

# Minority Student Achievement Oversight Committee Meeting Notes

February 8, 2023

## Members in Attendance:

K. Amenabar	M. Dickey	S. Mascoll	D. Quan	K. White
S. Ashok	C. Farrish	S. McKinney	N. Samaniego	
G. Becerra	L. Henry	L. Mondragon	P. Simpkins	
E. Bonhomme	A. Janan	E. Osborne	T. Temple	
Q. Craig	V. Long	R. Pérez	M. Vereb	

19 members were present. Quorum was met.

## Other Attendees:

T. Hewan K. Keys-Gamarra N. King M. Mason S. Presidio

## 6:30 pm Welcome and Updates:

Cheronda Farrish welcomed the group. Kenny reviewed meeting procedures including using table tents to request being recognized to speak and for guests to sit in the seats around the room by the windows.

Strategic Plan development – George Becerra shared that at the last meeting of the core planning team, “Equity centered” has been removed from the planning process documents. He expressed concern then and out our meeting about what that could mean for the Equity Policy and the charge of MSAOC. The consultant stated that the word was controversial and that equal outcomes has been questioned. Since there is a small period of time to express the MSAOC’s concerns before the next Strategic Plan meeting, the executive committee proposes to write a letter stating our thoughts and concerns on removing the word equity. Dr. King shared that she had been told removing “Equity” was an error which was going to be corrected. Dr. Presidio shared that if a letter is sent it would be beneficial to advocate for the commitment to the work and to clearly articulate the MSAOC’s hopes and expectations for students. George Becerra motioned for the committee to write a letter stating MSAOC’s objection to the removal of equity focus and the MSAOC’s expectations moving forward. It was seconded by Emmanuel Bonhomme. The vote was passed unanimously. The letter will be sent to the School Board no later than Feb 16<sup>th</sup>. It will be included in the meeting minutes sent to the full committee.

**6:30 pm Member Highlight:** Tabitha Temple, representative from the NAACP, shared information with the group. The NAACP is working on several things within the education subcommittee including manifesting an equity policy that centers students of color and advocating for a comprehensive plan to have teachers who look like our students. They are very concerned about some of the state education legislation including HB 1461 and the impact on our students.

## 6:55 pm Presentation from the Chief Academic Officer (CAO)

Dr. Presidio was asked to speak on the topics listed below:

### Equity in the work of the CAO

Dr. Presidio oriented the committee to each of the departments in the CAO and how equity factors into their work by making sure what happens in the classrooms is culturally responsive, that the curriculum represents the community and that classes are welcoming environments. He acknowledged that there is a lot of work to do but the roughly 2,000 staff members in the 3 departments of the CEO are doing quite a bit to further equity in the division. Some examples included the Department of Student Services (DSS) work to reduce discipline disproportionality; the Instructional Services Department (ISD) providing educational programs for everyone from

expectant mothers to preschoolers, to adults; and the Department of School Improvement & Support providing resources and coaching directly to schools to improve student outcomes.

### Collaboration with the CEO

Collaboration is embedded in the Chief Academic & Chief Equity Offices. There are regular meetings between the offices, teams, and leaders as well as embedded staff from both offices in team structures. Some of the collaborative initiatives include:

- Equity Policy Development
- Equity Lead Professional Learning
- Neurodiversity Project Team
- Reducing Discipline Disproportionality
- School Improvement Planning & Support
- Equitable Access to Literacy

### Equitable Access to Literacy (EAL)

Tara Hewan, Special Project Administrator for EAL presented about the EAL plan. It is the most substantial change in decades and is transforming assessment and curriculum processes. The EAL Plan provides a justice-centered approach to teaching and learning that will guide and serve continued literacy improvement efforts across our school division over the next five years. We believe it is essential to provide students with explicit and systematic evidence-based literacy instruction. This work started in 2021 with the school board commitment to change our approach to literacy. The instruction team, quickly began to ensure that Pre-K 2 students had access to cumulative, explicit, daily phonological awareness and phonics instruction and began critical professional development for our literacy leaders, school administrators and leadership team to begin building understanding of this change. In the spring of 2022, the VA literacy Act was passed which aligns and supports our work. This school year, progress has continued, deepening the work at K-2 and expanding in grades 3-6. We have continued to prioritize professional development. With 98% of our elementary literacy leaders on track to complete the comprehensive LETTRS training and 98% of all schools having at least one Orton-Gillingham trained teacher. As we implement the supplemental materials purchased last year, we are preparing to engage in a basal resource adoption process to adopt elementary core materials. Ms. Hewan shared copies of the [Equitable Access to Literacy Plan](#).

### Grading

Dr. Presidio shared the efforts FCPS is exploring to increase consistency in grading practices. There is currently a no zero policy as it is highly impactful for students. The CAO is working on making more policy and practice changes to grading such as improving homework practices, being clear with students on the standard they will be graded on, making sure that students have as many opportunities as they need to demonstrate their learning, and grading them on what they are doing in the classroom and not on factors outside the school.

