

Academics and Children's Needs Subcommittee

Meeting Notes

December 4, 2017

Members present: Secretary of Education Susan Bunting, Gene Montano, Robert Overmiller, Lauren Hudson, Natalie Ganc, Susan Haberstroh

Also present: Dorrell Green, Angela Moffett-Batty (minutes)

Secretary Bunting opened the meeting at 6:30pm. She reminded attendees that there would be a full Consolidation Taskforce meeting on Thursday, Dec. 7, 2017.

Secretary Bunting stated that at last month's Academics and Children's Needs Subcommittee meeting, a request was made to review year-round or balanced calendar options for Delaware schools. The Delaware Department of Education (DDOE) used WestEd – a research and development nonprofit that works with education agencies – to gather information on what other districts/states have done regarding year-round schooling. The information collected led WestEd and DDOE to conclude that no real evidence exists for year-round schooling as a means to improve student outcomes. At the request of Representative Miro, DDOE also looked into Delaware-specific examples of year-round schooling. Seaford School District and Brandywine School District were asked to provide reports on their year-round experiments for the subcommittee to review.

Secretary Bunting provided the meeting attendees with the Seaford S.D and Brandywine S.D. reports for review as well as a 3-2-1 worksheet asking attendees:

- 3) What three facts did you learn about year-round/balanced calendar schools that you did not previously know?
- 2) Which two features of year-round/balanced calendar schools would you like to learn more about?
- 1) What one concern about the year-round/balanced calendar school concept do you have?

All handouts can be found on the taskforce website. Meeting attendees were given 15 minutes to review the Seaford/Brandywine documents before discussing the worksheet questions.

Gene Montano noted that the Seaford S.D. document did not state when year-round schooling started, which made it difficult to compare the district's assessment data throughout the years.

Natalie Ganc stated that testing data was not an accurate measure to determine the impact of year-round schooling on students.

Gene Montano stated that assessment data could be useful when looking at growth compared to other schools. Depending on the data years, he stated that the Seaford S.D. document may show an overall advantage to year-round schooling.

Lauren Hudson pointed out that any growth could be due the schools attracting engaged families who completed the school-choice process so their children could attend year-round school.

Dorrell Green noted that the Brandywine School Board could no longer support year-round schooling due to finances. Green stated that more than \$330 in additional funding per student was used to support year-round schooling. Secretary Bunting suggested looking into whether the climate and community benefits that year-round schooling provides could be replicated throughout the state in other ways.

Secretary Bunting asked attendees if they felt strongly that the subcommittee should recommend year-round schooling to the full Consolidation Taskforce.

Gene Montano, Lauren Hudson, and Natalie Ganc stated that the information did not demonstrate a need to recommend year-round schooling to the full Consolidation Taskforce.

Secretary Bunting introduced Dorrell Green and Susan Haberstroh, who began their presentation on using trauma-informed practices to meet the needs of Delaware's diverse school populations. The presentation explained how poverty (both rural and urban) and adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) impact students and educators. Haberstroh stated that trauma-informed practices aim to support students, families, and educators in Delaware schools by supporting the whole child. Green discussed how "behavior is communication" and that the goal of trauma-informed practices in schools is to increase understanding and build more supportive relationships. Green said the initial focus of the initiative is on self-care and professional wellness for educators. Ultimately, the initiative will build resilient students, families and schools so that students are able to focus on learning.

Natalie Ganc stated that teachers do not have time to engage in trauma-informed practices given all the testing and other requirements "piled on" by the state and school administrators. Ganc stated that students have become a second thought.

Secretary Bunting stated that school climate could be particular to a building or district and that the subcommittee needs to determine what it will advocate for and recommend for all schools. She asked if attendees had any topics they would like featured at future meetings.

Gene Montano suggested weaving trauma-informed practices into Delaware's teacher prep programs.

Lauren Hudson said she would like to know more about whether school size impacts student achievement.

Robert Overmiller stated that he still wants to hear about mentoring. He said he thought this would be addressed since it was discussed at the last subcommittee meeting.

Natalie Ganc suggested learning more about how district consolidation would impact English learners.

Gene Montano suggested looking at what districts are having success in graduation rates, discipline rates, test scores and other qualifiers to see if opportunities exist to replicate these practices across the state.

Secretary Bunting ended the meeting at 8:02 p.m.