



***Joint Equity Advisory Council and Parents of Color Advisory Team  
Meeting Minutes  
June 7, 2022  
5:00 PM-6:30 PM***

**Members Present (EAC):**

**Chair:** Jessica Beeson

**EAC Members:** Annette Dabney, John Rury, Gary Schmidt

**Members Present (POC):**

**POC Members:** Rosina Aguire Kalusha, Cassie Eanes Brown, Cynthia Eubanks, Kim Fuller, Njeri Shomari

**School Board Members:** Kay Emerson

**Executive Leadership Team Member Responsible:**

Dr. Cynthia Johnson, Executive Director, Inclusion, Engagement, and Belonging

**LPS Administrators, Curriculum Specialists, Executive Directors, and Facilitators:**

Dr. Danica Moore, Equity Facilitator

Emerson Hoffzales, LEA Vice President

Kelly Walker, Coordinator III, Native American Student Services

Mark Preut, Associate Principal, Lawrence High

**Meeting Minutes:**

**Welcome:**

Dr. Johnson welcomed everyone to the meeting. She said she appreciates our partnership as we have gone full circle now in our meetings. Annette Dabney took us through the four agreements of Courageous Conversations.

**Vision for Moving Forward:**

Dr. Johnson is working with the Policy Committee to update our mission statements. This committee also includes Kristin Ryan, Executive Director of Human Resources and Dr. Quentin Rials who brings a legal perspective as he is a lawyer. Dr. Johnson will share feedback from tonight's meeting with the Policy Committee on Thursday.

**Review/Role of Equity Advisory Council Vision/Mission - Board Committee:**

**Equity Advisory Council Mission Statement:**

The Equity Advisory Council serves in an advisory capacity to provide feedback and make recommendations to the Board of Education as work progresses on district goals in order to eliminate disparities and ensure that ALL students achieve, succeed, and graduate future-ready.

This group meets monthly on the 1st Tuesday of the month from 5:00-6:30 PM (except when they need to cancel/reschedule due to scheduling conflicts). This group regularly merges with the Parents of Color Advisory (POC). All meetings are being held virtually at this time.

The Equity Advisory Council includes school board members, district staff, students, parents, and community representatives. To obtain further information, please contact the EAC Chair: Jessica Beeson: [jessmbeeson@gmail.com](mailto:jessmbeeson@gmail.com)

### **Suggested Changes:**

- **Statement limits EAC to district goals and the function of the group to identify other issues and questions the district may not be undertaking. The statement seems to narrow the purpose.**
- **The statement should pinpoint what we want to improve on for marginalized students, not just district, but also community. That should drive what we do in our schools.**
- **EAC brings issues from the community to discuss as well as district goals.**
- **Meeting in person is helpful and powerful as far as collaboration. It makes it easier to look at data and to break down into different cohorts. There should be virtual access to meetings as well.**
- **Change the word “merges” to “meets” (second line, second paragraph). It was questioned whether this line needed to be there. Some members would like to see it removed.**
- **There was a suggestion to say “periodically meets as needed.”**
- **Other suggestions were:**
  - **Both EAC and POC do not meet regularly, but as needed.**
  - **“as necessary or as needed”**
  - **“collectively meet to hear each other’s voices”**
  - **“meets as necessary on needs or topics”**
  - **“collaborate rather than merge”**
  - **“regularly meets rather than collaborate”--several members said collaborate sounded so much better**
- **Change the start time from 5:00 PM to 5:30 PM.**
- **Specify what type of students we want on this committee (i.e. elementary, middle, high school.**
- **Specify what type of community members EAC want on this committee.**

As we began to review the first paragraph of this statement, Dr. Johnson said she has gone back to April 10, 2017 to make sure our mission statement was correct. She asked if there was any portion of this to send to the board as it relates to the first part of the mission and vision.

John Rury commented that the statement seems to limit EAC to district goals and the function of the group to identify other issues and questions the district may not be undertaking. The statement seems to narrow the purpose.

Dr. Johnson said back in 2017 it looked like the purpose of EAC was to broaden the perspective. John Rury said part of the discussion back then was how to best help marginalized students. Annette Dabney added that the statement should pinpoint what we want to improve on for those students, not just district, but also community. That should drive what we do in our schools. Gary Schmidt said the EAC brings issues from the community to discuss as well as district goals.

