

APPROVED



## Veritas Preparatory Charter School

### Minutes

#### Academic Achievement Committee Meeting

Zoom Meeting

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#### **Date and Time**

Thursday December 9, 2021 at 8:00 AM

#### **Location**

Join Zoom Meeting <https://vpcs-org.zoom.us/j/3161659740>

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#### **Committee Members Present**

A. Errichetti (remote), D. Janes (remote), L. Doherty (remote), R. Romano (remote), R. Sela (remote)

#### **Committee Members Absent**

A. Clark, J. Crowell

#### **Guests Present**

J. Swan (remote), N. Gauthier (remote)

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### **I. Opening Items**

#### **A. Record Attendance**

#### **B. Call the Meeting to Order**

R. Sela called a meeting of the Academic Achievement Committee of Veritas Preparatory Charter School to order on Thursday Dec 9, 2021 at 8:05 AM.

### **C. Approve Minutes**

D. Janes made a motion to approve the minutes from Academic Achievement Committee Meeting on 10-14-21.

A. Errichetti seconded the motion.

The committee **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

## **II. Culturally Responsive Pedagogy**

### **A. Discuss Culturally Responsive Pedagogy**

Rebecca introduces the topic and priority of culturally responsive pedagogy and the reading.

Jonathan poses the question: How do you usually talk about the causes of the achievement gap in the past?

Ann says she doesn't know if we really have discussed this in the past.

Dale and Lisa agree.

Rebecca says for the past few years we have been looking at data for certain populations of students especially special education students and ELL students.

Jonathan asks how, after reading the text, do you think students become dependent learners?

Dale was surprised that the description of a dependent learner isn't based on race or cultural identity.

Ann agrees with Dale and remembers during her school days that students who were "dependent learners" were not recognized or supported.

Rebecca emphasized that the teacher often thinks they are supposed to carry the cognitive load for dependent learners rather than the teacher understanding it's their job to help the dependent learner carry the cognitive load themselves.

Rachel adds that when you're trained to be a teacher, you are taught certain things and there is a tendency to over scaffold so that students that are dependent learners can participate in the teacher's planned lessons. Allowing each student to learn at their own pace can look "messier" than a lot of teachers are trained to feel comfortable with.

Jonathan says it's often not intentional and can often come from a good place. When we think about dependent learners as they relate to race and culture, it becomes more widespread and engrained.

Ann thought the article was interesting and has seen the concept of individualism vs. collectivism other places.

Jonathan asks when you hear the word "culture" what comes to mind?

Dale thinks of 2 definitions: 1. Art, music, literature. 2. The fabric of how a group of people live or exist.

Lisa would add a third definition which is the environment, i.e. the culture we create at work. That feels like more active and less passive culture. In this case, you could change or have an impact on culture.

Dale asks what is the culture of Veritas?

Rachel explains that at Veritas there is a Director of Culture,. Veritas tries to create a culture of learning, high expectations, we intentionally try to create joy, team of teams - collaboration, feedback, growth mindset.

Ann says you must have to teach your culture.

Rebecca also mentioned the Viper Values/Core Values.

Rachel said yes, we do teach these things and we also have a set of values for the teachers and staff as well.

Jonathan mentioned the 3 levels of culture mentioned in the article. Are there any things that resonated with you regarding this topic?

Dale was struggling with how one teaches individualism vs collectivism? He wonders why that is part of the discussion and was having a difficult time picturing this in practice in the classroom.

Jonathan says it a great way to think about the "so what" related to cultural responsiveness in the classroom.

Rebecca thinks as a teacher, being aware of culture, would have her think about how she plans learning opportunities in her classroom. She's thinking intentionally about when she's creating an environment in her classroom that allows students to work together toward a common goal and when she is having the students work individually to accomplish a goal. How is she balancing these two things and how is she being explicit

with kids about these things. Also, she's thinking about her values and whether or not they are mismatched with her students and if so, how is she addressing that or acknowledging that within herself? It requires her to think more deeply about her interactions with her students.

