

Act 141 Advisory Committee

Meeting Minutes

March 9, 2023

5:00 p.m.

In Attendance:

Committee Members: Melanie Cook, Doug Thompson Leader, Michele Rolko, Dr. Sieta Achampong, Dr. Tamara Willis, Tim Wendling, Dr. Andria Saia, Eugene Spells, Dr. Marisol Craig, Eric Turman, Dr. Lori Suski

Director of IT: Adam Nornhold

Dr. Suski shared that Dr. Waters was at a conference in Chicago and unable to be in attendance.

Dr. Suski reviewed the minutes from the January 12th meeting and the agenda for tonight's meeting.

Dr. Suski shared that two questions were received in advance of the meeting from a committee member relative to the Mass Insight Diagnostic report:

1. *Were there any quick wins that the District can address? Is so, what were they?*

Mr. Turman shared that one of the criticisms in the Mass Insight report was that decisions tend to be "top-down." Therefore, the administration has been more intentional in its collaboration by including teachers and principals in decision-making. An example shared was the recent RFP for custodial services. Input was sought from stakeholders before a decision was made.

Mr. Turman provided another example of a strategy meeting held earlier today that involved central office leaders, principals, instructional coaches, community and School Board representatives visiting classrooms to look at instructional practices and developing a plan for personalized learning.

How will you prioritize the abundance of data provided by MI to ensure both short and long-term improvement?

Mr. Turman said that the CFO and COO are visiting schools to determine priorities for facilities and spending. Mr. Turman said that following the Recovery Plan is a priority and the Comprehensive Planning process is moving along. A main priority will be a focus on having all students reading on grade level by Grade 3 as well as growth paired with attainment. Another priority is retention and recruitment of staff.

Dr. Suski asked if the committee had any additional "noticings" or "wonderings" as a result of having time to process the Mass Insight Diagnostic report. The committee members shared the following comments/suggestions:

- Dr. Saia noted that she viewed the report positively and commented that it is nice that people are seeing the changes in the District. She suggested that the District focus on 1 – 2 goals or it becomes too overwhelming for people.
- Ms. Rolko shared that the level of academic growth in most buildings stood out, but that the District (and she as HEA president) are constantly “putting out fires.”
- Ms. Cook noted that if the District’s focus is going to be early childhood, careful messaging to the community must be developed to ensure that those with students in Grades 3 – 12 don’t feel left out.
- Dr. Craig said that the focus should be on literacy. Dr. Achampong agreed that the District once had a focus on reading. Mr. Spells said that Math scores tend to be lower, so we also need to address Math and Literacy K-3, then focus on cross-curricular work in the upper grades, as well as instructional leadership and professional development.
- Dr. Willis said that it appears from the data that the front-line folks understand the plan. Mr. Turman shared that the District is hiring a Director of Schools who will be responsible to oversee principals.
- Mr. Spells said the focus should be academic proficiency K-12 and determining “what that looks like” at each grade level.
- Ms. Cook said that it is important that we are specific about the level at which students are performing because we have many students performing well below grade level. Dr. Suski said that it is the District’s responsibility to develop a plan for each student who is not on grade level to figure out what supports are necessary to bridge that gap.
- Dr. Saia warned that nothing happens when the teams are overwhelmed.
- Ms. Cook asked how we arrive at directed goals and determinations (guide posts).
- Dr. Craig said that we really need to look Pre-K through 12 and need to unpack it for the teachers. Dr. Craig said that Acadience reports are color-coded so parents can see where their child is performing relative to grade level standards. She said that interventions and progress monitoring need to occur and asked if we are having data meetings. Dr. Suski said that Dr. Craig is really talking about developing systems and structures for the District.
- Ms. Cook asked what the role of the Reading Specialist is.
- Ms. Rolko asked questions about what is working in other districts that could be brought in so as not to reinvent the wheel.
- Mr. Spells said that culture and climate needs must be addressed. We have curriculum in place, although some people say we do not have it.
- Dr. Achampong reminded that we should not “throw the baby out with the bath water” and that not everything is bad. Mr. Spells noted that consistency is the key and helping people to understand the “why.” Ms. Rolko said that how the building is led is also important.
- Dr. Willis agreed that culture and climate is important, but consistent leadership and setting norms is important to sustaining the culture. To avoid people “waiting it out” for the next change, people need to see consistency.
- Ms. Cook said the Code of Conduct means nothing if there is no plan for how to address the students who do not follow it.
- Dr. Saia referenced an upcoming series at CAIU called “Belonging with Dignity” and said that we cannot “discipline our way out of situations.” Dr. Saia offered CAIU to fund Harrisburg SD’s participation in this series.

- Mr. Spells said that we need to make decisions based on data and he uses SWIS to look at each student and determine how to support them. Only 5 – 8% of students consistently disrupt and are removed from the school setting. The District has PBIS, mentoring, check in/out, and relationship building as strategies to address student misconduct. Parent meetings need to occur.
- Mr. Thompson Leader asked about supports for students.
- Dr. Craig asked if teams are meeting regularly to review student progress. Teachers lose their power if they constantly send kids to the office. Perhaps the administration needs to provide guidance as to how those student meetings are structured (i.e., agenda).
- Mr. Spells shared how he builds rosters by involving teachers to ensure heterogeneity, equity, etc....
- Ms. Cook said that we cannot ignore misbehavior. Ms. Cook also pointed to the feedback on page 61 of the Mass Insight report where teachers are complaining that they don't have supplies. Dr. Suski shared an example in which a particular department claimed they have no money, yet a significant amount of ESSER dollars was allocated to that department and remains unspent to date. Dr. Suski said that it appears that some staff are so used to the dysfunction of the past that they want to perpetuate the narrative that "we don't have the money" or "we can't do that." Dr. Achampong referenced that our budget process is much different now than in the past.
- Mr. Wendling commented that he has been at the table for these meetings for 10 years now, and it is the same conversation. He mentioned the need to build relationships.
- Mr. Turman said that the District is working with Dr. Barbara Moore-Williams to build understanding of different cultures. Mr. Turman also stated that we need to focus on what our kids can do well instead of on what they do wrong.
- Ms. Cook said it is also about adult accountability.

Having concluded the discussion on the report, the meeting adjourned at 6:12 p.m.

The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, April 13, 2023, at 5:00 p.m. in the Lincoln Administration Building Board Room.