



Champaign Community Unit #4 Schools Education Equity Excellence Committee Meeting Minutes – November 18, 2010

A meeting of the Education Equity Excellence (EEE) Committee was held on Thursday, November 18, 2010 in the Mellon Board Room. Dr. Kern Alexander, Facilitator opened the meeting at 4:00 p.m. He announced that Superintendent Culver would not be present today. Dr. Alexander reviewed the agenda and said the meeting will primarily focus on a Bilingual Report by Maria Alanis and a report on the Academic Academy presented by Rhonda Howard.

Committee Members present include: Kern Alexander, Dorland Norris, Ginny Holder, Nathaniel Banks, Lily Jimenez, Annette Jones, Joe Williams, Nancy Hoetker Sue Grey, Judy Wiegand, and Deb Foertsch.

Also present: Rhonda Howard, Maria Alanis, Linda, Greg Novak, and Ondine Gross

Welcome and Introductions:

Dorland Norris welcomed the group to the second meeting of the year. She said the work of this Committee is very important and we will be looking at all the agreed to areas. Ms. Norris continued that a subcommittee was formed to look at how we could facilitate more productive meetings and increase involvement. Subcommittee members decided we would focus on two reports at the November meeting which include the Bilingual Report and the Academic Academy Report. She said these reports were sent approximately two weeks prior to the meeting to provide Committee members ample time to review them before the meeting. Ms. Norris said that Dr. Alexander will review the Meeting Norms followed by a five minute review of each report and then open discussion on each report.

A member of the audience (Rev. Troy Burke) asked if he could speak in regard to the Climate Study that the District has not received and wanted to know if the community would be notified when the study was completed. Ms. Norris said the last time she spoke with Dr. Avery he indicated he had lost his principal investigator and it had caused him to fall behind in completing the report. Sally Scott, District Council, is working on this matter.

Review/Approval of Meeting Minutes:

Dr. Alexander asked members to review the meeting minutes and if acceptable to approve the minutes as presented. A motion was made by Joe Williams, seconded by Kern Alexander to

approve the meeting minutes from the September 2010 meeting. All yeas, motion carried on a voice vote.

Meeting Norms – Dr. Kern Alexander:

Dr. Alexander reviewed the meeting norms as originally presented by Dr. Hunter.

1. The meetings are intended to be advisory to the superintendent and his administration. Therefore, members will be expected to offer their best advice on matters before the Committee.
2. Meetings will begin and end as scheduled.
3. All speakers will be recognized by the facilitator.
4. Members will wait for the opportunity to ask questions after speakers have concluded making their remarks.
5. Members will not carry on side-bar discussions, while the meetings are in session.
6. The agenda will determine the items discussed at each meeting.
7. Confidentiality is very important. This means the names of students, faculty, staff and members of the Committee will not be mentioned when discussing any potentially controversial subjects.
8. Members will not make any inflammatory statements directed at students, faculty, staff, and members of the Committee.
9. Members will limit their comments to short concise questions, as opposed to long dissertations that tend to prolong meetings.
10. Robert's Rules of Order will be used as needed.
11. Others

He asked if the committee was in agreement of the norms and if so, could a vote be taken. A motion was made Sue Grey, seconded by Ginny Holder to accept the Meeting Norms. All in favor, motion carried on a voice vote.

Reports:

Dr. Alexander said each presenter would be given approximately five minutes to share information from their report area then a question and answer period would follow. Nancy Hoetker said her understanding was the reason to give the reports ahead of time was so the committee could have discussion. Lily Jimenez added she would like to talk about the Taskforce.

Bilingual Report – Maria Alanis:

Ms. Alanis said when committee members first received this report; over 500 students were involved in the bilingual program. She said the District supports a variety of languages and dialects. Our population is rich with linguistic and cultural diversity. Ms. Alanis said the District offers English-Spanish and Bilingual programs. The programs are currently housed at the Early Childhood Center, BT Washington, Edison Middle School, and Central High School. ESL is offered at Central, Westview, Stratton and Garden Hills. Children in ESL have different languages and spend most of their day in a general education classroom. Ms. Alanis explained how the students are identified for the program through an assessment tool.

In response to a committee member's inquiry, Ms. Alanis expounded on how program determination is made and placement at a school. Interpreters are utilized to explain service options to parents. Ms. Alanis said parents are assured that even if they waive on options, they are still eligible to elect to participate in the program. When asked how the District meets the social/emotional needs of these children as they acclimate to a new culture and society, Ms. Alanis said she addressed this in page 2 of the report. She said some students are refugees. Counselors are available at the middle and high school levels as well as a bilingual social worker at BT Washington. The program works with the refugee center and also puts families in contact with other supports available in the community.

