

Tuesday, October 23, 2018

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF AD HOC COMMITTEE OF GREAT CITY SCHOOLS MALES OF COLOR OF THE BRIDGEPORT BOARD OF EDUCATION, held October 23, 2018, at Bridgeport City Hall, 45 Lyon Terrace, Bridgeport, Connecticut.

The meeting was called to order at 6:17 p.m. Present were Dr. Melissa Jenkins, Sauda Baraka, Joseph Sokolovic, John Ramos Jr., JoAnn Kennedy, and Saleh Hanaif. Tekenya Monteiro, Eric Alicea, Natasha Noel, and Dr. Sheila Kearney arrived subsequently.

Ms. Baraka moved to approve the committee's minutes of November 28, 2017. The motion was seconded by Mr. Sokolovic and unanimously approved.

John Ramos spoke on his work at Harding High. He said his fraternity, Alpha Phi Alpha, and the sister sorority, Alpha Kappa Alpha, have expressed interest in wanting to help students with mentoring. He said there has been an effort with the Harding football team called Presidential Development, which aims to make the students carry themselves like presidents. He showed a video of news coverage of the initiative. He said the emphasis is working on the social-emotional health of the students.

Mr. Ramos said unfortunately this program has been eliminated. He said he was told he cannot keep the building open at night due to lack of funds for maintenance or security. There are groups of volunteers that have a solid curriculum of topics that they would like to implement. He

said the best time for the fraternity members to present the program would be 6:00 to 7:00 in the evening.

Mr. Ramos said he was approached by the sorority to run a college application program. He said that program was also shut down by the building principal due to lack of resources. Requests to hold it on Saturday or Thursday evening were denied. He said the program was currently being run out of Bridge Academy on Thursday evenings.

Mr. Ramos said the programs were in line with the Men of Color process and the need to provide mentors for students.

Ms. Baraka noted the custodians have to be there anyway during the time the program would be held. She said it would be considered a school function because it directly impacts children. She said Claytor School is almost open 24/7 because it belongs to the community. She said there is no reason the same thing can't be done at Harding. She suggested a conversation with Dr. Johnson.

Ms. Baraka noted the program included financial literacy, manhood and fatherhood, and scholarships.

Mr. Ramos said the programs were his babies, but he had no problem putting it under the Men of Color umbrella.

Dr. Jenkins said Dr. Johnson indicated there was \$5,000 money available for males of color activities at Bassick, Central and Harding. Dr. Johnson requested the committee develop a budget and plan for programming.

Saleh Hanaif said he was the soccer coach at Bassick, worked on mentoring program, and worked with fathers in prison at Manson Youth.

Mr. Ramos said both of his programs could be run simultaneously to cut costs. He said he thought 6:00 to 7:00 on

Thursday would be the best time, with the Presidential Development for juniors and the college admission program for seniors.

Dr. Jenkins said access to the building may just be a matter of submitting a building access form.

Ms. Kennedy said buildON was put out of Bassick High by the principal. She said there was someone else occupying the space they had previously been in. She said buildON does not need to be funded.

Ms. Baraka said the committee could look at where to spend the \$5,000. Dr. Jenkins said Dr. Johnson requested that there be programs that apply to all the high schools to bring unity across the district.

Mr. Hanaif said he offers his teen fathers program to Central, Harding and Bassick students. He said the curriculum was developed through discussions with students over the years and it became a state-certified program. He described some events that he holds for the teen fathers and the Bassick soccer senior night.

Dr. Jenkins said Dr. Johnson requested there be a family component in the males of color initiatives to be funded, along with the importance of academics. She also requested that students be informed of career opportunities such as the advanced manufacturing program at Housatonic Community College.

Ms. Monteiro said she had discussed with Ms. Noel holding a mentorship breakfast once a month. Ms. Noel said a similar program was used in Boston. Ms. Monteiro said the boys in various programs could come together and present what they have learned.

Ms. Kennedy suggested students meet at the new Harding because many students in other schools probably haven't seen it.

Mr. Hanaif said the most important work is mentoring the young men. He said he had been doing this for eleven years and guys who have completed his program come back as mentors.

Dr. Jenkins said Principal Graf of Central will designate a liaison to the committee.

