

Racial Equity Advisory Board 2021-22

Purpose: Engage in learning together and identify ways that will improve the educational experience for every student – ensure equal outcomes for all of our students.

Transformative Courageous Space

Be present
Experience discomfort
Speak your truth and listen to understand
Expect and accept non-closure
Learn/unlearn/relearn
Action & outcome focused
Refrain from pivoting to “other” isms

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March 10, 2022

Facilitator: Dr. Slade McSheehy

Present: Slade, Janie, David, Danny, Greg, Rebecca, John E, Celina, Zabette, Nidia, Amy, Thomas

Agenda:

- REAB Review of VISD Final Equity Stance
- Strategic Planning - REAB Restructuring
- Closing Community Sharing
 - Resource Links - TBD

[Strategic Plan - 4 Pager](#)

January 13, 2022

Facilitator: Dr. Slade McSheehy

Present: Layla, Leslie, Kevin J, Kevin D, Greg, Rebecca, John E, Celina, Zabette, Shelley, Nidia, Juniper, Jen, Kim, Renee, Amy, Stephanie

Agenda:

- Beginning of Year Check-in/Breakout Groups (Name—what's the story behind your name)
- REAB Review of VISD Draft Equity Stance—small groups, complete survey to record reactions/suggestions, brief share with whole group
- ~~REAB Review of VISD Strategic Planning—Equity Priority Educational Strategies~~ (dropped from agenda to allow some time to talk about demands & question from Parents & Friends for Racial Equity)
- Discussion about demands & question posed by Renee on behalf of Family & Friends
 - "1. We don't want to use valuable money earmarked for racial equity work on our group who do not work directly with the students.*

2. If the teachers are not receiving consistent monthly training on racial equity and culturally responsive teaching we would much rather the money be spent there. We do not believe in trickle down racial equity training.

3. The way that racial equity work is being carried out in VISD is very hierarchical. The district leadership and administrators control the work. How can we empower and give power to the teachers and students so that they can take ownership of this work and make it truly relevant to the school cultures where it is happening?

The shared purpose of Parents and Friends of Racial Equity: To help the racial equity work move forward in our district by empowering teachers, students, and staff."

Kim, Juniper and Jen shared their thoughts about the above as representatives of Parents & Friends.

From the Parents & Friends Facebook page:

"To partner with VISD as a resource to help all children and families promote inclusion, racial equity and social justice, and to close the opportunity gap. Our goal is to teach children and their parents how to recognize and combat racism and racial discrimination, as well as engage in dialogue about race issues with respect and integrity."

- Community Sharing
 - From Janie/SURJ:
<https://vashoncenterforthearts.org/event/moving-beyond-the-safety-of-allyship/>
 - Black Lives Matter Week of Action 1/31-2/4—if interested in helping plan some of the week, please let Slade know.
- Closing: will consider how to move the discussion forward

Resources:

VISD Draft Equity Stance: The plan reflects our district's commitment to Equity: it **guarantees** that **access to educational opportunities** and **high educational outcomes** are no longer *predicted by a student's race, socioeconomics, gender identity, sexual identity, language, cultural background, and other exceptionalities*. The plan is designed to provide a **unique learning experience**, *interrupt patterns and practices that create disparities in achievement*, and **ensure high levels of success, in every way, for every student**.

~~VISD Draft Strategic Planning—Educational Priority Strategies~~

Equity Stances Activity from our meeting together on September 9, 2021

December 9, 2021

Canceled

November 18, 2021

Facilitator: Dr. Nikum Pon

Present: Layla, Ty, Kim, John E., Danny, Juniper, Kali, Nidia, Rebecca, Shelley, Janie, Zabette, Thomas, Amy, Celina, Stephanie, Kim, Jen

Resources:

1. [Watch the video](#) | 'Disrupting Systems of Social Reproduction' | Dr. Jeff Duncan Andrade | NOTE: *Dr Duncan-Andrade is a Keynote Speaker at the Decolonizing Education Conference in Tacoma in November
2. Read and review the current [Vashon Island School District Racial Equity Policy\(Link Here\)](#) and identify data that points to evidence of impact of this policy

[VISD Data Packet - Outcome Data, Access Data, Student Voice Data](#)

What word(s) describe the sort of space that we need to create to do the work together?

