

# Minority Student Achievement Oversight Committee Meeting Notes

March 8, 2023

## Members in Attendance:

K. Amenabar	Q. Craig	A. Janan	E. Osborne	T. Temple
S. Ashok	M. Dickey	M. Lavalley	E. Rodriguez	K. White
E. Bonhomme	C. Farrish	V. Long	R. Shaw	
H. Capps	L. Henson	S. McKinney	A. Smith	

18 members were present. Quorum was met.

## Other Attendees:

S. Gray K. Keys-Gamarra E. Kinne D. Lee T. Scott L. Smith B. Wright

## 6:30 pm Welcome:

Cheronda Farrish welcomed the group.

**6:40 pm Member Highlight:** Dr. Lynette Henry, member at large, created a presentation to share information about the College Partnership Programs including Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) which helps prepare students for college readiness and success in a global society, College Partnership Program (CPP) which supports students from traditionally underrepresented groups pursue higher education, and Early Identification Program (EIP) which provides first generation students with tools and support to be college ready. Dr. Henry's was unexpectedly unable to attend so it was presented by Eric Kinne, Educational Specialist, College Success Programs.

## 6:55 pm Presentation from the Chief Operating Officer (COO)

Marty Smith thanked MSAOC for the invitation and for the work that they do. He was asked to speak on the topics listed below:

1. Briefly review the departments and functions of the COO. Where does equity show up in the work of these departments and what is the impact?

*The Chief Operating Office is made up of the Departments of Facilities and Transportation Services (FTS), the Financial Services (FS), Human Resources (HR), and the Office of Research and Strategic Improvement (ORSI). The Department of Information Technology (IT) was part of the COO until recently, but it is now on its own under the Chief of IT.*

*In HR, equity is woven through the office. We want to make sure that our employees have access to health care no matter what job or part of the county they work in. Equity & Employee Relations is responsible for discrimination and harassment between employees and with staff who work with students. Title IX office looks at ensuring that we are respecting the rights of all students particularly female students.*

*In the Finance Dept. – if the budget is passed, we'll have a 3.5 billion budget. That has grown over time because of increases in enrollment. Enrollment of students with needs like English, IEPs or being on Free and Reduced Meals, the dollars follow the students so that is needs based funding. The staffing model may not provide all of the resources we want; however, it provides equitable staffing not by location, but by student need. Financial Services ensures that equity lens. Food and Nutrition Services ensures that we*

*have healthy meals across the system. Salad bars are back on line first at the Title I schools. The Finance office is responsible for managing our ESSER grant which is most important for supporting those students most impacted by the pandemic.*

*FTS has the Transportation office which ensures students have equitable access to services across the county. Design and construction make sure that we have high quality buildings for all students. For example, Justice will have a renovation that will bring the top-quality science and physics labs. We are currently looking at how we can provide Prayer and reflection spaces in all our schools.*

2. Enrollment is down by over 10,000 students and not projected to increase in the next few years, yet new schools and additional space at existing schools is proposed in the Capital Improvement Plan. Is there any plan to look systemwide at boundaries? How do you respond to parents who oppose boundary changes?

*Boundary work is provided by us to the board so they can make boundary adjustments. Our previous superintendent halted the work of boundary changes, but we are looking at it again. In the meantime, we have done smaller boundary changes, like McLean/Langley. FTS has a robust plan for community engagement when a boundary policy is being considered. All parents are encouraged to voice their opinions on these changes*

3. What initiatives are planned to improve hiring and retention of teachers and administrators of color in FCPS?

*We've been working with Dr Henry to recruit teachers from Barbados and contracted with a vendor called Participate Learning to bring teachers from around the world. Currently they have about 120 international teachers slated to work with us in FCPS to make sure that we have teachers who look like our students and families. HR has many partnerships with Historically Black Colleges and Universities and diversity outreach. For example, Virginia State University (VSU), Howard University, and Bowie State University. They are also part of a group called Diversity in Education as well as the NOVA Hispanic American Chamber of Commerce.*

4. MSAOC has recommended the appointment of outside counsel to undertake a comprehensive audit of FCPS hiring practices. Has this been considered and/or undertaken? What has been done to reduce bias and subjectivity in the process?

5. Where does FCPS stand with having School Resource Officers (SROs) in our schools? How are they trained to interact with students and families, particularly those of color?

*SROs take all FCPS training. Their role is to support and find out what is happening with students. SROs are not involved in discipline. We are aligning ourselves to the state template which is actually based on our current template. Updates to the Memorandum of Understanding for SROs are coming.*

Additional Questions/Comments for the CAO:

R. Shaw asked – Our teachers are about 3<sup>rd</sup> on the pecking order in the region for pay. How can we improve that piece so we can retain them?

*Dollars and time are two aspects of that. How do we help teachers find more time and take things off their plates. On average we gave a 6-7% raise last year and this year we are hoping for a 5% raise. That will be the largest 2-year increase in the 30 years I've been here. The state is also recommending a 7% increase. We have step process, but the way to really add compensation is the market scale adjustment. If we put the money into the market scale adjustment, we've moved the whole scale and outpace everyone else. If MSAOC could advocate for a market scale adjustment (the Cost-of-Living Adjustment) that's how we catch up and outpace – not by raising the steps.*

V. Long asked – Is there a decrease in funding for tutors?

*The Tutoring program comes from the ESSER grant which is in Instructional Services Department (ISD). The Finance Department worked with ISD to set the tutoring budget to be at scale so people would want to work with our students. Face to Face tutor funding comes from ESSER. Tutors.com came from a different set of state money for the pandemic. Once the funding is no longer provided, we are in discussions now about how we'll be able to keep access for those who need it. The COO is part of this in that we set the rate and do the hiring.*

E. Bonhomme – collective bargaining – being a person who works in Central Office with data, many things go over our head until it's a new item. Could you give us clarification on what this is about?

