

APPROVED



Veritas Preparatory Charter School

Minutes

Academic Achievement Committee Meeting

Zoom Meeting

Date and Time

Thursday January 13, 2022 at 8:00 AM

Location

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

Committee Members Present

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

Committee Members Absent

J. Crowell

Guests Present

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

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 Jan 13, 2022 at 8:11 AM.

C. Approve Minutes

A. Errichetti made a motion to approve the minutes from Academic Achievement Committee Meeting on 12-09-21.

D. Janes seconded the motion.

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

II. Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain

A. Discuss Chapter 3: This is Your Brain on Culture: Understanding How Culture Programs the Brain

Rebecca will lead a discussion on Chapter 3: This is your brain on culture: Understanding how culture programs the Brain.

Jonathan wanted to first review the beginning part of the chapter when the anatomy of the brain is discussed.

Dale struggled to understand the connection between learning about the different parts of the brain and why we need to know this to teach better in the classroom.

Ann wondered if the first part about brain anatomy was necessary as well.

Amy thinks that is how some people's brains work - they need the scientific evidence that backs up the educational concept.

Rachel agrees with Amy and in terms of how we ask teachers to manage their classrooms, it sometimes helps to have scientific evidence to validate what we are asking teachers to do regarding classroom management "use the system".

Rebecca also found that reading the chapter can help teachers have some self realization about their own brain and their actions/decisions.

Dale wonders if he struggles with some of this content because there are generational differences.

Amy thinks that the concept of "work harder and you can achieve anything" ignores students from diverse backgrounds who have many other barriers that make it more difficult for them to achieve no matter how hard they work.

Rebecca agrees with Amy that there are outdated concepts, like grit, that can work against students from diverse backgrounds, students of color, students from lower income areas etc.

Dale sees a contradiction in the reality of education, what he sees, to what is said in (#6 pg. 23). He thinks bars and expectations should not be lowered but rather we teach students to achieve at the higher bar/level.

Jonathan thinks we are not doing enough to raise students up to that higher bar. Having dependent learners for so long we do find ourselves dumbing down the material and lowering the bar. We need to provide access to other opportunities and experiences so that students have the ability to reach the higher bar. We need to acknowledge systemic issues like why kids aren't being prepared at the same level and then address those so we don't have to lower the bar.

Lisa talks about the concept of grit and persistence and recalls that it means that you can push forward and through challenges to achieve. She also felt like this article overall had a "one size fits all" mentality and she struggled with that.

Jonathan reads it as our experiences shape how we respond to or interpret different things as a threat. Students and people see things differently based on their personal experiences but understanding why someone reacts or perceives something in a certain way is important so we can support them in their learning.

Lisa asks is that on a macro or micro level and if you have 90 kids is that realistic?

Amy says Lisa is right, teaching is so hard. We undervalue how hard it is to be a good teacher. We can go into a classroom and boss kids around but to really pay attention to each individual and make them feel valued and want to be lifelong learners takes a lot of work and a lot of effort.

Lisa says it's the same in the corporate world. In addition, if you don't have a safe and secure system at home all the work you did on Wednesday gets eroded Wednesday night and you have to start over Thursday.

Rebecca thinks building consistency in the classroom can provide that safety and security for children that they so desperately crave and need and can "open the brain for learning".

Ann asks if we see a difference in the older children vs. the younger children. She thinks when you are younger you are less well defended. As you get older do you gain confidence in learning habits?

Amy says the pandemic has made this challenging but yes. Sometimes that turns them into a independent learner and they go off to high school and college and are successful. Sometimes that means we've just created a good bunch of dependent learners who know what they have to do to get by in education.

Being in a school everyday, Rebecca sees a big difference in 7th graders and 6th graders (7th graders struggling more) and she thinks this is because the timing of when the pandemic interrupted school for these students developmentally.

Dale posed 2 questions: Is it fair to group children as dependent learners? Is it education's goal these days to make dependent learners independent learners?

Amy thinks there's a spectrum from dependent to independent learners and students fall somewhere along the spectrum. She thinks it's our job as a society to not make it such a disproportionate number of students from low income areas the ones who are labeled dependent learners.

Jonathan says we all have the ability to be independent learners and the pandemic has definitely impacted some students ability to become independent learners. We also have some students who did fine and some who did better remotely.

Rebecca emphasized Amy's previous point that we need to mitigate the discrepancies between suburbs and low income communities in terms of creating dependent vs. independent learners. Reading articles/chapters like this give us the knowledge on how we can do better.

Amy gave an example of how this past Tuesday, Veritas had a "cold day" because the bus system is flawed and students wait for 45 minutes for the bus whereas next door in Longmeadow they didn't have a cold day because parents all bring their students to school. Veritas students missed a day of learning due to systemic issues.

III. Other Business

A. Celebrating Successes

Rebecca wanted to acknowledge that we passed the school review for our charter renewal.

Rachel wanted to add that she learned that this is the first time for a charter or district school with no findings in special education or civil rights.

Rebecca thinks we should share this with the whole Board.

IV. 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 8:59 AM.

Respectfully Submitted,
R. Sela

Documents used during the meeting

- This is Your Brain on Culture - Understanding How Culture Programs the Brain.pdf