Truth, linkage, trust, learn old things again, authentic belief, gracious, empathic, reflective, courage, love, humility, honesty, shared framework, love, reflection on work by bell hooks (introspection, self-reflection)

Message from Dr. Smith Jr.: The Masai ask “How are the children?,” response “all the children are well” means “life is good” there is equal weight of responsibility of all members, what will it take to be able to respond, “All the children are well.”

From Dr. Pon: We are the system. We are the culture. Now is the moment. “Conduct an autopsy without blame.”

Reflections from data:

Performance Fact highlighting student voice—student perception

Walk through protocol developed by families/students

Math trajectory, wrap around team for continuity—possible here! Community wrap around

Initiatives and what is next

Student voice, boilerplate reach out to all represented in the “red zone?”

Next Steps:

Send [group notes](#) to Stephanie

- Start doing
- Stop doing
- Change
- Continue

Nikum suggests a sub-committee to design a clear and robust communication strategy for the time in between meetings–Stephanie/Slade invite

Closing words: onward, informative & constructive, too short, incomplete, I love S., curious, knowing each other, notes, grateful, reimagine, restructure, love,

Feedback from the session:

What did you gain from our session on Thursday (11/18)?

- I understand VSD equity policy better, and I appreciated hearing discussion about impacts
- Our break out session was great. We talked about things that are going on in the schools, and specific things that can be done to address them.
- The good intentions are there, now we need a plan to execute, and have good results.

Comments and/or suggestions for Ed2Liberate for our future sessions together:

- I'm a community member, and I feel like the check in question was too jargon-y! It took too me several readings to really figure out what it was asking.
- I don't get anything out of all the platitudes that we spend a lot of time on. Based on feedback, I feel like the group is getting frustrated that we don't have a purpose. Our breakout group was good because we were talking about specific problems with specific solutions. Having leaders from outside our district is not helpful to me. I am hard pressed to see where they have contributed towards this group even being able to make a plan. I do think our district needs to work on issues around race and racism, and we always will because schools are a big part of bringing young ones up into a common culture which holds the values of equality and respect dear. However, the rhetoric on the E2L website is racially divisive, and I think that hiring this company is actually getting in the way of achieving our goals.
- It would be nice to have students in our panel. Student voice is important.

October 14, 2021

Facilitator: Dr. Marion Smith Jr.

Present: Janie, Laura, Kim, Renee, Ty, Celina, Leslie, Thomas, Slade, Rebecca, Danny, Greg, Stephanie, Amy, Kali, Zabette, David, Layla, Holly, Chelsie, Kali, Juniper, Jen

Below you will find resources from our time together this evening with the VISD Racial Equity Advisory Board.

RESOURCES

- [PowerPoint slidedeck](#)
- [Video: 'Last Chance for Eden'](#)
- [Decolonizing Education Conference 2021](#) | Nov 3-5, 2021 | Greater Tacoma Convention Center
- [Article: "Think, Engage & Act Differently"](#) | Victor Clay

NEXT SESSION

- *As discussed, in preparation for our next session together in November, members should complete the following:*

1. [Watch the video](#) | 'Disrupting Systems of Social Reproduction' | Dr. Jeff Duncan Andrade | NOTE: *Dr Duncan-Andrade is a Keynote Speaker at the Decolonizing Education Conference in Tacoma in November
2. Read and review the current Vashon Island School District Racial Equity Policy and identify data that points to evidence of impact of this policy

Your partner in racial equity adaptive leadership,

-Marion

A question posed by Renee to those of us who are white—do we know the impact and the story of our own racial trauma—racial trauma impacts everyone

From Juniper, “A few different people on this list have suggested [Heather McGhee's The Sum of Us: What Racism Costs Everyone and How We Can Prosper Together](#). I'm reading it now and highly recommend it.”

