

Harrisburg School District

Act 141 Advisory Committee Meeting

February 8, 2024

Minutes

In Attendance:

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

Staff: Adam Nornhold

Community: Jane Thompson

- Dr. Waters welcomed everyone and shared the agenda for the meeting discussion.
- Dr. Waters followed up on Goal #2 feedback received since the last meeting via the Google doc. The committee offered the following comments/suggestions relative to early childhood:
 - *Whatever is done regarding Pre-K classrooms must be sustainable.*
 - *Mr. Turman said he wants to maintain the four classrooms that have been established using Pre-K Counts funding. There are two rooms at Downey and two rooms at Ben Franklin currently.*
 - *Laura Harding asked if Pre-K is a priority across buildings. Melanie Cook said that we must ensure that the state pays for it. Dr. Saia mentioned possible space at the Jewish Community Center and Dixon University Center. Mechanicsburg Area SD has an early childhood center. There is a community development grant available now. Mr. Turman said he is talking with Head Start now about a potential partnership. Dr. Saia said that the CAIU "is in."*
 - *Dr. Waters opened a discussion on the second early childhood strategy that focuses on early literacy. Dr. Saia mentioned literacy groups in Harrisburg libraries. Laura Harding suggested posting videos of recorded sessions. Melanie Cook suggested a library of videos/materials that would generate interest among parents and be easy to navigate. A pilot could be created for non-educators to assess ease of use/access. Michele Rolko said that parents may need help with*

computer skills, and Susan Roth affirmed that during the Covid-19 shutdown, parents needed assistance with turning on the iPads at Sylvan. Dr. Waters indicated that the use of acronyms is also a barrier with parents. Melanie Cook suggested a glossary of terms. Laura Harding suggested a partnership with public libraries for computer access. Melanie Cook said we need to “eat the apple one bite at a time but have to do something.” If kids are not on grade level, an illusion is created with parents. Dr. Suski asked Mr. Turman about the role of the Family Engagement Specialists in helping parents. Mr. Turman said the District will be launching a new website in August 2024 which will have a Pre-K section. Melanie Cook recommended IT connections to the community. Mr. Turman said that moving to the neighborhood school concept will help with parent engagement.

- *Dr. Waters clarified feedback on the next strategy addressing birth to age 2. Susan Roth feels we are missing a group of parents. Dr. Waters asked if Early Intervention should be at the table. Dr. Saia said that the state wants students integrated and not center-based. Jim Thompson advocated for comprehensive Pre-K across the city and said that we should not have a wait list. He asked who the convener was. Dr. Suski asked Dr. Craig to explain the role of Dr. Sabina Grant-Spencer (Director of Early Childhood). Dr. Craig shared a parent tab on the website that contains standards for early learning. Dr. Suski recommended that Ms. Keys (Public Relations Coordinator) blast out that information and the list of partners the District is engaging. Melanie Cook recommended linking the tabs to families/care givers and having multiple options. Dr. Waters shared that the District will be developing an early learning communications plan. Dr. Craig said the plan will outline expectations for community and external partners. Melanie Cook also recommended that a guidebook be developed for Family Engagement Specialists to approach parents so there is a standardized approach. Dr. Craig said that Head Start and Salvation Army are good partners. Dr. Saia recommended pairing this with K-5 registration marketing. Dr. Willis suggested using United Way’s data.*
- At 5:46 p.m., Dr. Waters directed everyone’s attention to Goal #1. He mentioned that the Office of Academics has obtained three quotes for a curriculum audit but is leaning toward CCIU because they have a dedicated team for this purpose. Melanie Cook asked what the scope of work would be. There was discussion about implementing the SAS curriculum by 12/31/24. Dr. Suski indicated that a curriculum cycle needs to be established for the District and this will be developed by whomever is contracted to conduct the curriculum audit.
- The meeting discussion concluded at 5:58 p.m. and will resume on March 14, 2024 at 5:00 p.m. with Tier 1 strategies.