

Meeting minutes 10/22/20

Attendees:

Toby, Claire, Emily, Rajeev, May, Meaghan, Julie, Mark, Janna, Jayla, Henry, Isaac, Joe, Leslie, Beth, Lisa

Equity discussion

Over the summer many individuals used the word equity to support their interests and priorities. The Planning Team thought it would be important for this group to come to a shared understanding of what equity and excellence means to us.

Administration view/definition of equity was presented, followed by a group discussion.

(insert the definition of equity that was on screen)

The proposition was put forth to look at what we propose through an equity lens. Clarifying questions - what does this mean as a district value. How do we apply this to our work here? Any questions about what we're sharing here?

We need to define terms we use (some of the pillars) so we are all on the same page. It will be in our best interest when we say XYZ, this is what it means. Whatever we come out with will be inherently inequitable by certain populations. There is no perfect solution. There are going to be tradeoffs, no matter what. It may be helpful to talk about types of inequity - race, income, abilities, disabilities.

Implementation decisions - won't be a perfect answer for everyone. But we need to understand if there are certain things from NPS values/priorities that are not moveable. We need to know that upfront. What is the bar? How can we use that to make decisions that are as equitable as possible.

What has the district done so far that supports our principles of equity:

- High needs students in the building
- Grading policy
- How homework is being handled right now
- Transportation pieces, where we did not offer activities without making sure all students could participate.
- There is no "absent" this year; students don't have to show themselves on screen this year - what does 'present' mean?
- Not linking attendance with grades.
- Amount of outreach being done to some students based on level of need. Counselors, teachers and administrators have been reaching out to students with specific needs.

A sentiment was shared that the majority of the community isn't aware of the list above, and how equity has played a central role in assessing tradeoffs.

We should make equity a part of our messaging early on. Equity is not 'I didn't get what I wanted.' We need to do a much better job communicating what equity is and is not across the community.

Some people this summer said 'Equity leads to lower standards.' NPS feels that using an equity lens is synergistic vs. in conflict with our core value of excellence.

A small example: a teacher was inspired to create a socially distance in-person book group for her class. However, she did this while also having a virtual book group for students who were unable to attend.

We can't allow equity to be used as a way of blaming other groups in the community for how things are going.

We need to stop just saying "equity" vs. "equity and excellence". Both are critically important. Internally we may be talking more about equity because the community has historically focused more on excellence.

We then broke into three subgroups:

- A) Students Focus Groups: Teachers and students met to discuss questions/facilitation of student focus groups
- B) Family Outreach: Parents met to discuss communications with families.
- C) External Research: Group that got started last week worked on advancing the matrix

STUDENT FOCUS GROUPS:

Beginning Questions:

- 1) How to ensure representative sample of NNHS and NSHS students
- 2) Questions about who will be selected and how?
- 3) Would students be more willing to talk to a teacher from their school or to someone they don't know (and be able to be more honest)?
- 4) Should we randomly choose Homerooms/Advisories from both schools?
- 5) Sample questions:
 - 1) Overall, how are you doing?
 - 2) What's going well for you? Probe for:
 - a. School work
Is work- interesting, challenging, enjoyable, fun, enough, too much?
Would you say you are present or engaged?

Is evaluation/grading policy clear, consistent, OK? PROBE: "Is your answer linked specifically to the remote aspect, or the nature of the class?"

b. Relationships/Connections (with adults, peers, friends)

Do you get connections through peers "at school" vs clubs vs. seeing friends outside of school

c. Emotional well-being (how are you doing? Where do you get support?)

3) What has been the biggest challenge about school for you this year?

4) What would be the most exciting thing about going back? (Probe: to see friends, because I crave normalcy, because I think I will learn more?)

5) What would give you pause about going back? (Probe: your ability to socially distance? Your ability to stay safe? Disruption to your routines?)

(Maybe reword this: "What concerns do you have about the idea of going back?") - answers may range from socially distance to losing/changing a community that has already been formed this year

6) Who of your friends should we talk to? Why? (This could give us a chance to "sample" better - cast a wider net for opinions).

7) Something about "what matters most to you? What do you want to make sure we 'hold on to?'" (Trying to figure out how to get information about what students would be really upset about "trading" off).

FAMILY OUTREACH

Parent survey sent out on Monday - how to cast a wide net to be sure subgroups are well represented. METCO, ELL, SEPAC, OOD families?, PTSO, and NPS listservs? We want to communicate a calm sense of urgency. Overcommunicate in a way that is manageable. This survey needs to allow for the range of parent voices.

Focus groups? We need to be clear about the desired outcome of focus groups if we do them with families. Discussed waiting until the survey data is completed, and then create forums from emerging themes. We have lots of groups of parents already, and they are quite vocal - who isn't vocal? Let's making sure we can reach them.

Concept/pressure testing certain options in the community down the road. Town hall?
Community meeting? Beginning of mid-stream ideas.

Put out a sense that this group has a calm sense of urgency. We have work to do, and we want parents to be part of the process. There will be follow-up after the survey.

MATRIX - The Matrix was expanded. In the full group, working group members signed up to fill out the matrix for districts they know about and/or have interest in. We will review this

information next week, and select a few districts to take a deep dive of parents, educators and students experiences.