### Opportunities for Advanced Coursework

The Advanced Academics Program (AAP) focuses on talent development of student strengths. Our goal is to provide access to Advanced Academics Program (AAP) curriculum and experiences even if a student is in the full time Level IV program. All schools are expected to use the AAP curriculum with students, and we have made progress increasing from 27% of K-6 classes using AAP curriculum materials in 2019 to 77% in SY 2021-22. We are also expanding opportunities for Young Scholar part time experiences, summer, and after school programs. The expectation is that every school will implement the YS model and we have work to get there but we have also made great gains. The selection process for AAP is holistic and is based on more than just on test scores, however we have even worked on the norming process for test scores. We have shifted our practice in looking at local norms. Instead of looking at overall average test scores across the country, we look at each school. This is a better way to look for the students who need additional challenge and it has improved the proportionality of Black and Hispanic

students in AAP. We still have growth, but we are getting closer to being proportional to our student demographics.

#### Middle School Athletics

We provide after school opportunities free of charge currently in some pilot schools. It's funded through the Middle School after school activities program. For Fiscal Year 2024 we are seeking to expand the funding to have more sports included and ways to support students in participation.

#### Additional Questions/Comments for the CAO:

R. Perez – What's being done to increase EL's participation in AAP programs?

*AAP and ESOL work closely to train the central selection committee. The AAP office has a successful partnership with ESOL. All training for AAP is open to other staff and ESOL staff have been partnering in that. We asked for help from the consultant who worked on the AAP recommendations and still have work to do.*

E. Osborne – There is an onslaught of technology in our schools. How much time is being given to how we embrace the technology or strive ahead regardless? Cafeterias are quiet because kids are on their phones. We're talking about creating critical thinkers, but the apps are making critical decisions for kids every day. The other concern is AI like chat GPT - Are we considering the implications of technology?

*We approach instructional technology as a tool and how we want it used when it can help the learning objective. IE computer software which can help students get the content. This is a challenge in all professions. How can we embrace what can be beneficial? We have a team working on this issue. We don't want to say no to new technology, but we have to think about how we instruct and what we want kids to learn. We do a lot of work around digital literacy and tips for parents at home. There are things that help but it's an issue for parents and schools.*

L. Henry – How are you planning to engage families in mutual ways in the EAL Plan? How do we raise awareness and lean on their knowledge and experience?

*The Family and School Partnerships office is working with the EAL plan to ensure 2-way communication. It is a goal focus of the plan and intentionally built into the infrastructure of the plan. We are working on collaborative interactive opportunities for schools and families.*

Do you have data on AAP participation within subgroups? Is proportional representation the only goal?

*We do have that data and can provide it if you let us know specifically what you are looking for.*

T. Temple – I'm concerned about suspended or expelled students not being encouraged or participating in advanced coursework. Is there an effort to reach out to their parents directly?

*Schools with heightened behavioral needs do have Advanced Academics Resource Teachers and behavior should not preclude programming. There's a lot of work still to do with staff but we can expand to parents.*

How about the issue of catching up with academics when students are out with COVID?

*There are a lot of reasons a student might be out with illness. During the pandemic we put practices in place that if they were out more than 3 days teachers have to make contact and set up ways for kids to access resources online. We have to look at the sustainability of that practice. It would be useful for committee members to connect with the constituencies of families, students, or staff they represent and see how their experience has been.*

S. Ashok – When I was in elementary school general education and AAP was very separated from each other. There was a lot of prejudice around what kids can take in middle school. Is anyone

working on encouraging kids to take higher level courses? Is there screening for kids who arrive later?

*Yes, students can be screened for Level IV services at any time up until middle school. After that we have open enrolment in honors classes. We are trying to open local AAP Level IV programs in all elementary schools so that students have an option to get the same curriculum at their base school. We have it in all but 7 out of 140 elementary schools. When we have a local program, we can have combined classes and it gives more kids opportunities to access the curriculum, see peers doing challenging work, and engage students in other ways. We're making progress and there is still a long way to go.*

M. Vereb – What's the possibility of all middle schools all having Level IV centers?

*We can do the same approach at middle school that we're doing with elementary schools to have local programming.*

S. McKinney – I've been sitting in Strategic Planning meetings, and it's been triggering. I have a son in college now who had anxiety because of the way his science teacher treated him. He tried to talk to him, but the teacher was rude to him. I asked to meet with the science teacher, but I was told I had to meet with all the teachers and things went really bad afterwards. I hear about equity and that we are student centered but I think back to this teacher that everyone knew was a problem, but no one did anything. He told kids they didn't belong in honors. It's like telling kids they are not valued. What are we doing about teachers who are not helping our students?

*There is professional learning on cultural responsiveness and teachers are expected to create a welcoming environment in their classes and there is still work to do.*

#### **7:55 pm Subcommittee Assignments and Work Time:**

Subcommittees met in breakout rooms to continue to plan and begin to draft their sections of the annual report.

#### **8:15 pm Committee Business:**

- Approval of January Minutes – A motion was made by George Becerra, seconded by Edward Osborne to approve the minutes of last month's meeting. A vote was taken with all in favor. The minutes were approved.
- Annual Report Timeline – The annual report will be presented in mid-late June, date to be determined, therefore Kenny White requested that subcommittees submit their drafts to be compiled into the full report no later than the April 12<sup>th</sup> general meeting.
- Brainstorm Questions/Topics for Marty Smith  
Since the meeting was over time, Kenny asked that members submit question to Kim Amenabar by Friday, February 17<sup>th</sup>.

#### **8:30 pm Call for Motion to Adjourn:**

Margot Dickey proposed the motion to adjourn which was seconded. With all in favor, the meeting was adjourned.

**Next Meeting: March 8, 2023, 6:30pm**