

Equity Advisory Committee Minutes



Date: 07/07/21

Time: 5:00-6:30pm

Location: Zoom

In Attendance:

Eric Howard, Jayne Finch, Andrea Jayne, Aala Basheir, Ali B, Charlie Eastham, Heidi Pierce, JP Claussen, Lulu Roarick, Paras Bassuk, Rebekah Tilley, Reyna Roach, Ty Cruce, Ain Grooms

Agenda

I. Check-In (5 minutes)

- a. Review and Approve Minutes: Paras motion to approve, Lulu
Seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously
- b. Updates from committee members
 - i. Jayne Finch – August will be her last meeting. Suggests that the committee holds elections next month to fill the co-chair position and vice-chair for the next school year.
 - ii. Rebekah Tilley – Also leaving this summer.
 - iii. Ain Grooms – Will be leaving the committee after this meeting.
 - iv. Reminder – Indigenous Peoples Day
 1. Reminder to the committee to invite activists from the Indigenous community to be a part of the conversation of how the district will celebrate this day.

II. Volunteer Day at HIH – Jayne

- a. July 11th is the scheduled date to volunteer at Houses into Homes.

III. ELP Discussion Follow-up

- a. Jayne, Eric, and Andrea reached out to Diane about ELP to have a representative meet this month. The current ELP Coordinator is retiring and it will take a few months for the new coordinator to get settled into the position, so it would be better to meet later in the school year.
- b. Paras – Wanted to approach the conversation as something not too abrasive. The EAC representatives gave suggestions and requests for changes to ELP to help promote equity. Caroline Barker and Paras are both ELP students at West High School. They shared their experience that ELP at a secondary level was mainly about college readiness, and only communicate via email. The information and resources sent were resources that should have been sent out to the entire student body, but were only sent to ELP students. All students deserve resources to help prepare for college and standardized test prep.
- c. A positive experience with ELP was that students were able to meet with older peers to discuss classes and resources for their high school experience. Gatekeeping of resources is linked to disparities at West High, specifically race, as fewer and fewer PoC students are registered for AP classes in the district.
 - i. Diane responded that we were correct and High School level ELP is not curriculum-based and is more counseling-based. The idea is that all students have individualized plans for their careers if they are in ELP, and they get extra counseling if they are being challenged in school and for college readiness. This was not consistent with Paras and Caroline’s experience.
- d. Suggestions for improvement – Make ELP more curriculum-based, and more focused on challenging, enriching, and service-based

- opportunities. There is no room for funding increases, the state funding goes to ELP coordinators in buildings, and additional funding would not be approved. A free modification to ELP could be to offer ELP students service-project opportunities. ELP students are not required to use these services or opportunities, but just need to be given the option.
- i. One thing noted about service-based projects would be that we would not be able to differentiate that option compared to what other students have who are not in ELP.
 - ii. Other efforts to reduce disparities in resources acquisition and information would be learning about AP courses.
- e. In 2019 West High had a course fair where they were able to meet with teachers to decide what classes to take. This was helpful and was organized by the student senate. This may be something to continue.
- f. Feedback/Comments
- i. Heidi – Did you talk about ELP in Jr. High?
 1. Answer: Paras – We did not. We were only able to share our own experiences in high school. Neither experienced Jr. High ELP.
 - ii. Heidi – What do ELP coordinators do? If they are being employed at the building, what are they doing?
 1. Answer: Paras - It sounds like they are giving extra counseling services to ELP services, and also doing counseling for non-ELP students. It is typically an added contract to existing school counselors.

2. Answer: Aala – At City High, the ELP coordinator was the guidance counselor. They also gave information about PSATs and provided resources to ELP students and parents for college prep.
- iii. Heidi – Wondering about the AVID project. It is supposed to offer extra support for students who are taking AP and honors courses. Is the focus of AVID to promote diversity?
1. Answer: Jayne – The AVID program is piloted in other schools and is to push for more representation in AP classes
 2. Answer: Ty – it is a college readiness program
<https://www.avid.org/what-avid-is>
 3. Answer: Andrea – the first school it piloted was Kirkwood.
 4. Answer: JP – This is a program targeted at first-generation college students with the thought that every student should have the option and resources to have college readiness. It is an awesome program and gives organizational skills and they teach it very directly. At the secondary level, students are pulled out or selected for the program. Not sure how kids are selected but the testimonies by students was very powerful
 5. Answer: Andrea – from a teacher perspective there is robust training for this and creates and changes the culture of the schools that use this.
- iv. Ali – What was the response to this meeting?

1. Answer: Paras – Noone seemed opposed to the ideas, but tried to keep this feedback about Equity and from an equity perspective.
- v. Aala – Is there a certain standard that children need to keep meeting to qualify for ELP at a secondary level?
 - a. Answer: Ali – This is the screening information on the district website. Does not contain much information:
<https://www.iowacityschools.org/Page/18938>
 - vi. Heidi – It sounds that harm is being done. The fact that children are expressing that they are not smart enough to stay in ELP or be recruited for ELP is not acceptable.
 1. Answer: Paras- That has been what we found, and is not the directive in law for ELP. The only directive that has been found is that the ELP program needs to exist and to create a challenging learning environment for advanced students in some way.
 2. Paras – [Shared with the committee an article from West Side Story about ELP] This article highlights that there are disparities in ELP.
 - vii. Charlie – Wonders if the students in the group could think about what parent responses might be who support ELP and want it to continue. That would be a consideration if the committee makes a recommendation for the district to modify the approach.
 1. Answer: Aala – Has heard from some parents that they appreciate the extra support of ELP.

- viii. Andrea – Impression is that we’ve discovered ELP has a fairly narrow scope, but we’ve also discovered that there are things that should be done for every student and not all of them are things that can be housed within ELP. These things should be allocated to other programs in the district so students can get these resources.
- ix. JP- Agreed. The district does not always emphasize ELP and this has shown what resources we need to get to all students. ELP doesn’t come with much funding and we can support students in other areas. Looking at things like ELL that does have more funding and the funding formula just increased in the last legislative session might be helpful.
 - 1. Things like sending emails out to everyone would address equity issues. We’ve identified these problems but it’s unclear if the solutions are housed in the ELP program. Would rather target the way that kids enter ELP and back off test scores and put emphasis on other areas. This would help get students that are talented in other fields involved such as art or music.
- x. Paras – the actionable part is to send these college prep emails to everyone and find a cost-effective solution and option for ELP students at a high school level.

IV. Subcommittee Updates

- a. Student Voice Council Follow-up
 - i. Paras – Made changes to the student voice council that were suggested at the last meeting. Does not know if we need a vote

to go ahead with the pilot and perhaps start with existing equity students.

1. **Changes** – Have this subcommittee potentially be a part of the input in the student climate survey. Clarified that this will be open to all 4 high schools. Added pieces to the curriculum portion of the proposal. Would invite representatives from the district to give short times to present what their departments do, and offer room for feedback.
- ii. Andrea – For a district-wide club there will be logistical hurdles and we may need to talk to Matt about this to see how this can be structured
 1. **Answer: JP** – It will be easy to start a student club at a single high school and if we identify a teacher at each school that wants to sponsor a club that could start immediately. This would be a perfect vehicle to recruit students into the main Equity Committee. Student voice on the committee has been very helpful and we want to keep this momentum going.

V. **Elections for August**

VI. **Check Out (10 Minutes)**

VII. **Adjourn**