

Act 141 Advisory Committee

Meeting Minutes

April 13, 2023

5:00 p.m.

**In Attendance:**

*Committee Members:* Jim Thompson, Doug Thompson Leader, Beth Light, Tim Wendling, Christine Anderson (Zoom), Eugene Spells, Dr. Marisol Craig, Eric Turman, Dr. Travis Waters, and Dr. Lori Suski,

*Director of IT:* Adam Nornhold

- Dr. Waters shared the revised academic goals for the Scranton Area School District's Recovery Plan with the committee. Scranton recently exited financial recovery and is now in a monitoring status. Dr. Waters shared that he and Dr. Suski are interested in revising the Harrisburg School District's academic goals because the plan was written prior to and during the COVID-19 pandemic when there was no human capital crisis like the District is currently experiencing. School climate concerns have also taken precedence since the return to in-person learning.
- Dr. Waters also shared York City School District's amended academic goals. They, too, recently exited financial recovery and are in monitoring status. York has only four (4) goals which are broad and focus more on putting supports, structures, and procedures in place rather than on achieving a certain percentage of proficiency on PSSA/Keystone Exams. Dr. Suski explained why the academic goals were amended in Scranton and York and that their plans were financial first before academics.
- Mr. Thompson commented that Harrisburg SD has had academic goals since 2012 that have not changed much, and that turnover in administration and lack of a consistent curriculum have not helped the District to make progress. Mr. Thompson said that the state has had ten years and HBGSD was deemed moderately financially distressed. Mr. Thompson asked where this leaves our students.
- Dr. Suski said that a trauma-attuned model is necessary and that we must believe our kids can learn. Dr. Waters asked why kids are not achieving. We need high quality teachers and administrators. Education is a partnership between community and school. Social-emotional learning is important, but what will we do to correct the problem for kids being behind?

- Dr. Craig said that kids and parents don't see the value in education. We need to educate the parents. Mr. Thompson Leader said the biggest struggle is getting parents engaged in the learning process. Parents often do not attend disciplinary meetings for their kids.
- Mr. Spells commented on the reinstatement of middle school athletics as a way to engage parents. At Camp Curtin they reinstated student council. A state representative is coming to visit. Kids are visiting SciTech, DCTS, and John Harris. They are looking at conversations/exposure to careers. Mr. Spells feels that we have a lot of things in place already but it's the systemic implementation K-12.
- Mr. Thompson Leader said that it is not just about careers, but exposure to different activities. He said that students are barely doing coding at MMSA; applications – focusing too much is worrisome – it's more about exposure and engagement. Great to see middle school sports back (volleyball). Theater is not just acting; there are tangential jobs people can do.
- Dr. Waters said that a decision must be made about how to amend the Recovery Plan and asked if the committee was interested in doing a combination of York and Scranton as models for revised academic goals. Dr. Waters advocated for a combination focused on growth and getting students reading on grade level by third grade.
- Dr. Craig indicated that safety nets must be in place as well as a triage for kids moving in. She said that the District should be strategic in selecting kids for participation in these programs.
- Dr. Waters said a strong Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) is needed. Dr. Craig said that data is collected on students by the authority to retain kids in grade level is needed.
- Mr. Thompson Leader commented that trauma is multi-generational and that programs and resources are available, but people don't trust. Dr. Craig said that schools should be open to the community as a hub.
- Mr. Wendling said that the public doesn't trust schools in general. It is important to continuously promote positive news.
- Mr. Spells said kids in Harrisburg are going to do what you expect them to do. It's all about expectation. We need to be clear and communicate consistently with the community about the expectation so that parents come around. Mr. Spells stated that he loves Camp Curtin and has

seen growth because of what has been implemented. Students look forward to the consistency of seeing their principal, notice what he is wearing, and ask questions about life.

- Mr. Thompson returned the discussion back to Ready to EnRoll and the data-driven reason for this subcommittee of Communities Practicing Resiliency (CPR). 80% of kids entering kindergarten were below grade level. CPR went back to partner and find resources. Mr. Thompson commented that he did not see a data-driven process in the amended goals that Dr. Waters shared from the two other school districts. Mr. Thompson reminded the committee that the requirement is that we have the ability to update the measures, but it can't just be checking the box.
- Dr. Waters said that we must address early childhood here.
- Mr. Thompson Leader said that there are federal programs that work with kids from birth to age 5. His wife works for a community health organization that helps parents. The kids get books. It is a nurse/family partnership. We need to work with birth through age 2. Dr. Craig said that Hamilton Health has a program.
- Mr. Spells said that students coming from poverty don't have the same resources. What does that look like for us to establish that foundation? Dr. Waters said that we cannot generalize.
- Ms. Light asked how do we fill the gap?
- Mr. Spells said that the District should not take on additional responsibilities that are not ours because we have outside agencies who can do this outreach. Dr. Suski said that the community has been pushing back about bringing in outside groups to support families.
- Mr. Turman said that the focus should be on systems because we only have a year and a half left until the decision will be made whether the District can exit receivership. Dr. Waters agreed that there should be an internal goal of all students reading on grade level by third grade. Mr. Thompson Leader recommended that be addressed in the comprehensive plan. Dr. Suski agreed that and the parent engagement piece should be addressed in the comprehensive plan.
- Mr. Thompson Leader commented that there is still state oversight for five (5) years after receivership. Dr. Waters said that if we are going to rewrite goals, we should add the Grade 3

Reading component. Mr. Thompson said that we did some smart, data-driven things by bringing Grade 5 back to the elementary level. We cannot allow students to exit elementary school without being able to read. Dr. Craig is doing research on middle school schedules and the possibility of bringing Reading and ELA classes for those who need it. Dr. Waters mentioned the need for flexible grouping. Ms. Light said that MTSS must be implemented with fidelity with data meetings and students accelerating at an appropriate pace. Dr. Waters said quality interventions are necessary.

- Dr. Waters thanked the committee for their input and said that he believes that he and Dr. Suski now have direction. The meeting adjourned at 6:12 p.m.
- The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, May 11, 2023, at 5:00 p.m. in the Lincoln Administration Building Board Room.