

Minority Education Concerns Advisory Committee Meeting  
October 16, 2008

Minutes

Members Present

Ellsworth James  
Dan Loring  
James LaBelle (4:50)  
Atisa Logo (4:55)  
Lamin Jobarteh (5:20)

Others Present

Jeff Friedman, School Board President  
Crystal Kennedy, School Board Member  
Andie Stone. Attorney from JDO  
Rhonda Gardner, Assistant Superintendent of Instruction

The meeting was called to order at 4:46 without a quorum present.

Announcements

Mr. Loring asked Dr. James, as chair of the committee, to encourage attendance and stress the importance of getting quorums.

Open Meetings Law

Andie Stone presented information on the Open Meetings law and answered questions from members of the committee. She provided copies of the actual act and clarified the issue of serial meetings and the result of violations.

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order when a quorum was established at 4:55 with four of seven members present.

Approval of Agenda

Mr. Loring moved  
Ms. Logo seconded  
Passed unanimously

Approval of Minutes

Mr. Loring moved  
Ms. Logo seconded  
Passed unanimously

## Old Business

Purpose of Committee – Jeff Friedman

Mr. Friedman led the discussion of School Board Policy 173.3 that addresses the MECAC. There is concern among some board members that the committee has lost its purpose. It is time to reaffirm the purpose. Mr. Friedman wanted to include the committee in the discussion.

Mr. Loring noted that the committee has been wrestling with the guidelines for several years. He feels the committee needs guidance from the school board. He said he hopes that the purpose of the committee isn't restricted to disallow MECAC to make recommendations to the board. He asked if MECAC is a voice for all or only for minorities.

Mr. Friedman said he wants committee member ideas. He personally believes there are more factors to diversity than just race; such as disability, immigrant status, etc.

Mr. Loring believes lower socioeconomic status is key. He suggested standing reports from the district to MECAC (Diversity Report, Profile of Performance, achievement gap, etc.)

Mr. Friedman asked if the group wanted things permanently in by-laws, or new topics each year.

Ms. Logo asked what the board's thoughts were.

Mr. Friedman said they are at the beginning stages of review in policy.

Ms. Kennedy discussed the role committee members play as a conduit for individual community members' comfort level with such an advocacy or navigator role.

Mr. LaBelle discussed having a by-law subcommittee. He has a strong desire to continue process and requested input from the Board. He wants committee to have a more proactive role.

Ms. Kennedy said she has always wanted the committee to come forward with recommendations on improving student achievement based on their research. She thinks the committee needs to decide who they are and who they want to represent.

Mr. Jobarteh agreed that the committee needs to fine-tune their mission statement.

Ms. Kennedy expressed concern with the circular nature of discussion in terms of who is waiting for whom to define it.

Mr. Loring stated that for the committee to thrive, it needs a small budget for subscriptions, training, conference, etc., for continuing education. It would also provide confidence for members who may one day want to run for schools board. He then thanked the board members for coming to recent meetings.

#### Committee Strategy Mission Statement / Standing Committee

Dr. James advised the group that they need to come together on strategy. They discussed the possibility of having a work session for strategic planning. After much discussion, the group decided to have two retreat/work sessions:

November 1, 12:00-4:00 at 1231 Gambell, Suite 200

November 8, 12:00-4:00 at 1231 Gambell, Suite 200

#### New Business

##### Elections

By unanimous consent, Dr. James was elected chair and Mr. LaBelle was elected vice chair.

#### School Feedback

##### Mr. Loring

Bartlett – concerns with mandatory English 11 class and concerns that struggling students do not get the strongest teachers

West – praise for strong graduation rate improvement under Principal Rick Stone

Dr. James met with Principal Stone and Mr. Blake at West. He had high praise for the meeting. He praised Mr. Stone's desire for community outreach. There are some concerns with lunch lines. The lines are referred to as the rich line and the poor line (free and reduced lunches). There are concerns about line cutting by some of the students who intimidate younger students. No one says anything. Dr. James shared these concerns with Mr. Stone and was pleased with his response and promise of action.

At this point in the meeting, Dr. James had to leave and he turned the gavel over to Mr. LaBelle.

#### School Feedback (continues)

Ms. Logo expressed the same concerns about the lunch lines at East. It takes too long especially in the free and reduced lunch line. She would like to see more

work done with students who are new to the district/school. Mr. Loring agreed this is a great idea and mentioned the in-migration of rural Alaska students.

Ms. Gardner shared with the members what ASD is doing to track and support these students.

Mr. Jobarteh stated that Catholic Social Services is supporting these students, as well.

Mr. LaBelle suggested that the group might look at a systemic process for new students - welcome, support, integration.

#### School Board Work Session Report

Mr. LaBelle noted the discussion at the board work session of flexibility in scheduling.

#### New Member Interviews

Mr. Loring asked that the interviews with the three current applicants be set up as soon as possible.

Meeting adjourned at 6:30