

Minority Student Achievement Advisory Committee

Minutes

October 6, 2009



The Minority Student Achievement Advisory Committee met on Tuesday, October 6, 2009, 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, Dr. Jon Andes, Mr. Kennis Austin, Ms. Twynette Binns, Ms. Caroline Bloxom, Mr. Michael Browne, Ms. Shirleen Church, Ms. Barbara Davison, Ms. Kristine Dodd, Mr. Doug Dryden, Ms. Nancy Fortney, Ms. Melissa Freistat, Ms. Cheryl Koerner, Mr. Edward Lee, Ms. Karen Leung, Mr. Ty Mills, Ms. Margaret Paige-Bacon, Mr. Matthew Record, Ms. Judy Rutkiewic, Ms. Diane Shorts, Ms. Terry Smith, and Dr. Richard Walker.

The meeting began with a welcome from Ms. Handy. She stated a quote from a famous writer and talked about how it related to the academic progress of minority students in the county. She highlighted the fact that the county was keeping minority achievement in the forefront, that programs and activities were continuously being implemented to address the issues, and that all necessary stakeholders were being encouraged to take part in the process of helping each child reach their full potential. Returning members and new members introduced themselves and were thanked for their interest, time, and continued commitment in regards to the achievement of African American students and the elimination of the achievement gap.

Ms. Handy reviewed the history of the Minority Student Achievement Task Force and how the advisory committee originated. She spoke of the purpose and goals of the committee, including information about the past presentations that had been made to the committee, as well as activities that the group had been involved in concerning minority achievement.

Ms. Handy reviewed achievement data with the group. Included in her presentation were the demographics of the county, attendance, and the Maryland School Assessment Performance Reading and Mathematics data (for school years 2007, 2008, and 2009) on students at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. She also discussed the percentage of students in the graduating class of 2010 that had passed the High School Assessments at Pocomoke, Stephen Decatur, and Snow Hill High Schools.

Ms. Bloxom gave a presentation on the different types of mentoring programs that were being conducted at Pocomoke Middle School. Ms. Bloxom's school has high school males mentoring fourth and fifth grade males, Pocomoke Middle teachers mentoring students, and a Big Brothers and Big Sisters mentoring program. She stressed that because they had a variety of programs they were able to match the students' needs with the appropriate mentoring program. Ms. Bloxom noted that assistance was needed in recruiting adult mentors to the Big Brothers Big

Sisters mentoring program. It was suggested that the school contact the Worcester Youth Council for possible mentors. In addition, she presented achievement data revealing the academic progress from 2003 to 2009 that Pocomoke Middle students had made on the Maryland School Assessment.

Subcommittee reports were given.

Parent Involvement – Ms. Shirleen Church reported the following information.

- The Parent Involvement Symposium is scheduled for Saturday, October 24, 2009, at the Worcester Technical High School.
- Parents have been sent registration forms for the symposium via students in all schools.
- Once registration forms are returned, an agenda for the day will be created.
- Businesses and organizations in the county have been sent flyers announcing the event.
- Several community organizations have already agreed to set up informational booths.

To help advertise the Parent Involvement Symposium, it was suggested that flyers be sent to churches, a flyer be put on the county's website, and an announcement be created to send to various newspapers and the radio.

Mentoring – Ms. Handy reported the following information.

- The subcommittee has completed the PowerPoint for the initial training of adult mentors in the county. Components of the training are: Developmental Stages, Stages of the Mentoring Relationship, and An Activity about Poverty.
- Discussions are occurring about how to roll-out the PowerPoint to guidance counselors.

Ms. Handy began a discussion on planning for church presentations. The committee will visit the same churches as last year to increase the awareness of the achievement gap and share what parents can do to help. The Committee reviewed the list of churches and added one to the list. It was decided that the main push to disseminate this information would be on Sunday, November 15th, in preparation for American Education Week. (Those churches where a member will not be in attendance will receive an invitation inviting them to the schools for American Education Week.) A sheet was provided for members to sign up for this subcommittee. The subcommittee would be responsible for deciding what information to disseminate about the achievement gap and would conduct presentations.

To add to the information that would be distributed at the churches, the Committee examined the state publication, “*A Practical Guide to Accelerating Student Achievement Across Cultures.*” The members were divided into five groups and given the task of looking at the “Student” section under the following five competencies: 1) Participating in Intercultural Communication, 2) Reducing Prejudice, 3) Establishing Culturally Supportive Learning Environments, 4) Designing and Implementing Curriculum and Instruction for Education That Is Multicultural and Accelerating Minority Achievement, and 5) Designing Tests, Measurements, and Assessments for Achievement Equity. Each group had to reach a consensus on two strategies in their section that they felt parents could use as “talking points” with their children. This information will be included in the informational brochure that will be handed out during church visits.

Ms. Handy discussed the Communications Survey that is given to parents each year. The results have shown that all racial/ethnic subgroups of parents are very satisfied with the way in which the school is communicating with the home; however, the participation rate of African American parents in the survey is low. A subcommittee will be formed to make phone calls to African American parents of two schools (schools with the lowest participation rate in the county) to encourage them to return the survey.

The Committee was asked to list presentations that they would like at future meetings, as well as activities that the committee could work on for the year. The list is on file in the Office of Multicultural Education and will be shared with the Committee at the next meeting.

The meeting concluded at 7:00 p.m.

Meeting Dates for the Year: January 12, 2010 and May 4, 2010