

## Race Matters Committee Meeting 3.17.21

The goal of this meeting was to leave with a sense of the Race Matters Committee's top priorities. The Committee reviewed and analyzed demographic data from students and the professional staff based on race.

Meeting facilitator Natalie McCabe Zwerger, Director of CSS NY Steinhardt Metro Center, noted that data we have about race crimes are disproportionately lower than what's actually happening. About two-thirds of hate crimes or incidents go unreported. Many victims are reluctant to go to the police and don't trust law enforcement.

Committee members agreed that it is particularly important right now to address increasing anti-Asian hate crimes and to help insulate, support and protect our students and members of our community of Asian decent. There has been a surge in violence targeting Asian Americans since the start of the pandemic. A NY Times article "Asian-Americans Are Being Attacked. Why Are Hate Crime Charges So Rare?" published on 3/18/21 explains further:

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/03/18/nyregion/asian-hate-crimes.html>

Anyone who has experienced or witnessed anti-Asian violence or harassment can report it to Stop AAPI Hate Reporting Center, and to the New York Attorney General's Office through their hotline at 1-800-771-7755 or email [civil.rights@ag.ny.gov](mailto:civil.rights@ag.ny.gov).

Comprising educators, parents and community members the Race Matters Committee wants to support all BIPOC young people, and remains focused on this goal. How do we have an impact on our youth and be agents of change. Natalie played a video of Dr. Martin Luther King and showed an excerpt of the text of James Baldwin's Talk to Teachers. Dr. King said, "It shouldn't be an installment plan to address inequality." By virtue of being born with a lighter skin tone, it gives whites automatic privilege.

To make real change, individuals have to be willing to give up part of their stake in the status quo or part of their white privilege to share with BIPOC groups. White backlash is like cancel culture (*Canceling and cancel culture have to do with the removing of support for public figures in response to their objectionable behavior or opinions*); all of these things are connected. Natalie provided a definition of white supremacy. It is important to define what that really means for everyone.

Segregation issues are within the Committee's purview and may include a number of areas including curriculum, clubs, extracurricular activities, etc. How do you educate people about unconscious bias and white privilege? Many adults do not understand the complexity of it or what it really means. We have to make

these dialogues typical in order to create more equitable and inclusive spaces for our children.

Some questions and suggestions that the Race Committee discussed include:

- Why would BIPOC teachers want to come and work in Dobbs Ferry? FYI, only two percent of principals across the country are Black.
- In our District, teacher turnover is very low, but is our School District trending in the right direction as far as hiring a more diverse staff?
- Maybe we need to debrief after each hiring round; how many BIPOC candidates made it to the final round?
- Going forward, we should make a conscious effort to bring in more BIPOC speakers, authors, artists, etc.?
- Can we do an exchange program with a more diverse school district so our students and educators get to host or visit a district very different than Dobbs?
- When we do implicit bias training is it possible to use smaller group settings, which seem more conducive to open discussion than larger workshops?
- How can we be more inclusive of BIPOC families who feel uncomfortable attending school events?

Natalie surveyed the Race Matters Committee members and these were the top five areas that were at the forefront for change. Areas of interest:

- Curriculum
- Strategic plan
- Professional Development/teacher training
- Community partnerships
- Hiring

(Communication was also a priority)

The Race Committee's April and May meetings will be full-on work sessions. The Committee expects to determine and finalize concrete and immediate long-term steps to ultimately present to the Board of Education.