From Janie, “Join The Civil Reparations Project for a presentation and discussion about making good on our promises and taking reparative action now. Thursday, November 4th, 4:30 - 6:00 pm, via zoom. Register here: <https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZErf-Ggrz0jHdzwe-X6cT1xJGAMWNJAnq8J>

If you are unable to attend on Nov. 4th, here is the [link to invest](#) in Africatown's Reimagine Black Seattle campaign. You can take further reparation action here: [Movement For Black Lives Reparations Toolkit](#)”

From Spring, “And here is my favorite book about racialized trauma with somatic exercises in it for people to do including white folk! [My Grandmother's Hands: Racialized Trauma and the Pathway to Mending Our Hearts and Bodies](#)”

REAB members participating in strategic planning: Shelley, Zabette, Nidia, Thomas, Danny, Greg, Rebecca, John E, Jon, Stephanie, Kathryn, Slade, Layla

Demographics of students participating in the strategic planning:

	Race & Ethnicity					Student Programs				
	Asian	Latino	Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander	Two or more races	White	English Language Development	Federal Low Income Household	Special Education	Section 504	Highly Capable
District-wide	1.8	13.4	<1	9.8	74.3	5.3	20.7	12.4	7.7	3.4
Interviews	5.9	17.6	1.9	15.7	58.8	3.9	25.5	9.8	13.7	3.9
Core Planning Team	3.8	26.9	0	11.5	57.7	3.8	19.2	7.7	23.1	3.8

Feedback from the session:

What did you gain from our time together on 10/14?

- Community wishing to get together is a good move forward.
- It was illuminating to see the framework for the different stages that a school district can be on in terms of equity.
- Unfortunately, just a lot of frustration.
- I had a great conversation with the second person I was with. We agreed we didn't feel capable of evaluating the choices (A, B, C, D) you charged us with, so we talked about issues we care about related to RE in the VISD. I learned from an administrator in my first breakout that he rarely gives much thought to racial equity or to his skin color. Because I've been in this group with him for years, I was only minimally surprised but deeply disturbed! We did not discuss the article you asked us to read, and we did not spend significant time parsing the StirFry video clip - that was disappointing.
- I would first like to know who initiated these questions, and thanks for asking. The session was confusing and unfocused. Based on what we learned from the 9-9 first meeting, it seemed like we would be using our time together to develop a shared purpose and collective

energy to work with VISD on a vision for racial equity. Our work would have a home in either the strategic plan or somewhere else. This would be based on creating a space for courageous conversations. If it's true that we have just 4 sessions, that is not enough time to develop the relationships that would be needed to safely do this work. And, I think it's safe to say that we haven't had space to know where everyone in the room sits about reimagining a different school system for different outcomes.

And, in my experience, you just can't get to IRO/IRS in an hour.

This seems rushed and not very useful unless we can use some time to reconfigure what we are about in these meetings.

Slade, can you please let us know the scope and amount of the contract with Dr. Smith?

Maybe we need to regroup and start over.

- That we did not have a shared sense of purpose other than we care deeply the education and experiences of our children in VSD. And, many are feeling frustrated, but we have not yet dug into our collective why (or our individual frustrations, hopes, dreams).
- What did you gain from our time together on 10/14?

1. That we are going to be looking at "data" of some sort, but not sure which we are counting as data. 2. That only 1-2 teachers were a part of this meeting last week and no students. 3. That we have not created norms, goals, and a vision for this work together, or if we have they were not visible to me, framing our work. 4. That we have not established trust within the group- we don't know each other. I missed the first meeting: was there time spent on goals, purpose, etc? I did not learn about what these were in our 10/14 meeting- I thought we would at the very least return to these (from a prior meeting) to ground our monthly time together.

- I got a lot out of talking to Danny Rock about how to approach students who are at different levels. It is valuable for me to know more about Danny's thoughts.

