

Minutes
AIMS Task Force
Wednesday, November 12, 2008

The AIMS Task Force held a meeting at the Northern Arizona University – North Valley Building 15601 N. 28th Avenue, Rooms 104 / 106, Phoenix, Arizona. The meeting was called to order at 9:31 AM.

Members Present:

Dr. Jim Zaharis
Dr. Deborah Gonzales
Dr. Charles Santa Cruz
Ms. Melinda Jensen
Dr. Joe O'Reilly
Dr. Alan Storm

Members Absent:

Dr. Chuck Essigs

1. Call to order

Dr. Zaharis called the meeting to order and said Dr. Chuck Essigs would not be attending.

Dr. Zahariz asked Mr. Vince Yanez to conduct the roll call.

2. Roll call

Attendance is noted above.

3. Consideration to approve minutes for October 22, 2008

Dr. Storm moved to approve the AIMS Task Force minutes Dr. Gonzales second the motion.

Motion passes.

4. Superintendent of Public Instruction, Tom Horne, will respond to questions and comments from members regarding his open letter to the Task Force, dated November 6, 2008.

Dr. Zaharis introduced Supt. Tom Horne to present on his position and perspective of the AIMS test and various issues. A copy of Supt. Horne's open letter was provided to the Task Force members.

Supt. Horne thanked Dr. Zaharis and the Task Force members for permitting him to present the letter and the opportunity to provide the Task Force with information. Supt. Horne stated he would try to attend all of the AIMS Task Force meetings.

Dr. Zaharis asked if the members had any questions or comments for Supt. Horne in regards to the letter submitted.

Dr. O'Reilly asked Supt. Horne what, in his opinion, should students know by the end of high school and how that should be assessed.

Supt. Horne stated it depends on what students will do at the end of high school and what field they will be pursuing. Statewide testing should depend on what the plan will be for each student once high school is completed.

Dr. Zaharis asked if the test should be a high-stakes test.

Supt. Horne stated at this time he would be reluctant to push for more high-stakes tests until the community has accepted the high-stakes test currently in place.

Dr. Zaharis shared that the P-20 Council has been working on the question of whether the test should be a high school proficiency test if the test should be integrated with the next step in a student's career. Dr. Zaharis read an excerpt from the P-20 Council draft discussion.

Supt. Horne stated he did not agree with the statement due to the fact that there are students who are not prepared to do college coursework but may still be successful in other areas. Supt. Horne also said that to be career ready does not necessarily mean that the student is ready for college.

Dr. Zaharis asked Supt. Horne for his perspective on the current AIMS program and the possibility of reducing the cost of AIMS and still meeting the legal requirement in order to have funds for an additional assessment.

Supt. Horne stated that the ADE is being as efficient as they possibly can be; therefore other funds and additional appropriations would be required.

Dr. O'Reilly asked Supt. Horne if he thought the norm reference test was necessary.

Supt. Horne stated that the business community and parents have expressed that the norm reference test be kept to know how Arizona compares to other states and there is also Proposition 203 which requires that students continue to take the test.

Dr. Zaharis thanked Supt. Horne for his presentation.

5. Overview of Arizona's K-12 assessment program. Discussion may include, but is not limited to, state and federal requirements, State Board of Education policies and the current structure of AIMS.

Dr. Zaharis introduced Dr. David Garcia to present the overview of Arizona's K-12 assessment program.

Dr. Garcia provided the Task Force with an overview from CTB McGrall-Hill, who focuses on CRT's and NRT's and what the AIMS Assessments are. The ADE also provided an overview that focuses on the legal obligations associated with testing in Arizona.

The overview presented is the current situation in Arizona. A more in depth report will be provided and discussed at the January Task Force meeting.

Dr. Garcia stated that the information provided includes the number of students tested. He stated that the cost for the test is \$11 million dollars. A comparison of the cost of the assessment in other states will also be reviewed at a later meeting.

Dr. O'Reilly asked if the \$11 million dollars was the ongoing cost of the test and not the

development cost.

Dr. Garcia said that in fact the dollar amount did not include any development costs and also stated that as research is conducted cost comparisons with other states would be factored in the report provided to the members.

Dr. Zaharis asked whether the current AIMS test included any areas that are not necessary to have in order to comply with the law.

Dr. Garcia stated that at this point it is difficult to narrow down what is not necessary to have as part of the current assessment.

