

EOGOAC

March 16,2021

10:00 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.

Theme/Goal: Issues Regarding School Boards

Members in Attendance:

Frieda Takamura, Commission on Asian Pacific American Affairs
Representative Sharon Tomiko Santos, House of Representatives
Senator Bob Hasegawa, Senate
Carrie Basas, Office of Education Ombuds
Dr. Jim Smith, Commission on African American Affairs
Representative Lillian Ortiz-Self, House of Representatives
Tyson marsh, alternate for Dr. Jim Smith
Lydia Faitalia, alternate for Fiasili Savusa
Representative Alex Ybarra, House of Representatives
Erin Okumo, alternate for Frieda Takamura
Bill Kallappa, Governor's Office of Indian Affairs

Staff and Public Attendees: Heather Rees, Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction
Maria Flores, Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction
Robin Howe, Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction

Members Not in Attendance:

Superintendent Chris Reykdal, Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction
Nicole Sutton, alternate for Bill Kallappa
Vacant, Senate Ranking Minority Member
Sean Heans, alternate for Carrie Basas
Rodrigo Renteria Valencia, Commission on Hispanic
Tennille Jefferies-Simmons, alternate for Chris Reykdal
Senator Lisa Wellman, Senate
Fiasili Savusa, Commission on Asian Pacific American Affairs

Minutes

Agenda item: Introductions, agenda overview, and approval of meeting minutes

Facilitator: Maria Flores, Executive Director CISL

Agenda item: Review of School Board Basics

Facilitators: Heather Rees, Research Analyst, CISL, OSPI

Discussion:

- Organization
 - Publicly elected
 - 5-7 members
 - Voted in via an at-large vote or director area vote
 - Washington has 1,477 school board members
- Elections
 - Staggered 4-6 year terms
 - No term limits
 - SB 5340 – currently being processed
 - Removes requirement to be a US citizen
 - Removes requirement to be a registered voter
 - Ineligible if convicted of a felony and right to vote has not been restored
- Responsibilities
 - Determine and adopt written policies not in conflict with other laws
 - Determine allocation of staff time
 - Establish curriculum standards
 - Setting number of instructional hours
 - Appoint a superintendent
 - Adopt annual budget
 - Approve school improvement plan
 - Hear citizen complaints
 - Hear appeals
- EOGOAC – Why is this information not all in one succinct place?
 - It is not required for it to be in one place and the topics cover a wide area of information where it would be housed in separate places.
- History
 - School boards used to be the sole administration of education.
 - Then came an increased federal role.
 - State role increased to oversee the federal funding and implement policy changes.

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- School reforms in the 1980s and 1990s were driven by state legislatures bypassing local boards.
 - Issue/ Complications
 - Board member turnover – Losing institutional knowledge and steep learning curve
 - Conflicting views/interests – Private vs. public schools
 - Constraints: State and federal laws, judicial decisions, union contracts
 - Oversight of policy vs. operation authority – What the board vs. school district believe the school board role is.
 - Time commitment/schedule – They have to have a schedule flexible enough to participate in hearings and meetings.
 - Compensation
 - Limited to \$50 per meeting and limited to \$4,800/year
 - 75% of school board members in small districts receive no salary
 - 63% of school board members reported their friends and family supplied more than half of funds for their most recent campaign
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Agenda item: Presentation from WSSDA

Presenters:

- Marissa Rathbone, Director of Strategic Advocacy, WSSDA
- Abigail Westbrook, J.D., Director of Policy and Legal Services, WSSDA
- Tricia Lubach, Director of Leadership Development, WSSDA

Discussion:

- “Hired and fired via local elections.”
- Originally designed to be lay person’s job to provide voices for the people. It was not meant to be educated individuals holding the positions.
- Year-round position
- The relationship between the work of the superintendent and the school board overlaps some and is dependent on district to district preference.
- EOGOAC – Do you have disaggregated data of school board members of color that serve?
 - It’s all voluntary as to who supplies what information because it is not collected at the state level.
- WSSDA is not a regulatory authority
 - Established as a state agency in statute
 - Funded by membership dues
- EOGOAC – Does everyone have the same voting ability for policy? What is the process for dues?

