

Report on the Interview Between Los Gatos DEI Commissioners and LGSUHSD Board President & District Officers

Overview

The interview between the Los Gatos DEI Commissioners and representatives from the Los Gatos-Saratoga Union High School District (LGSUHSD) provided valuable insights into concerns, efforts, and opportunities related to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) within the district and the broader community. Notably, the district does not express concerns about DEI within its schools but is uncertain about DEI initiatives and challenges outside of the school environment within the Town of Los Gatos.

DEI Concerns

Does your district have concerns about the issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion in the Town of Los Gatos?

LGSUHSD does not have concerns about DEI within its schools, as they believe students are supported adequately. However, district representatives are less familiar with the extent of DEI efforts in the broader town community.

Current Efforts:

What initiatives or practices have already been implemented to address these concerns, and how effective have they been?

- LGSUHSD has implemented DEI-focused programs within schools, including curriculum enhancements and student-led initiatives.
- They believe their efforts within the district have been effective and well-received but are unsure of what efforts exist beyond the school setting.

Community Involvement:

Are there particular groups (students, parents, staff) that you feel are underrepresented or underserved in the district?

- While the district continuously evaluates representation, they do not currently identify significant gaps in inclusivity within their schools.
- The district formerly identified English learners as an underserved group, but has made significant strides recently to bolster the strength of the program.

Hopefulness About DEI

What are you most hopeful for relative to these concerns?

- The district acknowledges ongoing student-led efforts and inclusive curriculum updates as positive steps.
- They express optimism that their schools have cultivated an inclusive culture for students.

Vision

What does an ideal diverse, equitable, and inclusive school environment look like to you?

- A space where all students feel safe, heard, and respected, with access to diverse perspectives in education.
- Continued engagement with students and staff to ensure inclusivity remains a priority.

Promoting DEI

Do you see opportunities for the Town to do more to promote and ensure diversity, equity, and inclusion?

- The district is open to collaboration but does not see pressing policy gaps within its schools.
- They express interest in understanding what the Town is doing to promote DEI outside of schools.

Collaboration

Are there local organizations or community groups the district could partner with to advance DEI efforts?

- LGSUHSD is interested in potential collaborations but would need more insight into existing community DEI efforts before committing to partnerships.
- Potential initiatives such as a ****Diversity Week throughout the town****, beginning with high schools and expanding to families, were discussed.

Support Needed

What type of support could the Town and the DEI Commission provide to your district to create a more inclusive community?

- The district does not identify immediate needs but is open to learning more about town resources that could supplement school efforts.
- The district continues to support student-led initiatives and believes student voices are already well-represented within their schools.

Conclusion

LGSUHSD remains confident in its DEI efforts within schools and does not express concerns regarding inclusivity among students. However, the district acknowledges a lack of awareness about broader DEI efforts in the Town of Los Gatos and is open to further dialogue. Potential areas of collaboration, such as a town-wide Diversity Week and increased communication with local DEI initiatives, could strengthen efforts to create a more inclusive community beyond the school environment.

February 12, 2025

Meeting Notes

Diane Fisher and Rev. Eric Swanson of Westhope Church, Saratoga

Diane collected information on the history and organization of the Celebration of Light, a multicultural winter celebration in Saratoga, to use as a model for a prospective similar event in Los Gatos. Rev. Swanson runs the annual event on behalf of the Saratoga Ministerial Group.

This version of Saratoga's winter celebration began 6 years ago. Previously there was an event co-sponsored by the Chamber and the Ministerial Group. Mayor Manny Cappello and Rev. Swanson conceived and planned the first city-sponsored event, which has continued annually.

As a partner with the Saratoga Ministerial Group, the Town of Saratoga handles the following aspects of the event:

1. The town promotes the event on its website.
2. The town provides candles and a sound system.
3. The mayor and council members speak at the event.
4. There is no overt security used.
5. The Town reserves the space in Blaney Plaza, which is a central area at the beginning of the main downtown street.
6. Town staff members John Cherbone and Leslie Arroyo manage the event, by receiving the diverse symbols brought to the office, pre-decorated with lights, and installing them in Blaney Plaza.
7. Each symbol is discussed in the interfaith service.
8. The symbols stay in Blaney Plaza for 2-3 weeks.
9. The event is held the 2nd Saturday evening in December, after sunset to accommodate the Jewish sabbath.
10. Several public school choirs participate in the event, bringing out their families and friends.

Rev. Swanson has been told that the Town is very glad this event is held, and that it is very important for inclusion and belonging in Saratoga.

The event organization will be changed in 2025. Instead of the town staff collecting the display and installing it, the town has given a \$2,500 grant to the Saratoga Ministerial Group to implement all of the event organizing. But the event will still be co-sponsored by the Town of Saratoga, with council participation. The grant will cover rental of a sound system and the candles, and alleviates the work load of town staff.