

## **State Board of Education Education Quality Standards Rule Update Committee**

### **Draft Meeting Minutes**

#### **Virtual Teams Meeting/Video/Teleconference**

**Call in #: 1-802-828-7667 Conference ID: 339 606 644#**

**1 National Life Drive, Dewey 206**

**Montpelier, VT 05620**

**Date: January 19, 2023**

#### **Present:**

**State Board of Education (SBE) Subcommittee Members:** Kimberly Gleason (co-Chair), Tammy Kolbe (co-Chair), Tom Lovett, & Patrick Brown

**Agency of Education (AOE):** Maureen Gaidys

**Others:** Tony Strat-Cortez, Thetford Academy Diversity/Equity/Inclusion (DEI) Director; Sora Bolles, student, Thetford Academy, Vermont Students Antiracism Network (VSARN) representative; Ryan Harlow, Advisor to VSARN; Katie Ballard, Chair, Special Education Advisory Panel (SEAP)

#### **Call to Order/Roll Call/Amendments to Agenda**

Co-Chair Kim Gleason called the meeting to order at 11:35 a.m. Patrick Brown, Tom Lovett and Tammy Kolbe were in attendance at the meeting.

#### **Public to be Heard**

Tony Strat-Cortez, DEI Director for Thetford Academy, shared his experience as a current director, and former student of Thetford Academy and one who is involved with students and the statewide efforts to address the unique experiences of our BIPOC students in Vermont. Tony recognizes changes that have happened and the work that still needs to be done. He prioritizes uplifting students to take pride in who they are and ensures that educators and peers create safer space and a sense of belonging. He supports educators bringing compassion to their work to better understand the more

diverse students with whom they may not identify. He joined the meeting today to support students in VT and the work of VSARN.

## **Approval of Meeting Minutes**

Lovett made a motion to approve the minutes from the November 15, 2022 and December 15, 2022 meeting. Brown seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

## **Invited Testimony and Committee Discussion**

- **Vermont Students Antiracism Network (VSARN)**
  - **Sora Bolles, Student at Thetford Academy**
    - Sora explained that VSARN is seeking to build antiracist schools in the state and more generally. Her fellow students contributed to the testimony and Sora shared the stories of her peers in [this testimony from the VSARN](#).
      - Examples of these stories include reflections on lack of study in authors of color, the micro aggressions that lead to the racist incidents at sporting events around the state, and the hope that if students are taught to understand these harms earlier there will be less incidents as students reach high school
      - Sora recognized the importance of having a trusted adult to go to in the school buildings for students experiencing difficulties
      - VSARN believes that school must teach diverse perspectives because that is who we (students) are

Committee members expressed gratitude for the courage to share the qualitative stories of the experience of Vermont students and the hopeful tone that VSARN offered. Several areas of concern were identified, to include the teaching of Black history beyond the unit of study or the designated month, school culture and climate, and designated DEI focused personnel. There was also a recognition of the importance that all voices are heard, to ensure that diverse voices are heard and cultures are experienced.

There was a question about how schools can get to a place of hearing all voices. Tony shared the importance of an integrated curriculum (e.g. ensuring that Black history is taught in the context of the full scope of the work) and materials (e.g. materials reflect

multiple perspectives and are written from those with lived experiences.) These efforts can enable students to feel seen in their educational experiences.

There was recognition that in more rural communities, some may feel that this DEI work may not pertain to them, but even in less diverse communities, the responsibility is to prepare students for the world. There was also acknowledgment that not all teachers are comfortable with the topics, and that through intentional professional development and support from DEI personnel there are growth opportunities for educators in this area. There was a recommendation that perhaps there is a resource directory compiled across districts. Tony belongs to a network of DEI coordinators and they are focused on sharing their best practices.

- **Special Education Advisory Panel (SEAP)**

- **Katie Ballard**

- Katie shared a [document that was compiled from the SEAP](#) to offer more specific suggestion or reflections on current language of EQS.
- Katie acknowledge that actual experiences may differ for families, despite expectations as laid out in the current EQS and other state and federal protections. This is true in students' Personalized Learning Plans, among other areas.
- Katie referenced the [graduation readiness tool](#) as a clear set of expectations to ensure students are prepared to reach graduation proficiency.

Committee members recognized that implementation is inconsistent and that we may see improvement with the coming District Quality Standards and Quality Assurance measures. The Committee will also consider adding language for Educational Support Teams (ESTs) to make clear that is a process for all students, highlighting that special education students are general education students first. The Committee thanked Katie and SEAP for their continued support in this EQS revision.

### **Committee Discussion:**

### **Legal Review Update:**

- Kolbe and Gleason had a preliminary meeting with the outside legal counsel, Bernard Lambek, who had only recently come under contract for this work, through the Attorney General's office.

- The co-chairs asked him to focus on two areas, while the EQS Committee finishes its work to get to a stable draft for further legal review and alignment with current statute references. Lambek will begin with review of the definition of discrimination for consistency with statute, and then will consider the Statement of Purpose section, and the question of who is required to comply with EQS.

### **Committee Decisions:**

- Discussed using the SEAP recommendation as a lens to view the full document as we review.
- AOE & Act 1 Working Group response to the AOE recommendations - [Updated Draft EQS document with most recent changes](#)
  - o “supports” replaces “support services”
  - o “Civic and Community Engagement” language from Act 1
  - o “Transferrable Skill” use Act 1 recommended language

Possible additional definitions: “interdisciplinary” and/or “cultural competency.”

### **Future Agenda Items**

- Next meetings: Thursday, January 26, 1-3:00 p.m.
- Update on legal review
- Discussion of alignment with District Quality Standards (DQS) & Quality Assurance (QA)
- Resolving/integrating Committee recommendations for the full document (e.g. language consistency, etc.)

### **Adjourn**

At 1:20 p.m., Brown made a motion to adjourn, and Gleason seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Minutes prepared by Kim Gleason, Co-Chair, EQS Committee.