

**The Davenport Community School District
1606 Brady Street
Davenport, Iowa 52803**

EQUITY COMMITTEE
Summary Minutes – November 25, 2008

In attendance: Dawn Anderson Rascher, Bonnie Beechum, John Border, Ann Dolan-Bishop, Nora Dvorak, Mike Garnica, Sara Gott, Tom Green, Robert Hutcheson, Clyde Mayfield, Bob McGarry, Ellen Reilly, Carmen Rivera-Jackson, Diane Simmons, Deb Stevenson, Trish Turner.

Welcome and introductions -

Purpose of the District's Equity Office –

Dawn Anderson Rascher presented an overview:

- Oversee various Title IX activities.
- Oversee the notification, enforcement and grievance procedures in regard to the nondiscrimination policy of the DCSD.
- Oversee the compliance with Title VI Civil Rights Act and Code of Iowa equity requirements.
- Examine the makeup and activities of advisory councils/committees established by the district.
- Examine the makeup of vocational councils/committees.
- Establish an Equity Committee that will meet at least twice a year.
- SPECIAL PROJECT FOR THE EQUITY COMMITTEE 08-09...Examine course enrollment with a focus on students (beginning with the high school level) who are taking accelerated, upper level, and advanced placement courses and how to encourage participation from unrepresented sub-groups.

The course enrollment review will assist the district in assessing the level of integration and inclusion in the district's programs and where the district has met their obligation to review program enrollment policies and practices when segregation or isolation exists. It will be necessary to examine registration handbooks, course descriptions, program brochures, course announcements, and targeted audiences. Activities by instructors or counselors to ensure that students make informed choices about programs should be reviewed. Language, illustrations, content or course titles, which imply that courses or programs are not for everyone, or which are not inclusive of all groups, are to be viewed with skepticism. Encouragement to enroll should be targeted students who have been traditionally under-represented in the program.

District's Diversity Statement –

We have established, with the assistance of Lane and Waterman, a consistent diversity statement that will be used for all major district publications. Schools and district departments have been provided a copy of the statement and are expected to adhere to the guidelines of usage.

Student Mobility -

Students who move from one building to another during the school year appear to have a significant decline in testing scores. In addition, studies show that every time a homeless child is uprooted they lose six months of education. Therefore, it is crucial that our district is aware of the trauma associated with children who are in transient and/or homeless situations. The need is for flexibility regarding school boundaries in order to provide stability and structure in their educational environment.

Note:....Research also indicates (across the nation) students transitioning from Elementary to Middle and from Middle to High School experience a significant disconnect, not only academically, but socially. More must be done to recognize the problems and implement ways to make transition easier for students.

Discussion –

Schools are experiencing first-hand the problems occurring across the country that are related to the current economic situation and immigration calamity. Building staff, especially principals, teachers, and guidance counselors are feeling the strains of dealing with families in crisis.

- How do we deal with the increase in the poor and homeless population?
- How do we deal with families whose experience with economic depression is new?
- How do we make sure families are aware of all the services they can receive?
- How do we deal with homeless youth who are on their own?
- How do we deal with children of undocumented parents?

The community, as a whole, has been very responsive to the needs of its poor and homeless populations. Community agencies and private groups are working hard to provide food, clothing, and shelter. However, there never seems to be enough. Shelters are filling to capacity and there is not enough food to go around.

Families experiencing economic difficulties for the first time are often unaware of the services available to them. Our community must do a better job of providing information to families in need. The Community Foundation of the Great River Bend is providing some assistance through their mobile offices and one-stop fill-out applications for assistance. Can schools help by housing these documents in the building?

We have a serious situation for young adults (under 21) who are no longer with their family and are homeless. Our community has no shelter to serve these kids. Many are on the run and do not want to enter the “system” for fear of being found out. Our district is working with other agencies to try to resolve this problem.

We have students whose parents are in the country illegally. Many would like to get jobs but are afraid to apply for social security cards because of their parent’s illegal status. In addition, we have children (born in the US) who have been left alone because their parents have been deported.

Translations/Interpreting for Spanish and Vietnamese –

Our district is in the process of trying to offer translations and interpreting services for all families across the district. Our goal is to provide translations that are accurate, and appropriate for the reader. We are currently using the services of Translations Unlimited and the district's ESL Office. There has been some concern that Translations Unlimited use of languages has been too general for our population(s). In addition, if the ESL Office were to continue with translating, their work load would be too heavy and they would not be able to meet the needs for non-English speaking families who have children in the ESL program. We are, therefore, looking at other possible solutions:

- Pay high school AP Spanish Teachers
- Pay College Students
- Find other community members who would qualify (Nora Dvorak may be able to assist in this)
- Continue to work with families who have members who could interpret for meetings

Special Project – Course Enrollments –

- We need to look more closely at sub-groups.
- Why are some children more reluctant to enroll in AP courses?
- What type of incentives will work to increase enrollment in AP courses for sub-groups who are poorly represented or unrepresented?
- We need to reach out to parents and teach them the importance of higher expectations.
- Parents, Schools, and Community need to work harder at showing students the path to greater success.
- Do we need to make AP classes mandatory???

Committee assignment.....to review the documents handed out at the meeting. Come back in February with ideas for improving enrollment of poorly represented or unrepresented sub-groups in higher level classes.....with emphasis on high school.

Next Meeting Date: February 24, 2009 (5:00 – 7:00 pm) ASC Board Room

Food for Thought

“We all have stumbling blocks....what is most important is turning them into stepping stones.”

(From Davenport Schools Words of Wisdom - Math Teacher, 1 year)