

Board Equity and Inclusion Committee meeting

Thursday, May 2, 2024 1:00 PM

Virtual Via Zoom

1. Call to Order

1.A. Board goals assigned to the Equity and Inclusion Committee

1.A.1. Ensure inclusion through implementing our equity lens to achieve equitable district outcomes

1.A.2. Continue to focus and prioritization of regional leadership around equity

1.B. Strategic Plan goals tied to the Equity and Inclusion Committee

1.B.1. Creating a high quality learning experience for all

1.B.2. Operationalizing systems that engage and empower communities

1.B.3. Building a culturally responsive workforce

2. Review minutes from the April 4, 2024 meeting and report on action items

3. Develop a process and guidelines for the Land Acknowledgement/Educational Opportunity

3.A. Clear guidelines for Board members on topics, time limits, etc.

Board Equity and Inclusion Committee

Thursday, April 4, 2024

2023-2028 Agency Goals

#1 – Creating a high-quality learning experience for all

#2 – Operationalizing systems that engage and empower communities

#3 – Building a culturally responsive workforce

MESD Board Equity Lens-<https://www.multnomahesd.org/board-equity.html>

The meeting was called to order at 1:00 p.m. on Thursday, April 4, 2024 by Committee Chair Ying.

• CALL TO ORDER

Present: Helen Ying, Chair
Denyse Peterson, Board member

Absent: Danny Cage, Board members

Administration: Heather Severns, Board Secretary
Reiko Williams, Director of Regional Equity Initiatives and Partnerships
Sascha Perrins, Assistant Superintendent

Guests: Marifer Sager, Director of Strategic Communications and Public Affairs

1. Review notes from the March 7th meeting- Denyse Peterson had a change in the minutes. The phrase “What can MESD” do was in twice. One will be deleted. The committee approved the minutes from the March 7, 2024 meeting.

2. 2023-2024 committee goals and action steps

- a. How will we share the work on equity with staff, students and the community?
 - i. The Director of Strategic Communications and Public Affairs, Marifer Sager joined the committee to share what we are doing to share our work on equity. Marifer shared a view of the new website where there will be a link to the Equity page under Recent Highlights on the front page. Right above the Recent Highlights section is a bar that will let viewers select a language to view the website content in.
 - ii. We can share out equity work in the monthly newsletter. In the current layout of the monthly newsletter there is a link for staff to submit their stories and happenings across the district as well as a link to current job opportunities MESD is hiring for. We can add a section between those two items with a link to the Equity webpage that is currently being built.
 - iii. Marifer also let the committee know about the posters with our Mission/Vision and the Equity Lens. These will be in all conference rooms throughout the Ainsworth building and at our schools.
 - iv. Committee Chair Ying asked Marifer how we reach staff that are not in our buildings. Those in the hospital buildings, detention centers and nurses that are

in other district buildings. Marifer let the group know that this information is presented at the Administrators meeting with the expectation that it will be passed along to the staff they supervise. Another option will be when we rollout the new website.

- v. Committee member Denyse Peterson asked if the posters will be placed in our component districts buildings so that they understand that this is an equity lens that MESD would like for them to consider whenever they are doing anything and everything, or will this be confined to just our building. Marifer responded that she believes our component districts are working on equity, they have their own tools that makes sense for them. We do not govern them. We can share what we are doing. As the Communications director she will share this content with her fellow communications leads so that they can use it as inspiration for their work, or they can give her feedback. Those are things that happen for any work that we are doing on a regular basis. Equity Director Reiko Williams responded that there are several Equity Directors in our component districts, and Portland Public Schools adopted a racial equity lens a long time ago.
- vi. Another way we are sharing our equity commitment is through our Viewbook. This is how we are recruiting people not just locally but also nationally. We are honest in our recruitment. We let people know who we are, what Portland is all about, and that these are our commitments so that people know what they are getting into when they come to work at MESD. In many cases this is one of the reasons why people choose to work for MESD. Marifer is working on a recruitment campaign that will hopefully be national and there will be an equity component tied to this as well.
- b. How do we get feedback or hear back from people? Did they actually get our message? What do we have in place?
 - i. Marifer shared a survey last spring to gather feedback on communications and the work they are doing. This year we could include something about this.
 - ii. Reiko let the committee know that we do collect feedback. At the Administrators meeting last month we introduced the Equity Lens bookmark. At every Administrators meeting we are collecting data and getting feedback from this group. There is overwhelmingly positive feedback about people wanting to know more about how to use the tool and how to make it part of their practice. At the Administrators meeting scheduled for April 11 we are going to go deeper and actually do an activity where we are looking at a policy and having people use the Equity Lens and guiding questions.
 - iii. Marifer also gave the example of the feedback collected after the Back to School event in August of 2023 and how we are using this information to plan this year's event.
 - iv. This all relates to the Blueprint 28 which is our continuous improvement guide. We do something, we try it, we listen, and we rectify or correct the way we do things based on feedback.
 - v. Committee Chair Ying thinks we are moving in the right direction and thanked Marifer for the good work she is doing and for leading the way in thinking ahead. She would like to tap her expertise again as we continue our journey in

this discussion. Committee member Denyse Peterson also thanked Reiko for her contributions on this work as well.

