Equity Committee Focus Group Update (August 2020)

We hosted two parent focus groups and one alum focus group to gather reactions around equity in our schools. They were advertised on FB, through PTOs, and by school principals, as well as the Equity Groups' personal networks. The recent equity report was the starting point for our discussions in these groups. Groups included:

1. 17 June 2020 (19 parents)
2. 21 July 2020 (6 parents)
3. 27 July 2020 (6 alums)
4. 19 August 2020 (6 alums)
5. 24 August 2020 (19 parents)

BIG THEMES for school wide equity work (parent focus groups)

1) Equity report itself -- The report was seen as TOO POSITIVE and ignoring huge issues in the schools (e.g., Colonial days, students of color choosing prep schools, LGBTQ+ slurs and harassment, problems of students with learning issues, lack of diversity in curriculum and staff)
2) Sustainability -- Make sure this work lasts; it causes real change in schools' cultures and isn't just a fad.
   a) Equity as a lens
   b) Equity needs to be part of the fabric of everything -- curriculum, hiring
   c) Equity should be on every agenda of every meeting - stay proactive
   d) Be INTENTIONALLY ANTI-Racist
   e) Sustained pd - for years
3) Accountability --
   a) Leadership - Superintendent and the leadership as well as the School Board need to be seriously invested in equity work.
   b) Equity committee - ensure the committee has goals that can be measured and analyzed
   c) Incidents -- how do incidents get reported and who follows-up? Who is responsible for ensuring students and staff who have problems are heard and their problems solved/addressed?
   d) Feedback loop - make sure we inform parents of progress on any issues
4) Curriculum -- Must be overhauled completely as it is dated and not diverse, nor is it consistent across grades and schools
5) Parent Education -- Parents need education:

      a) Around equity issues (how to talk about race, gender, sexual identity, disabilities)

      b) About how things are changed in schools- time and process issues

6) Staff Education - ALL staff including coaches, ed assistants, and custodial staff need professional development around equity issues.

7) Student Education - Students need help around DEI issues as well, not just a program but days of intensive work around equity.

8) Stories provide a way to:--

      a) allow parents to share information

      b) share important information and examples in a way that allows change to happen

BIG THEMES for school wide Equity work (alum focus groups)

1) Lack of Diversity is harmful --

      a) While in District, students were not taught diverse perspectives.

      b) Lack of exposure to diverse people in classrooms and in curriculum hurts HHS graduates in college and work - no matter their affinity group identity.

2) Curriculum --

      a) Needs to be overhauled to be more representative of many perspectives,

      b) Needs to become less centered on logic and argument. Some things can not be justified (e.g. Andrew Jackson's use of the Trail of Tears)

      c) Needs to include history after 1950/WWII.

3) Communication --

      a) White privilege needs to be addressed head on .

      b) Teachers, parents, and curriculum need to talk about racism with students from an early age (K)

    4) Trust and relationships --

      Students from marginalized groups need to have adults in each building who they trust so they can share information about incidents safely and so that change may occur.

GOING FORWARD

Parent subcommittee will:

1) **Focus Groups --** We will organize additional focus groups, only if needed, as the year unfolds. For now, we will switch to planning parent workshops.

2) **Plan parent workshops**

After a summer of focus groups, this subcommittee will shift from planning and executing focus groups to developing parent workshops (two annually?) around equity. We will ask PTOs to sponsor these workshops. We plan to work with the PD Subcommittee to provide content using the PD staff members are receiving so that the entire community will have and benefit from the same information.