

LOWER MERION SCHOOL DISTRICT

Tuesday, April 6, 2010 (4:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.)

Meeting Informal Notes

I. Welcome.....Dr. Christopher McGinley

Dr. McGinley opened the meeting with a welcome to all members and turned the meeting over to Dr. Spence

II. Announcements.....Dr. Deitra Spence

Dr. Spence shared information about the following:

- Black Male Development Symposium at Arcadia University on Saturday, May 15th from 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. – transportation will be provided from Bala Cynwyd Middle School, Welsh Valley Middle School, and Lower Merion High School. Students in grades 7-12, parents, and other adults are encouraged to attend. For more information go to www.blackmaledevelopment.com
- Ninth Grade Summer Bridge Program will be offered to 25-30 students at each of the high schools for rising 9th graders. This program will be a week-long, half-day program to help 8th graders make the transition from middle school to high school
- CARE website is currently being updated – To access the CARE website go to the “Community” link on the LMSD website.

III. Cultural Proficiency Cadre Update-----Dr. Barbara Moore-Williams

Dr. Moore-Williams mentioned that the two Cultural Proficiency cadres continue to meet and that a two-day retreat with both cadres and the administrators from each school will be held in June to discuss where the district is in relation to the cultural proficiency initiatives and to create an action plan for moving forward. A Cultural Proficiency link to the district’s website is in progress.

Dr. McGinley shared with the group that he, Dr. Maguire, and Dr. Spence have met with Dr. Molefi Asante, a world-famous scholar in the area of African-American studies. Dr. Asante presented a proposal about various curricular issues and his approach to helping school districts develop a knowledge base about African history and African-American history and how to work that information into the curriculum. Further discussions will focus on K-12 infusion and building the knowledge base of teachers. Thanks to Lorraine Carter for referring Dr. Asante to the Dr. McGinley and the CARE committee.

IV. Establishing District-wide Parent Panels.....Dr. McGinley

A number of parents and staff members attended a DVMSAC workshop presented by Dr. Karen Mapp from Harvard University. Her presentation focused on parent engagement, building trust, and building parent relationships and prompted a number of parents to propose the formation of a district-wide parent panel that would help shape the dialogue of the CARE meetings to include the parent perspective. Those interested in participating on the parent panel will meet after the CARE meetings and will meet for the first time on May 25th.

V. LMSD Hiring Process and Open House Event.....Dr. Yoder

Dr. Yoder shared with the group the strategies she's been using to recruit African-American candidates for professional positions (see attached handout). She encouraged CARE members to help recruit prospective candidates of color and stated that candidates who are sent to her would get an interview. An Open House is planned for May 12th at Harriton High from 4-6 p.m. Sessions will be set up to provide information about the district and teachers will be available to "meet and greet" those who attend.

The members worked in groups of four to talk about what else we could do to help with the recruitment efforts. They shared the following:

- Cast a wider net – to go beyond the churches in Ardmore – recruit in Philly and NJ
- Be thoughtful about the communities with re: to recruitment
- At the Open House – present the process – it may look different here than in other places
 - Part of the perception is that you're creating another hurdle for me to overcome and maybe I'm not welcomed here
- Be explicit about the process
- What is the hiring process? When was the last time it was assessed or reassessed? Is it what we need today to recruit and retain the type of people we're looking for?
- The application process – can we provide additional assistance – without jeopardizing the process
- How can we help navigate the process for applicants
- Have some current staff at Open House to come and encourage and explicate the process and encourage people to RSVP
- Minorities need to be on interview committees
- Interview questions should be reviewed for cultural proficiency
- Put in the flier re: the district's commitment to cultural proficiency and CARE
- Create "move up" opportunities for existing staff
- Clustering teachers like you cluster kids
- Formal review of the human resource practices
- Find out from those who work here
- Find out why people weren't hired for positions
- Should be a cultural proficiency requirement
- Focus recruitment on substitute teachers and student teachers

- Offer financial incentives – tuition reimbursement
- Mentoring programs and connect teachers of color
- Perception is that black teachers have to be more qualified
- Adding more recruiters of color
- Have parent reps on the hiring committee from CARE
- Where are we pulling student teachers from?
- Have never seen student teachers of color
- There are fewer students of color going into education – decreased talent pool
- Most teachers from Philly don't want to give up their contract to be a LTS
- Recruitment becomes key – there aren't that many to go around
- Can we begin thinking about the induction process and recruitment
- Go into colleges during the students' freshmen year – developed a fostered a relationship over the years hoping that when they graduate they want to work in our district
- Warmer personal connection – welcoming package or brochure – for minority candidates
 - Three-folded brochure, folder, talk about initiatives – represented minority teachers in the building - you're welcomed here
- Current teachers should be able to speak with the applicants – the first connection is critical – helps the teachers feel welcomed
- What's being done to retain staff?
- Some current staff did not feel welcomed when they arrived in LM
- Utilizing staff to create a safe environment to have courageous conversations
- Specificity of job openings – currently 30 mostly professional positions
- Professionals get together on their own to support each other
- Difficult to connect with folks who are distributed throughout the buildings
- Establishing a welcoming committee at each school – headed by the administrative staff of each school – perhaps a hospitality committee – extroverted, warm fuzzy group
- Friday morning events – get together – if you're fairly new and don't have anybody to talk to – big sister, big brother
- Have exit interviews with people who leave and check on rate of leaving and retention – why do they leave – compared to other districts
- Changing the culture of the district
- Outreach to pre-service teachers at local colleges – Temple, Lincoln, Cheyney, Villanova
- Ask student teacher supervisors for minority candidates
- Job fair follow through – phone calls or emails
- Broaden the communication to churches and groups
- Use current minority staff to support and mentor newer recruits
- Course offerings in colleges re: cultural proficiency and which ones offer a strong cultural proficient training and inclusive practices in their school
- Utilize African-American professionals as a resources and what is keeping them here – what supports do they need to be successful

- Increase personalized/individualized outreach
- Create a survey for African-American applicants – their experiences in the interview process – what has been your experience – what helped you to stay? Encourage folks to be honest with their answers ‘cause this would help others
- Create a survey that would be trusting and safe
- Should email Dr. Spence if you’d like to be involved with creating this survey
- Change the image of the district – what does it mean to survive?
- An effective public relations – what we want people to know
- What does “survival” mean for African-American employees in the district?
- Some believe that standards are higher for African-American employees
- Does not do a great job of promoting African-Americans
- Some parents are asked questions such as “Do you really live here?” How are parents treated?
- The subtleties – happen repeatedly and are not addressed!
- Institutional racism is tangible and we can feel it – what are our children experiencing?
- This district will only change in incremental steps – every teacher and employee needs to be changed re: cultural proficiency – without that kind of commitment – change will never occur
- Should be school-wide professional development
- The district has made some efforts to provide some glimpses of professional development but people need to hear things more than once – have to make it part of their being
- Needs to have every teacher and administrator trained in cultural proficiency – needs to be done indepth – It’s a process

Next meeting: May 25th, 2010

Location: Board Room, Administration Building