

**Minutes**  
**AIMS Task Force**  
**Wednesday, April 8, 2009**

The AIMS Task Force held a meeting at the Northern Arizona University – North Valley Building 15601 N. 28<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Rooms 104/106, Phoenix, Arizona. The meeting was called to order at 9:34 AM.

**Members Present:**

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

**Members Absent:**

Dr. Alan Storm

**1. Call to order**

Dr. Zaharis asked Mr. Yanez to conduct roll call.

**2. Roll call**

Attendance noted above

**3. Consideration to approve minutes for March 25, 2009**

*Dr. O'Reilly motioned to approve the March 25, 2009 meeting minutes.*

*Motion second by Dr. Gonzalez*

*Motion passes*

**4. Presentation and discussion of the Task Force's draft recommendations**

Dr. Zaharis stated that the meeting would be to come to recommendations and have these to Dr. Garcia by the end of the next meeting in order to begin the final report. Dr. Zaharis complimented the Task Force members for their diligence.

Dr. Zaharis asked Dr. Garcia to begin the review of the draft. Dr. Garcia stated that members have provided excellent input and all of the individual comments are noted on the column on the right side of the document. The purpose of the document is to review the edits that have been made, make more edits where necessary, and discuss some issues that need to be considered.

Dr. Zaharis asked the members if they had any overall comments on specific points. Ms. Jensen asked when dollar amounts would be added to the recommendations. Dr. Zaharis stated that a fundamental decision the members will have to make is if their recommendations would be constrained by dollars or will the recommendation be made from short and long term perspectives. Dr. O'Reilly said that it would be best to make recommendations based on what needs to be done and then as the funds become available

the recommended plan can be implemented; otherwise progress can never be made due to the lack of insufficient dollars.

Dr. Gonzalez stated that based on the writing assessment recommendations the task force will be able to decide if there is a cost benefit to eliminate some of the writing assessment if it is not a cost benefit there will need to be another discussion.

Dr. Santa Cruz stated he provided a series of editorial comments to Dr. Garcia. Dr. Zaharis said these changes would be addressed page by page.

Dr. Santa Cruz also said that when the first draft of the recommendations was created he stated that he had some difficulty with the word *insufficient* and he suggested changing that word to *limited*.

Dr. Zaharis ask Dr. Vicki Balentine if she had anything to say on behalf of the State Board. Dr. Balentine said that the State Board will be very interested in the conclusion and recommendations of the Task Force.

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Dr. Santa Cruz asked to change the word insufficient to limited. He also referred to paragraph three and asked if it was determined to increase the amount of times the AIMS assessment was administered. Dr. Garcia said that there will continue to be five administrations of the test.

Dr. Santa Cruz sated that the other suggestions are pronoun pieces. Dr. Garcia asked if he could submit those changes electronically.

Dr. Zaharis asked Dr. Santa Cruz to explain his request to change the word insufficient to limited. Dr. Santa Cruz said that through the discussions the word insufficient would work but it does not go far enough to explain the test. He stated that the test is a 10<sup>th</sup> grade high stakes test for graduation purposes, but provided limited information. Dr. Zaharis said that initially the word insufficient was proposed because the AIMS Test is important for mastery of minimal skills, but it was not sufficient to measure the threshold of career and college readiness.

Dr. Santa Cruz said that from the school's point of view there is negativity with the term *insufficient* because it is used for accountability purposes for schools it may be portrayed that an insufficient test is administered. A limited test would communicate that the test only takes schools to a point and that schools are not teaching at an insufficient level.

Dr. O'Reilly said Dr. Santa Cruz's suggestions could be added to the definition of *insufficient*.

Dr. Gonzalez stated that she was concerned that by adding new subject areas to AIMS, that would make the assessment less limited. She said she would rather not add more subject areas but rather focus on measures for college and career readiness.

Dr. Zaharis stated that the Task Force concurs that AIMS should be kept as a high stakes test and any additional assessments should not be high stakes, instead these additional assessments should be college/career ready level.

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Dr. O'Reilly suggested deleting the last sentence of paragraph 1, *There are a number of ways schools could balance these two needs*. He stated that the focus is not AIMS but rather the next level.

Dr. Gonzalez asked to review the third paragraph and asked if a long term assessment system is being created, or if the objective was to create a series of recommendations. Dr. Zaharis stated that the purpose is to create long term recommendations and the members agreed to change *created a long-term assessment system to we have created a series of recommendations*.

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Dr. O'Reilly suggested deleting *rather than punitive* in the first paragraph because denying a diploma is not punitive but actually encouraging of students to try harder. The members agreed to make the change.

The Task Force also agreed that they would keep the last sentence on paragraph 1 to recognize the Board's current position on dual diplomas.

Dr. Zaharis asked Dr. O'Reilly and Dr. Garcia to work on the change to clarify differentiated resources and multiple pathways.

The last comment on page three regarding the consideration of early warning systems will be addressed on the meeting April 22<sup>nd</sup>. Dr. Zaharis said he would definitely like to add information about early warning systems in the final document.

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Dr. Garcia stated that the changes Dr. Gonzalez suggested for further discussion on the indicators that are not assessments. He said that this topic was related to a school accountability discussion early in the process.

Members also discussed the terminology of college/career readiness and agreed the document should read *college and career readiness*.

Dr. Zaharis stated that as a result of the Achieve meetings he would like to express the importance of finding a common ground for the terms used. He also said that as a member of various groups he trying to find areas where the discussion could be kept open but with a common core. Dr. Zaharis said that this is one of the reasons he asked to include the Cambridge assessment as one of the mentioned tests that examine international standards.

The members agreed to add the Cambridge assessment to the list of possible assessments.

