Recommendation 4

Work in partnership with and parallel to Shrewsbury Public Schools Senior Leadership Team

Priority Level: High

Problem Statement

Ensure that all children and families feel included in all places and spaces in public schools and other Shrewsbury departments.

Solution or Recommendation for Plan or Approach

Data from the Panorama Survey will be collected and presented to the School committee and to the community at large. Data from the Panorama survey will be analyzed in the 2021-2022 school year to support improvement.

The DEI Task Force survey results will be reviewed by the Shrewsbury Public Schools Senior Leadership Team

Continue providing needed Professional development for staff throughout the 2021-2022 school year and beyond.

Deliverables and Success Criteria

Result #1: Ensure the district continues to address diversity and develop concrete plans that can be implemented so the entire SPS community is a community of belonging.

Result #2: using the Panorama survey results, conduct a gap analysis between where the district is today and where the district want to be in three years. From this, create an action plan for areas that need more focus and attention. This data can be measured year over year using this year's data as a baseline.

Result #3: Staff shall receive ongoing professional development based on the Panorama survey insights.

Result #4: Members from DEI Task Force and members of SPS Senior Leadership team will meet by April 2022 to discuss the results of the DEI Task Force survey and create an action plan for areas that need more focus and attention.

-Maura shared recommendation 4 on the screen and read it aloud

-Maura, the current DEI committee with end but there will be an ongoing DEI committee

-Joe the school district is starting to use Panorama and are looking forward to seeing the survey results. This will help with planning Professional Development. Some Professional Development is mandated by the state and Joe wishes there was more time to for Professional Development. The district will continue to included DEI in Professional Development and take the action plan under advisement.

Barb share she appreciates the work the Education subcommittee has done and thank you.

Amy shared her Thank You and appreciates the time all have devoted to the work

Joe is looking forward to moving forward and seeing what will happen in all town departments. Important elements have been addressed and will strengthen opportunities.

Speaking as the School Superintend, Shrewsbury resident, and parent appreciate all the work and for sharing this evening.

Helen shouted out a Thank You to Maura in all the work she has done leading the group. Deb agreed and there were many thanks given to all at the closing of the meeting.

Joe will begin to align the work the district is dong and add what was discussed this evening.

A motion was made by Lynsey Heffernan to adjourn the meeting. Adeola Mbaneme seconded the motion. All were in favor, the meeting was adjourned at 8:06.

Minutes submitted

Deb DelDotto, Education Sub-Committee Clerk