



Newtown Public Schools

BOE DEAI Committee Meeting
June 10, 2025

BOE Conference Room
Municipal Building
3 Primrose Street
Newtown, CT 06470
6:00 PM

As citizens of our community, we will conduct ourselves in accordance with Newtown's Core Character Attributes as displayed in our character tree. We will be responsible for our actions and show respect for each other. We will interact peacefully, productively, and politely. We will be trustworthy and honest and show compassion toward others. Newtown's continued success is contingent upon our ability to persevere, to follow through with our commitments, and to stay focused on the greater good.

AGENDA

1. **CALL TO ORDER**
2. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**
3. **NEW BUSINESS**
 - A. Action on Minutes of April 8, 2025
 - B. Hateful Language Protocol Update
 - C. Website Update
 - D. Incident Data Review
 - E. Nixon & Co. Update
 - F. Goals and Planning for Next Year
4. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**
5. **ADJOURNMENT**

Board of Education
3 Primrose Street, Newtown, CT
Diversity, Equity, Accessibility and Inclusion Subcommittee
April 8, 2025

Minutes of the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Subcommittee meeting held on April 8, 2025 at 6:00 p.m. in the Board of Education conference room, 3 Primrose Street.

C. Gilson, Chair
D. Linnetz
D. Zukowski

A. Uberti
K. DiBartolo
3 Public

Item 1 – Call to Order

Dr. Gilson called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Item 2 – Public Participation – none

Item 3 – New Business

Action on minutes of February 11, 2025:

MOTION: Mrs. Linnetz moved to approve the minutes of February 11, 2025. Ms. Zukowski seconded. Motion passes unanimously.

Impact of Federal changes on School District:

Dr. Gilson referred to Mrs. Uberti's statement regarding anti-bias training for teachers, diversifying curricular materials, and ensuring curriculum is culturally responsive. Newtown practices and policies are in alignment with the current administration. DEAI works to ensure everyone has access to a great education and that students feel welcome and included. Our practices and policies are in alignment with all applicable executive orders so we will continue to pursue the district's goals and mission without interruption. Some of the new government orders have brought up questions between the federal directives and state law, which will require ongoing guidance from the state.

Ms. Zukowski referred to federal changes and feels there is a lot of information that doesn't make sense and that mistakes were made and wants to be sure that all Board members understand what is going on. We should outline a couple of policies to send to the Policy Committee to review to be sure they don't fall into the gray or black area. We have some language in our policy that some people might object to. We should try to be as diverse with our staff as that of the State of Connecticut.

Mrs. Uberti feels there are some things we have in place that are potentially in conflict with changes to the federal law and recommends going slower. The last legislation that came out has to do with Title VI, which is around discrimination in financial aid assistance so they are probably looking at colleges. There are conflicts between state and federal guidance. The State has been quiet but we received notice that the State Department of Education is reviewing the latest letter that was sent and asked for an extension to respond by April 24 and they will follow up with information to the schools. The area superintendents have gotten legal guidance and she doesn't see anything that is an immediate problem for us as we are in compliance with guidelines. She feels we should go slow and see how things work out. Policy 0523 may have language that might warrant a review. We aren't putting the district at any risk.

Ms. Zukowski wanted to have the information we need first without taking action.

Mrs. Uberti said that didn't come to us and was just sent to the State Department of Education.

Mrs. Linnetz said it was just sent to the State and things are changing on a daily basis and she feels its up to the State of Connecticut to let us know how they are going to respond. We need to keep focused on what we need to do for our students.

Mrs. Uberti said we are working on policy 0523 and the Increasing Educator Diversity Plan and are potentially in conflict regarding the actual targets. We have not been asked to sign anything or comply with anything. The request was of the State education agencies who requested an extension to April 24. This letter references discriminatory practices relating to Title VI which would not impact our district. She received a list of all of the potential problematic things that could happen in the districts but none applied to us. We should keep moving forward with our mission and make changes as needed. The big issue is transgender athletes and we will deal with them when they come up.

Ms. Zukowski suggested making our DEAI statement about full inclusivity to somehow make it show that we are fully inclusive in terms of a welcoming environment and engagement.

Update on Equity Leader Training and Planning:

Kara DeBartolo, Director of Teaching and Learning, has been working closely with Nixon and Co. and the equity team leaders. She reported that they shifted the ownership of the work from the building administration to the equity leaders. Nixon and Co. conducted a certified and non-certified staff culture survey in December and in January they provided the teams a review of the results. At the March meeting, the equity leaders were given school-specific data and were asked to analyze it as a team and create a 60-day work plan. The next steps will be to see the data and how it can be incorporated into our school success plan.

Mrs. Uberti said after the break we send the climate and culture survey to parents, students and staff to create a community of practice around the work and ways to make our schools more welcoming.

Mrs. Linnetz asked what the equity teams thought about the differences between students in Reed, the middle school and the high school and how those schools handle things because they are older.

