



***Joint Equity Advisory Council and Parents of Color Advisory Team Meeting
Minutes
August 3, 2021
5:00 PM – 6:30 PM***

Members Present (EAC)

Chair: Jessica Beeson

EAC Members: Jeffrey Cornish, Annette Dabney, Lois Orth-Lopes, John Rury, Gary Schmidt, Chris Tilden

School Board Members: Erica Hill, Paula Smith

Members Present (POC)

Chair: Kay Emerson

POC Members: Cassie Eanes Brown, Naomi Danso, Cynthia Eubanks, Kim Fuller, Adrineh Mehdikhani, Njeri Shomari

District Administrative Staff: Bill DeWitt, Jeff Harkin, Michelle Hunter, Dr. Cynthia Johnson, Mark Preut

Guests

Amber Brown and Ed Winchester, Equal Opportunity Schools

Sarah Balzer, Justice Matters

1. Welcome

Dr. Johnson welcomed everyone and shared her excitement for us to work together on our goal of doing what is best for the students of Lawrence USD 497.

2. Purpose of EAC and POC

Both groups serve in an advisory capacity to provide feedback and make recommendations to the Board of Education.

- Jessica Beeson shared that the Equity Advisory Council includes school board members, district staff, students, parents and community representatives. We need to look at inviting students to serve on this council.
- An update about SOAR and the Equity piece would be available in September.
- Kay Emerson said she was super excited to be here and to be working with Dr. Johnson. She said the Parents of Color Advisory Team (formerly DELTA-District Equity Leadership Team Advisory) consists of parents of color who serve to engage family and community members of color in working with district leadership on racial equity issues to ensure that students of all races and backgrounds achieve, succeed, and graduate future-ready.
- These two groups are meeting together virtually on the first Tuesday of the month from 5:00 PM to 6:30 PM (except when they need to cancel/reschedule due to scheduling conflicts).

3. District Theme 2021-2022 Overview

Dr. Johnson shared the district theme for our upcoming 2021-2022 school year was “**REBUILD REBOUND RENEW**” and is reiterated in everything we’ve done. Addressing skill gaps remains important.

- Our focus is our students, faculty, staff and community.
- We are rebounding—we can’t jump in and act like everything is perfect
- We need to acknowledge complex trauma and stress.
- Faculty and staff need to revise their lessons.
- We are dealing with families that are in a place they have never been before. They are dealing with illness, stress, job loss and other situations. We all have to work on equity for all. It is important that there is access and opportunities for all of our students. The return to school on August 21st will be unlike any other.

Annette Dabney said,” Thank you, Dr. Johnson, for acknowledging our reality and that we have been through something and support is needed!!!! THANK YOU VERY MUCH!!”

4. Equal Opportunity Schools Report

Amber Brown from Equal Opportunity Schools gave a report on a presentation that was shared at the last Board meeting. This report shared what our district is doing to ensure students of all backgrounds have equal access to advanced placements and opportunities to succeed at the highest levels and development of critical thinking skills.. Ms. Brown shared that students in 11th and 12th grades were given surveys to complete in the fall, and followed with a spring experience survey.

- Many students do not feel challenged in their classes.
- One blindspot that was shared was that some students don’t know adults believe in them.
- The survey and site cards that students completed gave insight to teachers as to what students wanted, what their experiences have been, and what support might be needed. It gives staff support teams a student background before they moved here and is a great starting point. It assures support and belonging opportunities for growth.
- It is very important and critical that every student’s voice is heard.
- Dr. Lewis had shared a data point with staff that six teachers from the insight cards were students’ most trusted adults.
- Jeff Harkin shared that what students wanted from teachers opened many teachers’ eyes to EOS.
- There was some discussion about the focus on these surveys at an earlier age. It was suggested that the great divide begins at the 5th and 6th grade levels. Some felt it might be helpful to share this data from the high schools with the middle schools. Mark Preut said this was a great opportunity for freshmen and sophomores to be introduced to AVID.
- It is incredibly important to hear the voices of the historically unrepresented.
- Paula Smith said it was shocking to see the results of the EOS report for our indigenous students.
- Ed Winchester, Equal Opportunity Schools will be replacing Amber Brown in our work with EOS. He said he is looking forward to the opportunity to invite middle school teachers to our EOS meetings.

5. Restorative Practice

Dr. Johnson said that there would be Restorative Justice training for two half days next week for new faculty staff at LHS, FSHS, the College and Career team, middle schools and paraprofessionals.

