The Brent Elementary Diversity Working Group met on 10/16/19, in the Brent library, located at 301 North Carolina Ave. SE, Washington DC. The meeting began at 6:00pm.

Meeting Participants: Jon Berg, Leda Bloomfield, Piper Campbell, Melinda Copeland, Danielle Drissel (Chair), Sara Ewbank, Lucy Hynes, Jasmine Leary, Norah Lycknall (Principal), Andrew Pratt, Erin Roth, Sharon Santos, Adi Segal, and Bettina Schewe. (14)

1. All School Social Events - Multicultural Night Planning: Adi designed passports which will be folded by student volunteers in the Brent front office. Adi volunteered to design a flyer. Promotion of the event will include an email from room parents and Ms. Santos will send an email to English Language Learner families that was drafted in both English and Spanish. The bulletin board with a map of the world will be prepared in advance of Multicultural Night to help promote the event, participants can use star stickers on the map to designate places they identify with and after the event the display will be updated with photos and materials from families at the event. Event logistics were discussed including the effort this year to draw people outside with food consumption and the mariachi band playing outside (weather permitting).

2. Cultural Celebrations - Reflections on Hispanic/LatinX Heritage Month: There were two family funday activities which attracted different participants. Several Brent families attended the Justice Sotomayor book signing event separately from the organized group from DWG. Ms. Bettina reported families gave positive feedback on the reading spotlight booklist.

3. Cultural Celebrations- What's up Next: Veterans Day (Nov 11), Native American Heritage Month (Nov) and National Adoption Month (Nov). There will be a separate reading spotlight for each of the three first weeks of November: Veterans Day, Native American Heritage Month and Adoption Month. Note: Conscious Kids has just initiated a for-fee service with book recommendations. For Veterans Day, Ms. Santos will repeat a popular display from last year in which Brent students contribute pictures and brief biographic information about service members in their family. Contributions for the Veterans’ day will be requested through TuesNews and room parents. As a family funday activity we will participate in the American Legion-hosted event in Folger Park. In connection with Native American Heritage Month, Ms. Maslin will be coordinating a bulletin board to publish student materials from the fourth grade unit on Native Americans. Additional family funday activities will be explored.

4. Student Engagement - Rising Together: Sara Ewbank provided a brief history of the Rising Together program (previously known as Rising Tides, until its name was changed during the 2018-19 academic year). She explained that this year’s program was initially envisioned as serving up to 30 students; but the current level of participation, 16-18 students from the 3-5 grades, is working well. The program is in its third week, and is
being led and facilitated by Ms. Hairston and Ms. Briscoe with other Brent staff and Adi joining in. There are themes each week, and each session includes some games with a social emotional learning (SEL) component. There was some discussion about the connections between the Diversity Working Group and Rising Together as well as about to what extent family/parent engagement is a goal of the Rising Together program. Principal Lycknell affirmed a program was cultivating a sense of belonging and suggested students could lead decisions about family/community involvement. She also identified the "publishing" aspect of the program as a way to facilitate community connections.

5. Promoting Inclusion/Social Justice - Used Uniform program: Many incoming and existing families have expressed strong support for the program. Efforts are being made to make uniforms available at Wednesday evening community meetings and Friday morning principal’s coffees. This expansion needs move volunteers. Currently the majority of work is done by one parent (Kelly Vielmo) and the front office. There was a conversation about how to avoid/address any feelings of stigma around the program including options for a name change (e.g., Uniform Exchange, Kid-to-Kid clothing) and TuesNews pieces highlighting demand for clothes.

There was a discussion about food waste and how to generate awareness around hunger and unmet food needs among the student population. DCPS has a policy on food sharing, which has not yet been fully implemented at Brent – but will be. Brent's Green Team is working towards a composting program.

Further, there was a conversation about using the revenue from used uniform sales to support Brent families in financial need. Gift cards could be a good tool, if there is a distribution mechanism. Principal Lycknell stressed her hope that the DWG can help the school find additional and better ways to determine where needs exist and suggested we may be able to learn from examples of other schools.