It was decided that Tuesday is as good a day as any to continue with our EAC meetings. It is our hope to meet in person as there was power in doing so. Kay Emerson said if we meet in person, there should still be virtual

access. John Rury said meeting in person is helpful and powerful as far as collaboration. Dr. Johnson said there is power in meeting in person and coming together to look at the work and the achievement data—data informing us how our students are doing. It makes it easier to break down into different cohorts.

Cynthia Eubanks brought up the need to change the word “merge” and that both EAC and POC not meet regularly, but as needed. There was some discussion about this. Cynthia suggested “meets” vs “merges” and it was asked if this statement needed to be put in there? Kim Fuller said as it has been communicated, it needs to be taken out. Cynthia agreed. Dr. Johnson said she is gathering feedback from this group to share. Gary Schmidt suggested saying “periodically meets as needed.” He added that both groups are worth keeping in there. Cynthia Eubanks suggested “as necessary or as needed.” Annette Dabney said “collectively meet to hear each other’s voices”—there was power in that. “Meets as necessary on needs or topics.” Dr. Danica Moore said a better word would be “collaborate” rather than merge. Dr. Johnson said it had been originally italicized, which led her to believe it wasn’t every single time. John Rury asked if we wanted “regularly meets” rather than “collaborate.” Several members said collaborate sounded so much better.

Dr. Johnson asked about the time of 5:00 PM to 6:30 PM and what members thought. Njeri Shomani asked where did this come from? She said the purpose of the council was in the 4/24/2017 advisory minutes when it first began revamping and restarting the council. Dr. Johnson said it came from a report that was sent to the Policy Committee on 4/10/2017. Njeri Shomari asked if we could change the start time to 5:15 PM or 5:30 PM? It is hard for members with younger children and/or work to make the 5:00 PM time. Kay Emerson would like for us to acknowledge the barrier for these members.

Jessica Beeson announced that she needed to step down as the Chair of the Equity Advisory Council as she feels she cannot give it the attention it needs. She is hopeful somebody wants to step up in this position to work with Dr. Johnson to set up the agenda and to intervene in meetings. Dr. Johnson said she appreciates the work Jessica has given to these committees throughout the years. We are now advising that we have a chair position open. Kay Emerson asked if we needed to continue to have a chair in these settings. She said other committees have no chairs, such as the district site council. Dr. Johnson said this will be part of the conversation she will have on Thursday.

Njeri Shomari asked if we could be specific about students for these committees. Instead of being general, could we say if they are elementary, middle school, or high school across the board in capacities inclusive of all kinds of students, students from every school. There were specific things in 2017 regarding what kind of representation from staff and from community—specific organizations. In EAC and POC, talk about who you would like to work with from the community and put this through an equity lens and full community lens.

Dr. Johnson said the Policy Committee last month looked at how EAC is put together and the different types of groups on these committees. Do we need to revise the vision and mission statements to a completely different level? We know the vision for 2017, but is it part of the conversation in 2022? Kay Emerson said when looking at the mission and vision statements, think about community members; come with recommendations and suggestions. What do we want to accomplish? If it helps people, think about what kind of information you want to share.

Dr. Johnson stated the Policy Committee will be looking at all committees. What does that look like? Sound like? If you have thoughts or comments, please reach out to Dr. Johnson or Michelle to have them shared with the Policy Committee. There will be an Equity Report and Board Policy Report coming.

## **Review/Role of Parents of Color Advisory Team Vision/Mission:**

### **PARENTS OF COLOR ADVISORY TEAM:**

The Parents of Color Advisory Team (formerly DELTA-District Equity Leadership Team Advisory) serves in an advisory capacity to provide feedback and make recommendations to the Board of Education. This group 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.

POC meets monthly on the 1st Tuesday of the month between 5:00-7:00 PM except when they need to cancel/reschedule due to scheduling conflicts.) This group regularly merges with the Equity Advisory Council (EAC). All meetings are held virtually at this time.

