



## Board Retreat Meeting Minutes

SAMI - Environmental Learning Center  
Room 200

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5715 Animal Loop Rd.  
Tacoma, WA 98407

Tuesday, March 1, 2022 05:30 PM

### 1. WELCOME / AGENDA REVIEW

The Board of Directors of Tacoma School District No. 10 met in a Board/Superintendent Retreat on Tuesday, March 1, 2022 at the SAMI Environmental Learning Center. Directors Bonbright, Keating, Leon, McElroy and Strozier, as well as Superintendent Garcia were present. Beth Boggs, Executive Director from the American Leadership Forum of Tacoma/Pierce County, attended as a facilitator.

President Bonbright reviewed the agenda.

### 2. OVERVIEW: ENVIRONMENTAL LEARNING CENTER

SAMI's Co-Directors Ketler and Hall gave an overview of the Environmental Learning Center (ELC).

The ELC (located in the Pt. Defiance Park) was built about 5 years ago and was designed to be more like a studio/shop (concrete floors/wood walls) where students are encouraged to work and do experiments, not having to worry about damaging the physical space. SAMI/ELC has partnerships with Metro Parks, the Pt. Defiance Zoo & Aquarium, and the Youth Marine Center, allowing students to have collaborative experiences within the zoo, the park, and at the marina as part of their learning.

### 3. INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS AS PART OF A COLLECTIVE TEAM

Vice President Keating led the Board in a team building exercise.

Each participant was given a copy of 4 different quotes, and each had to choose the one that most resonates with them. The quotes were:

- o Don't make worry out of what you don't know.
- o People more often react to the role you play than who you are as a person.
- o The need to be right can stop progress before it has a chance to begin.
- o Listening with presence and intent is a skill that gains strength and endurance with practice.

After choosing their quote, the group shared their thoughts on the following questions:

- o How do you want people to feel after leaving an experience with you?
- o How does the quote you selected either represent or reflect your hope and intent of what you just shared?
- o How do you practice making that a consistent reality?

### 4. BOARD GOALS

Board President Bonbright shared the Board Goals that were readopted at the August 2021 Retreat. These are:

- o Racial Justice/Equity
- o Social, Emotional Well-being and Mental Health
- o Family and Student Engagement

At the December 2021 board retreat, directors looked in-depth at the Family and Student Engagement goal. At this retreat, the focus is on the Racial Justice/Equity goal. Some work that has been done on this since the August Retreat is monitoring the implementation of the Equity Policy Review Team (EPRT) and the policy review process to ensure that change has resulted from that team's feedback.

These are important goals that will always require ongoing work.

## 5. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT - UNDERSTANDING CHANGE METHODOLOGIES: DIVING DEEPER

Beth Boggs and Director Strozier led participants on a deeper dive through an Adaptive Change Model exercise (which was first introduced at the December board retreat meeting). Adaptive challenges are those that leaders often want to solve last as they require a shift in values or beliefs or that are never going to be fully "solved." This is hard work to lean into which requires change in a lot of places, across the whole organization; it doesn't rest in just one spot. Additionally, people are often resistant acknowledging adaptive challenges. Coming up with solutions will require many experiments and new discoveries, which take time to implement. As progress is made, the world shifts or changes again, and the need is different.

The CLA Peer Consulting Methodology model was shared with directors in advance of the meeting. This model helps co-create new solutions and get new thinking to some of the biggest adaptive leadership challenges. It can be done in large or small groups. The model focuses the most time on lending different perspectives on what the issue is and what it may entail and less time on brainstorming specific solutions.

STEP 1: Case Presentation (Director Strozier; 5 mins.)

The question presented was: "How does our current policy reflect our values and support our goal to be an anti-racist school community?"

Policy No. 3111 - Nondiscrimination and Equity is our policy, which has not been revised since 2014, though the world has changed tremendously since then. In his national fellowship with School Board Partners, the purpose of the organization is to assist leaders in re-imagining policies, partnerships, and conditions so that dynamic systems of high quality schools emerge, improve, and endure. Their recent conversations have been around moving towards anti-racism and getting out of the gray area. In the conversation, questions have been presented:

- o Do you believe that your school district is anti-racist or moving towards it?
- o How?