3. Develop a process and guidelines for the Land Acknowledgement/Educational Opportunity-

- i. There was discussion on what the title of this agenda item should be. It has been called Land Acknowledgement and Educational Opportunity. We want to expand on the Land Acknowledgement and include the Educational Opportunity. The decision was made to use both titles and the agenda item will be called Educational Opportunity/Land Acknowledgement.
- ii. Each person has been asked to bring five must have items for the guidelines. Some examples shared were
 1. Denyse Peterson-She asked herself a series of questions about our audience and if this is an educational opportunity, who are we trying to reach or educate? Is it just Board members, management team, community partners, stakeholders, the public, since we are doing this in a public setting?
 - a. What will the Board members do with this information once it is presented and should there be any action assigned to the topic or any discussion?
 - b. Board members should also have the option to choose an expert in their field to come and present for 5-10 minutes as well as Board members presenting so it does not take them out of the equation, but they will have the option if they desire.
 - c. Possibly/preferably using one hour per month or quarter to do professional development on various topics.
 - d. Invite someone from the native community to come speak to the Board, they may choose what they share.
 - e. Present more information from the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion committee.
 - f. We are the experts in our lived experiences and the way in which we convey our essence and perspectives as individuals.
 2. Reiko Williams
 - a. If we land on a statement we should include an acknowledgement of land and labor. Reiko has been doing some research and learned that Australia and Canada have long used land acknowledgements and recently in the US. She shared an article with the committee sometime in 2022 that challenged this practice around this being a rote activity. Her hope was that we would not be reproducing the same thing that we were challenged against doing. Acknowledging land and labor consists of what land we are on and then what labor practices have resulted in where we are and what are the current things that are happening. A lot of times we look at historical things that have happened, but what are the current things happening.
 - b. One thing we started doing was understanding better what Indigenous people in the region are facing, what are some of

their issues? They are most overrepresented in foster care and they are underrepresented in TAG programs. So it is important for us, if we are making decisions about Indigenous people to know what the current issues are that are facing them and communities like them. Possibly having Board members listen to our Indigenous community partners on what they would like for us to know about Indigenous people to inform decision making by leadership.

- c. What is a land acknowledgement and why is it important?

Reiko shared this article in 2022 in the spirit of us not practicing check the box activities that we've done and that make us feel good. Instead doing really meaningful work that will help inform our decision making on behalf of the communities we serve. The article link below answers the question, what is a Land Acknowledgement and why is it important? Reiko added to this with the following questions that is a more comprehensive approach.

- i. Why is it important to the MESD Board of Directors?
- ii. Why is it important to acknowledge the land?
- iii. Where can you find out more information about native students and families, and what are we doing in terms of our staff and representation and recruitment and retention?
- iv. What have we already done towards a more inclusive experience for Indigenous people?
- v. Who do we consult with to create the Land Acknowledgement?

<https://thewalters.org/about/land/>

- d. The Walters Art Gallery in Baltimore has a Land Acknowledgement, but they don't just have a Land acknowledgement. They have an acknowledgement of how they are changing their practices. It is one thing to say we acknowledgement the land that we are on, but another to say this is what we are our intentional strategies that reflect that we aren't just making a statement that makes us look or feel good, but this is how we have adopted our practices.
- e. Reiko asked if these guidelines were for the Board process to establish a process around how Board meeting operate or if it is to establish what Board leadership identifies as a priority for decision making relative to Indigenous and other communities of color. So do we want to talk about how our agenda operates when we convene or we want to talk about how the needs of Indigenous and BIPOC communities can be centered? Helen responded that the Equity and Inclusion Committee was requested to come up with guidelines for this segment of the meeting. This could be step one, then as a committee we could propose step 2. This would be how we have Board discussions,

our Board agenda, and our Board action/work to reflect our values.

3. Sascha Perrins
 - a. Where does our mission overlap with our Indigenous Communities priorities?
 4. Helen Ying
 - a. Growth Orientation-have we done anything transformative or just checked a box?
 - b. We need to acknowledge that we have limited knowledge and exposure.
 - c. Must include education and action
 - d. Sharing articles, videos and guest speakers to learn and respond to issues impacting native communities and other historically marginalized communities.
 - e. Deeper reflection about institutional actions that the Board can engage with and support.
 - f. Come prepared with examples that are actually evidence based and that help bring better understanding of the communities needs and examples of what action can look like to make that happen.
 - g. Maybe instead of having guidelines telling Board members what to do, we should come back with a set of questions that Board members could ask themselves so that they will know if the presentation itself will be in a way that is helping to transform our thinking and transform our actions.
4. Action items/next steps
 - a. Return for the May 2nd meeting with actual guidelines not just concepts for the Educational Opportunity/Land Acknowledgement segment at our Board with the hopes of taking this to the Board for approval at the May 21st meeting.

Adjourn

There being no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned 1:58 p.m. The next meeting of this committee will be May 2 at 1:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Heather Severns
Executive Assistant/Board Secretary