

APPROVED



Veritas Preparatory Charter School

Minutes

Academic Achievement Committee Meeting

Zoom Meeting

Date and Time

Thursday April 14, 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, L. Doherty (remote), R. Romano (remote), R. Sela (remote)

Committee Members Absent

J. Crowell

Guests Present

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 Apr 14, 2022 at 8:05 AM.

C. Approve Minutes

D. Janes made a motion to approve the minutes from Academic Achievement Committee Meeting on 03-10-22.

A. Errichetti seconded the motion.

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

II. Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain

A. Discuss Chapter 4: Preparing to Be a Culturally Responsive Practitioner

Rebecca asks what stood out to folks in this chapter?

Dale asked if teachers are engaged in this process?

Amy said yes, it is woven into PD and they are also doing a book study related to this topic in PD this year.

Ann wondered how this is taught or modeled. She talked about how in her previous role, they did role plays to practice for certain scenarios.

Amy says they talk a lot about bias and how it shows up in teaching practice (grading, who gets called on in class, who gets suspended, etc.).

Ann thought the story about James was interesting. It was a good example of different points of view.

Dale asked for clarification about when Amy mentioned who gets called on in class.

Amy explained maybe a teacher always calls on "Rebecca" because they assume she will have the right answer as a white female. We need to be giving all kids a fair and equal chance to answer questions no matter what our preconceived notions about them might be.

Rebecca talks about it feeling like a problem we need to fix and it can be easy to look for quick fixes rather than looking at what the core issues are preventing students from succeeding in certain areas and addressing those directly.

Dale asks about levels of implicit bias. He wonders when do we stop saying we have implicit biases and settle on what's standard and expected for all?

Rebecca thinks it's something we need to continually check ourselves on and keep standards front and center from an academic perspective. We need to simultaneously be

engaging in these reflective practices to be able to keep up with changing dynamics that always exist within education.

Amy said there was a turning point for her when she read an article about the unintended consequences of Brown vs. The Board of Education. For example, when the black schools were shut down, students were made to go to schools with white students and white teachers. All the black teachers were fired and many black students suffered leaving their communities and what they knew when trying to integrate into their new "normal".

Dale wonders which is worse, a teacher who doesn't call on a student because he's black or a teacher who doesn't call on a black student because they don't think they'll know the answer and doesn't want to embarrass them?

Rebecca might argue that a culturally responsive classroom is one where mistakes are made and encouraged because that's how we learn. So not calling on someone because you don't think they'll know the answer is not a culturally responsive practice.

Lisa asks Amy why she thinks it's harder for white teachers and if she is trying to leverage some of the experiences of teachers of color to help white teachers learn and understand?

Amy says there is a lot of nuance on a case to case basis. Rebecca adds that white teachers can be a little more defensive and assuming that a teacher of color has the exact same experience as students of color in front of them can also be inaccurate. Teachers of color need to do the work related to unpacking biases as well.

Amy provides an example of why you can't just hire more teachers of color and it fixes the problem. There is a teaching pair (one white and one black teacher) where the white teacher always deflects discipline to the black teacher.

Rachel says it may have nothing to do with race why the teacher deflects discipline to their co-teacher but even if that's true, imagine how the co-teacher feels about always having to handle discipline issues. It is important to create a culture where we can have conversations related to these topics/issues so that feelings don't get hurt and understanding can be found. Secondly, Veritas has always been about holding students to the same standards/expectations and that's an area where we're doing a good job. In the past, where we have struggled a bit, is over scaffolding for kids who are struggling and we don't want to create dependent learners.

Dale has often felt if you work hard, you can succeed no matter who you are.

Amy agrees but also feels like there are schools, due to implicit bias, that may not be preparing students appropriately or giving them the opportunities required to be where they need to be to either get into college or succeed when they get there.

Rachel adds that failure can be helpful for some students and make them push through or push forward with more determination and resilience but for others, it can be detrimental long term.

Dale switches gears to cultural/holiday celebrations and how schools seemed to be limiting the conversations around cultural celebrations/traditions in the classroom. Is that how it is currently?

Rachel says schools swung away from these conversations for several years to avoid issues due to fear and ignorance. Now we have moved back to talking about all traditions, cultural celebrations, etc.

Amy and Rebecca provide examples about food for staff always being of a certain type and how diversifying staff has led to diversifying so much including food choices for PD or staff events.

Dale asks if we're seeing gains related to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI)?

Amy talks about Veritas having two audits done related to DEI by a researcher from Harvard. From their first to second audit there was clear progress shown. We still have plenty of room to improve but we are making strides, recognizing that this is ongoing, long-term work.

Dale thinks we should discuss the audit highlights with the Board.

Rachel agrees. She just received the final audit and will be having debriefs with school leadership and then we can bring that information to the Board.

Amy thinks a universal "ah-ha" from this work is that it is going to take active work and awareness to change the "typical" way that schools are run that is not serving students of color well and we need to address that and be willing to change what has been done for years and years and what many people are comfortable with.

Dale asks if teachers are evaluated related to DEI or culturally responsive teaching?

Amy says yes, it is a part of their evaluation. It can be hard to measure but we do address it in performance reviews. It is called cultural competence on the official evaluation.

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 9:00 AM.

Respectfully Submitted,
D. Janes

Documents used during the meeting

- Preparing to Be a Culturally Responsive Practitioner Chapter 4.pdf