

## Meeting #5 Notes

- Agenda:**
- 1) Opening/purpose**
  - 2) Voices of Students**
  - 3) Dialogue: What are you learning, wondering, connecting?**
  - 4) Brief update from research team**
  - 5) Next steps**
  - 6) Closing/cards**

Guest Panel: Yohann (Big Picture), Andrea (Interlake), Oumie (Sammamish), Nami (Interlake), Tracey (Bellevue), Nosaiba (Interlake)

1) What do you feel your school has done well to create a safe and positive environment for all students? What are some good things? (5:10 – 12:19)

Tracey: Well they put in effort, that is a great start. Are they doing well? Probably not, because kids get singled out. Smarter kids hang out with smarter kids, the not so smart ones hangout together. As to what they've done to how to collect them all to make them aware that they are being seen by the school, that's a good start. But as of now, effort is all I can give them

Nami: The different clubs and groups (mental health clubs and inclusive clubs).

Oumie: I can't think of anything right now but I feel like they have attempted to have us feel safe and represented as of right now because we have had past issues and we spoke up. Student voiced their opinion and wanted things our way.

Andrea: I think that when we voice our opinions and is heard. The opinions support student bodies and efforts of reaching out.

Yohann: I agree with what I have heard so far that there is effort, for example, there are surveys at the end and the beginning of the year which include questions regarding equity, bullying & others. They encourage us to learn about equity. There's support from the school. EX: SOAR (Students Organize Against Racism)

Nosaiba: Student's inputs and voices are really valued. Especially this year, we reach 40 clubs at our school. It is nice to have most of them about identity clubs. A lot of them are not just about race but also religion and other things that are nice to have. To have student's input and be represented.

Nami: I don't recall if we have harassment training 2 years ago but we had it this year.

2) What would you want your school to do better, so that all students feel welcome? (12:20 – 21:00)

Nami: Social wise, Gifted and non-Gifted. Have the school make it so the Gifted kids immerse with non-Gifted kids. Less separation (us & them). I see it in the hall ways, pretty much everywhere

Oumie: I agree. When you get into the lunchroom, you can see separation, black kids will hang together, then there's the white kids and the Asian students. You can see the segregation. I think it is because students felt uncomfortable after what happened last year, that brought us together but afterwards people who had lots of white friends did not hang out with their friends anymore. They don't have conflict or anything, they will talk but you don't see them hanging around each other. We should find a better way to figure this whole thing out.

Andrea: We see freshman in one section and mostly whites. Sophomore will hang together. They have said things about us and it's not true or we've heard things said. Not a lot of Hispanics, me and my friend have said something to administration or teachers, but it is not effective. Teachers and administrative should understand when we tell them our experiences.

Yohann: Ideally, all people come together. At Big Picture, high school is small, and we all come together. All my friends are Hispanics. Overall, find something can bring us all together.

Nosaiba: Our school is too busy emphasizing academic success rather than social integration, especially Gifted. Clubs are doing some parts but for example, this year we had one African American teacher and we all thought it was cool. I would love to see more representation, we had one Muslim substitute and we all thought it was really cool.

Tracey: I think having an adult who is comfortable to talk to is vital because Mr. Richards class is right there. It is the most colorful class and office you will walk into, that is where people can feel safe and talk to. Teachers that they can talk to, because they do not just need teachers but someone they can talk to.

3) Do you think BSD is meeting its goal for equity based on your experiences at school? Give grade

Oumie: C, because we don't represent a lot of students. We focus on the bigger group. Yes, there's black, white, Asian. I have an issue going on right now at our school because Ramadan (1 month long). Prom is going to be June 1<sup>st</sup>, and the end of Ramadan is June 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup>. We went to get it moved up for 3 days, and I grew up seeing my sister go to prom. We have a lot of Muslim kids at my school, they are not going to go to prom because school was not willing to move the date for us. The school haven't done anything about it and I feel like they are not represented.

Andrea: Low C, almost D. Culture is not represented a lot.

Yohann: Low B, high C. I feel like the effort is there this is kind of a new thing. I am guessing you guys have been trying to do this for about a year now. Earlier, I don't think it was much of a priority. You are kind of new, you guys are trying, you are learning. Keep up the effort, eventually you will get it.

Nosaiba: Give my school a B. There is like so much effort especially at our school. Especially in our health class, where they had an LGBTQ panel, one of the coolest thing in that semester. In terms of identity and education in general, that is one of the groups that we don't hear from or they don't speak up as much. Doing it in health class especially is telling them that they are heard. Gender oriented awareness violence advocacy club is crazy to see how many people relate and are affected by it.

