



LGBTQIA+ Rainbow Commission Minutes

Date: *Thursday, October 17, 2019*

Time: *6:30 pm*

Location: *Arlington Senior Center, 27 Maple Street*

Attendance:

Note: There was no quorum so the Rainbow Commission held a community discussion in lieu of the October 2019 monthly meeting.

Minutes/Notes of Community Discussion

The community discussion was ably facilitated by Commissioner Lisa Krinsky. Commissioner Bill Gardiner helped to prepare for the meeting and took notes. Chair Mel Goldsipe attended.

Twenty people participated. Participants included Superintendent Kathleen Bodie, School Committee member Jennifer Susse, teachers, school health care workers, parents/guardians, and interested citizens. We had lively discussion. Parents/guardians helped to bring real-life experiences to the conversation.

Bill Gardiner talked about the programs that have been held through the Arlington Schools Parent Forum with Mystic LGBTQ+ Youth Support Network and the Rainbow Commission.

GENDER AND SEXUALITY ALLIANCE AT ARLINGTON HIGH SCHOOL

David Conneely, advisor for the high school GSA, described the organizing the members of the Gender and Sexuality Alliance (GSA) at the High School are doing. The GSA officers meet every week. GSA is working to provide safe space for everyone in the school. Not all students feel comfortable about being out. The GSA does programming at AHS's Inclusion Day. GSA members went to Dallin Elementary to connect with youth there.

They are ensuring that LGBTQIA+ issues are included in health education. They are working with the state legislature to support the Healthy Youth Act.

There are problems with bathroom use at the high school. First, there are not enough bathrooms in the high school overall. There are only two all-gender bathrooms and they are not in convenient places. Work is being done to ensure these issues are addressed in the new high school that will be built.

Some of the students use the f-slur in a derogatory way.

Some faculty and staff are dismissive of nonbinary students but most are great.

TRAINING FOR FACULTY

November 1 is professional development day. Among many other options, teachers can choose workshops on working with LGBTQIA+ students.

There is regular training on cultural competency, though not necessarily LGBTQIA+ related. Every faculty member will receive training on helping students with mental health issues. This includes discussion of the LGBTQIA+ student population. 350 teachers have been trained so far.

200 faculty have done the Responsive Classroom program, which is a week-long workshop offered in the summer. One of the areas of focus in the program is developing healthy relationships.

There are regular meetings of school principals across the system.

There are grade-level meetings for teachers across the system.

There is a Welcoming Schools program offered through the Human Rights Campaign.

Many teachers have a Rainbow Flag in their classrooms.

It might be helpful for faculty to get training in what to say in difficult situations.

TRAINING FOR STUDENTS:

PFLAG did a Safe School Program for the second grade at Hardy School.

In the Wellness Block in the elementary schools they are doing anti-bullying training.

Students get Upstander training at Gibb and Ottoson to learn how to respond to hurtful incidents.

The Health Day at Dallin included learning about the use of pronouns.

ORGANIZING RAINBOW ALLIANCES IN THE GRADE SCHOOLS

There is a Rainbow Alliance at Brackett School. Dallin is learning about how they might create an RA at their school. RAs could also be promoted at other grade schools.

PROVIDING BOOKS AND RESOURCES FOR THE SCHOOLS

Pam at Robbins Library is helping the faculty find new books and resources all students can use to learn about LGBTQIA+ issues.

REWORKING SCHOOL FORMS

Steps are being taken to rework school forms so they are more inclusive.

FUTURE STEPS

Can RC help to create an affinity group for LGBTQIA+ faculty in the school system?

There is an opportunity to pull resources together for faculty and administrators to draw upon that might be available on a website.

Rainbow Alliances can be created at additional elementary schools.

There is an Inclusion Day at the High School in the spring. What can the RC offer at that event? Pronoun workshop?

Who leads and coordinates efforts to ensure LGBTQIA+ issues are addressed at every level of the school system?

Respectfully submitted, Bill Gardiner, Commissioner