

Harrisburg School District

Act 141 Advisory Committee Meeting

December 14, 2023  
5:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.

Minutes

***In Attendance:***

***Committee Members:*** Dr. Sieta Achampong, Melanie Cook, Laura Harding, Michele Rolko, Dr. Andria Saia, Eugene Spells, Dr. Marcia Stokes, Dr. Lori Suski, Jim Thompson, Doug Thompson Leader, Eric Turman, Dr. Travis Waters

***Staff:*** Adam Nornhold, Portia Slaughter

***Community:*** Christine Anderson (via Zoom), True Thompson Leader

- Dr. Waters welcomed everyone to the meeting.
- Dr. Suski shared that Tim Wendling has resigned from CASA and will no longer be representing the charter school on the Act 141 Advisory Committee. Dr. Saia will need to appoint a replacement from a charter school. Dr. Waters asked for feedback from the committee members as to a recommended replacement. Laura Harding and Melanie Cook suggested that someone from Sylvan Heights Science Charter School be appointed since the school is well-established and they are familiar with Harrisburg School District. The committee agreed with the recommendation.
- Dr. Waters introduced Portia Slaughter, Assistant to the Superintendent, who presented on the academic chapter of the Recovery Plan (see attached presentation). The following questions/comments were posed by the committee in response to the data presented:
  - Ms. Slaughter presented District demographics that reflected only .1% Gifted students. She explained the universal screening process and its limitations. ***Dr. Saia discussed the racial bias that is inherent in the tests for Gifted and shared that when in Chester-Upland SD she relied on other criteria, including parent input. Mr. Thompson Leader shared that the Gifted pull-out program takes students out of core instruction and there should be a GIEP to make each student's program individualized.***

- Ms. Slaughter shared Reading/ELA performance data for 2019, 2022 and 2023 (There was no PSSA in 2020 due to COVID. 2021 data was not listed due to low participation during COVID). **Mr. Thompson said he heard a 15-20% learning loss. Ms. Cook reminded everyone that HBGSD students were out an additional year than others.**
- Ms. Slaughter explained the Beginning of the Year, Middle of the Year, and End of Year STAR data and showed the correlation between PSSA Proficient/Advanced percentages and STAR data. **Ms. Cook asked if the District drilled down to the teacher level when looking at data. Testing fatigue was mentioned since the STAR data was collected after PSSAs were administered.**
- **Mr. Thompson commented that parents had the opportunity to retain their children due to COVID and many did not.** Ms. Slaughter said the research is compelling to not retain. MTSS is better. **Ms. Harding asked about year-round school or if a hybrid approach was considered for those students who are behind to go year-round.** Ms. Slaughter explained the challenge of getting students to attend the extended learning opportunities.
- Ms. Slaughter reviewed the Math performance data for elementary, middle, and high school. **Several committee members expressed grave concern for the low test scores. Ms. Harding suggested a program at HACC that is offered online for students who have a fear of Math ~ Developing Confidence and Skills in Math. Dr. Suski said that many students at HACC must take remedial Math courses before beginning college level Math courses, and this issue is not limited just to HBGSD. Ms. Cook asked if Eureka Math was a good program.** Ms. Slaughter said that it is a good program for building conceptual understanding of mathematical concepts. **Dr. Suski mentioned the curriculum audit that has been proposed in the District. Ms. Slaughter referenced the expectations for instruction that have been put in place this year, along with the use of manipulatives when teaching Math.**
- Ms. Slaughter reviewed the 4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade Science PSSA and Biology Keystone Exam data. **Ms. Harding asked if Physics is offered at the high school. Mr. Turman said that students who cannot get certain courses are supplementing with dual enrollment courses and the District received a \$75,000 grant for dual enrollment in 2023-24.**
- Ms. Slaughter reviewed the District PVAAS (growth) data and explained the color coding (red, green, blue, and dark blue). Dark blue is where we want students to be. The District is growing students overall. Ms. Slaughter believes this is due to being intentional regarding how things are done. There is a focus on continuous improvement, personalized learning, and instructional leadership. Ms. Slaughter explained the first quarter focus on Tier 1 Instructional Support Model (ISM) and

learning walks that occurred in each school. 55.4% of teachers were using District-identified materials during instruction. ***Mr. Thompson asked what the other nearly 50% are using.*** Ms. Slaughter indicated teacher-selected materials and other free resources available online through “Teachers Pay Teachers” (which is not what we want). ***Mr. Turman said that schools that had red data all had significant leadership changes for 2023-24.***

- Ms. Slaughter shared that professional learning has been intentional and focused this year and provided examples such as the Pathways to Proficient Reading course and Writing with Multi-Linguals. She said that the next steps need to be appropriate use of prescribed materials and core instruction, support for lesson planning and transition of instructional time.
- Ms. Harding indicated that she would like to set up a meeting with Dr. Suski and Dr. Waters to share some thoughts about the Math crisis in the District.
- Dr. Waters thanked Ms. Slaughter for the presentation and indicated that at the January 11, 2024 meeting of the committee there would be discussion of the new academic goals.
- The meeting adjourned at 6:08 p.m.