

Minority Education Concerns Advisory Committee Meeting
January 22, 2009

Minutes

Members Present

Ellsworth James
Dan Loring
Lori Pickett
Jonathan Larson
Polly Miller
James Beverly
Atisa Logo
Damito Owen (by phone)
Lamin Jobarteh (5:20)

Others Present

Susan Williams, Manager, 21st Century Program
Margo Bellamy, EEO Director
Rhonda Gardner, Assistant Superintendent of Instruction

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order when a quorum was established at 4:40.

Approval of Agenda

Mr. Loring moved to amend the agenda. Under New Business he added the school board appointment of the new member to replace Chris Tuck. Mr. Loring felt this was an opportunity for the MECAC to partner with the district in the interview process.

Ms. Gardner requested that the Diversity Report be added to the agenda.

Mr. Loring said that he would like the Orientation manual and the Website Update be added to the February agenda.

Mr. Loring moved that the agenda be approved as amended.

Ms. Pickett seconded the motion.

Agenda passed unanimously as amended.

Approval of Minutes

There was a correction to the minutes of the November 20, 2008 meeting. Mr. Jobarteh was the person nominated for 2nd Vice President.

Mr. Larson moved to approve the minutes as corrected.

Mr. Loring seconded

Minutes passed unanimously as corrected.

Announcements

Mr. Larson said he is glad to be a part of the committee. He has visited his children's classrooms and attended the Indian Ed functions at Spring Hill. He echoed Mr. Johnson's comments from the minutes about the difficulties for classroom teachers and the importance of parent involvement. This is his issue – how to help parents work with their children.

Ms. Gardner invited any of the members, especially the new members to meet with her to learn about the district.

Mr. Loring welcomed the new members and invited them to work with him and Ms. Gardner on the orientation manual.

Ms. Pickett announced the upcoming Healing Racism course.

Mr. Loring asked the group to think about bringing in an organization to help the committee with leadership training and create a dynamic plan they could follow. He would like to see the group go from good to great

Mr. Beverly said that the thing that could derail a team is when people work on their own issues rather than the mission of the team. Each member needs to know his/her part.

Ms. Owen noted that some of those very issues are on today's agenda.

Dr. James welcomed the new members and said that every time a new member is added, there are ten more hours of work the committee can do.

Ms. Gardner gave the committee members the latest contact information for everyone.

Mr. Loring noted the strength of district and school board support for MECAC.

Special Guest

Ms. Bellamy presented the ASD Diversity Report. She explained the difference between this report and the recruitment plan. Ms. Bellamy said that part of the issue in increasing diversity hire is the hiring pool. Ms. Gardner explained the importance of early legislative funding and early staffing to get the highly sought after diverse candidates. There was discussion about targeting recruitment efforts.

Ms. Owen asked if the district tracks diverse candidates and if we are seeing an increase. Ms. Bellamy said she would get back to the group with that information.

Mr. Loring asked about the change in the designation of ethnic groups. Ms. Bellamy explained to the members that it was Federal law that changed the ethnic codes.

There was discussion about how the contract language requiring the district to seek internal candidates first might be harming diverse candidates. Members suggested ways to increase diversity hire. Mr. Jobarteh proposed workshops to help explain the hiring process and work on resumes. Ms. Pickett

advocated a career ladder for teacher assistants, since there is already diversity in that group.

Mr. Larson asked Ms. Bellamy about the number of internal and external EEO Complaints her office received. She said the number has been going down.

Old Business

School feedback from committee members

Ms. Pickett said parents are asking why it takes so long for struggling students to be identified for special education services. Mr. Loring said the group should determine if taking a closer look at special education is something they want to include in their goals. Mr. Loring suggested that because the special education issue is huge, perhaps a subcommittee could be formed to look that particular issue and get back to the group.

Because the three standing committees (1) outreach, (2) curriculum, and (3) monitoring haven't been meeting, Ms. Owen suggested the group decide on a couple of committees, perhaps (1) goals, and (2) special education to begin meeting before the February MECAC meeting.

New Business

School District Insurance

Dr. James stated that the district is not responsible for accidents that occur during the academic day. There is insurance for parents to purchase if they don't have other coverage, but many people are not aware of it. Ms. Gardner said the district is responding to his concerns and working more aggressively to get the information out to parents.

Dr. James suggested that folks from Risk Management come to a meeting to speak about the issue and the availability of insurance coverage through other agencies. The question was asked about the needs of non-English speaking students. Ms. Bellamy said there are interpreters available through her office to help these parents.

Pre-K - 12 Graduation Plan

Ms. Gardner requested input on the plan. Ms. Owen volunteered to organize a sub-committee meeting on the plan. Mr. Jobarteh, Mr. Beverly, and Mr. Larson all expressed interest on serving on this sub-committee. Ms. Gardner will notify the committee when the school board work session on this topic is scheduled.

Public Comment

Ms. Haas was asked to put together a list of upcoming board meetings so that committee members can let Dr. James know of their availability. Ms. Owen requested a template of what members would be expected to share with the

Board when they attend the meeting. Dr. James and Ms. Gardner will work on a template.

Meeting adjourned at 6:40.