

Pearl River School District  
Equity Task Force Meeting Minutes  
November 30, 2022

6:05 PM

Dr. Brady opened the meeting by going over the agenda - finish unpacking the NYS-CRSE Framework and then briefly meet in committees

Dr. Brady revisited the norms from previous meetings: Stay engaged, experience discomfort, speak your truth and expect and accept non-closure

- Working together to push each other's thinking, expect and accept non-closure. We are not going to "close the loop" on these topics. We may have more questions when we leave than when we started.

Dr. Brady went over the listing tips (see slide 4 of presentation)

Dr. Brady returned to the NYS-CRSE Framework overview. She briefly went over the slides about the publication and a few concepts related to equity, diversity, equality, acceptance, etc., that were previously presented at the last meeting. She then presented the four principles of the CRSE:

- Welcoming and Affirming Environment
- High Expectations and Rigorous Instruction
- Inclusive Curriculum and Assessment
- Ongoing Professional Learning

Dr. Brady revisited group assignments and the "Golden Line Protocol" (see slide) and asked participants to rejoin their groups, debrief and prepare to share (for those groups who didn't share during the last meeting)

Dr. Brady continued the sharing out of each of the groups. She reminded participants of the protocol.

Some of the comments from participants and groups included:

- Very strong language in the CRSE and could be off-putting to some.
- Great things that are happening in PR and the focus should be on how we can continuously improve rather than focus solely on the perceived deficits.
- Individual school cultures can take steps to make schools welcoming to all (not exclusively based on Race).
- Inclusive curriculum, ongoing professional learning with continuous adaptation were referenced from the CRSE. A suggested approach was to "look forward" rather than continuously looking back or focusing on what "we didn't know before".

At the end of the activity, Dr. Brady opened the floor to any participants to share additional thoughts.

Comments/questions from participants:

- Clarification on the role of the document in determining the outcomes - are students going to learn this? Is it the environment we want them to live in?
- What are the ground rules of a subcommittee - how are decisions made? Will members vote to make decisions?

Dr. Brady discussed some examples of how a subcommittee can work together to determine some outcomes. She stated that subcommittees will meet once a month and then the other meeting of the month will be a full committee meeting.

Dr. Brady introduced the next activity for exploring the CRSE - Cross Role Activity - Finding themes of the different stakeholder groups in the SRSE (students, teachers, administrators, families, etc.)(see slides 15-17).

Participants joined new groups to complete the Cross Role activity.

After a few minutes, Dr. Brady asked a representative from each group to share the themes that emerged from their reading and conversations.

- Students - Supportive and respectful classroom/school environment for all students was a theme. Emphasis on norms based on personal responsibility and the importance of involving students when creating norms and expectations - "Buy-in" from students is important for it to be a productive school environment.
- Teachers - Creating welcoming and inclusive classroom environments. Students should see themselves and others in learning materials and the learning environment. Recognizing the existence of implicit bias. Embrace differences and recognize what all families bring to the school/classroom community environment.
- School leaders - Role of building leader to support all - students, faculty and families. Using data to drive initiatives and decisions (climate surveys, discipline and attendance data, etc.). Strategizing ways to be more inclusive for students, faculty and families.
- District leaders - Using data from a variety of sources and stakeholders (surveys, focus groups, etc.) to inform needs which will then inform policies and practices. These policies and practices will then inform the type of professional learning for faculty, staff and administrators. Continue to engage families in the process and communicate updates to policies, based on the data.
- Families and community members - Schools encourage families to share information with teachers so they know more about their children (languages, learning styles, interests, family & cultural information). Concern was raised that it could be difficult for teachers to manage the amount/type of information for each student. Some parents don't share information about their children and that could create an inequity.

- Questions were asked about existing surveys that are often used for these purposes.
- Education Department Policy Makers
  - Keeping students at the center of policy, continuously refine policies, link between student achievement and the learning environment engaging stakeholders, provide the necessary resources to local school districts needed to implement policies.
- Higher Education Faculty and Administration
  - Research on culturally responsive policies and practices that impact students from diverse backgrounds. Finding faculty that represents the diversity of the student body.
- Participants added comments:
  - The CRSE framework has a lot of negative language (deficits focus). It would be more productive to focus on the strengths, successes, and continuous growth and improvement.
  - Bias is human nature. There are positives to biases as well. It is more about awareness of biases than feeling that it is wrong.
    - Dr. Brady shared an experience with bias in hiring practices. She commented that being aware that the biases exist help to keep level of awareness so it will be less likely to occur at the subconscious level.
  - There are a myriad of angles that have to be considered and that it would be helpful to know how to do this work without offending people.
  - It is helpful to want to see someone's point of view (of the person who was offended) so you could learn something from it or reconfirm that the decision made was the best at that moment.
    - Dr. Brady acknowledged that it is very difficult to do this work and not offend someone. She suggested that the focus of this work be on making improvements for students rather than overly trying not to offend others.

Dr. Brady turned the meeting over to Dr. Pochintesta to discuss the subcommittee assignments.

Dr. Pochintesta discussed the purpose of the subcommittees:

- Essential questions will guide the subcommittee work
- Each essential question may not be fully applicable to each subcommittee but keep them in mind during this work
  - How do we/How can we celebrate the presence of cultural diversity?
  - How do we/How can we prevent discrimination?
  - How do we/How can we assure equitable access to educational opportunities, extracurricular activities, athletics?
  - How do we/How can we promote inclusion?
- Dr. Pochintesta announced the members of each subcommittee.

Subcommittees met briefly before the end of the meeting.

Next meeting: December 12, 2022 (subcommittee meetings)