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- WSSDA invites any school board member/representative of the board to submit a position proposal and it is kept open for submission for a month. Then members take votes on these positions. General assembly allows members to unilaterally vote on the positions. Weights of votes for some positions are based on student enrollment.
- Dues formula is based on full time enrollment of students. It was updated to ensure dues are equitable for smaller districts.
- Two subcommittees – Legislative and permanent positions to shepherd the intent behind the positions for the vote.
- WSSDA does not advocate outside the scope of the positions adopted. There is a process to get an on the spot position, but this overall issue is addressed by continual engagement of the members.
- Policies that boards can adopt: Some are required and for the others the board may decide on a policy to adopt. This is done through local control.
- If something is a law, boards do not need to have a policy around designating it for school districts.
- Sometimes a position is passed that states that boards have to adopt a policy developed by WSSDA.
- Policy Services:
 - Featured Policies – On main website for the public
 - Subscription Policies – Optional for districts
 - Policy Legal News - Gives some of the why for the policy for board meetings and other topics
 - Model Policy – Updated version of all policy
- Boards are required to publicly post all adopted policies. This is mostly done online.
- Two readings happen before adoption of policy and involves the public. This is for policies not specifically required
- EOGOAC – Has WSSDA thought about where school board policies should live for people to be able to find the information? This impacts family access to school board meetings and information of what’s taking place; possibly consider making a policy around standards about where information should be kept regarding school boards on a district page.
 - WSSDA needs to create information about engaging with communities. Currently, we are working on highlighting issues of ability, language, childcare to participate, culturally responsive feedback loops, and where to house information.
 - Engaging with the community and getting buy in about the policy and terminology is essential. Sometimes the community is not in agreement and then the board cannot take the feedback; for example, spanking children being given as a suggestion from the community.
- Boards have a responsibility to adopt policies and the superintendent’s responsibility is to implement the policies.

- Trainings occur for those interested in running for school board all the way to advanced positions.
- School Board Team
 - An effective team includes diversity
 - Reflecting the community that you support
- Board Boot Camp: Culture of Connecting
 - For to five hours training at the annual conference after the election happens
 - Training covers what disaggregated data are and how they can be utilized to bring equity to the work.
- WSSDA Leadership (statewide) – Reached out to new members to make sure that selection is diverse including people of color, indigenous people, and others.
- WSSDA ON Board – On board training for school directors and school boards
 - Built towards adult learners
 - System designed to be interactive and support member needs
 - Provide in person and virtually
 - Commitments, mindsets, and principles build out the functions
 - Equity is taught as background knowledge
 - Currently being built out for incorporation
 - Covers laws and civil rights
 - Diversity and inclusion
 - Dismantling institutional racism
 - Cultural competency
 - All stem from legislative policy or law.
 - Weave equity knowledge into the foundations of state funding; for example, looking at the impact of wording in a protocol about school uniforms.
 - EOGOAC – What assistance do school directors give to get voices at the table that wouldn't typically be heard?
 - The feedback that was heard from board members of color is that Roberts Rule can shut conversations down. We believe that a more balanced board will bring a more balanced audience.
 - Equitable Participation – to know when to speak but to also listen

Agenda item: Public Comment

- Trenise Rogers – Parent from federal Way. It is hard to engage with the school board even when contacted, to have two-way communications with parents of color. Currently there is a public lawsuit with Federal Way around this. Public comments have been forwarded directly to districts rather than being read out loud during school board meetings which silences parent voices. The lack of information about engaging

communities of color from WSSDA and school boards is concerning. Intentional efforts should be made to hire people of color to represent the people the position serves

- Tracy Castro-Gill – I am concerned that we have a panel about members of color and the ones presenting are three white women. SB 5504 is a bill about professional development for anti racism. The bill has educators not required to engage in this training. They should be required to take this professional development because too many people will opt out if it isn't.
- Angelica Villegas – Families don't feel welcome in school settings and BIPOC students are being treated unfairly due to bias and nothing is being done about these experiences. The system and the way it functions in regard to discipline, excludes families and families are not being engaged to have a dialogue. People are often dehumanized when the board comes and just puts everything into a PowerPoint. If we are going to have this conversation, institutionalized racism and how this system was established needs to be spoken about. Also speak about, underfunding and how this is a barrier to parents who are being asked to pay on our own.
- Victoria Moreland – PESB looks forward to work with the EOGOAC and other stakeholders around cultural competency with standards and a framework. On June 4, 2021 we will have an event to diversify the workforce and collectively advancing equity by discussing multiple areas in which impacts can be made for systemic change.

Agenda item: Lunch Offline

Agenda item: Panel Discussion with School Board Members of Color

Presenters:

- Aurora Flores, Manson School District
- Drayton D. Jackson, Central Kitsap School District
- Maya Vengadasalam, Kent School District
- Ron Mabry, Kennewick School District
- Stanley Holland, Orting School District

Discussion:

Questions being discussed:

1. As a school board director of color what was the greatest challenge you faced in trying to get elected?
2. As a school board director of color, do you experience some of the same systemic racism barriers as other educators of color?
3. Is school board compensation specifically a barrier for school board members of color?

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4. Do you, as a director of color, have to fight any battles to maximize diversity, equity and inclusion in your school district?
5. Have you experienced any challenges in equitable distribution of funding?
6. In your role, what impact would you like to see when it comes to students of color?
7. Given challenges that you may have had to deal with during your first or second term, do you plan on running again?
8. What support do you or other school board members of color need?

