

**Minutes**  
**AIMS Task Force**  
**Wednesday, January 14, 2009**

The AIMS Task Force held a meeting at the Pima County JTED Offices, 2855 W. Master Pieces Drive, Tucson, Arizona. The meeting was called to order at 9:35 AM

**Members Present:**

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

**Members Absent:**

Mr. Chuck Essigs

**1. Call to order**

Dr. Zaharis called the meeting to order and thanked the Flowing Wells culinary program for proving breakfast and Dr. Storm for hosting the meeting.

Dr. Zaharis stated that Dr. Essigs had a schedule conflict and would not be in attendance. Dr. Zaharis asked Mr. Yanez to keep Dr. Essigs briefed on all the AIMS Task Force matters.

**2. Roll call**

Mr. Yanez conducted roll call. Attendance was as noted above.

**3. Consideration to approve minutes for December 10, 2008**

*Motioned by Dr. Gonzalez Second by Dr. Storm*  
*Motioned Passed*

**4. Presentation and discussion regarding testing systems in other states.  
Discussion may include, but is not limited to, the following states:**

<b>California</b>	<b>North Carolina</b>
<b>Florida</b>	<b>Ohio</b>
<b>Louisiana</b>	<b>Rhode Island</b>
<b>Massachusetts</b>	<b>Tennessee</b>
<b>Mississippi</b>	<b>Washington</b>
<b>New York</b>	

Dr. Zaharis asked the members to ask clarification questions pertaining to the presentation as needed. Further discussion would be permitted at the end of the presentation. Dr. Zaharis informed the audience that comments would be welcomed at the Call to the Public, people who wished to speak would need to fill out a form.

Dr. Garcia introduced Emily Ackman, Education and Leadership in Policies Graduate student. Dr. Garcia stated that Ms. Ackman would be focusing her presentation on assessment systems in other states and alternate pathways. The states that will be presented and discussed have alternate pathways to reach a high school diploma. The primary goal of the meeting will be to have a discussion on an assessment system for Arizona.

Ms. Ackman provided the members with her educational background information. Ms. Ackman stated that currently 23 of the 50 states in the U.S. have mandatory exit exams and it is expected that by the year 2012 the number will increase to 26.

Ms. Ackman stated that out of the states the task force originally requested information on only Michigan and Ohio do not have exit exams, therefore these two states will be discussed at another meeting. The states that currently require an exit exam have a unique and comprehensive program for assessing the skills they expect students to demonstrate upon graduating high school. Ms. Ackman also stated that all 23 states have alternative options for students with disabilities and only 5 states have no alternative path for the general education students.

The Five states with no alternative diploma are:

- Alaska
- Louisiana
- Texas
- California
- Alabama

The components of alternative path are:

- Substitute exams such ACT and SAT or a standardized end of course exam.
- Waivers can be given for grades, attendance, participation, and remediation programs or specific extenuating circumstances.
- Multiple indicators can be a portfolio assessment or a combination of factors such as grades and attendance.

Ms. Ackman provided a list of the assessments each of the following states used and discussed how these assessments was administered.

- New York Exam type: End-of-Course
- North Carolina Exam Type: Comprehensive & End-of-Course
- Washington Exam Type: Comprehensive & End-of-Course
- Massachusetts Exam Type: Comprehensive & End-of-Course
- Ohio Exam Type: Comprehensive
- Rhode Island Exam Type: None  
State assessments will be used as one-third of the components

Dr. Zaharis asked how critical thinking was assessed by Rhode Island. Ms. Ackman stated that this area is left to the discretion – and assessed at – the local level.

Dr. David Garcia stated he has three major topics of discussion.

- Discussion for an assessment system in Arizona
- Options for recognizing or certifying student accomplishments
- Continuing development of the guiding statement

Dr. Zaharis asked if the members had any other questions in regards to the other states that were not part of the presentation or if they had any other topics of discussion they would like to add. The members had no further questions regarding the presentation and agreed to continue with the discussion for an assessment system.

Dr. Garcia opened the discussion to consider an assessment system and stated that Dr. Zaharis had requested from the members suggestions of assessment systems.

Dr. Zaharis was the first member to present and stated that the main purpose of discussion for this part of the meeting was to find coherent set of ideas to assessment pathways. Dr. Zaharis stated that part of the challenge is finding college/career ready goals and pathways.

Dr. Zaharis presented his suggestions of the pathways to achieve college and career readiness and stated that nothing in the chart he has proposed requires a high-stakes test beyond the current 10<sup>th</sup> grad AIMS test.

Dr. Zaharis said the task force had agreed to retain AIMS as a graduation requirement and asked if the members had any other alternatives they wanted to discuss for AIMS in addition to augmentation.

Dr. Storm asked to clarify his previous statements and shared that he is fine with the provisions in place for special education students.

Dr. Zaharis agreed and stated that these provisions for special populations also need to be considered as additional alternatives for the current assessment requirements.

