



**Blue Valley Board of Education Diversity, Equity, Inclusion Committee  
January 6, 2022**

**Attendance:** *Jodie Dietz, Kristi Dixon, Kiwaini Duson, Celia Fritz-Watson, Chris Gray, Gina Knapp, Caroline Lubbe, Erica McDonald, Tonya Merrigan, Tyson Ostroski, Nayelli Palazuelos-Bowers, Fariha Shafi, Susan Swift, Brittany Verrette, Yongfu Wang, Kelly Wessel*

The Blue Valley Board of Education Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee met on Thursday, January 6, 2022 via zoom. The meeting began with a welcome from Dr. Merrigan to our newest Board member elect Gina Knapp.

Mr. Scott Roberts, principal at Blue Valley Southwest shared a new program that the BVSU DEI committee is doing with distinguished speakers. They are providing monthly opportunities for students to hear from members of our communities about their careers or life experiences. They ideally want a diverse group of speakers for students to hear. This is a voluntary opportunity that students can opt into. Mr. Roberts asked the committee to consider being a part of this series or to suggest other community members that would be good candidates.

Dr. Amy Dillon, Director of Human Resources was back again this year to share the work that her department has done around recruitment and retention of a diverse workforce. She began by sharing the disparity both in Blue Valley and nationwide regarding the ethnicity of students and those educating them. Additionally, the overall number of students going into teacher education programs is down drastically both regionally and nationally. All of the school districts are recruiting the same small pool of candidates. Research indicates that the best strategies for recruiting are to engage them at an early age in programs such as a grow your own; develop close meaningful relationships with regional universities; and to look at alternative certification programs. Blue Valley's efforts have included working

with students from the FORCE and RISE programs at Midamerican Nazarene University which is for students of color who are in their teacher education program. Blue Valley has had several of these students who did all of their required observations and student teaching with us and were great additions to our schools. Recruitment at regionally Historic Black Colleges and Universities is also taking place both virtually and hopefully soon in person. Finally, early hiring is key when landing diverse candidates because so many schools are going after the same small group of candidates.

Retention of our staff is another key strategy that human resources along with all of our administrators focus on. A district wide Educator of Color group was formed last year to support these staff members. This is facilitated by a veteran staff member with the goal of making sure these educators have a safe space to ask questions and share feedback. Finally, Dr. Kelly Wessel shared work that is done with all teachers during onboarding around DEI.

**Next Meeting**  
***Thursday, February 3, 2022***  
***4-5:30 pm via TBD***