

**PDAC Meeting**  
**How can we welcome families of diverse race and ethnicities?**  
**March 17, 2015**  
**Minutes**

*Mission of PDAC*

*Focused on student achievement, the mission of the Parent Diversity Advisory Council is to positively impact the academic achievement of a diverse student population through school-specific outreach efforts and initiatives that focus on and directly address disparate academic performance.*

**Welcome**

- Saily and Sindy welcomed the audience to meeting.
- Religion or lack of religion often reflects our Core.
- Norms were reviewed – Be on Time – Be Relevant - Be Open –Be Honest- Be Respectful

**Guest Panelists**

Michael Escamilla – Christian  
Aadil Farid - Islam  
Alta Goldstein – Jewish  
Gantam Gover - Sikh  
Howard Katz - Humanist  
Tina Jagshi – Muslim  
Jay Joshi – Hindu (absent)  
Marc Rudolph – Jewish  
Dimple Shah – Jain (absent)  
Rachel Subramanian – Baha'i

**Considerations and Talking Points made by Panelists**

- The District has been incredibly neutral and it is appreciated.
- It is important that teachers have an understanding of the different religious beliefs.
- How can both the school and children best understand religion differences and this be woven into the curriculum?
- Important to have a diverse staff.
- Schools should not teach religion. It is important to be neutral.
- It is important to define what welcoming needs because our students will be our leaders. It is important to understand differences. We need to reduce fear. It is important to instill our humanity to our children.
- Welcoming = Feeling wanted and valued. It is important to break down the assumptions of the other.

- Some also believe that religion can be taught in schools. There are pitfalls, but they can be overcome. It is important to inform, not pressure students. Teachers need awareness.
- It is important to inform, not pressure students. Teachers need awareness. As educators, it is important to take our students level of being uncomfortable seriously.
- Jewish students – Do not make assumptions. They have a variety of beliefs and practices. The calendar is difficult to understand. Understand the holidays and respect them for tests and major assignments. Be sure to reach out to the Jewish community.
- Muslim – Prayer schedules need to be followed.
- It is important to create a culture where students feel welcome to share difficulties they may experience in regards to their beliefs.

### **Question – Should we celebrate traditional holidays in our schools?**

- Students should not be forced to participate in events that they do not want to participate. Is there a traditional holiday?
- We need to respect the ability to choose and also respect the ability to disagree.

### **Parent Perspective**

A parent perspective was shared from a Muslim mother. She shared some school perspectives. As it relates to terrorism and violence, it is important to counteract the perception of the Muslim religion.

### **Follow-Up Comments**

- We need to encourage the knowing of one another.
- One of the panelists shared a model that she has used to foster understanding and break down barriers.
- It is also important to create communities outside of school.

### **Open Discussion**

- History at times may cloud and slant our perspective. Eastern cultures could be taught more. A teacher shared our curriculum is more culturally competent. As teachers are writing the curriculum, they are becoming more aware of other cultures and religions. Schools can begin to educate themselves.
- It is important for the PTA to be inclusive.
- Saily shared that IPPC has been receptive to meeting and discussing.
- Dialogue is important to educate and begin to eliminate controversy.
- As adults, it is important to expand our relationships with others different than us. We need to expand our circle of influence.
- As we discuss our religions, we need to keep in mind the common core values that we share.