Dr. Gonzalez stated that it is important keep the current methods of assessment for the core subject areas and not give the impression that the standards are being watered down, but rather that focus is being given to alternatives to assess career and college readiness.

Dr. Zaharis stated that the possibility of keeping the current alternatives would be wise and instead of adjusting the assessment in place the focus could be on adding assessments at a college level at the threshold at the end of high school.

Dr. Santa Cruz agreed that skills such as creativity, innovation, and design are not being assessed and these skills are necessary for the next step in education whether students choose to go on to college or enter a career.

Dr. Zaharis stated that the option of an appeal process should also be considered.

Dr. Garcia concluded the discussion and stated AIMS would be kept as is with the current provisions and augmentation and the focus will be on finding assessments for college and career readiness skills.

The second topic of discussion was to review options for formally recognizing student accomplishments.

Dr. Garcia stated that certifications, diplomas, and endorsements could be options for formally recognizing student accomplishments.

*Dr. Zaharis called a 15 min break at 11:03*

*Meeting reconvened at 11:18*

Dr. Zaharis stated that the discussions and options considered are for short term and long term consideration and as to what is also best for the state due to the current financial struggles. Dr. Zaharis asked Dr. Garcia to add any perspective summary or next step questions that could be important.

Dr. Garcia stated that considering the option of adding an endorsement or type of certificate to the current requirements for a high school diploma will require further discussion and it would be helpful to gather the suggestions task force members might have as to how this option could work. The information gathered could be reviewed at the next meeting.

Dr. Garcia also asked the members to consider how much detail information they will want to include in the final report the will be provided to the State Board, Governor's office, and Legislature.

Dr. Garcia said that another point to keep in mind and consider is the population of students who are struggling to pass the current assessment.

Dr. Zaharis stated that as to the report his suggestion would be to provide a brief report with the recommendations. These recommendations could have a one to two page explanation and information of work the task force did in order to come to the recommended conclusions. The report should be clear, precise, and elegant.

Dr. Zaharis said that as to the option of having a single graduation plan with a system of endorsements that do not involve high stakes but that do have parameters and specifications that the state can endorse.

Dr. O'Reilly asked Dr. Balentine if having endorsements on diplomas was a possibility with the State Board and Dr. Balentine stated that this alternative had potential.

Dr. Gonzalez stated that the options should be universal so that all students have the same opportunities.

Dr. Gonzalez stated that a simple solution would be easier to follow and understand by districts and students and stated that the model presented by Dr. Zaharis was very achievable.

Dr. Storm stated he would like to discuss alternative assessments for students who are at risk of dropping out due to failing the AIMS test.

Dr. O'Reilly said he would like to address the 9<sup>th</sup> grade assessment at the next meeting. Explore if a test that is more applicable for college readiness. What would alternatives be if Terra Nova was eliminated the cost for these alternatives.

Dr. Zaharis asked Mr. Yanez and Dr. Garcia to also provide clarification on the Norm Reference requirement to make sure the law is being met.

Dr. Garcia informed the members of the topics the ADE will be addressing at the next Task Force meeting.

- Current assessment program in Arizona
- Cycle of testing
- Federal and standard assessment requirements
- Changes in the assessment system
- High school exit exam
- Federal and state funding sources
- AZ Budget for assessments
- Implications and costs of retakes

Dr. Zaharis asked the members if there were any other questions or requests they would like to make to the ADE to include in their presentation.

Dr. O'Reilly requested further information on remediation testing.

The task force agreed to have written comments to Dr. Garcia by January 19<sup>th</sup> and all information will be sent to Mr. Yanez first.

Dr. Zaharis asked Mr. Yanez to send the task force members the information form Bill Porter.

## **5. Call to the public**

- Debbie Hedgepeth, Assistant Superintendent in the Vail School District. AIMS should be maintained and preserved in order to continue the achievements in place. Ms. Hedgepeth stated that AIMS has impacted the district in a positive manner by providing an enormous amount of feedback and therefore providing a target and identifiable goal to be met by teachers and students.
- Quinn Kellis, Asst. Supt in the Dysart Unified School District. Ms. Kellis stated that the District supports the AIMS assessment and would like to see an additional or alternate indicator to be available for students. Ms. Kellis said she would like to allow students to focus on materials that will help them prepare for college. As to college ready endorsements the colleges would need to have an input so that

colleges can accept these endorsements.

Dr. Zaharis asked Mr. Kellis to submit further information on any of the topics discussed.

- Mr. Mark Neish quoted several reports from California and Arizona and stated he does not support AIMS as a high stakes exam or any other type of high stakes test since these tests have increased dropout rates. Mr. Neish stated the task force is not using the time wisely and is not focusing on the charge the legislation.

Dr. Zaharis stated that many of the topics mentioned by Mr. Neish were discussed at previous meetings and more information or materials could be provided to Mr. Neish.

Mr. Yanez stated that the next AIMS Task Force meeting will be January 28<sup>th</sup> and would be held at the Rio Salado Conference Center.

## **6. Adjournment**

Dr. Zaharis adjourned the meeting at 12:13PM

