

Harrisburg School District

Act 141 Advisory Committee Meeting

April 11, 2024
5:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.

Minutes

In Attendance:

Committee Members: Melanie Cook, Dr. Marisol Craig, Beth Light, 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

- Dr. Waters welcomed everyone to the meeting.
- Dr. Suski distributed copies of the minutes from the March 14th meeting which were previously emailed to all committee members.
- Beth Light commented that she is in a lot of buildings and that the work being done is noticeable. When she walks in Ben Franklin, she “doesn’t hear a sound.” Dr. Waters said that it takes time to see results and that the sense of urgency must continue. Dr. Saia said we must go “as fast we can, and as slow as we must.”
- Dr. Waters commented on the robust discussion that occurred last month and said that the group would continue its review of Goal #1 (strategies 5 – 8).
- **Goal #1** – *Establish comprehensive systems and processes to improve student achievement at all grade levels, including but not limited to using data-driven decision making, implementing standardized instructional practices across the District, using a standards-aligned curriculum, and providing safe and welcoming building climates that support and promote student learning.*
 - **Strategy 5 – Assessment Calendar Pre-K -12**
 - *Dr. Waters asked if we are using appropriate benchmarking tests. Dr. Willis commented on the minutes from last month and said that there was quality conversation of a solid plan for those strategies. She said that Susquehanna Township SD uses NWEA MAP (Measures of Academic Progress) which is a*

nationally normed test, but it needs to be re-normed after Covid-19. Mr. Thompson Leader asked why that is necessary if teachers are teaching the core standards. Dr. Saia indicated that nationally normed tests compare one (1) child to all children. She prefers criterion-referenced tests which compare a student's performance to their own mastery of core standards. Mr. Thompson Leader again stated that if teachers are using a standards-based curriculum, it should convey to PSSA, but it appears there is a disconnect. Ms. Cook said that the PSSA is protected so no one can see it; not even school administrators or teachers. Dr. Willis shared that there are released items that can be used to benchmark students' understanding of PSSA test items.

- *Dr. Suski shared concern that data is not moving when looking at the BOY to MOY to EOY assessments. Ms. Cook said that the 45-day plan should have been implemented sooner. Mr. Thompson Leader indicated that some teachers are on pace and need to be modeled. Mr. Turman mentioned that he went into every classroom (K through 5) for five minutes and saw the concerns with planning and preparation. He shared that next year grade levels/subject areas will be planning collaboratively across the District on the early release Wednesdays, particularly in Math and ELA. Dr. Saia recommended that instructional coaches bring in data to see what students are missing. Mr. Turman said that Dr. Slaughter will be directing the work of instructional coaches next year. They will meet daily, and she will deploy the coaches according to the needs. Mr. Turman also commented on the number of emergency-permitted teachers in the District but sees the "turning of the corner" with less loss of staff this year compared with the prior two years. The principals' lack of understanding of SGP and the correlation is also problematic. Mr. Thompson Leader asked about common assessments and asked if the District must use STAR. Mr. Turman said that we need common assessments to extract data, but it doesn't have to be STAR. Dr. Waters said that we can't overlook the teacher shortage which was intensive after Covid. Mr. Turman complimented Ms. Cook on her classroom management as a substitute teacher. Ms. Cook said that she received no support at all from building administration. Mr. Spells said that you must know the assessments and how to use the data. Principals need coached in that area. Mr. Thompson Leader asked if teachers were ever taught how to write curriculum.*

- **Strategy 6 – Use Academic Data to Drive Instruction**

- *Dr. Suski mentioned Data Wise and the training that was provided a few years ago in the District. Dr. Craig said that several of those trained to be trainers have left the District since then. Dr. Saia said that summer would*

be a great opportunity to hold a “boot camp” for teachers on how to use data to drive instruction.

- *Dr. Craig said that teachers need to understand eligible content. She mentioned GLEAM/ISM and discussed how we get students’ foundational skills. Dr. Waters said that struggling with data is a problem of practice. Dr. Saia said that teachers need to understand where to pick up the pieces and fill in the gaps. Harrisburg SD has resources for training. Dr. Waters said that it starts with the principals. They need a clear understanding of data. Ms. Cook asked a rhetorical question: “If principals don’t understand the data, then how should a 23-year-old coming out of college?” What is the expectation for teachers?*
- *Mr. Turman shared that teachers and principals are going to UnBoundEd this summer for a five (5) day training in either Denver, CO or Washington, DC on planning and preparation. Mr. Turman said that coaches sometimes take the principal’s instructional role, and we need to get the principals better trained in this area. Dr. Craig mentioned that targeted professional development is also offered to teachers by grade level.*
- *Dr. Willis cautioned that a major pitfall to school improvement is the desire to fix everything at once. She said that the team must be given permission to learn; to slow down and focus. Attention is pulled in too many directions. Routines need to be established and address things through it.*
- *Ms. Cook said that we can’t focus on Social Studies and Science when students cannot read. Many cannot read the Math questions. Dr. Willis suggested a framework to define the challenges to delivering quality instruction and documenting them, so they are funneled and prioritized. Dr. Suski said that the focus this school year has really been on establishing a climate/culture conducive to learning in all buildings. Ms. Cook noted improvement in that area. Mr. Thompson Leader mentioned a long-term substitute at Melrose who was doing a great job. Dr. Suski said that lesson planning and execution will reduce behavioral issues and noted that the Madeline Hunter method of planning in most teacher preparation programs years ago may not even be used anymore. Mr. Turman said that the District needs to move away from digital programs and develop engaging curricula.*
- *Ms. Cook complimented the Ben Franklin administrators for knowing their students. She asked if the CCIU will involve HBGSD teachers in the curriculum audit. Ms. Light said that she taught special education and not all teachers were always included in curriculum writing. Ms. Cook said that Chester County has diversity and wealth and that cultural connections are*

important for curriculum. Dr. Waters reminded the group that the curriculum audit phase 1 is soon underway and will be completed by June 30, 2024. Dr. Saia reinforced all the positive things happening in HBGSD.

- Dr. Waters commented that the remaining two strategies under Goal #1 – following the MTSS process with fidelity and the use of PBIS - would be addressed in a subsequent meeting.
- Dr. Suski reminded the committee of the next meeting scheduled for Thursday, May 9, 2024 at 5:00 p.m.
- The meeting adjourned at 6:04 p.m.