The task force members were also provided, per their request, information on the use of teachers in the item development process and information of several states that were requested by the task force to be researched for this topic.

Dr. Zaharis asked Dr. Garcia if faculty from higher education was involved in the process and if that could be looked into for the next time the topic of developmental process was researched.

See handouts: Current AIMS Information
Member requests for information from 10/22/08 Mtg.
Use of Teacher in Item Development Process on State High School
Assessment: Select States

Dr. Garcia reviewed and explained how the research and one page summaries were created for the purpose of providing the members with thorough information.

6. Presentation and discussion regarding intended purposes of high stakes tests.

Dr. Garcia introduced Mr. Victor Diaz and Mr. Paul Ruiz they are first year PhD students in the Educational Leadership and Policy Studies division in the College of Education at ASU.

Dr. Garcia stated he would be presenting the policy analysis framework, Mr. Diaz presented on the academic and economic purposes of graduation tests, and Mr. Reese would present the political purposes and final considerations.

Dr. Garcia said there are three major components in assessment policies: standards, assessments, and rewards and consequences also known as accountability, and gave a brief description of each.

Dr. Garcia explained the standards are a blueprint of the test; standards are what link the test to the curriculum and to the classroom. Therefore teachers with a good assessment system have well-defined performance objectives, understand what the expectations are and work from these objectives for classroom strategies.

Dr. Garcia stated there are three sub-components for assessments: the type, administration, and development. Rewards and consequences are how assessments are used to hold any group accountable and there are two levels. One is a system level: This means holding schools accountable or educators and school administrators accountable. The second level is holding students accountable.

Dr. Gonzales asked if in the research there were any single indicator consequences.

Dr. Garcia stated there are single indicator systems not only in Arizona but also nationally; NCLB requires a statewide CRT.

Dr. Santa Cruz asked for more information on the untested standards, what they consist of and why they exist.

Dr. Garcia responded that the standards are a very broad document and there are some standards that are more suitable for testing than others. The other standards are still important from a curriculum stand point. Due to accountability measures teachers and schools tend to focus on the standards that will be tested.

Dr. Zaharis asked if any of the research reflects any attempt to raise the level of importance for the untested standards.

Dr. Garcia said that at a state level there is little in having practical implications for untested standards and this is mainly due to the budget situation. Untested standards would need to have an accountability system in order to be prioritized.

Dr. Garcia asked to clarify the high-stakes term. He explained that this term includes school and student level consequences.

Dr. Garcia introduced Mr. Diaz and provided a handout with information on the economic and academic purposes of high school graduation exams.

Mr. Diaz summarized several research articles. The main finding of these articles were:

Academic purposes of a test:

- Create high expectations and increased rigor
- Focus curriculum
- Increase student motivation
- Close the achievement gap
- Prepare for postsecondary education

Economic purpose of a test:

- Increase productivity
- Provide workforce readiness
- Access to (creation of) high-paying jobs
- Remain Competitive in global market.

Mr. Ruiz presented on the political aspect of a high stakes test. The main findings of the research he presented were:

- Inexpensive way to get “inside the classroom”
- Changes are rapidly implemented
- Encourages standardization

As final considerations to the task force members Mr. Ruiz asked:

- Which purposes have been achieved via graduation testing? Which purposes remain applicable?
- What changes to assessment policies will yield the desired outcomes?
- Can the purposes be achieved through other means?

Dr. Garcia reviewed what the next steps would be:

- Develop a purpose statement as a committee to serve as a preamble to the report.
- The next meeting will focus on the intended and unintended outcomes of graduation tests.

Dr. Garcia said a draft would be made from the statements made to use as a point of discussion at the next meeting.

Dr. Zaharis stated that the AIMS test at this time was an assessment of essential and initial set but not the standard for High School graduation.

7. Call to the public

- Kevin Brackney, Supt. Of Show Low Unified School District.

Supports the AIMS test but also agrees on an end of the course exam. Mr. Brackney also agrees on alternative paths for students who cannot pass an assessment such as AIMS.

Dr. Zaharis encouraged Mr. Brackney and members of the audience to provide the Task Force with a one page brief of any ideas or input they would like to members to consider.

8. Adjournment

Dr. Zaharis motioned to adjourn Dr. Santa Cruz second the motion.

Meeting Adjourned at 12:11 PM.

