

Equity Working Group Report to Salem School Committee Sept. 24, 2018

Our **Equity Working Group** consisted of two Policy Subcommittee members, Mr. Cruz and Ms. Nuncio working since late May 2018 to explore the question of forming an Equity taskforce, working group, or subcommittee for the Salem Public School district.

Mr. Cruz, Ms. Manning and I met over the last couple of months and examined various approaches used by school districts throughout Massachusetts to move towards achieving more equity within their systems.

At our previous (9/17/18) Policy Subcommittee meeting, we agreed that an **Equity Subcommittee** would be the best vehicle for further investigation of this important subject, and to help us achieve a more equitable school system.

Our team shied away from supporting the formation of an Equity Task Force, and we chose instead to recommend the formation of a new Equity subcommittee. If established, we noted that this subcommittee can, at any point during its work, call on outside experts and resources to support its work.

We agreed that participation from members of each existing subcommittee was needed, and one idea that was put forth was to have the chairs from each existing subcommittee participate in the Equity Subcommittee.

We also said that it was important to arrive at a definition of equity for our district. We offer the definition below from the Cambridge Public School system for School Committee members' consideration:

Equity means that each student, regardless of race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, gender identity, disability, sexual orientation, religion, or socioeconomic status will have access to the opportunities, resources, and support they need to attain their full potential.

School districts surveyed for information on their equity work or initiatives:

Amherst Pelham

Chelsea

Lawrence

Lynn

Methuen

Revere

Springfield

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continued

Newton, Brookline and Cambridge were also surveyed; Cambridge Public Schools appears to have the most well thought-out and developed plan for achieving equity. In addition, we note that this school district has allocated many resources to support this work.

Categories identified by Cambridge Public Schools in relation to equity: Structural Change; Racial Justice and Inclusive Practices; Educator Diversity; Legal Rights and Responsibilities

RE: Policies – CPS focuses on Policies of Discrimination and Harassment; Bullying Procedures, and mentions a Micro-aggressions Working Group

Our Equity working group recognized that there are at least two existing groups within SPS working to achieve a more inclusive and equitable school system:

- The Social Justice Curriculum 101 & 102 team organized or supported by former SC member Patrick Schultz and educators Shamus Mrak, Abby Sherwood, and Elizabeth Beaulieu
- The newly formed Equity and Engagement Department for SPS
- The Professional Development Team, working under the direction of Assistant Supt. Kate Carbone – We commend the great offerings this past summer to prepare teachers for working with diverse learners.

We believe that there needs to be a coordinated flow and regular reporting from these groups to an Equity Subcommittee, if School Committee approves its formation. A newly formed Equity Subcommittee could coordinate that flow and hear from these groups themselves on a regular basis. The Equity Subcommittee would then make reports as necessary to the entire School Committee.

Healthy School Climate and School Culture – This was the common thread or theme in school districts that were striving to achieve equity. Among the components that made this striving real and effective was a timeline for promptly addressing equity issues whenever and wherever they surfaced in schools.