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The Experiential Program for Preparing School Principals

STANDARD 3: Equity, Inclusiveness, and Cultural Responsiveness

Candidates who successfully complete a building-level educational leadership preparation program understand and demonstrate the capacity to promote the current and future success and well-being of each student and adult by applying the knowledge, skills, and commitments necessary to develop and maintain a supportive, equitable, culturally responsive, and inclusive school culture.

3.1 Program completers understand and demonstrate the capacity to use data to evaluate, design, cultivate, and advocate for a supportive and inclusive school culture.

13. Work with a diverse team of stakeholders to address an issue of equity. Working to exercise equitable and inclusive treatment of all stakeholders, work with school counselors, teachers, administrators and/or parents to address an issue of equity in the school community by using data to evaluate, design, cultivate, and advocate for a supportive and inclusive school culture. (NELP 3.1)

Summary: With recent events linked to Black Lives Matter, Carmel saw a need to address the issues with race and equity within its schools. They began by creating a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Officer for the school district. With the job posting for a DEI Officer, the district included community members within the interview process to make sure the need was being met. Terri Roberts-Leonard, a black woman with a background in Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, was hired in December. Immediately when she began, she established a series of professional development focused on how to support our diverse students, whether they are people of color, within the LGBTQ community, or come from other marginalized and intersectional communities. This was offered to the entire school district on an optional basis; the attendees varied from administrators at the central office and building level, teachers of all levels, social workers, and interventionists.

The first in this series was focused on allyship. It was an hour-long training on Zoom, led by Roberts-Leonard. She spent time bluntly informing a mainly white audience on how to properly be an ally - digging into the discomfort that many of us may experience. Many examples were from her perspective as a Black woman, but she also addressed the experiences of LGBT students.

She paused and had us discuss how we would react to racial profiling in public; many responded that they would intervene, although we discussed that this is easier said than done. The

discussion also focused on how allyship means using your privilege to help others that do not have those privileges. Roberts-Leonard discussed several topics that are often avoided, such as the All Lives Matter group and how Carmel believes that this is true, however we need to focus on Black Lives right now. She showed a video on all of the different types of allies one can be - many of which were passive or self-serving. We had to do the hard work of identifying which one we were in an attempt to realize what we need to improve on.

Finally, she shared a working document of resources to support our teaching; some were professional and personal resources, while others were read alouds or resources to be shared with our students. This document will be shared throughout the district to continue supporting students and move in a positive direction.

Reflection: I loved this presentation because Terri Roberts-Leonard did not mince words. She did the hard work by being blunt and honest about what it takes to truly be an ally. She spoke from experience and reiterated several times that her comments were her own. She dug deep into sentiments that are often watered down - such as dissecting why Black Lives Matter is an important movement and that as white teachers we have privilege that we need to actively use and acknowledge. I appreciated these statements - many sentiments that I had explored and researched on my own - and was impressed that this talk moved past being afraid of offending others.

It was interesting to me how many teachers said that they would intervene in an instance of racial profiling, many said that they would have a hard time controlling their temper. This was surprising to me, and had me a little nervous that some of these teachers were not reflecting on their true actions. We all believe that we would do the right thing in these instances, but acting in the moment is definitely more challenging. I hope that these teachers used this opportunity to truly assess how they treat people in groups that are not similar to theirs.

A district like Carmel gets a lot of flack for hiring so many white teachers and having a largely white population; however, Carmel has a diverse population that is currently in pockets - at the elementary level, many of these students attend Orchard Park Elementary and Forest Dale Elementary. As a teacher at Orchard Park, it was heartening to see so many voluntary attendees interested in doing this hard work. I also appreciated the lens of the new officer leading this professional development, as it brought in a new voice and perspective to this district. Ultimately, I am excited to see where these new trainings lead us as a staff. I am hopeful that we will see an improved perspective and approach to teaching students that belong to minority groups.

Artifacts:

Do

- Do be open to listening
- Do be aware of your implicit biases
- Do your research to learn more about the history of the struggle in which you are participating
- Do the inner work to figure out a way to acknowledge how you participate in oppressive systems
- Do the outer work and figure out how to change the oppressive systems
- Do use your privilege to amplify (digitally and in-person) historically suppressed voices
- Do learn how to listen and accept criticism with grace, even if it's uncomfortable
- Do the work every day to learn how to be a better ally