We need to take a deep dive to see if our policy is relevant to the district being "anti-racist" and to decide how often we should review relevant policies. In reviewing our Strategic Goals, many of the terms used are consistent with this topic, but it is not specifically addressed.

To frame the conversation for Step 2, common definitions for "anti-racism" and "institutional racism" were shared:

- o Anti-racism: The practice of identifying, challenging, and changing the values, structures, and behaviors that perpetuate systemic racism.
- o Institutional racism: Occurs within institutions and organizations, such as schools, that adopt and maintain policies, practices, and procedures that often unintentionally produce inequitable outcomes for people of color, and advantages for white people.

STEP 2: Data Gathering Questions to Case Presenter (10 mins.)

A sampling of the questions asked were:

- o Do you believe systems in Tacoma are racist?
- o Who do you identify as the major players?
- o Are there places you can point to where you can say "we're already doing this, it's just not in our current policy"?
- o What have you personally done to work on this problem?
- o Whose voices are we not hearing from, and how do we get them to the table?

STEP 3: Diagnostic Brainstorming Phase (Presenter "goes to the balcony"; 15 mins.)

The case presenter turns his chair away from the group and listens as they brainstorm their "wonderings." Examples of thoughts shared include:

- o Agreeing on a definition, such as those from the Government Alliance on Race and Equity. This allows us to focus more on the "how" rather than the "what."
- o When speaking about racism or anti-racism, it can create an "us versus them" mentality, but anti-racism is for ALL people.
- o Is it a question of anti-racism being a noun or a verb? It should be both. The language needs to be updated based on who we are now.
- o Nondiscrimination can feel like color blindness, more "equality" than "equity," whereas anti-racism is active work. We need to be aware how the words used may be perceived differently by people of color.
- o We should look at the good work we have done and identify things that can help us be a better version of ourselves.

STEP 4: Action Step Brainstorming (Presenter watches and listens; 5 minutes)

The goal of this step is to offer possible new initiatives, smart risks, and experiments that may be done to move the challenges forward. Think about things like what are low risk tests? What courageous conversations need to be had, and with whom? What new partnerships or relationship shifts should be made? What are some specific and possible goals that can be done over the next month?

- o Community and stakeholder conversations
- o Have an EPRT at every school
- o Hire more BIPOC staff
- o Calibrate definitions of key terms
- o Ask the EPRT if the policy is still relevant
- o Communication updates, no matter what happens

- Do we want a very specific anti-racist policy or incorporate into the existing policy?
- As an organization, white people need to talk about anti-racism; and they need to talk to each other about it. Often, the burden of these conversations fall on BIPOC people. BIPOC students in our schools have talked about having to educate their teachers about it.
- There have to be key practices that are identified such as curriculum instruction and/or professional development (PD) options to help. Not all staff have to do the same amount of PD, so including anti-racist training as professional development would have to be specified in a policy if it's a requirement.

STEP 5: Case presenter reflection (5 mins.)

The presenter may share reactions to the process and what questions came to mind based on the conversation, make observations about what was heard, and any action steps that seem relevant or manageable.

- Appreciated the clarifications about different terms or ideas
- Appreciated the idea that we should create a specific policy
- He would like to move forward with community stakeholder conversations, including student voices
- Appreciated the idea of having each school have their own version of the Equity Policy Review Team

STEP 6: Group debrief (5 mins.)

This step is a debrief of the *process*, rather than of the discussion itself. Were there questions that you didn't ask? What was accomplished? What conversations were avoided that you wish had been brought up? What default behaviors did you observe? What could be improved for future consultations?

The only wrong thing to do is to not do the work at all.

Board members were asked to do some individual homework, through research and introspection, then sharing with the Board president and vice president 2 or 3 action steps they would like to see happen. Board leadership will compile that information for use in determining what the next steps could be and creating a timeline.

**6. ADJOURN**

Board President Bonbright adjourned the meeting at 7:30pm.