Dr. Garcia stated that the only comment left to address on page 4 is the section for Other Considerations. The topic listed under this area should be placed somewhere else in the report if it was going to stay or asked if the members would like to delete it.

Dr. Zaharis stated that the last sentence of the paragraph in questions would need to be part of the report because it states that the learning goals must remain constant and that time and instruction must be variable.

After a brief discussion Dr. Garcia said that the term Other Considerations would be deleted and the statement would be added in another area of the report.

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Dr. Zaharis said that the statement on the first paragraph is not strong enough and he suggested that all students take the college and career readiness test with an opt-out provision that can be requested in writing by the family not the student. He also said that this would put in place the AIMS assessment and a college and career readiness assessment for all students to have an honest snapshot of where they are relative to post-secondary education.

Dr. Balentine stated that the State Board's requirements contain the same concept.

Dr. Garcia asked how a new assessment would be incorporated into the school accountability system if the Task Force decides not to have consequences associated with the new assessment.

Dr. Zaharis stated the assessment would be of value and by noting the participation rate and with the hope that the rate would continue to increase.

Ms. Jensen stated that using the term accountability system is dangerous and the definition should be more specific. Dr. Garcia said that one way to note the participation rate is to make it part of the report cards but not for the purposes of school labels.

On letter D of paragraph 1 Dr. Gonzalez asked to make a change and for the statement to read; *the State Board of Education, ABOR, and the Community College Board should agree on how the college and career readiness assessment would be used. Scores would be used for admission, placement and incentive reward purposes.*

Ms. Jensen asked to delete the last sentence on paragraph E of page 5 stating that the number of AIMS writing administrations would be limited. The members agreed to remove this statement.

Another suggestion was to remove from paragraph E the statement that *this recommendation is cost neutral.*

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Dr. Garcia stated that Dr. Storm submitted a statement that endorsements on diplomas are and a topic beyond the charge of the Task Force.

Dr. Gonzalez presented the DRAFT Proposal for College-Career Prepared Endorsement step by step and what would be required to obtain the endorsement. The members were provided an outline of the proposed Endorsement.

A copy of this document can be provided at the State Board office.

Dr. Essigs stated that he likes the proposal and finds it to be very positive.

Dr. Zaharis stated that the third column; System Level Incentives for School and District Accountability could be left out.

The career and college prepared endorsement would be an incentive not a punishment.

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Mr. Yanez stated that instead of referring to the Terra Nova assessment that it be discussed as the NRT assessment.

Dr. Garcia said that the cost savings could be listed under a separate report and be as specific as possible. (The topics discussed on pages 7 and 8 will be part of the separate report)

Dr. Essigs stated that it is important to keep the NCLB and USDOE references.

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Dr. Garcia asked to further discuss writing as a graduation requirement.

Dr. Balentine said that as a superintendent she knows writing is critical. Dr. Zaharis stated that he does not want to diminish the importance of the writing assessment.

On paragraph 6 of page 9 the members would like to change the word *eliminate* when talking about writing. Dr. Zaharis asked the members to please send suggestions on alternatives to address this topic.

Dr. Garcia said that there were two separate issues to consider one the consideration to keep writing at the 10<sup>th</sup> grade but not as a graduation requirement in order to comply with state statute. The other topic is writing in the accountability system.

Dr. Gonzalez stated that there was an agreement that talking about the accountability system is not the Task Force priority.

Ms. Jensen stated that once writing is not high stakes for students it should not be high stakes for districts.

Dr. Balentine suggested that the word transition be used instead of phase out. Mr. Yanez stated that if the Task Force was to recommend a transition with respect to the AIMS test that would have to be a recommendation made to the Legislature and if this was to happen it would automatically trigger accountability issues that the Board would need to address.

Dr. Zaharis stated that as a Task Force they are not requesting to remove the writing assessment and it will not be a high stakes assessment. Dr. O'Reilly said the writing assessment would not be a high stakes exam; it would only be for students to measure their skill level.

Dr. Garcia suggested that section 6 on page 9 be taken out completely. Dr. Gonzalez that she agrees with that suggestion and instead keep AIMS writing as it currently stands and allow the ADE to continue to work with their technical advisory committee to improve validity and reliability of the assessment.

Ms. Jensen asked if ECAP were implemented at the 8<sup>th</sup> grade level there is no direct logistical path for the paper work to follow the student to high school. Transcripts are not transferred from middle school to high school.

Dr. Zaharis asked Ms. Jensen to write down her questions and concerns for Mr. Yanez. Dr. Garcia recommended that the ECAPS paragraph be deleted.

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Dr. Santa Cruz asked to delete the section on certificates for Achievement. The Task Force agreed to delete the sentence.

Dr. Zaharis ask if the members had any questions on the charts and information on pages 13 and 14. The changes suggested were technicalities such as terms and arrows. (The changes made to the charts will be reflected on the next draft of the recommendations)

Dr. Zaharis thanked the members for a good and rich discussion.

Dr. Essigs asked if the final report would include an executive summary. Dr. Garcia said it would.

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

### **\*Mr. Harold Tenney, Principal of Washington Traditional School**

Mr. Tenney provided the members with a handout regarding his proposals for the Task Force. His recommendation was for assessments at the elementary level.

Dr. Zaharis asked Mr. Tenney to contact the ADE Assessment Unit and provide them with the information presented.

**\*Penny Kotterman, Chairperson from the Education Coalition.**

Ms. Kotterman provided the members with a handout outlining the guiding principles and purpose of student assessments as approved by the Education Coalition.

Ms. Kotterman also stated that it is important to have curriculum that will be assessed and she explained the steps the coalition took to come to the ideas on the document presented.

Dr. Zaharis thanked the audience for attending and asked the members to please submit any proposed changes to Dr. Garcia as soon as possible.

**6. Adjournment**

12:23pm