Comments and/or suggestions for Ed2Liberate for our future sessions together:

- There remains an imbalance of time this group has to meet in small groups versus large group. Not acknowledging community member sharing about white trauma. Over explaining directions. Giving material to read and then not referencing the material. This has happened earlier with an ask to review a video and then not bringing the video into the session. Not sure Marion is connecting with the group even though strong intent.
- I wish I had gotten more of a chance to read and process the reading on the stages of equity in school district before talking about it in a breakout group. That was a bit nerve-wracking.
- It feels like these sessions come from a fixed template and the facilitator is not prepared to be responsive to the realities of the group. One participant asked about white peoples' trauma and it was ignored. The superintendent's comment in the chat in response that he doesn't understand the question (about white trauma), also ignored. IMO, once questions like that are raised, the facilitator should have pivoted - dropped everything he had planned - and made the session about addressing whiteness, trauma and grief.

The fundamental problem is this group has no trust, is not actually in relationship with each other, and has no shared framework. Some folks have been engaging in this work for years; others are brand new but "game"; yet others are complacent and think they're the good guys so they're unclear why resources need to be devoted to this work, when really "everything is fine"; and then there are those in the group who are actively working against a robust anti-racist framework and are (willing? knowing?) participants in a conservative campaign to create a boogey man out of CRT. But none of that is being named.

If the goal of these sessions is for the district leadership to be able to say we did it, rather than have meaningful conversations that begin to unpack, honestly and vulnerably, the unbearable whiteness of the VISD and the resulting current and historical harm, then I am disinclined to continue. I feel this "advisory group" is not actually being engaged to advise on anything. It's also confusing why this work is being siloed when down the street, a mostly separate group of people is starting work on the strategic planning process. This work of the REAB should directly be informing the strategic planning. It's being handled as a "nice to have" rather than a "must have." This work should be foundational to how we, as a district, move forward towards our collective liberation.

Lastly: where are the students? We were told they would be a part of this effort. "Nothing about us without us." Where. Are. The. Students?

- I have lost track of the purpose. I don't know if we're here to offer policy outcomes or to dig into our own journey to become anti-racists, or both and more. As a community member, I'm way over my head when you focus on A, B, C, D outcome oriented discussions. I care

deeply about the kinds of questions that Renee bravely surfaces and am always eager for the deep dive, that doesn't appear to be where we're going. Because this group consists of folks who've been together for years vs new folks, and of people who believe strongly in leading with racial equity vs at least one who has actively opposed any RE focus, and called out a few of us in the Beachcomber, I have some trust issues, and actually dread being put in a breakout with this person. I apologize for sounding so negative. I greatly appreciate our facilitators, your commitment, and your skills. Also your heart!

- Dr. Smith,

I appreciate you joining us here on Vashon, and I know that your work here is not easy. I would like to know what your expectations were and how that has looked after two meetings here. I'd also like to know what you have in mind for the next two sessions.

I know it must be hard to read a zoom room in an unfamiliar community and...I think my biggest observation from the last meeting was...showing the video...talking about pain, and then not acknowledging or working with it when expressed. Also needed to help with organizing when folks expressed need for gathering in between these meetings.

I would like us to be able to look at your contract and figure out how best to use your time with us. I'm not sure that you will get to know this group well enough to do the work that you set out to do.