### **Suggested Changes:**

- **Parents of Color Advisory Team or Parents of Color Advisory?**
- **Parent of Children of Color?**
- **Parents only or Community of Color?**
- **People of Color Advisory?**
- **POC consists of parents and community members.**
- **Are we concerned only about racial issues or all educational issues relative to all children of color?**
- **Remove: “This group 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.”**
  - **In regards to the above sentence, move away from deficit-based language and behavior. Anytime race/racial is followed by words like “issue” it reaffirms the notion that race is an issue rather than “people who are conditioned to have an issue with race.”**
  - **If racial equity is going to be a focal point, it should also include ethnic equity, as Latinx (or Hispanic) identity is not considered a racial category.**
  - **We should be mindful of words we use in our mission and goals.**
  - **Suggested “...with district leadership to ensure that students of all races and backgrounds achieve, succeed, and graduate future-ready while keeping a racial equity at the forefront of decisions.”**
- **District staff not well represented in POC.**
- **EAC and POC should start out together in a meeting, but then break into two different groups to do relevant work to that respective group.**
- **When discussing or writing about “district” such as members, please be specific about their role in the district (i.e. principal, administrator, secretary, etc.).**
- **POC wants a space that is comprised of only people of color. This is important to POC to feel safe and to be able to express themselves without fear of retaliation or being silenced. They need a space to speak their truth. This group was formed for affinity and it should be firmly communicated.**
- **Change the start time from 5:00 PM to 5:30 PM.**

As we began our review, the question came up regarding the name of this group. Is it the Parents of Color Advisory Team, or Parents of Color Advisory? Which one is it? Cynthia Eubanks said we struggled with the name: POC, DELTA, POCAT (which had a negative connotation) and it was shortened to POC Advisory. She said it was an issue we struggled with for quite some time. We need to go through our goals and mission before we decide on a name. Kay Emerson said it was POCAT. Njeri Shomari said she believed we ended up with POCA. Cynthia Eubanks said POC was controversial—are we concerned only about racial issues or all

educational issues relative to all children of color? Do we go with Parent of Children of Color? This was debated and discussed before. Do we leave it alone as it is? Cynthia said this was a concern of hers. Kim Fuller said it wasn't only parents, it was parents and community members.

Cynthia Eubanks said she would like to see the sentence: ["This group 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"](#) removed. Kay Emerson said the group consists of individuals of color. Cynthia Eubanks clarified the focus on students not just racially challenged but everything. Not just issues relative to racial issues, but including math and science. District not interested because we aren't educated participants. POC should include all aspects of their child's life. Dr. Johnson said we should invite different groups to the table. For example, next year when we focus on safety, make sure we have representation at the table. Kim Fuller said community members of color need to be represented. She said one great example of a community member was Dr. Taylor. Kay Emerson said "thank you" for that. EAC community members need to express an interest and specify that. Kay said the site council members specify where they are coming from. Dr. Johnson said not just parents, parents and community members are huge! She said she appreciates Kim's example of Dr. Taylor! Gary Schmidt said that the EAC includes district staff and that it appears top heavy. District staff are not well represented in POC. Perhaps this was an oversight when set up. It was not an oversight by Dr. Johnson. Cynthia Eubanks said we used to meet in two different places at the same time. Dr. Johnson said follow up was separate in 2019 in language. She will capture that we feel we will have representation to start out together and then disperse to work on two different things.

In discussing the removal of the previous highlighted sentence, Dr. Danica Moore asked: "What are the group's thoughts on moving away from deficit-based language? Anytime race/racial is followed by words like "issue" it reaffirms the notion that race is an issue rather than "people who are conditioned to have an issue with race." Njeri Shomari said: "Agreed moving away from deficit-based language and behavior is imperative." Many people expressed that they agreed! John Rury added: "If racial equity is going to be a focal point, it should also include ethnic equity, as Latinx (or Hispanic) identity is not considered a racial category." Emerson Hoffzales agreed with Dr. Moore and said we should be mindful of words we use in our mission and goals. Emerson suggested: "...with district leadership to ensure that students of all races and backgrounds achieve, succeed, and graduate future-ready while keeping a racial equity at the forefront of decisions." We could resolve this simply as language being changed and move from deficit language. Dr. Johnson asked that we think about the wording.