Mrs. DiBartolo said there's a different way to think about it. For example, part of Head O'Meadow's plan is what the vision is of a Head O'Meadow student. Moving up the grade levels it depends on what needs are shown in the survey regarding behaviors but it's a way to be more proactive because the conversations will be different between the schools.

Mrs. Uberti added that the middle school and high school have separate equity teams. She was not sure if we can ever eradicate behaviors. It has to start with how students treat others and how adults treat others. Students are changing every day in the upper grades. We have a lot of work to do internally to make us be better receivers in order to be more welcoming to others.

Mrs. Linnetz said it the expectations and the way we treat others and making it clear to students is what is and is not acceptable. She asked if any of the work is getting input from the students.

Mrs. Uberti said at the middle and high schools there are students who sit on the Safe School Climate Committee but she wasn't sure of their level of involvement.

Development of Protocol for Hate Language/Conflict:

Mrs. DiBartolo said students should be in alignment when there are incidents of hate language or conflict between students. She will create a draft of a protocol that looks at what happens when the incident is reported, what is the reporting procedure, what is the investigative process, and what is the education prevention. It's important to follow up with the student and the family. This will be work with the equity leaders also.

Mrs. Uberti said we talked about this here and feels this is particularly important. Sometimes principals can't get the resolution to prove something happened. There needs to be someone to come in and do the restorative piece to check in. Secondly, the dream is that everyone can do this equally and students know that. We want every adult to be understanding and trusted. We do a good job investigating but still need to have a consistent experience for children, staff, and families.

Dr. Gilson noted that a CAGE session talked about this last year. Most schools are good in the investigation part. It was conducted by staff members of the Manchester Public Schools and they recommended reaching out to them which he strongly recommends.

Mrs. DeBartolo would reach out to them and she joined a State DEI roundtable that meets monthly. Manchester spoke about their process and she will follow up with them as well as with Simsbury and Avon.

Ms. Zukowski asked if there was going to be a delineation for types of hate.

Mrs. Uberti said we are looking at marginalized groups that are being targeted. Bullying has its own specific definition. You can have a racial incident that might not be bullying. Our administrators would do the investigation.

Date Review:

Anonymous Alerts Summary: Mrs. Uberti pulled the data from February 11, 2025 and reported there were 36 incidents and from that, there were 2 incidents of sexual harassment, 15 as harassment or bullying, and 6 racial slurs/hate crimes. Of the 6, there were 2 that resulted in consequences and 4 in educational steps. There were comments on different cultures. The other 2 involved use of the "n" word but not directed at another student and 1 that stemmed from a bus driver who said something mean and not appropriate. We have to think about what training we can provide to our bus drivers who are subject to training from us. We used to do bullying training and feels we should begin doing that again.

PowerSchool Disciplinary Report: There were 2 racial slurs reported in PowerSchool and discussed consequences. There were 3 incident with discipline for non-sexual harassment which involved in one incident which was mean behavior and name calling, 2 reports of sexual harassment with 1 at the elementary level and 1 at Reed Intermediate School and those focused on inappropriate comments of a sexual nature. There are a few incidents this week that are being investigated.

Item 4 – Public Participation

Nicole Maddox, 14 Nighthawk Lane, felt this was good information. She referred to the Federal changes and urged them to please be proactive and it was important to decide how you will resist some of the things that will land this district on the wrong side of history. What can we do to maintain the community we have? Regarding the equity leaders, we are talking about not all kinds of hate but hate to protected classes of people and you should understand who falls under a protected class of people. The protocol would be to make sure the information on it has been properly rolled out. People are left feeling like no one is going to do anything. Protocol should

be shared with parents also. In testing the protocol, see if a few families would review it to give their opinion and be sure educators understand they are mandated reporters in a situation.

Kate McGrady, 26 Philo Curtis Road, loved hearing all of this information. Regarding the protocol, Danbury has an accountability APP not for race but for things like driving over a pothole and accountability after the incident. It would be good for our parents to see the accountability steps regarding what is happening. Do parents and children know who the equity leaders are at the schools? It would be important for a parent of color to know who the safe staff members are and asked how that could be shared. Regarding teachers having their own biases to work through, the Superintendent has the great ability to work through that with training. She asked how comfortable the staff feels being on these equity teams given the federal changes. She hopes they feel comfortable but the Board of Education should double down on this and send a letter to staff supporting them given the federal changes.

Don Lococo, 27 Hi Barlow Road, stated this is good information but it brings up the importance of definition. Some things from the Federal government are not meeting the right definitions. He wanted to make sure what is put out, is accurate and dealing with the right definitions.

MOTION: Ms. Zukowski moved to adjourn and Mrs. Linnetz seconded. Motion passes unanimously.

Item 5 – Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 7:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Kathy June

These minutes are pending committee approval.