

## **Race Matters Committee Meeting Minutes 4/21/21**

April is poetry month, so Natalie started the meeting by having us read the poem *Invitation to Brave Space*- by Mickey Scottbey Jones. How do we help turn minds and go from allies to co-conspirators? We have to examine what we think we know. Voices in the outside world bring us together. It's not going to be perfect if we want to bring people along; we just need to get them to move a little farther.

We discussed if this space has created an opportunity to be braver, what scenarios do we need to curate and talk about; and how do we openly share our emotions. Our students, staff and families need a processing space. As the Committee crafts recommendations, how do we foster more safe spaces to talk about what's happening in our schools?

The Committee also watched an interview with Dr. Bettina Love, (a sought-after speaker, award-winning author and the Athletic Association Endowed Professor at the University of Georgia. Her writing, research, teaching, and educational advocacy work meet at the intersection of education reform, anti-racism, carceral studies, abolition, and Black joy). We also listened to Yolanda Sealey-Ruiz, (Ph.D., New York University, Associate Professor of English Education at Teachers College, Columbia University. At TC, she is founder and faculty sponsor of the Racial Literacy Roundtables Series and also co-founder of the Teachers College Civic Participation Project). They talked about taking a risk and putting something on the line for someone else. It's great to be supportive, but "don't stand there, go somewhere."

Along those lines and within the past week, there has been a significant announcement from the New York State Board of Regents, naming the impact of systemic racism and inequity in our schools, and launching an initiative to advance diversity, equity and inclusion in New York Schools. All schools now need to develop an equity and inclusion policy. Chancellor Lester Young and Commissioner Betty Rosa are leading this charge.

As the first step in the initiative, the Board released a draft framework and call to action for all schools in New York State to develop policies that advance diversity, equity and inclusion as a priority in their schools. As part of this work, schools may consider:

- Specifically acknowledging the role that racism and bigotry have played, and continue to play, in the American story;
- Adopting a Culturally Responsive and Sustaining (CR-S) Framework that embeds the ideals of diversity, equity and inclusion by creating student-centered learning environments that affirm cultural identities; fosters positive academic outcomes; develops students' abilities to connect across lines of difference; elevates historically marginalized voices;

- empowers students as agents of social change; and contributes to individual student engagement, learning, growth and achievement through the cultivation of critical thinking; and
- Ensuring coherent opportunities for students to actively participate in experiences that prepare them for a lifetime of civic engagement and social justice activism, including, for example, completing capstone projects.

The old normal is no more. This document has an energy that feels very urgent. The full text of the Board's Framework for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in New York Schools is available on the Department's website.

<https://www.regents.nysed.gov/common/regents/files/421brd1.pdf>