- There will be a student handbook and district handbook statement regarding Restorative Practice.
- There will also be a Restorative Practice Information flyer for students, parents and community.
- Next month we will begin having a community monthly behavior update for secondary schools.
- The district is busy with determining what the next level for Restorative Practice would look like.
- There needs to be a shift in our mindset on what we do. It needs to be upscale in behavior on the restorative side to a higher level than our punitive side. We need to peacefully resolve conflicts.
- Restorative Practice comes from the indigenous populations.
- There was some discussion about concerns over Restorative Practice replacing our equity work in the district. Dr. Johnson assured everyone this is not happening. **Equity work will continue to be a big part of our district!**

6. Student Handbook Revisions 2021-2022 School Year

Dr. Johnson shared that there would be student handbook revision for the 2021-2022 school year.

7. New Membership Process

We discussed having a new membership process. It was suggested that we look at the attendance of current members and reach out to some members to see if they want to remain on these committees. We need to talk to high school staff for suggestions on students to recruit.

8. Fall School Assignments

Jessica Beeson and Kay Emerson will update us at the next meeting on the fall school assignments. We will reach out to site council members.

9. For the Good of The Order

Dr. Johnson reiterated, **“Equity work will not go away in Lawrence Public Schools!”**

10. Next Meeting

Our next meeting will be on Tuesday, Sept. 7, 2021 from 5:00 PM to 6:30 PM. This will be a virtual meeting, but if someone feels strongly about this, please reach out to the Co-Chairs. We may have breakout meetings for the two groups.

Dr. Johnson said it was nice to meet everyone. We have a lot of work to do as we enter the new school year. We cannot allow the pandemic to impact the work we do. We will do this work because children are depending on us!

Notes taken by Michelle Hunter.

From the Office of Dr. Cynthia Johnson, Executive Director of Inclusion, Engagement, & Belonging

Restorative Practices at Lawrence Public Schools

Lawrence Public Schools is committed to contributing to a positive school climate, ensuring that all students have multiple systems of support focused on sustained and supportive relationships and relational accountability. Restorative Justice, also called restorative practices, is an alternative approach to the more traditional punitive discipline and school culture. It is a worldview deeply rooted in the practices and values of Indigenous Peoples around the globe. Restorative Practices “focuses on community building, belongingness, and peaceably resolving conflicts by creating opportunities for those involved to listen empathetically to one another’s stories, to repair any harm that may have occurred, and to restore positive relationships within the school community” (*Restorative Schools: An Introduction to Tier 1 Practices Manual*, Restorative Schools Initiative, KIPCOR, 2021, 7).

By engaging in a multi-year Restorative Justice Implementation Plan in partnership with the Restorative Schools Initiative of the Kansas Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution (KIPCOR) at Bethel College, LPS commits to establishing safer and healthier schools, as well as stronger systems of support for students, families, and the community as a whole.

Defining Restorative Justice and Restorative Practice

Restorative Justice refers to a **set of principles and values with a foundational orientation towards healing and repair as a relational response to harm and wrongdoing.**

Restorative Practice often refers to these principles and values as applied in the school setting, including particular focus on the **foundation of relationship-building** and positive community culture development.

The core questions of Restorative Justice ask:

- Who was hurt?
- What are their needs?
- Who has responsibility to address those needs?
- What process should be used including those who have been affected?

These questions guide an orientation toward repair and responsibility over punishment, and needs and obligations in relationships rather than broken rules.

Restorative practice requires us to:

- Re-evaluate our understanding of broken rules and consequences.
- View misbehavior primarily as an offense against human relationships.
- Foster awareness by asking questions to help students understand how their behavior has affected others.
- Separate the deed from the doer—to recognize the student’s strengths while acknowledging that the student made a poor choice.

A Vision for Restorative Schools

A **Restorative School** – a school community with sustained and supported relationships which is capable of repairing harm through relational accountability – demonstrates the values of restorative justice, which include:

- **Respect** – All members of the community are seen as valuable and worthy, and thus treated with dignity, recognizing the diversity of individual paths and needs.

- Mutuality – A recognition that we are interconnected, and individual wellbeing is dependent on our collective wellbeing. No one is free until all are free. If one is harmed, all are affected. When one rises, all rise.
- Inclusivity – Those who are most impacted have voice and leadership in decision-making.
- Shared Responsibility – We have responsibility for the impact of our actions and behaviors. When harm occurs, we support each other in taking responsibility and hold each other accountable.
- Justice as Healing and Repair – Justice is not seen as vengeance, or arbitrary punishment. Further, our mistakes do not define us. Rather, when harm occurs, the demand is to seek for that which repairs, makes right, and offers opportunity for healing and education rather than arbitrary punishment.

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For more information: <http://kipcor.org/Restorative-Schools/>.