There was a discussion of potential trips students could be taken on. Dr. Jenkins said Dr. Johnson emphasized the importance of just having them see something different.

Mr. Alicea noted the only college in the state that doesn't accept community college credits is Yale. He said Yale offers scholarships to New Haven public school graduates to attend four years at Southern Connecticut University.

Mr. Ramos said he needed to get his program nailed down because of potential frustration on the part of his fraternity.

Dr. Jenkins said her requests to use buildings had always been granted without charge. Ms. Baraka said she would write an e-mail on behalf of the committee requesting room for Mr. Ramos's program.

There was a discussion of holding another meeting to recommend a budget to Dr. Johnson.

Mr. Hanaif invited everyone to the soccer senior night at Harding High on October 30th.

Ms. Noel said she had been discussing mentoring for middle-school boys with Ms. Monteiro, which would fit well with the high school mentoring discussed by Mr. Ramos and Mr. Hanaif. Ms. Monteiro said she was working on applying for a grant to fund the program.

There was a discussion of when to hold another forum. Dr. Jenkins suggested the forum engage educators this year. Ms. Monteiro noted the last forum had the participation of district social workers.

Mr. Ramos said he had about 25 students in each of his two programs. Mr. Hanaif said the young fathers program consisted of ten students at Bassick, four at Harding, five at Central, and about nine guys in the re-entry program. He said he would try to incorporate males of color into his program.

It was decided to hold a meeting on October 29th to discuss the proposed budget.

Mr. Ramos said he would like to start his programs at Harding on November 8th. Ms. Baraka said she would send an email on behalf of the committee.

Ms. Noel suggested the committee emphasize that it is tackling mentoring first, at the middle school level and programs at three high schools. She said this was a good way to demonstrate the progress the committee is making.

Mr. Sokolovic said he would help out with the messaging by providing updates to the board.

Dr. Jenkins noted a question would arise about who was working with the students and how they're supervised and vetted.

There was a discussion of the necessity of background checks for volunteers. Ms. Baraka said background checks and fingerprinting were very costly.

Mr. Hanaif played a video about his teen fathers program. He described some successful outcomes he had in mentoring with students. He said the first thing is to develop love.

Dr. Jenkins said because there will be liaisons at each school for the males of color initiative there may be an opportunity to gather further surveys of students. She said it had always been a challenge not having a point person in the schools. She noted responses from 9th and 10th graders were needed, with most of the current survey data coming from 8th graders.

Mr. Alicea said there was a program at Classical Studies for mentoring boys.

Ms. Baraka offered to go into the schools to participate in the survey process.

Dr. Jenkins said she will ask Dr. Johnson if she is in support of having a liaison at the middle schools as well.

There was a discussion of strategies to convince students to get their parents to sign permission slips to engage in the survey. The use of QR codes that parents could scan on apps was suggested.

Ms. Baraka noted surveys from some grades were lacking. She added the survey data is needed for the white paper.

Dr. Jenkins said there were 273 surveys completed: 176 8th graders, 39 from 12th grade, 33 from 11th grade, 14 from 10th graders and 11 from 9th graders.

Ms. Baraka suggested targeting the high schools and obtaining permission slips.

There was a discussion of possible contact persons at the high schools to assist in getting surveys completed.

There was a discussion of the white paper and whether the committee would have to produce it by themselves without outside assistance. Several members noted the committee itself had gathered data from the focus groups, surveys and the forum. Dr. Jenkins said the voices of educators and community providers was missing. She said hearing from educators at a forum would be valuable.

Ms. Monteiro said a target date for the white paper might be August 2019. Ms. Baraka said it could be presented to the board in September 2019.

It was decided to hold a webinar on males of color and capturing voices on a professional development day for educators. Ms. Baraka said the same could be done with principals.

Ms. Baraka said the subcommittee for the forum had been reconstituted with the same members.

Ms. Baraka moved to table the last item on the agenda. The motion was seconded by Mr. Alicea and unanimously approved.

Mr. Alicea moved the meeting be adjourned. The motion was seconded by Dr. Jenkins and unanimously approved.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

John McLeod

*Approved by the committee on November 27, 2018*