

Harrisburg School District

Act 141 Advisory Committee Meeting

November 9, 2023
5:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.

Minutes

In Attendance:

Committee Members: Dr. Sieta Achampong, Melanie Cook, Dr. Marisol Craig, Laura Harding, Beth Light, Michele Rolko, Dr. Andria Saia, Dr. Marcia Stokes, Dr. Lori Suski, Eric Turman, Tim Wendling

Staff: Adam Nornhold

- Dr. Suski welcomed everyone to the meeting and shared that Dr. Waters was out of town.
- Dr. Marisol Craig, Assistant Superintendent, provided a presentation on charter school enrollment, suspension, and attendance data. Below is an overview of the information shared and ***comments from the committee:***
 - John Harris has the highest enrollment in HVLA with the most students coming from 9th grade.
 - ***Dr. Saia asked about Cougar Academy and how many students were part-time virtual, as well as if address verification had been done. She shared that WSSD hired an investigator to verify cyber charter enrollments in their district.***
 - ***Laura Harding asked if climate surveys are conducted to investigate reasons for 9th grade enrollment being so high.***
 - Dr. Craig explained that enrollment in HVLA decreased by 258 students from the end of 2022-23 to the start of 2023-24, and Mr. Turman said that many students returned to John Harris after hearing of new leadership. Dr. Craig provided information on the status (location) of those who did not return to HVLA.
 - The charter school recapture target was 60 students in 2021-22 and 50 students every year thereafter (per the Recovery Plan).

- ***Michele Rolko asked if the District can be reimbursed for students who return from charter schools.***
 - ***Dr. Craig explained that the cyber charters invoice the District monthly and verification of enrollment occurs at that time.***
 - ***Dr. Suski asked Dr. Stokes to explain the per pupil calculation for charter school tuition.***
 - ***Melanie Cook recommended lobbying for charter school reform and stated that the public needs to know the costs. Dr. Suski shared that PSBA does lobby on behalf of school boards and that resolutions are passed to express dissatisfaction with the current funding formula.***
- Dr. Craig mentioned the program improvements that have been made to the District's cyber program such as the implementation of a new learning management system, alignment of curriculum, use of District assessments, onsite testing days, support positions added, student orientation, and onsite project days.
- Dr. Craig indicated that charter school enrollment continues to increase from 1,366 students in 2022-23 to 1,405 students in 2023-24.
 - ***Dr. Saia asked why enrollment changed so drastically at Ben Franklin from last year to this year.***
 - ***Laura Harding asked if students must audition to attend CASA.***
 - ***Beth Light asked about Special Education enrollment at charter schools. Dr. Craig confirmed that the District is understaffed in Special Education which may contribute to students exiting to charters.***
 - ***Dr. Saia asked if the District is providing swag.***
 - ***Laura Harding mentioned that some charters encourage students to participate in protests advocating for school choice.***
 - ***Dr. Saia reminded that course completion does not equate to passing.***
- Dr. Craig reviewed student attendance data and said that attendance is taken each period for Grades 6 – 12. Principals get daily attendance notices and Student Attendance Improvement Plans (SAIPs) are written.
 - ***Dr. Saia asked if attendance is tied to Positive Behavior Intervention & Support (PBIS).***
 - ***Dr. Craig said that teachers make daily calls, and every school has an attendance team.***
 - ***Michele Rolko indicated that attendance is a challenge at the high school level after Keystone Exams.***

- ***Dr. Suski said that the District was unsuccessful in finding anyone certified as a Home & School Visitor, so social workers do the majority of follow-up on truant students.***
 - ***Dr. Saia congratulated the team on the significant improvements in student attendance over the past few years.***
 - ***Dr. Craig said that the Office of Student Services has focused a lot on the withdrawal process and 10-day drops for students who did not show up for school at the start of the year, so the data is more accurate.***
 - ***Melanie Cook asked about incentives for attendance. Dr. Craig said that PBIS offers incentives for students with good attendance.***
 - ***Laura Harding suggested a teacher vs. student basketball game.***
 - ***Dr. Suski commented on the high number of absences at John Harris and said that it is indicative of a problem with student engagement.***
 - ***Dr. Saia said that money for career and technical education is needed as well as to address admissions criteria. Culinary Arts and Early Childhood are two programs that could be created in-house. She said that Mike Reed of Penn College of Technology wants to partner with school districts.***
- Dr. Craig reviewed suspension data and action taken to reduce students being excluded from school. The Byrnes Center in York will be doing conflict resolution programming, and Scott Mailen is holding weekly meetings for students transitioning from Hamilton back to John Harris and/or SciTech.
 - ***Melanie Cook said that we need to start earlier because some kids and parents do not care.***
- Having spent the full hour on the presentation/discussion, Dr. Suski said that the quarterly report on the Amended Recovery Plan was emailed to all committee members, and they could contact her with questions.
- The next meeting will be held on Thursday, December 14, 2023 at 5:00 p.m. The focus of the meeting will be academic initiatives.
- The meeting adjourned at 6:10 p.m.