Tracey: F+ for the school, not the district. F because metaphorically, the school is in a math class but they are learning English in a math class. Like, administrative (principals and such) will roam the hallway and bust a black child and tell them to go to class when there is a group of white children having a full-

on conversation but they will bust a black kid. I don't even think admin can look at an Asian student and probably not know our name. I feel like they want to put in an effort and they are trying but they are not approaching it the right way. They want equality but are quick to bust a black child to go to class and not the white kid standing there having a snack.

Nami: C+ because not religiously represented. And for what Andrea said about when you walk into school, you see a bunch of different groups divided into race.

Tracey: I just want teachers to see me as a student. Don't look at me as a student of color because at the end of the day, I am just here to learn. I don't want to be seen as an asian student because when we are singled out, it can be seen as an attack.

Oumie: I agree with Tracey. Last year, I was that student that would get blamed for things. I was that "skipper" because I was with a group of friends, about 6 of us. We would sit in the back of the lunch room and there will be a bunch of white kids sitting in front but they will skip them and go to us to question, "why we aren't going to class? You guys are skippers." We would not stay in school if we were skipping. My reason for skipping class was because I felt so uncomfortable, I was in a history class and we were watching a video about slavery. Students would turn and look at me like, "oh, how are you feeling about this?". The reason I don't answer questions in class is because they look for confirmations from other students in class. Even if I answer a question right, they will still look at another student for confirmation. Those are one of the reasons we didn't go to class. Teachers assume we hate school, we have to tell them that is not why. All they have to do is ask if everything is okay. Sometimes, we just don't feel comfortable.

Andrea: In freshman year, I was the only Hispanic in my class and I sat in the back of the class. Sophomore year, me and my friends realized that our schedule did not allow us to have time together. They did not trust us to do something good, that is uncomfortable. Assistant principal who is male goes into the bathroom and very controlling asking to see what is in my hand.

Yohann: B- because we all have different experiences. This give everybody a chance. Putting aside stereotypes, see me as a student, help me want to succeed. Don't treat me anything less than what you treat a normal person.

Nosaiba: Not much else, but it is always about the teacher/student connection. Teacher should set the rules for classroom when sensitive topics do come up to allow students to feel more comfortable in classroom.

### **Questions for students from the EAG:**

Lynn J.: *Many of the students says that they don't want to be seen by their color, but do you feel that your teacher should understand, tell me your idea how that works together.*

Yohann: Recognize that there's colors, cultures and different kinds of background and help celebrate and treat all equally

Nosaiba: I disagree because basically you should be able to be out there with your identity. For example, my friend who is into sport and very athletic and she wears a hijab. It's really about being out there

because if she hadn't done it I would have felt out of space. I would want to be more represented for myself than be hiding.

Nami: I agree.

Tracey: Having a mutual respect and that is common sense everywhere. Just be aware of everybody's background because not everyone comes from the same one as you are. Be aware and accept it and treat someone as you would treat another person.

Shomari J.: *What is your definition of racial equity?*

Nosaiba: Filling out survey and not finding myself there is disappointing. I cannot find a category that I fit in, especially in Egypt, I am considered as white but Egypt is Africa, and I'm not black either. We need more options.

Yohann: Identification, ways to identify us and representation.

Tracey: Shooting for equality. Everyone is given the same playing card and they are supposed to deal with it. Equity for me is accommodating everybody's personal needs. If it means giving them certain cards so they can play better and certain cards to other students, so they can also play better.

LeAnn T.: *Build off of Shomari, are specific processes in your school you can think of that have created a situation among students that created inequity? How one situation is handled at one time vs another?*

Oumie: A couple of times I have brought up certain situations to teachers and staff, it was basically brushed aside. We had to speak up last year, you have to do something. We also had survey about whether or not we feel safe, only 33% felt like they belong. For me, I have to deal with stuff outside of school that I don't want to deal with in school. People can already see that I am black, I don't want to deal with that in school.

Andrea: Letting teachers know about situation in October, they will open an investigation, but it was closed down after a day. Graduation success coach who is Hispanic has helped us since we have grown so close to him. He gives us strengths to speak up.

### **7:15pm. Dialogue: What are you hearing, learning, wondering and connecting?**

Jill R.: I was struck with the comment that "School feels like math class." I was at Elementary school for 3 years, was very community focused. Teachers are given so much curriculum, all the social and community go to the waste side. That piece gets lost w/ more that we have to pile on our plate.

Maina T.: They all wanted to have equal respect as a common theme for them. For them to say that, means that they are experiencing that disrespect.

