BRENT ELEMENTARY
Diversity Working Group (DWG)
September 2019 Meeting Minutes

The Brent Elementary Diversity Working Group met on 9/18/19, in the Brent library, located at 301 North Carolina Ave. SE, Washington DC. The meeting began at 6:00pm.

Meeting Participants: Jon Berg, Justin Bernard, Piper Campbell, Melinda Copeland, Danielle Drissel (Chair), Sara Ewbank, Dayon Hairston, Tori Hawkins-Plummer, Lucy Hynes, Machee Kelly, Norah Lycknell (Principal), Adam Matuszeski, Andrew Pratt, Erin Roth, Sharon Santos, Adi Segal, and Bettina Schwebe. (17)

1. Self-introductions and Review of the DWG’s Mission. The group comprises parents, teachers and staff and a nice mix of old and new faces. Each person answered the question, “what brought you here tonight” and described personal goals for participation in the group. Common points of emphasis were creating a space for conversation about inclusion/differences and ensuring a sense of belonging for everybody in the Brent Community. Chair Danielle Drissel introduced the DWG’s mission: 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.

2. How was the Back-to-School Experience? The group use the book The Day You Begin – which was Brent’s designated back-to-school reading – as a starting point for a conversation about back-to-school experiences: what should be sustained and what could be improved. Participants shared children, parent and teacher experiences regarding the return to school. Some parents shared challenges their children faced with peers based on 1) gender identity and 2) attrition at 5th grade. New families described positive experiences and sense of welcome, with some student anxiety that was characterized as expected. The lottery system was discussed, including perspectives of parents who joined Brent via the lottery (“lottered in”) and concern about the number of Brent families who left after fourth grade to attend charter schools. Principal Lycknell noted ongoing work to support for new families at Brent, including options for student support from returning classmates.

3. DWG Events and Programs. Four categories of activities for DWG this year are: all-school social events; cultural celebrations; student engagement and promoting inclusion/social justice. Meeting participants selected the categories of personal interest. Multicultural Night and Hispanic/LatinX Heritage Month were highlighted as upcoming activities. DWG also obtained tickets for a September 21 book reading by Supreme Court Justice Sotomayor.

Discussion of parent engagement included reminder to maintain DCPS volunteer clearance (Brent front office has documents on file) and recognition that clearance requirements are perceived by some parents as onerous and/or inhibiting full participation.

4. DWG’s Role in Facilitating Community Discussion. Brent Neighbors listserv posting regarding the troubled history of Robert Brent and information cited in the posting from the DC government’s website were circulated. The absence of a public response to the posting was noted as was DWG’s role in ensuring safe space for dialogue. Members expressed interest in researching the issues raised in the post to facilitate discussion at the next meeting. The work of a non-profit named “the story of our schools” was cited as a potential resource.
Brent Diversity Working Group (DWG) Meeting
Wednesday, September 18, 6:00 – 7:30

AGENDA
1. Self-introductions: Name, kids at Brent, what brought you here tonight? (10 minutes)

2. Mission of Diversity Working Group (5 minutes)

3. Back-to-School Reading: What was your experience with the start of school? What should we sustain? What change? (20 minutes)

4. DWG Events and Programs: Description of activities, indications of interest (45 minutes)
   I. **All School Social Events**
      a. Multicultural Night (October 25)
      b. Inclusive Schools Week (December)
      c. MLK March (January)
      d. CommUnity Dance (February)
      e. Pride Parade (June)
   II. **Cultural Celebrations**
      Usu. include Family Fun Days (Out of School Activities)/ Displays/ Reading Spotlight
      a. Hispanic/LatinX Heritage Month (Sept 15 – Oct 15)
      b. Native American Heritage Month (November)
      c. Adoption Month (November)
      d. Veterans’ Day (Nov 11)
      e. Human Rights Day (Dec 10)
      f. Black History Month (February)
      g. Women’s History Month (March)
      h. Month of the Military Child (April)
      i. Asian-American & Pacific Islander Heritage Month (May)
      j. Pride Month (June)
   III. **Student Engagement** (Example: Rising Together affinity group)
   IV. **Promoting Inclusion/Social Justice** (Example: Used uniform program)

5. DWG’s Role in Facilitating Community Discussion (5 minutes)

6. Other topics? (5 minutes)

Mark Your Calendars – NEXT MEETING: OCTOBER 16, 2019

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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.brentelementary.org/diversity-working-group.html](http://www.brentelementary.org/diversity-working-group.html)

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DIVERSITY OF VOICES = STRONGER BRENT CommUNITY