

Minutes
AIMS Task Force
Wednesday, March 11, 2009

The AIMS Task Force held a meeting at the Rio Salado Conference Center, 2323 W. 14th Street, Tempe, Arizona. The meeting was called to order at 9:52 AM.

Members Present:

Dr. Jim Zaharis
Dr. Joe O'Reilly
Dr. Alan Storm
Ms. Melinda Jensen

Members Absent:

Dr. Deborah Gonzalez
Dr. Charles Santa Cruz
Dr. Chuck Essigs

1. Call to order

Dr. Zaharis apologized for the delay starting the meeting and asked Mr. Yanez to proceed with roll call. Dr. Zaharis requested a meeting prior to the meeting scheduled for April 8th; this meeting should be schedule for the week of March 23rd. The purpose of this meeting will be to have the members that are not present updated and involved with the topics that will be addressed.

Dr. Zaharis also stated that Dr. Sybil Francis from the Center for the Future of Arizona was invited to attend the AIMS Task Force meeting but will not be present due to her participation in the Tough Choices Tough Times project held in Washington D.C. Dr. Zaharis said Arizona is an important part of the efforts that are being made in Washington and he also stated that he would like to make effort to coordinate the work of the Task Force with the work that is being discussed by the Tough Choices Tough Times group. Very similar topics are being discussed by the P-20 Council, the College and Career Ready Policy Team, and the AIMS Task Force; the main focus is to find the best way to have Arizona students be internationally competitive, college and career ready, plus meet the initial and minimum standard requirements.

2. Roll call

Attendance as noted above.

3. Consideration to approve minutes for February 11, 2009

Dr. Storm motioned to approve the February 11, 2009 meeting minutes.

Motion second by Dr. O'Reilly

Motion Passes

4. Presentation and discussion on the work of the College- and Career-Ready Policy Institute as it relates to student assessment

Dr. Zaharis welcomed and introduced Dr. Karen Nicodemus.

Dr. Nicodemus stated there have several efforts made that have led to the College and Career Ready Policy Institute (CCRPI) and one of the efforts was to join the American Diploma Project (ADP) Network in 2006. Achieve was founded by the National Governor's Association and almost 40 states are part of the network.

Dr. Nicodemus said that all of the efforts focus on ensuring that high school graduates leave high school college and career ready. She said that as the president of Cochise

College she has the perspective of students graduating from high school and entering the higher education system.

Dr. Nicodemus stated that the ADP has five key areas:

- Align high school standards with college and workplace expectations
- Require students to complete a college-and career-ready curriculum ensuring a student is ready for postsecondary options
- Administer college readiness tests to all high school students
- Develop a P-20 longitudinal data system
- Hold high school and postsecondary institutions accountable for student preparation and success

Dr. Nicodemus stated that based on Arizona's participation in the ADP, the state was invited to apply and be part of the College-and Career-Ready Policy Institute. Arizona was one of eight states to be accepted into the policy institute. The institute is an extensive 18-month policy research and development process. Dr. Nicodemus said that part of the reason Arizona was accepted was the ability to put policy issues on the table, have discussions and move forward. The AIMS Task Force was also a factor since this group was formed outside of the Governor's office.

As part of being accepted, Arizona was aware of the expectations of Achieve and partners. Some of the expectations include:

- Intent is for Arizona to be a national model
- Create a coherent set of policies in all five of the ADP areas
- Focusing on assessment and accountability

Dr. Nicodemus said Arizona has adopted core goals such as:

- Improve student achievement; beginning at P-K level
- Increase high school graduation rate
- Increase college and career readiness
- Increase enrollment in and successful completion of postsecondary education programs

Initial observations of the Leadership Team are as follows:

- Informing students, parents, and educators in order for them to understand whether a student has achieved the skills and knowledge necessary for postsecondary work
- Assessment administration at an appropriate time within the high school experience and is designed to offer feedback to allow for "course corrections"
- Require all high school students to take the assessment
- Align college/university placement decision and high school assessments
- Factor results into the state's accountability system, but not as a "high stakes" component

Dr. Nicodemus stated that part of the purpose of her presentation was to say that the Policy Institute Partners agree with having only one college and career ready anchor assessment. Another topic the Policy Institute agrees with is that all students should take a college and career readiness assessment.

