



Vision 2020 Diversity Task Group Minutes

Date: Monday, May 8, 2017

Time: 6:45pm Social Time; **7- 9pm Meeting**

Present: Carla Bruzzese, Naomi Greenfield, Alberto Guzman, Brooks Harrelson, Mary Harrison, David Landskov, Lynette Martyn, Louise Popkin, Allan Schramm, Heather Smith

1. Mary H took minutes; Allan assisting. Minutes from the April meeting approved.
2. Speakers: Carla Bruzzese, Arlington Public Schools English Language Learner (ELL) Coordinator and Heather Smith, Family Liaison described the ELL program and family liaison role. There are 269 ELLs in town, mostly at the K-5 level. Most are at Hardy (49) and Thompson (56). Arlington has 54 different cultures and languages including Dinka, Norwegian, Swedish, Japanese, Chinese, Haitian Creole, Tibetan, Nepali. The largest ELL group is Japanese.

All children entering the schools complete a home language survey. Those whose primary language is not English are assessed to determine their level of reading, math, speaking and listening. Learners have different levels of proficiency in their primary language; ELL plans are tailored to the individual based on the assessments. Many of the families in the program are highly literate professionals living in Arlington temporarily. Some families are struggling because of low literacy in their own language, which may be due to interrupted education. There are 11 ELL teaching staff at town schools. Books in various languages are donated by Book Rack.

Massachusetts does not provide a statewide standard ESL curriculum. The district is developing a curriculum. There will be a free summer program in ELL at Bishop for children in levels 1 and 2, entering grades K-5.

The program needs interpreters/translators to interpret documents and assist staff in meetings with parents who are not fluent in English. Staff are creating a list of interpreters of various languages.

The family liaison greets newcomers to the program and coordinates with the ELL staff at the various schools and with interpreters. She works to involve ELL families in social events and the PTOs and offers workshops for the parents to show how parents can help at home. Many families would like to attend ELL classes for adults; however, funding is needed to offer such programs. The ELL program would benefit from more resources for all program activities, as more children and families in need of ELL are coming in to town.

DTG members present expressed interest in volunteering with the program and learning more about it.

3. Reports

- Lynette: First Parish is assisting 6 asylum-seeking families by providing temporary housing, resume writing, transportation. She invited DTG to assist by offering housing; they would like to involve other churches so the program can serve more families. Unlike many other towns, Arlington is LGBTQ friendly, so some refugees prefer to locate here. It was suggested that Lynette write a blog for our website and an article for YourArlington.
- Robbins Speed Date volunteer event: Brooks and Mary attended and Brooks gave a brief overview of DTG. Not enough time in program for individuals to talk with volunteer groups.
- Alberto: the Uncle Sam Plaza committee has arranged for a Japanese martial arts group to perform in the plaza. They have contacted other groups but have not received a response. DTG urged Alberto to send publicity for plaza and film festival events to our website so DTG can help promote the events. Alberto offered to publicize DTG meeting on his site.
- Allan: the Superintendent's Diversity Advisory Committee hoped to speak about the goals for cultural proficiency training at the next School Board meeting. The school administration has received training. The Superintendent's committee held a well-attended coffee for teachers of color who might apply for positions in Arlington.

6. New Business

- Alberto would like DTG to participate in the October International Film Festival. Brooks will help organize a panel discussion, perhaps focusing on LGBTQ immigrants.
- It was suggested DTG should tape our speakers for ACMi broadcast. It was recommended that we do wider publicity for our speaker meetings.

Upcoming DTG meetings – all held at Jefferson Cutter House (enter through parking lot), all on Mondays: 2017:

- June 12 Pam Hallett, Exec. Dir. of Housing Corporation of Arlington, speaks about affordable housing concerns in Arlington
- Sept. 11 Cindy Sheridan-Curran, APS Homeless Liaison speaks about her role as liaison for the schools

For more information go to our website: arlingtonmadtg.org or contact Program Coordinators Miriam Stein, miriam.stein@comcast.net, 781-648-0255 or Mary Harrison, mar.285ha@gmail.com

DTG Chairs: Claire Carswell, Yawa Degboe