

RUT Education Committee Meeting
5/10/23 Minutes

Present: Julia Lavine, Pay Yosha, Misty Crompton, Nancy Zajano

- I. New Volunteer—Alexander Koch** – Aliyana’s father is interested in education issues in NH, especially with regard to legislation. Pat Yosha will connect with him.

- II. Report on Diversity Directors Dinner** (from Misty’s written report supplemented with discussion at committee meeting):

Date: 4/13/23; Location: Roost, a restaurant in Dover, NH

In attendance:

RUT - Julia Lavine, Misty Crompton, Shawna Coppola, Tricia Maynard, Aliyana Koch-Manzur
Diversity Directors - Kevin Pajaro-Marinez, Stephanie Bramlett, Andres Mejia, Rachael Blansett

- Began with decorating the special room, presentation of gift bags with donated items upon entrance (including Starbucks gift cards, artistic items), then an introduction with welcome and poetry read by Shawna (“Truth” by Gwendolyn Brooks). This created great ambiance and made the diversity directors feel valued.
- There was talk of doing another dinner soon since the face-to face time is so important and we were under budget.

What is working:

Kevin Pajaro-Marinez and Stephanie Bramlett: Phillips Exeter

Academy: <https://www.exeter.edu/community/equity-and-inclusion>

Check out this website to see the depth and breadth of PEA’s commitment to DEI, including their 50.9% of students who identify as students of color.

* Kevin spends time on deep reflection with the Black Men's Reading and Reflection Group that he founded, and expresses the importance of reflecting on lived experience rather than the concepts in isolation. Committee discussion noted that UNH has lost BIPOC faculty because they are expected to be mentors for all BIPOC students and not focused on their academic pursuits.

* He explained that they are also hoping to bridge the work at PEA with community work and partnerships. They both discussed an exciting program called "Educate the Educators" which is now in its second year. On May 17, 2023, both in person and on zoom, students from Portsmouth High School, Exeter High School and PEA discuss their DEI work in their schools and as part of Black Lives Matter Youth Division

* Stephanie discussed how she moved here from CT and now runs the Exeter Diversity Leadership Institute, a five-day summer immersive training for public and private school

educators leading diversity, equity, inclusivity and belonging efforts at their schools. Would RUT be interested in supporting a scholarship toward the \$1200 fee per teacher?

As part of connecting to the larger community, Stephanie has worked with police and the NAACP on improved training and relations and is a Seacoast BLM Board Member. She is a marathon runner who also coaches CrossFit and believes in the importance of self-care as part of her work at PEA.

* She talked of the importance of “3rd spaces” to build community. If we think of home and work as 1st and 2nd spaces, the 3rd spaces include gym/church/YMCAs – any community gathering place that “calms the flames of division” because people know each other. Sadly, much of these were lost during the pandemic.

* Rachael Blansett from Oyster River Cooperative School District (ORCSD) moved here from California and was highly recommended. She discussed her district-wide event hosting a black transgender musician / artist as something very important and possible with today's obstacles.

* She discussed the addition of a Middle School BIPOC student space as a big win. Around 35 students have joined, which is a pretty high number.

* She noted that 2 students will have a full scholarship to a True Leaders in Equity Institute in July for community service and improvement.

* Andrès Mejia from SAU16 – He had worked as a fellow (along with some other DEIJ leaders) with NH Listens, working with 7 school boards, each with a DEIJ coordinator. Working together as a district on common goals.

* They have Seacoast Outright representative for grades 6,7,8 with a counselor as part of the LGBTQ+ affinity group in the middle school. (Seacoast Outright is an organization serving, supporting and advocating for LGBTQ+ youth in the seacoast area since 1993.)

* Andres appreciates that he can send parents who want to be active in DEIJ issues to RUT, especially given the passage of HB2.

* DEIJ micro aggressions campaign was a recent win, and students helped to run professional development for educators.

* Andres discussed the district's anti-discrimination task force (Tricia is on it). The focus is on centering the students and leveraging an anti discrimination plan.

* He mentioned “Caregivers for anti racism in Exeter.

Brainstorm: where do we go next?

Ideas mentioned for RUT support:

Two biggest takeaways:

- More connection - RUT could create opportunities to stay connected with diversity directors.
- More community education- mentioned more than once. RUT could do more programming educating the community on DEIJ issues.

Also:

- Larger RUT:
 - Grow the organization beyond the Seacoast.
 - Be clearer how RUT will support them and what are the deliverables.
 - Communicate more effectively what RUT is and what it does. Currently it's unclear both what its larger vision is and how its various pieces fit together.
- The community needs "3rd spaces" to interact. Rise of white nationalism is easier when we lose those spaces. These are places where people expect and are excited to see you there.
- Libraries are hubs for so much programming as well as archives. RUT's fireside chats and BLM "educate the educators" programs are great examples.
- The effort needs more dads and parents to get involved quickly.

Topic for reflection: How do we support the youth of the town as a group?

III. Update on Frederick Douglass reading (Pat)

- Pat will ask Exeter TV for a second microphone for Eric Sinclair's guitar for the music played prior the start.
- We will ask Shawna to update last year's program with this year's details since Brynn is not available.

IV. Zinn Project / Black Lives Matter at School Day of Teaching Truth (Misty)

This effort asks for local groups to display support for "Teach Truth Day of Action," on or before June 10, 2023. Misty will pick a date and place and send an email invite to Education Committee members to commit to showing up. (June 3rd was mentioned as a possibility, but it is also the Wear Orange - National Gun Violence Awareness Day that will have a presence in front of Exeter's Town Hall from 10-12am.)

Other topics/questions:

- Misty noted that the new push for conservatives is to tell white parents that "your child is losing out," as resources are spread more equitably, e.g. college admissions.
- The question was asked if RUT has done anything with athletics. Pat noted that there was some discussion about the effort to increase BIPOC engagement in wooded areas, but no programs came from it.

Respectively submitted, Nancy Zajano 5-26-23