Lily – asked about early childhood certification. Ms. Alanis said she spoke to ISBE and the current certified staff has adequate certification to teach.

Dr. Alexander asked about programmatic needs. Ms. Alanis said funding for additional staff, recruitment and retention of bilingual teachers and administrators are some of the needs of the program. Ms. Alanis talked about the tuition waivers available for general ed teachers to obtain their endorsement. The District is trying to “grow our own”.

Nathaniel Banks expressed concern about the percentage of time students been in this program. It seems to say the students are continually encouraged to speak/learn their own language as opposed to being immersed. Ms. Alanis said they stay in as long as necessary. The exit criteria are set by the ISBE. Content is initially given in home language and then they are transitioned into English.

Dr. Alexander thanked Ms. Alanis for her report. Ms. Alanis shared an article about the movement of the ESL program from BT Washington to Garden Hills. She also touched briefly on the Chinese language program.

Ms. Norris shared the District website can translate into all of the languages. Translations are literal, not exact, but at least provide an understandable version of the information.

Lily Jimenez provided an update on the Latino Taskforce. She shared that two Latino forums were held. Only two families attended the first meeting; however more people attended the meeting held yesterday. She reviewed topics that were discussed at the forum which include:

- Move from BTW to Garden Hills
- Magnet programs offered at each school
- Translation of IEP paperwork for Spanish speaking parents
- Transition process
- Stress on fliers when the meetings are important

She talked about what could have been done to increase attendance at the forums. She reviewed next steps such as surveys for parents, teachers and administrators.

Academic Academy Report – Rhonda Howard:

Rhonda Howard, AA Principal, introduced Linda Page and Ms. McLain, staff members at the Academy. Ms. Howard talked about the history of the Academy. She said there was a very diverse committee who worked on the planning committee for the Academy. She said the Academy is a choice alternative school on an application basis. She talked about the target population and said the Academy serves up to 60 students per year. There is a low teacher/student ratio. The students at the Academy typically have multiple barriers. For instance, 25-30 students are homeless. The Academy looks at each student individually to provide academic and emotional needs. Ms. Howard talked about the admission process. Students are tested academically and must have a desire to attend the Academy. There is an enrollment selection committee that reviews applications. Ms. Howard talked about the staff numbers at the Academy. There is flexibility as it pertains to dual certification and the APEX system. The program offer credit recovery and the hours are extended.

When questioned about the 7th grade reading level benchmark, Ms. Howard explained there is not a minimum 7th grade level, but some minimum level is needed to work with APEX. Every student gets a plan. The program offers a semester's work in 7 weeks which equals a session. The first barrier is improving self-esteem and self-confidence. All the barriers have impacted their educational experience.

Linda Page shared the majority of students are there because of credit recovery. In addition, there are a couple of students with autism which have necessitated a smaller environment. Dr. Wiegand said the District is looking into a program to track students after graduation. Dorland said that the Academy checks up on students. Rhonda said kids are returning for help for various reasons after graduation.

Ms. Howard said the application process takes approximately 3 weeks. Linda Page added it could be up to 7 weeks depending on where we are in the session. Guidance counselors, parents and community agencies, deans, social workers all can recommend and/or encourage students to attend the Academy,

A committee member asked if there was any work toward integrating the program into the two high schools. Dorland Norris responded that this version meets the needs of the kids. Ondine Gross said she is so grateful for this program. She said some kids just don't like the "big school" environment. This provides an alternative where students can get their needs met in a smaller setting. Deb Foertsch said she was "blown away" by the atmosphere around the kid and the flexibility of the teachers to meet the students' needs. Teachers wrap around these kids. A committee member said the last thing the District should do is try to incorporate this into the traditional high schools. This is a 21st century model. There is always going to be a need for this school. The need will increase because those types of students are more and more prevalent. If we try to move students back the same reasons these students didn't succeed will still be there.

Board member Greg Novak said the Academy has some great things going on which should be exported back to the high schools. He said we need to take what works and figure out how we can make it work elsewhere. Teachers serve as advisors with every kid. That is absolutely important to have the connection between staff and students. The system also works because

the kids have to want to go there. Deb Foertsch said there are some strengths that could be duplicated. The success is that the program is unique. Judy Wiegand said that both high schools are restructuring and we actually have some of these. There has been discussion about an advisory period being built into the day. Dorland Norris said it is important the Academy not become a site for discipline.

The next EEE meeting was scheduled for Thursday, February 3, 2011 beginning at 4:00 p.m. in the Mellon Board Room.

Meeting adjourned: 5:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Gayle Griffin-Jordan
Recording Secretary