6. Promoting Inclusion/Social Justice - Fees and the Brent experience: A conversation started within the DWG last year around the fee structure for the welcoming picnic and how lack of clarity regarding whether the picnic is an all-school event or a fundraiser introduces confusion, particularly for incoming families. This year, DWG will consider the range of activities for which some sort of fee or contribution is solicited, the various ways the solicitation occurs and opportunities for more consistent messaging and equity fairness. An initial list of solicitations was circulated to spark discussion.

Some notes from the conversation about items for further investigation:

- What fees are visible and not visible?
- How do requests for financial assistance come in, and what are messages/language used to indicate what assistance is available?
- Enrichments vs. aftercare... Inability to participate in enrichments can create a sense of otherness. There is a meaningful opportunity gap in aftercare. Is there
a way to collect donations specifically for enrichment participation? Some parents have expressed willingness to donate.

- **What if there was no enrichment, only aftercare. Have high sign up rate for enrichment. Enrichment breaks up the aftercare experience and is appreciated by many working parents.**

- **Note – There was a feeling that it’s useful for parents to understand how funds are used. Comments: “I know what the school fees go to, I feel like I have a better understanding of the Annual Fund this year.”**

7. **Promoting Inclusion/Social Justice – School Namesake:** Andrew Pratt and Lucy Hynes provided a written summary and made a brief presentation on what they learned about the Boone school-naming process from the Boone principal. Adam Matuszeski has an appointment at DCPS’ Sumner School Archive to research Brent’s history. Discussion will be shifted to a later agenda.

7. **Selecting shared readings for deeper discussion:** DWG will dedicate time at every third meeting to discuss articles of interest to the group. We will have our first shared articles at the November 20 meeting. Choices for the text are:

   - "Beyond diversity to equitable, inclusive schools” by Laura Wilson Phelan and Lee Teitel, DC Policy Center
   - “The danger of teaching children to be ‘colorblind’” by Valerie Straus, Washington Post
   - **Dress Coded: Black Girls, Bodies, and Bias in D.C. Schools** by the National Women’s Law Center

Copies of the articles were provided. Members were asked to email Danielle with their preferences ranked.

8. **Additional Topics:** The number and range of DWG activities was noted. A strategic plan was suggested as a tool to help DWG prioritize and to enable longer range planning.

Meeting ended at 7:45.
Brent Diversity Working Group (DWG) Meeting
Wednesday, October 16, 6:00 – 7:30

AGENDA

1. All-school social events: Multicultural night planning
   a. Pre-event preparation: flyers, posters, passports
   b. Contributions to event: artifacts, fashion, food
   c. Volunteering at the event

2. Cultural celebrations
   a. Reflections: Hispanic\LatinX Heritage Month
   b. What’s up next: Native American Heritage Month (November);
      Veterans Day (November 11); and National Adoption Month
      (November)

3. Student Engagement
   a. Rising Together: Program status and volunteer opportunities

4. Promoting Inclusion/Social Justice
   a. Used uniform program: Program status and volunteer opportunities
   b. Facilitating community discussions
      i. Financial requests of Brent families: Information gathering
         and input
      ii. Exploring school namesake: findings and input

5. Selecting a sharing reading for deeper discussion at next meeting

6. Other topics?

Mark Your Calendars – NEXT MEETING: November 20, 2019

Mission Statement: The Brent Diversity Working Group advances the school’s commitment to recognizing, respecting, valuing and promoting diversity by serving as a resource and liaison for students, families, staff and faculty on issues of equity through education, outreach and advocacy.

Website: http://www.brencelementary.org/diversity-working-group.html

Danielle Drissel; Danielle@websterious.com; 202-558-7566 /Piper Campbell; piper@pipercampbell.com; 571-286-8297
Adi Segal; Adisegaladi@gmail.com; 914-414-8484 / Melinda Copeland; Melinda.copeland@k12.dc.gov; 703-795-3241

DIVERSITY OF VOICES = STRONGER BRENt CommUNITY