Responses:

- Ron – People often don't realize what institutionalized racism is. They ask what can I do? Communicating what the problem is and giving a solution is difficult when individuals don't realize there is a problem.
- Drayton – When people of color take on a position, we do it for our community. A lot of questions about qualifications and representation of the community are challenges. Personally, it's a challenge about whether I belong in this space. Knowing and having pre-meetings with board members and talking about the position makes it easier. If I am the only person of color on the board, I ask what are the stigmas that I am facing and what judgement will come my way. I carry that weight of a community that is under served on my shoulders and wonder will I represent them well enough. If I make a mistake will it be counted against me or the community as a whole?
- Maya – Previously I worked with administrators who were used to working with those outside the system. Dealing with 9/11 bias and racism, I didn't see a welcoming of community groups into the education system. All of this stems from the experience of fighting our way into a system that is not used to accepting different viewpoints.
- Aurora – The doubt of qualification is often the biggest barrier. Often there is a lack of confidence to take it on. I mentor young people that have kids in school to build confidence that they can be a school board member. Compensation would help with recruitment and retention of school board members. When I was the president of WSSDA we worked on the equity policy and some board members felt that this is not an issue that needs to be addressed. Everything being the same doesn't mean its equitable.
- EOGOAC – Is there no system within WSSDA for a caucus of members of color?
 - Aurora – No, we just made a steering committee that may bring that about to provide that support with recruitment and retention.
- EOGOAC – Can you speak to your experiences in getting on to the board?
 - Maya – Ran in 2013 and I was one of two Indians within Washington State that ran and was elected. I remember going to conservative areas and being told to get out of their driveway and slurs being said. It was a rough period for volunteers. It was up to the individual running to go knock on doors at their own risk. Raising funds was difficult; people feel that unless you have thousands of friends you can't take this on yourself. It's a misguided notion that you have support systems to run for elected office.

- Ron – If you want to run for school board you have to go to their meetings and get to be known by them and know the issues, and to talk to community members. Even though this is a non-political position, political parties have become involved in the races.
- EOGOAC – How can we as a state group help you at the local level?
 - Maya – If we don't have exposure on financial reports, data and reviews, this can be restrictive. Also push some sort of orientation for board members of color to make them aware of what constituents are facing on a regular basis. Helping to understand how the disaggregated data impact is huge.
 - Drayton – Making sure everyone understands the process and promoting sitting on the board is for everyone. When I ran there was no direction on, "This is where you go to learn this." You have to do your due diligence to fully understand. Once my voice is heard what do I do with it. If I saw a space for people who look like me, I would be more comfortable to be in the space; also, having language that fits our community as well.
 - Aurora – We have conferences, we have meetings, we have committees. It costs me a lot of money from the loss of time. There needs to be assistance with this. A lot of people of color or people in poverty that have full time jobs can't afford to take that time off from work. Possibly a solution is offering different times for opportunities for training. We battle the image placed on people of color and the institutionalized racism that we have to get over. Sometimes you give a suggestion and it is ignored and someone who is not a person of color is praised for the same suggestion.
- Drayton – I often watch the reaction between my white colleagues and myself, and it is quite different. When they find out I am on the school board they are surprised or excited. I think in Washington there is a lot of blind racism and people are not aware that it is racist. An example being, when someone asks if I have a degree after learning I am on the board. When we are meeting in person, we have signs that say, "Think with an equity lens." Often the term equity is thrown around but it is dismissed by its overuse. I don't think it is trained enough to identify the racist actions. It takes policy to change these things and that is why I ran for the board.
- EOGOAC – Often times I find it is a lonely fight as a person of color. It is good to see others in the battle. I applaud you for your dedication in your work. When you come into a space where there are only two people of color, it is intimidating. I am not changing myself to fit the situation I am there to inform and change the system.
- Drayton – I didn't know that my being on the board would impact our students of color. We met the black student union and seeing what they were doing, and when they were informed of my position, they started cheering. Our students are hungry to see someone who looks like them in these positions. We have students now that are interested in running for student seats because they can now relate.