Kay Emerson said she was curious about what the differences were between EAC and POC. Anything that can help? Dr. Moore said the board meetings used Roberts Rules to set their agenda. EAC moved away from strictures. Folks of color came to the floor inclusive to break away and it was important to have the space to step away. Kay said we should provide space for individuals to elevate their voices. Njeri Shomari said EAC did not pop up until POC was in motion. She continued with the history and said EAC had been defunct for quite a while. It formed in 1986 and came alive. People did not need district permission to help our children. Annette Dabney said she was around at that time and that EAC kept decreasing the amount of meetings. There was a minimal amount of people and it was not functioning in the way it started out. The decrease in membership and meeting times did not seemingly serve a great purpose at that time. Kay said that she would like to see the board have feedback before voting on adoptions. Dr. Johnson said we already have board members on the Policy Committee and we are showing progress.

There was a discussion about the meeting start time. Cynthia Eubanks asked that we do what we decided with EAC and meet at 5:30 PM to alleviate problems with working parents and parents of small children. She said it was something they have discussed on and off for several years. Dr. Johnson said she would be

sending out a survey on this. Dr. Moore asked for clarification as to who would be getting the survey, community or district? Would the survey be regarding meeting times or community members? Kay Emerson said it would be great to offer it to community members. Dr. Johnson said it would have a spot to say whether you were a district member or community member. Njeri Shomari asked that it be clear as to what the district means. Who? Please be clear as to what the titles are: Principal, teacher, secretary, Executive Leadership Team—be more specific. The question came up as to whether this group should be People of Color instead of Parent of Color? Kim Fuller asked if it was Parents only or Community of Color? Dr. Moore asked if it should be People of Color Advisory? Dr. Johnson said she will take this to the Policy Committee. Kay asked if we may revisit this. Dr. Johnson said we would at our next meeting on August 2, 2022.

Cynthia Eubanks brought up a question from a former POC member: Are we still going to have a closed group of parents of color? Consider parents not of color, but parents of children of color. This is something we struggled with in the past. Kay Emerson said we should focus on students of color outcomes. Parents of students of color should have a voice. Njeri Shomari stated that POC needs a safe space and it is not always safe when a person of another persuasion is present—they can't express themselves. Whether it is groups at individual schools or parents of students of color in their own spaces, reserve this space to speak freely without a lot of administrators and fear of retribution. Annette Dabney agreed with Njeri. We all learn together and while we can see a benefit of a larger group, we need a space without repercussions, or being shut down to be able to safely speak our truth. It brings us opportunity and is needed now. Dr. Johnson said we will keep it as POC. Dr. Moore said we needed this space. We know what happens when white kids dominate and how it shows up. This group was formed for affinity and it should be firmly communicated. Njeri Shomari said people of color are still an affinity group. It is a microaggression to what we do to have someone else not of color show up. What is it about this that they cannot understand? POC has spoken. This has been going on for years. This is our space. End of story. They can participate in the Equity Council. Njeri went on to say this is an issue—coming for us and our space. Why is nobody saying that for EAC. Dr. Johnson said this is a space for parents of color.

#### **Upcoming Data-Informed Decision Making Board Report:**

Dr. Johnson advised the group that at the June 27th Board meeting, board reports would be presented that show where we are in the work we are doing every day which talks about our promise:

*Lawrence Public Schools will ensure that students of all races, backgrounds, and abilities achieve at high levels, demonstrate proficiency in reading by third grade and in math by eighth grade, and graduate on time prepared for success in college and careers.*

Our reports will show exactly where we are as it relates to third grade reading and eighth grade math. Dr. Johnson wanted to bring this to your attention. There is a divide not only at Lawrence Public Schools, but in our nation. Dr. Johnson has arranged to have this clip recorded and will send it out to you after the meeting.

We have been busy doing our final building goals check-ins this week.

Kay Emerson said she appreciated Dr. Johnson and her team's work. It is grounded and awesome. She also reminded everyone that Juneteenth was around the corner. There is a Juneteenth celebration going on at the Lied Center, Saturday, June 18th (7:30 PM to 8:30 PM). Come see Kay and Erica Hill in "Love Does: A Celebration of Juneteenth!" Celebrate freedom of African Americans and why we are part of the American culture!

Dr. Johnson asked if there was anything else for the good of the order. She said our next meeting will be on Tuesday, August 2, 2022. Please remember the opportunity to add anything else to our Policy Committee meeting and contact Michelle Hunter by 3:00 PM on Wednesday, June 8, 2022.

Notes by Michelle Hunter

From the desk of Dr. Cynthia Johnson, Executive Director, Inclusion, Engagement, and Belonging