Susie P.: They were saying that the clubs and groups helped them, but it is run by students. So, is that the school doing it well or allowing them (the students) to do it right?

Keri D.: Without you going and educating yourself. How can we as educators or families or community help everyone understands what those pieces look like. For example: Oumie, I didn't know that she was Muslim by looking at her. How do I know what perspective I have for her by looking at her?

Monica W.: I guess I feel like that is where that teacher/student connection comes into place. I feel like if the kids feel like they can make a connection. When that connection is there, it creates a safe space. You are able to cater what is in front of you, maybe the solution is figuring out the connection piece. How can I better connect to my students, how can I create a safe space, how can I (teacher) feel comfortable enough to ask.

Keri D.: We can only teach so much as an educator, how can we do it as a community. Everyone focus on community in elementary school, it is culture, big family and everyone feeds on that. The bigger they get the more freedom they have.

Pia D.: I thought it was disappointing and upsetting to hear that schools are physically seeing these groups form. It is disturbing to hear about. I have heard stories but listening to the students today gave me live proof.

LeAnn T.: They don't feel heard, when they spoke up, it fell on deaf ears. The relationship is there, but we have to prove to them that they are heard.

Haruka K.: Stereotypical response from teachers. Ex: go to black students first vs. white student. Maybe open up and accept them also be neutral.

Chhoun M.: This affirms there is a need for this group. We have a lot of work to do, we have a moral professional obligation to learn about individuals that come to us. We have this privilege to see so many different people from so many different dialogues and cultures so we don't have to go out there to access this diversity. As community members, if you are trying to learn about the community you live in, you have to look at the people you surround yourself with. And if you are seeing people who look like you, you aren't doing much to expand. After listening to proofs of students tonight, it makes me question, who really listens to them. It is disheartening as an educator, I have heard from high school students before that we do have this effort. We have these teachers that can attend beyond diversity, we have these teachers that need to go.

Alma G.: I was talking to group of teachers, basically I know to stop looking at students and their families as a stereotype. We all have a story behind us, at least the story you don't know. 12 years ago was my 1<sup>st</sup> round table in equity at BSD. As an immigrant family in the district, this time around it breaks my heart to hear. How are we delivering this effort? It is easy to point the finger.

Lynn J.: It all comes down to delivery being very intentional, it's a people problem. Things can be interpreted in so many ways when it is written. How to we make that deeply a part of what we are? Kids know from the very beginning that this is not tolerable or they understand that this is not what we do here. Teachers are not responding correctly, so our kids are not being injured over and over again. Kids should feel safe in school.

Ana G.: They are at the end of their educational journey here with us. I teach in a 5<sup>th</sup> grade classroom and I am very aware of those issues and I feel such a sense of urgency. We want to fix things as educators, but it can lead to band-aid solutions. Students at every grade level should feel safe at school.

Huaxia Z. There is a serious culture gap with students, and with parents. Teachers can spend more time to help each and every student but it's also important for parents to help students come together

Paul S.: I was thinking what they were saying implicates through all levels of the school and reinforces what work we want to do in our school: academics, social and emotional learning. Relationship between teachers and students. It's easy to care about our students; it's just a choice.

Maria O.: I know that as a teacher, first year I was so overwhelmed and time is filled with curriculum (bell to bell). I have been taking every Monday to get to know each student and to talk about "rainbows and unicorns" and play some videos. I still feel the pressure to fill my curriculum but I take the time.

Susie P.: Can we look at policies surrounding curriculum, bell to bell teaching.

Keri D.: I hear from my kids that when there is a substitute, there is not a lot going on. Perhaps that could be a dedicated/organized time where the kids can get to know each other (social/emotional learning).

Shomari J.: A lot of interest in how we move the needle. This is an example of some of the experiences that some of the students have when they go to school.

Alma G.: Problem we are seeing is the ground is not even.

7:45pm Brief Update: How are we choosing schools we are researching?

Paul S.: List school districts that Dr. Duran gave us with formalized school policies on equity. A lot of schools have talked about it but not all has gone as far as making a formalized list of policies. Making deep dives about what makes those policies robust. Monica has spent some time on the phone with folks across the country, same goes with Huaxia. We are also putting together ways of district is different and similar demographically as well. Adopting equity policy is pretty new practice, when we talk about whether or not it is working is a tricky thing. Finding out whether or not they work, goes beyond. A lot of district has not thought through about that process yet. There hasn't been a lot of places if any, that has any robust tool for measuring how equity policies would be implemented and to what extent those are effective.

Huaxia Z.: We are looking at 17 school districts, closest in demographic to us is in California and Massachusetts. We are looking for similarities in meter size and demographics.