

Wooster City School District
Diversity Task Force
ANNUAL REPORT
Wooster High School
Zoom Meeting
July 28, 2020
5:30 pm
Minutes

Present: Yvonne Williams, Co-Chair; John Clay, Alexis Florence, April Gamble, Scott Miller, Dave Noble, Luke Pomfret, Clay Price, Rachel Relle, Danielle Schantz, Michael Tefs, Lawrence Walker, Karen Arbogast, Richard Leone, and Cameron Maneese

Guests: Brian Questel, Tyler Keener, Keaton Leppla

1. **Welcome and Introductions** - Williams welcomed the Task Force. She commended Dr. Tefs and the Board of Education for the strong stand they took vis-a-vis the Wayne County Fair Board re the presence of the Confederate flag at the Fair. She noted that this achieved what the NAACP has been working toward for the last 5 years and sets a real model for our community. Maneese introduced Luke Pomfret, WHS Class of 2022, as a new member and student representative for the Diversity Task Force.
2. **Exceptions to the Agenda** - None
3. **WCSD BOE Recommendations** - Williams and Maneese reviewed the June 2019 recommendations to the Wooster Board of Education for the continued work of the DTF:
 1. *The Diversity Task Force recommends that the co-chairs and the facilitator of the DTF continue to meet three times a year. Upon the resignation of a member of the Steering Committee, the NAACP should participate with WCSD in filling the vacancy.*
 2. *The entire membership of the Diversity Task Force should reconvene annually to receive an update on recommendations from The Wooster City School District.*
 3. *It is recommended that the Wooster High School Student Council be updated regularly on the status of Diversity Task Force recommendations. The superintendent should set up a meeting with the Student Council as part of the Student Council agenda, perhaps once a quarter.*
 4. *The Diversity Task Force requested that there be a public report on diversity, at least on the website or other marketing piece. The superintendent will make this report to the BOE at the June meeting or the August meeting.*
4. **Diversity Task Force Steering Committee** – Cameron Maneese reviewed the meetings of the Steering Committee. They met on November 5, 2019, February 20, 2020, and June 3, 2020. Notes from these meetings were sent out to the DTF in preparation for the Annual Report. She discussed the decision to hold the DTF Annual Meeting and report to the BOE in July. She shared

the Steering Committee meeting dates for the 2020-21. They are November 5, 2020, February 18, 2021, and June 10, 2021. All meetings are scheduled for 1:00pm. The Diversity Task Force will receive an annual report in July 2021 before the July WCSD BOE meeting

Going forward, the notes from the Steering Committee will be sent out to the Task Force after each meeting and archived on the DTF web page of the WCSD web site at the following link. <http://www.woostercityschools.org/district/content-page/diversity>

5. **Civil Rights Class** – Brian Questel reported on the first year of the WHS Civil Rights course. There were eight students in the first semester course, and 13 in the second semester. Of the 21 students, three were Hispanic, one was Black, and one was Asian. It was structured around the book *A Boy Who Was Raised as a Dog*. Highlights of the curriculum were given noting the course gave an historical look at civil rights in America focusing on the Civil Rights Act, Voting Rights Act, and gerrymandering. It looked at the Civil War and Reconstruction. They spent time learning about Emmett Till and read the book *Just Mercy* and learned about the Innocence Project. They looked at women’s issues and Native American and LGBTQ rights. This was very much a student led class.
6. **Student Council** – Tyler Keener reported that WHS has formalized conversations with the Student Council on diversity and equity. They looked at student school governance and at diversity issues of school leadership. Student Council will look at being more intentionally inclusive. Tefs noted it was important that the DTF gave the Student Council voice on this subject. We will still meet, even if remotely, quarterly this next school year.
7. **Recruitment 2020 - 2021** – Rich Leone reported that COVID impacted recruitment and that most staffing fairs were cancelled. The fall job fairs were held, but spring fairs were cancelled. Lawrence Walker has continued to be a great resource. Clay Price has also attended the events and Cheryl Goff was to attend the spring fairs. Leone is in on-going conversations with the College of Wooster Education Department as a pipeline for faculty openings. The recruitment team will schedule a meeting for the near future to look at the fall recruitment schedule.
8. **Social Emotional Supports / Leader in Me** – Karen Arbogast reported on the Social Climate recommendation that Leader in Me (LIM) be supported and serve the entire district. She noted that elementary schools are starting year four of the Leader in Me and year two in Edgewood. The BOE has not approved the Leader in Me for grades 8-12 at this time. Work is being done to find a program that addresses the elements of [Ohio’s Social-Emotional Learning standards](#) for the upper grades. Arbogast discussed how Leader in Me supports Social Emotional Learning (SEL) and how SEL builds sustainable systems of equity and supports inclusion and social justice issues for students.
9. **Follow up on DTF curriculum and literacy recommendations.** Arbogast gave an update on finding a “common read” or finding one book that addresses diversity, which the WCSD would read, together. It had been planned that books supporting diversity, which allowed students to see themselves in what they read, would take place at the Reading Under the Lights event. This event did not happen due to COVID. However, books which offered a diversity lens were part of the summer “Read Across Woo” event. She noted student athlete, Evan Heller who is on the wheelchair team, read for students via the web, stressing what it is like to overcome barriers.

10. **New Strategic Deliverables** – Tefs discussed two new WCSD deliverables beginning in the new academic year (2020-21).

- a. Formal implicit bias training will be delivered to all employees and students between 2020 and 2024, with 25% being trained each year. This training will be on going and offered every year. Tefs reported that WCSD is working with Ohio State University to bring implicit bias training to the entire district. While staff and faculty have had this training in the past, the district has not had the goal of including the entire student body in this training.
- b. Increase NAACP membership with three new WCSD faculty members. Tefs reported that this goal is to increase the WCSD's presence as active members of the Wooster/Orrville NAACP. He noted that if the district is to be fully engaged in diversity and equity issues, it needs to build capacity within the community and have liaisons with the leading organization on these issues. Walker noted that the NAACP has grown to over 200 members and that a number of these members are educators. Tefs noted that for distributive leadership to work in the WCSD, and if the school district is to be a model for others, it needs to have staff involvement across the community. Williams noted that the end result is to inform and educate the public.

11. **Follow-up comments from the DTF -**

- a. Williams asked that the Steering Committee consider how the community learns about the DTF work? What ways can we publicize our efforts and outcomes?
- b. Gamble noted the importance of supporting behavior that minimizes the impact of COVID on vulnerable populations. She noted that mortality rates for Black, Latino and Native Americans are 3.7 times higher than the rest of the population. She asked that the WCSD be leaders in this area by encouraging behavior such as mask wearing and physical distancing.
- c. Schantz asked the DTF to consider what roll it should take concerning activities and incidents related to race, equity and inclusion that take place in the schools during the academic year. If members of the DTF are notified of activities that are counter to the goals of the DTF, what policy or process should the DTF use to address concerns? Tefs noted that issues in the school should be addressed in the building and ultimately by the BOE, but that the DTF should be made aware of concerns. Williams noted that developing a policy should be an agenda item for the Steering Committee.
- d. Maneese indicated that she hoped using the WCSD website to archive the Steering Committee minutes would help with ongoing communication between the DTF and the community.

12. **Set Annual Report:** The WCSD BOE will determine their meeting schedule in January 2021. The DTF Annual Report will be set for July 2021

There being no other business Noble moved to adjourn. Tefs seconded.
Meeting was adjourned at 6:30 pm