

ANWSD Community Engagement Committee
Tuesday, November 15, 2016

6:00 p.m.-7:25 p.m.

In attendance: Laurie Gutowski, Chris Cousineau, Diana Raphael, Kristina MacKulin, Finn Yarbrough. Travis Park, Kaci Pierce, Judy Elson, Megan Tarte. Absent: Scott Grant, Kathryn Wyckoff.

1. Kristine M. moves to approve minutes from October 16, 2016, Chris C. seconds. Motion carries.
2. **Student Input.** Discussion on logistics of outreach efforts to students. Is the nature of the proposed questions appropriate? How will the questions be disseminated? Online, Google forms. Morning meeting seems like a good time to allow for response. Setting a deadline for response is deemed to be a wise decision. Before Winter Break seems ideal: Diana R. will ask JoAn for approval and to get the word and the Google form out. Travis P. explains how this works technically.
3. **Authentic Community Engagement.** Diana R. brings a reading on authentic community engagement to the table, and the CEC breaks into groups to dissect it for 20 minutes, reflect on its relevance, and report to the commission. The contents of the reading are as follows:

“To some school leaders and educators, the term “community engagement” is largely seen as a synonym for public relations or marketing, and to them “stronger engagement” means improving quality of information materials distributed to the public or convincing the community to support the decisions those school leaders have already made. To others, community engagement means surveying or talking to students, parents, and community members, and then using that information to inform plans, governance decisions, and school policies. In this case, the school leaders still retain the power to make unilateral decisions without the direct involvement of stakeholders. While strong communications and persuasive leadership are essential for every school, our definition of community engagement is quite different: **Authentic community engagement is the constructive disruption of (1) structural inequities and unfairness in educational systems, (2) traditional hierarchies of power and privilege in school systems and classrooms, and (3) deeply entrenched patterns of negative, unproductive thinking and relating in school communities, especially among groups from different socioeconomic, cultural, racial, and ethnic backgrounds. When authentic forms of engagement are done well, schools and educators become more responsive to the needs and priorities of their students and families. We also see more inclusive conversations between schools and their community, stronger and more trusting relationships between educators and families, more energized and welcoming school cultures, greater support in the community for equity driven educational innovation, and—most importantly—improved educational results and outcomes for all students, but especially for the most marginalized, low achieving, and historically underserved student populations.**”

4. **Community Focus Groups.** Chris C. will host the first one on from 6:30 to 8:00 p.m. Tuesday November 29, at 194 S. Maple St., Vergennes. The focus will be on workshopping the question: “What role do you see the community playing in your school and your school in the community?” He has invited community members whom he knows. Judy E. wants to know how we can avoid the “bubble” effect of input exclusively from like-minds. Kasi P. suggests that offering snacks/child care can be an important draw for future efforts. Shortcomings aside, Chris C.’s initiative represents a first-step of ground-level, authentic engagement. Wide-ranging discussion on the importance of building trust with community, such that there is faith that the CEC will honor community input, rising to the level of “authentic community engagement” in the development of the ANWSU vision statement.

5. **Faculty Input.** Wide-ranging discussion about what kind of information to solicit from teachers. Concern that the present draft, presented by Travis P. and workshopped with JoAn Canning, is a leading question that might restrict the creativity, range, and depth of the data. Additionally, presenting teachers with our draft of the vision statement to critique might engender skepticism that the board is prepared for authentic community engagement. Input from teachers and former teachers suggests may be a fear amongst faculty that the preliminary work of the CEC on the vision statement is a “done deal” rather than an evolving document. We do not wish to send this message. Out of time, the CEC will revisit Faculty input at next meeting.

6. **Other Business.** Discussion of upcoming community/family dance at the Vergennes Middle/High school.

7. Next CEC meeting is set for December 13th at the Bixby Library, 6:00-7:15.

8. Meeting adjourned at 7:25 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted by Finn Yarbrough