

Race Matters Committee Meeting 5/19/21

The Committee reviewed the results from the ThoughtExchange survey that students participated in last month to obtain their thoughts on diversity, equity and inclusion in our schools. Nicole Senior, a customer success manager with ThoughtExchange, helped the Committee members understand the survey analytics. This data will be used to assist the Committee groups in developing their recommendations.

There were 742 students who participated in the ThoughtExchange. Each student shared approximately 30 thoughts and starred the 10-15 thoughts of others whose thoughts they agreed with the most. Thoughts are grouped by key words to highlight themes within the exchange. The interactive report provided a list of all thoughts rated highest to lowest. The students responded to three questions that included their thoughts on witnessing or experiencing racism and microaggression in school, and their comfort level on speaking out when encountering such behaviors and/or incidents.

Many of the committee members agreed that it was important to have concrete definitions of terms like microaggression and inclusion so that when we focus on these issues during professional development and bias training, we are all talking about the exact same thing. We spoke about defining the top five “terms” related to this work. A common vocabulary also helps validate peoples’ experiences.

The Committee’s recommendations, which will be presented to the Board of Education, are broken down into essentially four areas including:

1. Hiring and Retention
2. Curriculum
3. Professional Development
4. Community Partnerships and Engagement

The four subcommittees used a portion of the time to meet within their own groups and flesh out ideas/suggestions further. Natalie also went around to each group to help guide the discussions. The final recommendations will be incorporated into and become part of the district’s overall strategic plan. Each subcommittee will be meeting on their own in between now and the Race Matters Committee’s final meeting.

As a reminder, the Board of Education will receive recommendations from the District’s Race Matters Committee at its meeting on June 22nd for consideration in the development of the District’s Diversity, Equity and Inclusion plan. The Race Matters Committee - composed of students, staff, parents and community members - has been meeting monthly since December.