Dr. Nicodemus commended the AIMS Task Force members for their commitment and

time, and the research that has been produced by Dr. Garcia. She also said she is very impressed with the work and diligence.

Dr. Nicodemus asked that the task force members consider some of the work of the Policy Institute as it relates to college and career ready assessment and she also said that she looks forward to recommendations of the Task Force.

Dr. Zaharis stated he appreciated Dr. Nicodemus presenting and bringing the Task Force up to date with the good work of CCRPI. Dr. Zaharis asked the members if they had any questions for Dr. Nicodemus.

Dr. O'Reilly asked if there are there any assessments now that would assess career and college readiness.

Dr. Nicodemus stated that Achieve has currently narrowed three possible assessments:

- End of course testing, especially around algebra II
- Consider ACT, SAT or an equivalent college admission. She acknowledged that this assessment may need to be modified to reflect the standards that are being taught in the K-12 system
- The California model has been considered

The key would be that students will have to engage in learning beyond high school and in some formal way that is similar to what is required to be accepted into a post-secondary institution.

Dr. Garcia asked if California uses their assessment as part of the school accountability system. Dr. Nicodemus stated that California makes the assessment voluntary and said she did not know if the state used the assessment as part of the accountability system.

Dr. Zaharis stated that the recommendations shared by Dr. Nicodemus are, for the most part, parallel to the recommendations from the AIMS Task Force.

5. Presentation and discussion of the Task Force's draft recommendation.

Dr. Zaharis asked Dr. Garcia to continue with the draft recommendations.

Dr. Garcia asked for clarification from Dr. Zaharis on what he wanted to cover and what he wanted to postpone due to the absence of some members.

Dr. Zaharis stated that there was a quorum and wanted to make use of the time by going through the draft paragraph by paragraph. Dr. Zaharis also said he would like to schedule the next meeting no later than the 25th of March so that the members that are not present have an opportunity to have the information and include their input. He also stated that he would like for the input provided by the task force members present to be added to the draft.

Dr. Storm stated that his only concern would be the dialogue between the members that are missing.

Dr. Zaharis said all the members would be welcome to attend the next meeting and continue to share their suggestions and asked Dr. Garcia to proceed.

Dr. Garcia stated that the document provided to the members was the "down-draft" and the

purpose of this first draft is to put everything down that the members have discussed in the last meetings. The next draft will be the “up-draft” this one will be fixed up so that it is presentable and clear with regard to the task force intent.

Dr. Garcia said that the first recommendation discussed was replacing Terra Nova (administered in 9th grade) with a college potential assessment. The possible assessment would be one that would let students know early of the possibility of moving on to post-secondary education. The rationale for replacing the Terra Nova assessment is that a college potential assessment can fulfill the state statutory testing requirements since Terra Nova is not required to meet any federal assessment or accountability requirements. This recommendation does not have federal implications or any other implications in the school accountability system. Dr. Garcia said that per information received by the ADE the cost for administering the Terra Nova assessment in the 9th grade was \$675,000. If this assessment was not administered at the 9th grade the funds saved could be used to fund the college placement test.

Dr. Zaharis asked if representatives from the ADE had any comments on recommendation one.

Ms. Cheryl Lebo stated that the funds used for Terra Nova may not be enough to switch out the assessment. As to the policy to make any changes to the administration of Terra Nova, she agrees with Dr. Garcia and stated there are no implications.

Dr. Zaharis asked Ms. Lebo if she knew what the Superintendent’s view would be on this option.

Ms. Lebo said she could certainly not speak for the Superintendent but she does not think he would be opposed.

Dr. Garcia asked if Ms. Kris Zavoli from the College Board could provide more information on this topic.