*This is another way we look at equity because it provides a way for employees to have a voice who may not have had one before. The School Board is looking at 3 groups, Licensed, Operational, and Administrators & Supervisors. Once collective bargaining is in place, each group would be able to negotiate with the system on wages, benefits, and at least one working condition (such as longer breaks, more PD, etc.). There are budgetary impacts on that. We work with the state where they tell us what to provide but with collective bargaining the group interest may have to compete with other interests. It provides a voice to those that haven't been heard. The only additional things that would be funded would be staff in HR to run the bargaining. We currently have a revenue stream that we get from the bargain and that structure doesn't go away. If there are contracts that come out of collective bargaining, then we have to look at the pot of money we have and some things may have to go away depending on the priorities.*

E. Osborne – Why are all the teacher leaving FCPS? 1,900 left the workforce during the school year. 15% of VA teachers said they are leaving public education by the end of this school year. It was 9% last year. In the context of those numbers where do we stand? The employment engagement survey didn't capture these ideas. There should be some way of teachers to advance that isn't necessarily leaving the classroom.

*We had 900 vacancies at the beginning of our hiring process this year. We can track who is leaving the system but not why. We have an exit interview process but it's hard to get responses from those who are leaving. We know that a lot of teachers were simply burned out. When we relaxed the evaluations on teachers during the pandemic, what we realized when they came back was that some of those teachers needed to go. The other thing that we know particularly with first year teachers is that people aren't staying in jobs the same way they did before. If I'm a teacher and I have all these issues on my plate such as feeling attacked on the national, state and community level, it's hard for us to know where people have gone. They're doing the gig economy. I know teachers who have gone who are doing things that bring them happiness. We're in a time when people are looking at work in different ways. We're working with colleges and universities. We're giving automatic contracts to high school students if they go to college and do well in their program, they have a guaranteed job here. The same with our Trades for Tomorrow program and we have apprentice programs to help them work in our system. We know it's an issue and we know we have to hire as many teachers as we can. Our principals know they have to hire immediately. We're hiring people into the system now and will place later and that is new. Dr. Reid is focused on having the best teachers in front of students. Her focus*

*is on keeping those great teachers in the building and giving them opportunities. We want advancement opportunities without having to leave teaching or leave the profession.*

Q. Craig – I'm curious about Food and Nutrition Services (FNS). I want to applaud the salad bars and the pork identified on the menu. Who are the stakeholders in the room when deciding the menu items?

*A lot of those voices are student voices. FNS staff brings new food options and taste testing set up for the students to try at the Superintendent Advisory Committee so that a primary voice in that is a student voice. Real Food for Kids has been active with us in creating healthy options. Falls Church high school is one of our 8 central kitchens, and they will have the renovation where they will have a scratch food kitchen and will be able to push out homemade food to the surrounding schools. We have to look at the nutrition standards that the FDA sets, and we have to have a dairy component. What we saw during the pandemic when all of our students had access to free meals was that our lunch participation went through the roof at over 170,000 meals a day. The biggest need for us is trying to find distributors who can meet the needs of a county as large and diverse as ours. There aren't providers who can provide 10 times more than any other demand. FNS is balancing finding distributors and being able to pay what it costs for fresh healthy food options that also take dietary and personal choices into consideration.*

H. Capps – Can you clarify market scale vs steps?

*Steps go up with each year of experience. With market scale increases you're adding money to each step but at a larger amount. The state has recommended a 5% increase. If we have people going up on the scale and the scale itself being increased that would be a significant difference.*

K. Amenabar – I hear that other counties, like Prince William, have more steps and so employees who reach our last step are leaving FCPS to go to places where they can continue to get increases. How are we to compete with that?

*PWCS adds a step every year, but they save the money in other places like class size which is capped much higher than ours. They can have up to 37 kids in an elementary class. So, there are tradeoffs.*

C Farrish – Teachers are having to provide so much more than content. How are we addressing mental health needs of students and staff?

*We just got funding for more mental health providers in schools. Also, for staff to get more access to mental health resources. When you look at the pandemic that has played a huge role in our mental health. The phone is a stress element that we have added to all our lives. We're looking into providing Tele-mental health services for students with parental permission. We are working to provide some of what is needed realizing that finding the money and people is hard to do.*

## **7:40 pm Subcommittee Assignments and Work Time:**

Subcommittees met in breakout rooms to continue to draft their sections of the annual report. Drafts need to be submitted to the Executive Committee at our next meeting on April 12<sup>th</sup> 2023.

## **8:20 pm Committee Business:**

- Approval of February Minutes – A motion was made by Qia Craig, seconded by Heather Murphy Capps to approve the minutes of last month's meeting. A vote was taken with all in favor. The minutes were approved.

- Heather Murphy Capps announced her new book: Indigo and Ida. There will be a launch party at Busboys and Poets.
- Annual Report Timeline – The annual report will be presented in mid-late June. The School Board will finalize the date soon. Drafts of each section of the report are due by the next meeting as well as a brief presentation by the subcommittee to support the Co-Chairs in presenting to the School Board. Revisions will be made, and the final report will be voted on at the May 10<sup>th</sup> meeting so that it can be posted at least a week prior to the presentation in June.

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

Margo Dickey proposed the motion to adjourn which was seconded by Emmanuel Bonhomme. With all in favor, the meeting was adjourned.

**Next Meeting: April 12, 2023, 6:30pm**