Ann asks how do you create a balance in the classroom of these two things?

Rachel says building culture comes from holding the individual responsible for their actions as well as utilizing measures where students work together to achieve success. In the beginning, thinking about motivating kids, she brought her own background of individuals succeeding and competition to drive motivation. Now, she feels torn because collectivism helps create a better culture but you do lose individual achievement and independence. We need to find a balance. It's about creating a culture in your classroom where kids feel safe to make mistakes, to think out loud, etc.

Dale is happy Veritas is trying to blend the two. From the article, Dale felt a battle between these two concepts. Dale uses an example of an individual sales person who cannot be successful without a group of people behind them that offer supports in different ways.

Rebecca thinks the majority of people in this meeting are from white dominant culture which values individualism. We have to be open to the idea that one isn't better than the other but there are multiple ways to approach combining the two. When you are successful based on white dominant culture norms, it's hard to think perhaps there's a different way. We shouldn't place value on one way.

Dale would argue this article feels like it pushes us in one way.

Jonathan says he sees it more as understanding culture so you can be aware of how that shows up in your classroom and so you can facilitate the learning for your students through that lens. What is most important is that we are creating learners who will be able to succeed in college.

Lisa talked about the culture at her business is predominantly individual performance but you function as a team (like Dale's sales example). She asks if I am a teacher (particularly a new teacher), this feels like it could be overwhelming, how do we help them embed this in their teaching?

Rebecca says in the chapter there are some concrete things to take away. 1. Helping teachers recognize patterns and being aware of the archetypes in the classroom. 2. Helping teachers recognize their own implicit biases as well as understanding concepts like poverty is not a culture. "Coping skills are often mistaken for norms and beliefs" is a concrete line for teachers to take away and open their mind within their teaching.

Rachel would add, at Veritas, we used to train teachers to do these specific things in these specific ways and we found we were creating dependent teachers. We needed to teach them how to be fluid and nimble enough to adjust in the moment. Now we do a lot of coaching and discussion to help teachers recognize their own implicit bias and where that shows up for them in the classroom which then prepares teachers to make better decisions for their students in the moment.

Lisa asks if this concept changes how you hire or the attributes that you're looking for in a person beyond diversity?

Rachel says yes. For example, in looking for the founding High School principal last year, they looked closely at values aligning with Veritas rather than just, can you perform the job?

Dale summarized, in his mind, there are two spaces. On one side there is the quantitative the how you do things? On the other side is the qualitative or why you do things. The how is easy and the why is hard. Are moving more towards the qualitative way of how we approach the world? In a quantitative world, Veritas has been very successful and now are we changing as we start the high school or are we trying to find a middle ground?

When Jonathan thinks about HS, he knows students have to pass assessments that are determined by the state and that's quantitative. When I think about creating independent learners and individual thinking, we have to create a learning environment where students can complete college successfully.

Rebecca mentioned how high school graduation rates are her least favorite metric because just because a student graduates does not mean they can succeed in college.

Ann asks are you using this article or book at Veritas?

Rachel and Jonathan say yes. Amy and the DCIs have thought about how this and other frameworks their using show up in the classroom and what does this mean in terms of what teaching look likes.

Rachel mentioned the professional development time each Wednesday helps create a space for these discussions. It also shows up in individual coaching sessions.

Dale thinks trustees would benefit from these types of discussions.

Lisa thinks it's very helpful to hear the translation of what these types of articles mean for teachers and students in the classroom, especially for folks not in education.

### **III. Closing Items**

#### **A. Adjourn Meeting**

There being no further business to be transacted, and upon motion duly made, seconded and approved, the meeting was adjourned at 9:02 AM.

Respectfully Submitted,  
D. Janes

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#### **Documents used during the meeting**

- Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain Chapters 1 & 2.pdf