Ms. Zavoli stated that the PSAT is the practice assessment for the SAT. This test measures critical reading, math and writing and it is given the third Wednesday and Saturday of October. There has been an increase of 9th and 10th graders taking the PSAT and currently there are 14 states that paid for the assessment not only for the benefit of the students but also for the benefit of the schools.

Dr. Garcia asked if the members could make changes to the draft document that was provided and submit the changes to Mr. Yanez.

Dr. Garcia continued with paragraph two of draft recommendations; reduce the number of AIMS writing administration in the elementary grades. The rationale in this suggestion is that AIMS is the most difficult to score and most volatile. Dr. Garcia stated that there are very important facts that need to be added to this idea of re-thinking writing and he would like to work with Dr. O’Reilly and Ms. Roberta Alley to be clear on the recommendations. Dr. Garcia also said that he was under the assumption that the recommendation was to reduce the number of elementary grade administration from six grade levels to three.

Ms. Alley from the ADE stated that the department recommends administering the test in grades 3, 5, and 7 because science is administered in grades 4 and 8.

Dr. Garcia stated that this recommendation can be made while still complying with other recommendations. He also stated that he will get a cost assessment and provide that information to the members.

Dr. Zaharis asked if the task force was heading towards a college and career ready assessment was there information on the dollar amount needed to make this happen.

Dr. Garcia said that due to the fact that the ADE is currently working on a new contract it was difficult to get accurate dollar amounts but an estimate could be made from the old contract.

Dr. Garcia continued with recommendation number three; eliminating AIMS writing as a high school graduation requirement and reading and mathematics would continue. Writing is the single most expensive assessment to develop and score. Arizona could continue to stress the importance of writing by requiring local school districts to incorporate a writing assessment into high school English courses.

Dr. Zaharis asked Dr. Vicki Balentine for her point of view on this topic as a High School Superintendent.

Dr. Balentine stated that it would be very helpful if the recommendation of the task force included a writing component required of school districts.

Dr. Storm stated that in his previous district they had tried to score their own writing assessments and conducted extensive trainings yet the outcome was not successful.

Dr. Garcia stated that there are two separate issues; keeping writing as a graduation requirement, and whether the scoring of the assessment should be left at the district level. This topic leads to paragraph four; scoring AIMS writing assessments at the school level with annual, random checks at the state level to ensure accuracy and consistency.

Ms. Jensen stated that if scores need to be verified at the state level then that would mean that the state would have to train schools. If that is the case this alternative will not be a cost saving measure. Ms. Jensen also said that if this was not going to be a graduation requirement then it should not be part of the school accountability system.

Dr. Garcia said that one alternative could be to add that the college placement test include writing; this subject would no longer be a graduation requirement or part of the school accountability system.

Dr. Zaharis called for a 10 minute break at 11:28 AM

Meeting reconvened at 11:40 AM

Dr. Zaharis stated that the college and career readiness test should be strongly encouraged for the endorsement.

Dr. Zaharis encouraged the members to share the draft with their school personnel and get feedback from them.

The members asked to clarify that the Achievement Certificate is issued at the district level.

Dr. Zaharis stated that the next meeting will be held April 8th and asked the members to hold the March 25th date. The April 22nd meeting will possibly be held in Tucson.

Dr. Garcia reminded members to send any specific changes to Mr. Yanez.

6. Call to the public

- Mr. Steven Brackney, Superintendent of Show Low USD.
Mr. Brackney stated he is concerned that if a college readiness exam is in place why would AIMS be necessary. The funds used on AIMS can be used to help students continue on to college.
- Mr. David Scott, Director of Accountability & Research for the Tucson Unified School District. Mr. Scott stated he was very encouraged by the information he heard and he stated that he believes it is important that the exam that the Task Force chooses is aligned to a college/university admissions test.
- Ms. Debra Raeder, Executive Director of the P-20 Council. Ms. Raeder stated that she had concerns on some of the language used, such as saying college and career readiness and these areas should be treated as the same. Ms. Raeder also stated the that national statistics should continue to be considered in order to continue raising the bar of expectations for education in Arizona.

7. Adjournment
12:29 PM

