

## DUDLEY-CHARLTON REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

Approved minutes of the meeting of the Dudley-Charlton Regional School Committee held Monday July 12, 2021, at Shepherd Hill Regional High School, 68 Dudley-Oxford Road Dudley, MA 01571, 7:00 PM – 9:30 PM.

In attendance were members of the School Committee:

Cathleen Carmignani  
Jeanne R. Costello  
Jordan Willow Evans at 7:03  
Catherine M. Kabala  
Kenneth J. Laferriere  
Pauline J. Aucoin, Chair  
Jamie L. Terry, Vice Chair

Also in attendance were District Administration: Steven M. Lamarche, Superintendent of Schools; Brian J. Ackerman, Assistant Superintendent for Teaching and Learning; Dean Packard, Peter Olson, Kelly True, Jennifer Desto, Jennifer Lilley, Michael Resener; Noreen Smith, Charlton Moderator; Dr. Sheldon Eakins (attending remotely); Rich Earle, Audio Video Coordinator; Debbie LaPlaca, Telegram, 150 attendees, Sandra Sullivan, secretary.

The meeting was live streamed via Vimeo on the district's website.

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 7:02 PM.

II. Pledge of Allegiance

III. Moment of Silence

IV. Community Forum

A. Citizen's Forum Policy BEDH – Chairperson Aucoin

Mrs. Aucoin read the parameters for the meeting. The school committee will not allow personal complaints about staff.

B. Introduction – Mr. Lamarche

Mr. Lamarche thanked the committee for scheduling this meeting to provide context to the citizens' forum of the last school committee meeting.

Mr. Lamarche stated the Dudley-Charlton Regional School District has neither invested in, nor does it endorse Critical Race Theory. The district has not researched and has not asked educators to research CRT, nor does it have plans to change the curriculum to incorporate CRT.

Mr. Lamarche said the district has embarked upon equity as it applies to public education and the Dudley-Charlton Regional School District. Mr. Lamarche said this is not a new term in public education but is what civil rights and civil liberties are all about. The district ensures that Civil Rights policies are upheld. Mr. Lamarche listed the district's Civil Rights coordinators as Dr. Brian J. Ackerman and Lorinda C. Allen.

Mr. Lamarche provided a timeline of the Equity Committee dating back to 2015.

C. Presentation on Timeline of the DCRSD Equity Committee – Dr. Ackerman

Dr. Ackerman provided updates on the equity committee which began in July 2020 through May 26, 2021.

2016 – DESE statewide Civil Rights audit required all districts to review curriculum to ensure that all provide equal access to all students in all the categories.

2017-2018 – Formal work begins to address the areas mentioned in the audit

2020 - All staff work on equity and diversity.

2019-2020 – Unforeseen Pandemic, no meetings held. With spring and summer events in 2020, Equity Committee reforms and finds professional development provider for our faculty.

Dr. Sheldon Eakins provides four professional development sessions via webinars to staff.

D. Review of Questions from Form and Presentation of Answers – Dr. Ackerman  
A survey was sent to all Dudley-Charlton Regional School District stakeholders in the end of June. Dr. Ackerman was joined by residents Caitlin Seaman and Shauna Piehl, as well as committee members Cathleen Carmignani, and Jeanne Costello to plan this meeting tonight.

Members of the Equity Committee are Peter Olson, William F. Chaplin, Graces Batista, Jordan Evans, Matoaca Hardy-Fletcher, Devon Wallace, Eve Summer, Katie Durant, William Chaplin, and Peter Olson.

Dr. Ackerman shared the results of the feedback from the equity sessions held for teaching staff, which indicated an overall satisfaction rating of 85%.

E. Comments from Dr. Sheldon Eakins – live stream – Dr. Ackerman  
Dr. Eakins is an educational consultant. He said three years ago, as an educator, wanted to be sure he was doing his part to meet all needs of all students.

Dr. Eakins stated he does not teach Critical Race Theory but Culturally Responsive Teaching.

F. Live Forum Questions/Concerns from Audience – Charlton Town Moderator Noreen Smith  
Representative Peter Durant, 6<sup>th</sup> Worcester District, a Spencer resident, addressed the group to thank the committee for the forum. Rep. Durant said we are no longer being taught the positives of this country, and it time to return to teaching the basics while letting our kids know we are trying to give them the best opportunities globally.

Carroll Sue Rehm, Charlton – said Critical Race Theory is informed by Culturally Responsive Teaching. She asked if other consultants besides Dr. Eakins were considered.