With respect,

Kim

- I think we need to understand our purpose, timeline and goals as a group. I think we need to plan backwards from a set time and ask ourselves what would it look like by X date if we were to (SAID PURPOSE)? One way to get at this would be to look in small groups at the RE policy and do some work with it--a protocol or two that helps us to dig into what this policy means and how it lives in the district--in each of our schools. I also think BEFORE all that, we need to build trust across roles and create a sense of trust by establishing norms as a group. We don't know each other as a group. Are we equal members of this group? What can we "risk" in this group in order to dig deep together? The question one parent (Renee) raised about white racial trauma--the costs of whiteness for white people is an important one. What conditions need to be present for us to understand and engage authentically with this important and brave question? These, to me are our starting places. Reading a book like The Sum of Us might be an entry point for building the kind of trust we need to collectively do the important work of co-constructing an anti-racist and equity focused district (IF that is our shared purpose).
- The biggest benefit of hiring outside facilitators is the hope that they will push our work farther than we have been able to go collectively, with our current leadership (and leadership also needs the coaching and facilitation--in this realm, they are a part of the group, working alongside us--in creating a more distributed leadership/flatter organizational structure, all of us can position ourselves as learners with an outside facilitator, knowing that some folks will be held accountable in different ways. Our whiteness (as an island, as a district) has allowed:
 - 1) A strategic planning process to get established SEPARATE from a RACIAL EQUITY advisory board. Why would these entities not be integrated?
 - 2) No youth and only 1-2 teachers? For this REAB to have any lasting and authentic impact, it is likely that release time will be needed for teachers and youth (5th-12th at the very least) to participate and be central to the REAB meetings. District leadership has been meeting for 3 + years with PSED consultant support, yet those most affected and furthest from educational justice have not been directly involved. How has leadership made visible their learning around equity in this time? We all need to be all in— teachers, students, leadership, community alongside one another. We need to all dive in together purposefully and courageously now!
 - 3) How WILL this work feed into the Strategic Plan? Will we come together at some point? If so, when? and how and why? These questions need to be articulated, co-constructed, and clear. We need a timetable for what it is we are trying to GET DONE. Ultimately, if they do not come together, then I feel we may be wasting important time.
 - We are coming from many places, committing the time to this work because it is vitally important and long overdue. Lots of brainpower and human hours committing to this work every month. We need to establish grounds for democratizing the space, from an equity stance. If we want vulnerability and deep work, then there is some essential groundwork to do around trust-building, clarity of purpose.
- I feel like the meetings are tailored to schools with a different demographic profile than what our district has. I would like to learn more about what challenges our schools face, and then dive into solutions to our unique problems. Marion also keeps saying that we share the same goal, but there are different ways to get there, and we will work through consensus in this group. As a group we haven't defined what our goals are in relation to our district. Marion has defined them in a general way for us. I would like to be shaping our objectives more as a group, and not have such a top down experience.

September 9, 2021

Facilitators: Dr. Nikum Pon and Dr. Marion Smith Jr.

Present: Shelley, Juniper, Celina, Renee, Janie, Slade, Rebecca, Danny, Greg, Kathryn, Stephanie, Thomas, Leslie, Amy, Zabette, Kali, David, Kim, Nidia, Kevin, Laura, Jon, John, Chelsie, Jeni,

Below you will find resources from our time together this evening with the VISD Racial Equity Advisory Board. We look forward to our year-long transformative work with this group this school year.

RESOURCES

- [Transformative Courageous Space](#)
- [Equity Stances](#) | National School Reform Faculty
- Article: ["Leadership in the Age of Complexity: From Hero to Host"](#) (Wheatley & Frieze, 2010)

NEXT SESSION

- As discussed, in preparation for our next session together members should complete the following:

1. Read the Wheatley & Frieze article and identify information in the text that they may AGREE with and/or CHALLENGE.
2. Read through the Equity Stances document and identify the one (1) equity stance most closely aligned to the personal definition of equity they wrote down during the session

Your partner in racial equity adaptive leadership,

- Marion

For October, invite students to join us.

Additional Resources

[Ensuring Educational and Racial Equity Policy](#)

[VISD Racial Equity Journey](#)

2021 Strategic Planning: [VISD Data Packet - Outcome Data, Access Data, Student Voice Data](#)

Training/Events to pursue on your own if you are interested:

[Healing in a Time of Truth and Justice: Boarding School Healing. Virtual Summit](#) November 19 & 20

[Moving Beyond the Safety of Allyship](#) January 17, 2022

[Toward Right Relationship with Native Peoples](#) January 22, 2022 or February 13, 2022

[Since I Been Down: Film Screening & Panel Discussion](#) January 23, 2022