- Maya- It is so important for our kids to see the diversity that we bring into the district and they can see themselves in the roles. Often, there are comments from students that they only see people of color in the education system in janitorial type roles.
- EOGOAC – When I speak to teachers of color across the state they are not seen as experts or valued for what they can bring. So instead of being treated as the expert in talking about some of these things, they are marginalized. Sometimes they say they can't reach their board members of color. Please ask for access to these groups; for the school boards and superintendents to create spaces for real and authentic spaces for teachers in the field for our districts.
- EOGOAC – Do you have thoughts on how to strongly encourage legislation requiring trainings around cultural competency?
 - Maya – There are those of us who are legislatively mandating our way into issues rather than bringing them up locally about discriminatory behavior. I wonder whether cultural competency training for a few days is not enough. Often the trainings are cited to justify their actions and behaviors. I think people who run for election need to go through this training rather than presuming they have had all the training needed and are coming in as experts.
- EOGOAC – Anything you would like to leave us with for consideration?
 - Aurora – Look at everything with an equity lens. The challenge to doing this is that we need that training on all these terms such as cultural competency, equity, and equity lens.
 - Maya – Communication process is needed to show what work is done and the time it takes to get it done. Allow the board members to take a break and have communication on the work that we do with businesses and communities.
 - Drayton – When not seeing representation in trainings and groups it restricts. Where are spaces when something happens and when discussions are made? How do we create something and fund it so that the experience people of color bring can be applied?
- EOGOAC – How would you hold white counterparts accountable if a policy were enacted?
 - Drayton – We must start getting mandatory in processes in order to move up in positions. If we don't start having real history classes and conversations and get uncomfortable, we won't be able to move forward.
 - Maya- Those honest conversations are very important. When we have them and call out something it is because we see that the conversation has gone to a point that it's not only insulting and painful; it is also done with little thought. When we have school board members that don't understand, and we can't point that out, we are not doing anyone justice.

Presenters:

- OSPI SEL Advisory Committee
 - Dr. Bonnie McDaniel
 - Dr. Caryn Park
 - Dr. Deborah Tully
 - Leiani Sherwin

Discussion:

- Giving guidance to the education preparatory programs
- SEL guidance and resources for teacher and principal prep programs
- Here to get EOGOAC thoughts on how to implement SEL in an equitable manner.
- SEL should be implemented with equity and cultural competency
- Discuss the draft SEL implementation brief
 - Prep is based on the six benchmarks for K-12 students in SEL
 - Programs begin this journey at multiple entry points depending on where a program might be.
 - Need opportunities to practice the standards multiple times
 - Building relationships
 - Context matters
 - Knowledge of self, matters
 - Community engagement matters
 - The plethora of information coming out in the last year speaks to being aware of what is current and can be embedded in the prep programs.
 - Opportunities for student voices needs to happen. The work does better when students are at the table and get a say in what happens.
 - If leadership is not supporting with time and effort, then it won't be implemented with fidelity.
- EOGOAC – Is there a directive on bias or racism and addressing it within SEL?
 - We added standard six about social efficacy to give space and have a voice in equity building and create opportunities for addressing those problems.
- EOGOAC – How do we link up cultural competency around the discussion of SEL?
 - There is a principal preparation program for SEL implementation focusing on the adult and the capacity building they need to do. To understand how they were socialized around dealing with conflicts that stem from culture, family, and other aspects.
- Looking Ahead: Context for Change
 - What actually happens when policy is created?
 - Advancing equity work by defining SEL in a deeper dive not only for preparation programs and training for in-service teachers. Discussing what this would look like to humanize pedagogy.
 - Once initial guidance is out, we will keep editing and altering to address issues around cultural competency and equity understanding.

Agenda item: Public Comment

- Trenise Rogers – We don't only need people of color on our school boards we need courageous people of color. It's embarrassing to have the most diverse board in the state but have the least responsive. We are asking for access with the school board and response to our concerns and how we feel. School board members enter the process wanting to do the work and are told not to communicate with certain people and schools.
- Bruce Jackson – Working with the legislature on SB 5504 about dismantling racism in K-12 education and holding the system accountable. It needs clock hours/ professional development ties to certification around equity training and needs providers to be BIPOC owned and operated.
- Tracy Castro-Gill – We have to do more to make sure people are taking these professional development sessions. In the current language one day out of the 3 TRI days for training is around systemic racism. We should make it part of the certification process; or for classified staff members it should be a requirement of their employment, and these trainings need to be led by BIPOC businesses.
- Rebecca Cortes – I am concerned that I keep seeing PowerPoint slides with SEL and equity that are tacked on to other subjects. Systematic racism is a trauma. When I see SEL and equity presented without having a human being in their development, it is not taken into consideration that we are not meeting their social context for development.
- Angelica Villegas – Equity needs to be done by the BIPOC community. When we talk about inclusion it starts with the professional development of the teachers. North Thurston has taken the approach of cultural awareness but often it feels like we are asked to educate white people on the different topics. The North Thurston school district board only has two community meetings a year for listening sessions. More time needs to be put into doing this work. If the positions of power don't know how to do the work then hire someone who knows how to host these community conversations.

Agenda item: Next Steps, Final Announcements and Conclude Meeting

Discussion:

- EGOAC recommendation notes will build out on school boards
- Build out workplan around possible travel for the EGOAC community meetings
- Get feedback on the family engagement framework
- Discuss the forwarding of emails from the public to the EGOAC; talk about the format and process

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Meeting concluded at 3:30pm

Minutes Taken By: Robin Howe