Mr. Lamarche said the district follows the state frameworks and has no intention to insert Critical Race Theory. Dr. Ackerman agreed, saying there is no segregation and has no intention to do so.

Mandy Bush, City Depot Road, Charlton – said the School Committee are being advised by the Equity Committee, which is an unelected, handpicked group choosing our curriculum. She said the district has no process for approving curriculum and this is why parents are nervous. She said curriculum groups needs to be answerable to the School Committee.

Chris Daoust, Ramshorn Road, Charlton – said she withdrew her child from the district citing a lack of confidence. She asked why CRT is taking precedence over social-emotional, mental health issues. Were

social emotional programs considered as professional development opportunities? She asked what the plan is to earn trust back.

Mr. Lamarche said the District not prioritize social-emotional learning over CRT because we are not doing CRT. We have used Covid-19 relief monies to hire school adjustment counselors, and the district was an early adopter of this model. Mr. Lamarche said a future School Committee agenda item will approve an opportunity to present on what has been done. Mr. Lamarche said he is open to working with anyone who has questions.

Bob Carlson, Laurel Lane, Dudley – read a letter written by Dudley Middle School teacher Jennifer Loring Hegedus, who spoke out against the presentations by Dr. Eakins, which she said focused on divisiveness and seeing differences in each other and conflict where there is none.

Dr. Ackerman said the larger conversations were about what is going on in the country. The district is not telling people how to think, but to be open minded.

Marcia Wagner, Dudley – said students need to understand what it is to be an American, not a globalist.

Mr. Lamarche urged those who have questions about what their child’s teacher is teaching between the lines should address those concerns with the teacher.

Rhiannon Mansur, Charlton, a student at Shepherd Hill Regional High School, offered a personal account of her experiences being the target of bullying and hate speech, and said parents need to be aware of their children’s attitudes toward fellow students.

At this point, the chair noted the meeting will be extended to 9:40 PM to account for the time lost to technological issues.

Christa Martin, Old Muggett, Charlton, said the town is 98% white, and thanked the committee/administration for the effort in teaching these principles as they relate to race and equality.

Kelly Szela, Partridge Hill Road, Charlton – Teachers need to have input on decisions that are being made for their classrooms. She said the reading program was approved and the right people were not involved. She asked Dr. Ackerman for his goals regarding curriculum, and for the policy guiding curriculum changes.

Dr. Ackerman said going forward, he will absolutely work with people of all layers regarding new initiatives. This has been the most unprecedented year, and the district is looking forward to returning to fully in person learning, and traditional work along those lines.

Mr. Lamarche said the right people were involved with the CKLA selection, and middle school mathematics is on the horizon.

Ashley Karle – Camelot Circle, Dudley, said communication is key going forward.

Joellen Burlingame, Saundersdale Road, Charlton, said she is a teacher in Worcester and attended Culturally Responsive Teaching training sessions 10 years ago. She said Color blindness is not an absence of racism.

G. Next steps – Mr. Lamarche/Dr. Ackerman  
Mr. Lamarche thanked Ms. Smith for moderating the meeting.

Mr. Lamarche said the citizens' voice has been heard, and he wants to work with the community to ensure that we are not teaching CRT in our schools. He said he is available to answer questions.

Mr. Lamarche said there will be an update at an upcoming School Committee meeting concerning the district's work to support social-emotional needs.

Dr. Ackerman thanked those in attendance for the feedback. He said the next step will be to follow the Strategic Plan, and that the Equity Committee will pause and relaunch in the future with specific procedures. Dr. Ackerman said there will be a presentation to the Dudley-Charlton Regional School Committee prior to that launch.

V. Next Meeting Dates School Committee Meeting:

Wednesday, July 14, 2021, Charlton Middle School, 2 Oxford Road, Charlton, 7 PM.

Budget and Finance Subcommittee: TBD

Policy Review Subcommittee: Friday, July 16, 2021, 10:00 AM via Zoom

Curriculum Subcommittee for Teaching and Learning: July 26, 2021, 9 AM via Zoom

Capital Outlay/Safety Subcommittee: Friday, July 16, 2021, 11:00 AM, via Zoom

VI. Future Agenda Items: Update Specialized Programming (July), DCRSD Strategic Plan Progress Report (August), Superintendent's Evaluation (July/August), School Committee summer workshop (July/August), Approval of DCRSD Student Handbooks (August)

VII. Adjourn

A motion by J. Evans, second by J. Terry to adjourn the meeting was approved by unanimous vote at 9:58 PM.