

Quality Assurance Committee  
Minutes  
September 10, 2007  
6 p.m.

**Attendance:** Chairwoman Thompson, Commissioners Brennan and White; Board staff L. Dunsmoor; Administration staff C. Holloway, G. Sullivan, J. Silvers, G. Van der Water, T. Cliby, S. Kaufmann.

Chairwoman Thompson convened the meeting at 6:02 p.m.

**Agenda items:**

**1. Attendance/Suspension Data**

Extensive report provided to committee members on Friday, Sept. 7. Chairwoman Thompson opened the floor to questions/discussion.

Commissioner White noted that when attendance drops below 95 percent, the graduation rate drops precipitously. What do schools do when individual student attendance drops below a certain point? Ms. Holloway explained later in the meeting that principals communicate with parents when they see a pattern of or extensive absence in students. Communication includes letters and phone calls.

Commissioners also discussed the data itself. Consensus was reached that:

Having the data broken out by race and gender, as required by NYS, is moot because commissioners and administration are interested in how all students are doing, not in comparing them by race/gender. However, the data can be used to identify which groups are struggling/achieving the most and how to focus various resources. The race/gender differences are statistically insignificant regardless. It may be more instructive to disaggregate the data by socio-economics, and administration is working on that re: Chancery.

Administration was also asked whether classroom teachers are using Chancery correctly. Ms. Holloway said the data is as correct as it can be and that principals are working with staff to ensure daily attendance is completed. Errors in the 2006-07 data have been corrected.

Some schools have much higher attendance rates than others; the differences must be attributable to more than geography. How is knowledge regarding increasing attendance transferred from school to school? Ms. Holloway said principals' meetings are used to discuss best practices. The issue is also about relationships -- if parents believe teachers and principals notice when their child is absent and care, they may make a greater effort to be sure child attends. *Commissioners asked how principals are held accountable.* Chairwoman Thompson commented that the differences in attendance rates in various schools is about more than geography.

**Action:**

J. Silvers will provide three-year attendance data by grade, gender and ethnicity for December 10 QA meeting. Will also break down "other" category to include information on Native American, Pacific Islander, etc. students. (Data not available until the end of November.)

C. Holloway will report on teacher usage of Chancery system at Dec. 10 QA meeting. (Providing time for staff to learn inputting system.)

## **2. Suspension Report**

Chairwoman Thompson asked what supports are put into place for suspended students. Ms. Holloway said she believes students receive two hours a day of instruction but will confirm information.

Commissioner White commented that some of the behaviors that result in suspensions may be caused at or by the school.

Dr. Silvers said the information will be disaggregated in November when the Violent and Disruptive Incident Report (VADIR) is due.

Commissioner White commented that the suspension information is critical because to African American students, it represents the justice system.

Chairwoman Thompson suggested that the suspension report be discussed again in November when the disaggregated information is available. Commissioners should submit questions to L. Dunsmoor on suspension information prior to the meeting.

Commissioner Thompson asked whether “suspendable behaviors” are sometimes not resulting in suspensions in order to keep the suspension rate low.

### **Action:**

J. Silvers to provide disaggregated information for November QA meeting.

L. Dunsmoor to remind Commissioners to submit questions regarding data provided so far.

## **3. Diagnostic Reading Assessment report**

Chairwoman Thompson said she is concerned that there is not 100 percent testing. Ms. Holloway said administrators are working with teachers and union to change the assessment paradigm; DRA results allow teachers to see students’ strengths and build on them. Teachers must administer the DRA three times for each student but are required to log the information only one time. Commissioners and administrators also discussed the effect of retention on the graduation rate in reference to students who could be three years below grade level in reading. Administrators said that Andrew MacGowan of Research, Evaluation and Testing has collected significant information on this issue and could present to QA.

## **4. Adjournment**

Motion by Commissioner White. Second by Commissioner Brennan. Adopted 3-0 at 7:55 p.m.

Next QA meeting: Monday, Oct. 15, 6 p.m.

**DRAFT: Not Approved by Chair**