

Minority Student Achievement Advisory Committee

Minutes

January 12, 2010



The Minority Student Achievement Advisory Committee met on Tuesday, January 12, 2010, at 5:30 p.m. in the Board of Education Meeting Room at the Worcester Educational Center. The following members were present: Ms. Wynnette Handy, Mr. Kennis Austin, Ms. Nikki Blake, Ms. Valerie Bradshaw, Ms. Linda Brown, Mr. Michael Browne, Mr. Carlton Cartwright, Ms. Shirleen Church, Ms. Barbara Davison, Ms. Michelle DeCicco, Ms. Kristine Dodd, Ms. Melissa Freistat, Mr. Leland Green, Ms. Eloise Henry-Gordy, Mr. Edward Lee, Ms. Margaret Paige-Bacon, Mr. Matthew Record, Ms. Diane Shorts, Ms. Janet Simpson, Ms. Terry Smith, Ms. Diane Stulz, Ms. Nancy Thibodeaux, Ms. Kysha Townsend, and guests, Ms. Elizabeth Marshall and Dr. Michial Gill.

The meeting began with a welcome from Ms. Wynnette Handy. She discussed the issue of the “single story.” A single story is when one only looks at one side of an issue and believes that side to be the only truth. She asked the Committee members to think about the minority male achievement as a “single story” and challenged them to see the issue as an obstacle that could be surpassed. The Committee members introduced themselves.

Ms. Handy reviewed academic data of White, African American and Hispanic males, in grades three through eight, on the 2009 Reading and Mathematics Maryland School Assessment. (This data is on file and can be reviewed upon request.)

Dr. Michial Gill, the newly appointed Minority Achievement Specialist, from the Maryland State Department of Education presented the Report of the Task force on the Education of Maryland’s African American Males. The report outlines recommendations that fall into one of six requirements identified by the Task Force. The recommendations that directly relate to education are listed below.

Skilled, culturally competent teachers

- 1) Place the most effective teachers in the highest-need classrooms and place the most effective principals in the highest-need schools.
- 2) Recruit African American men into teaching.
- 3) Include in teacher preparation programs cultural competency training, especially as it relates to African American males, and makes teachers demonstrate effectiveness in this area.

High standards and academic opportunity

- 4) Stop the over-identification of African American males for special education and draft a plan for exiting students from it.
- 5) Increase the proportion of African American males taking the PSAT in 10th grade and provide them the academic preparation and support they need to score well on it.

- 6) Ensure that every public high school offers an Advanced Placement (AP) program and that the prevalence of African American males enrolled in AP reflects the demographics of the overall student population.

In-school support

- 7) Increase and improve in-school, supervised suspension programs focused on academic development and behavioral counseling. Significantly reduce out-of-school, unsupervised suspensions.
- 8) Establish within African American majority schools some single-sex classes primarily enrolling students with academic, attendance, and discipline problems.
- 9) Assign to all high-risk African American male students an advocate to work through academic and disciplinary problems and provide college and career guidance.

Family and community support

- 10) Fund and provide direction for programs in which one-on-one and group mentoring is provided to African American males. Focus mentor recruitment efforts on African American men.
- 11) Provide educational materials to young African American fathers and their children.

Prevention and intervention services

- 12) Provide high-quality early care and education to all children.
- 13) In areas of high need, provide the physical, dental, and mental health services needed to support greater academic achievement.

College preparation and financial assistance

- 14) Help African American males make the transition from high school to college.
- 15) Make college financially viable for African American males.
- 16) Provide support system for African American males in college.

Dr. Gill discussed the strategies included in the state's operational work plan to implement the recommendations of the task force. He asked the group keep the following questions in mind when addressing the academic achievement of African American males.

- Were these initiatives designed/developed specifically to address the needs of African American males?
- What measures do we have to assess their impact on African American male achievement/success in Maryland?
- Why have our ongoing efforts not impacted the achievement of African American males?
- Are there additional strategies that might be employed that more directly affect African American male achievement/success? What can we do differently?

The Committee began to discuss the initiatives that have been implemented at each school to improve the achievement of minority males, as well as the challenges that are encountered.

Snow Hill Middle School – The Greater Expectations Mentoring Program evolved as a recommendation from Snow Hill Middle’s Minority Achievement Committee. The program is funded through grant funds from the Community Foundation. Staff, community members and clergy serve as mentors. The program has 55 mentors and this year is running in conjunction with the after school program which has allowed some flexibility in planning specific activities for students and their mentors. The challenge the program faces is the recruiting of mentors, especially African American mentors, as the number of students needing mentors increases.

Buckingham Elementary School- Buckingham also has a mentoring program which focuses on bringing African American males into the building to work with African American male students. The challenge for them is the recruiting of African American male mentors for the program.

Student Services – The Board of Education is working collaboratively with the Health Department, Department of Juvenile Services and the Department of Social Services in order to address mental health issues and dysfunctional situations.

Ms. Handy said the school presentations would continue at the next meeting. She asked the Committee to think about its next steps concerning minority male achievement.

The meeting concluded at 7:00 p.m.

**If you have an idea for a presentation that you would like to hear about or an activity that we could work on involving minority males, please phone Wynnette at 410-632-5091 or email her at wfhandy@mail.worcester.k12.md.us.

Next Meeting Date: May 4, 2010