

Tuesday, November 26, 2019

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE AD HOC COMMITTEE OF GREAT CITY SCHOOLS/MALES OF COLOR OF THE BRIDGEPORT BOARD OF EDUCATION, held November 26, 2019, at Bridgeport City Hall, 45 Lyon Terrace, Bridgeport, Connecticut.

The meeting was called to order at 5:50 p.m. Present were Chair Joseph Sokolovic, Dr. Melissa Jenkins, Sauda Baraka, Eric Alicea, JoAnn Kennedy, Natasha Noel, and Dr. Carmen McPherson.

Mr. Alicea moved to approve the committee's minutes of October 22, 2019. The motion was seconded by Mr. Sokolovic and unanimously approved. Mr. Alicea abstained.

The next agenda item was an update on the white paper. Dr. Jenkins suggested adding to the paper the percentage of males of color in selected grades, the response of males of color to social-emotional learning surveys, and numbers of males of color involved in suspension or expulsion. She said further editing was needed in the sections on history.

Dr. Jenkins said there are two groups of data from forums on what will enhance the success of males of color, which highlighted systemic racism, more male teachers of color, and parent training. The identified issues facing males of color were early-start care, high-stakes testing and administrator/teacher turnover.

Dr. Jenkins said the call to action is on page 8, which includes an equity audit. The audit would cover male of color teachers and recruitment plans.

Dr. Jenkins said there were coach consultants available at the state level to help potential teacher candidates with navigating the certification process. She said the barriers to certification are not as great as in the past.

Ms. Kennedy urged that males of color have input when curriculum is being created or updated. She urged that teacher vacancies be filled with males of color.

Mr. Alicea said the barriers to different certification is the teachers' union. Mr. Sokolovic said all districts are under pressure to diversify in hiring. Dr. Jenkins noted Hamden and New Haven have partnerships with Southern Connecticut University that leads to many teachers from Southern taking jobs in those districts.

There was a discussion of recruiting and hiring practices for teachers of color. Mr. Alicea noted the challenges of retaining teachers with five years experience or more that can make more money in other districts. Dr. Jenkins said a potential source of teachers in the district are paraprofessionals.

Dr. Jenkins said she would recommend as a result of the forums including mentoring and networking in the white paper.

Dr. Jenkins said she would like to submit a draft of the white paper to the full board by the first meeting in December.

Ms. Kennedy read her draft paragraph on white supremacy. Dr. Jenkins suggested highlighting personal experiences in the paragraph.

There was a discussion of who is included in males of color.

Ms. Kennedy urged the committee make a presentation to the board in addition to the white paper draft. Dr. Jenkins said because the white paper is a collaborative effort the committee has to review the draft and suggest revisions before it is finalized.

Dr. Jenkins said including historical information in the white paper requires connections to something that is important such as hiring. She said that requires a lot of work, but she could clean it up to close to a final draft.

There was a discussion of the steps to take to gather the final contributions for the white paper.

The next agenda item was on the committee's budget. Dr. Jenkins said the previous discussion was operating on the assumption it would be the same as last year. She said the previous budget was centered on the mentoring programs at the three high schools and the middle school level.

Ms. Noel said if it wasn't for foundation funding the middle school program could not have been done last year. She said the goal is serve 150 boys. She noted Mr. Testani visited the program last Saturday and he seemed impressed.

Dr. Jenkins said she did not believe additional funding was available this year, although it was unpredictable at this time.

There was a discussion of whether another forum would be held or not.

There was a discussion of a program described by Mr. Sokolovic that involved the Stratford Police Department and his church. Mr. Alicea said his cousin runs the program. Mr. Sokolovic said the program – Calm, Cool and Comply - is focused on interactions with police.

Dr. McPherson described some interactions with the Bridgeport Police Department that might be fruitful to pursue for similar training. Mr. Sokolovic said he would be willing to reach out to the Bridgeport Police about an interaction seminar.

Ms. Noel said this sounded like programming rather than operating as an oversight committee.

Mr. Sokolovic suggested that Mr. Testani could reach out to the police department.

Mr. Alicea moved to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Mr. Sokolovic and unanimously approved.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:26 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

John McLeod