

Minutes
AIMS Task Force
Wednesday, December 10, 2008

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 9:33 AM.

Members Present:

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

Members Absent:

Mr. Chuck Essigs
Ms. Melinda Jensen

1. Call to order

Dr. Zaharis called the meeting to order and welcomed the attendees. Dr. Zaharis excused Ms. Melinda Jensen and Mr. Chuck Essigs and ask Mr. Vince Yanez to proceed with roll call.

2. Roll call

Attendance is noted above.

3. Consideration to approve minutes for November 12, 2008

Dr. O'Reilly asked to revise the sentence of Mr. Essigs attendance. Mr. Essigs was not on assignment for the Task Force.

Mr. Yanez said this would be noted and revised.

Dr. Storm moved to approve the November 12, 2008 minutes, motion second by Dr. O'Reilly.

Motion passed.

Dr. Zaharis asked if the members had any questions or clarifications and proceeded to give an overview of the items that would be covered in the meeting. Dr. Zaharis said there would be a 15 minute presentation on the outcomes of high-stakes testing by Dr. David Garcia and a student from ASU. The next section of the meeting would be to review the AIMS Task Force purpose statement and encouraged the members to provide their input. The last section of the meeting would be to have a significant discussion on what has been presented and address the critical question if AIMS should remain as a high-stakes test for the students of Arizona and if possible have a preliminary decision on this topic.

4. Presentation and discussion regarding the intended and unintended outcomes of high-stakes testing.

Dr. David Garcia introduced Ms. Kim Eversman.

Ms. Eversman provided the task force members with a summary of the articles she referenced for the presentation. Ms. Eversman stated that in the research literature there are far more negatives documented for high-stakes testing than positives. Most of the positive research deals with the accountability of schools rather than students and policy as the

ultimate measure of success for rising test scores.

The presentation covered the following points:

Positives outcomes

- Few positives outcomes found in academic literature.
- Scores generally rise
- Schools held accountable
- Increased attention to the performance of all students and schools
- Public accountability

Negatives outcomes

- Narrows the curriculum (teach to the test)
- Those students most likely to pass are those most likely to test
- High-stakes testing can at times lead to cheating
- Single graduation test are contrary to professional judgments
- All outcomes do not affect schools equally

Policy Implications:

- Are we satisfied with the outcomes of graduation tests? Why or why not?
- Moving forward, we should be critical in our deliberations to continue with current policies
- Is a graduation test necessary?

Dr. Zaharis thanked Ms. Eversman for her presentation and providing the background information.

Dr. Zaharis asked Dr. Garcia if he had further comments on what has been presented or the topics to be considered on the agenda.

Dr. Garcia stated that the task force can more meaningfully move forward and talk about adding on to or making changes to the AIMS test and hopes that the members have found the summary of information provided helpful to make their decisions.

Dr. Zaharis asked the task force members if they had questions for Ms. Eversman or Dr. Garcia.

Dr. O'Reilly said he recognizes there are few statistics about the positive student impact of high-stakes testing and stated that although very little there is some and he referenced one of the studies which provided information on this topic.

Dr. Zaharis asked Dr. Santa Cruz for his opinion as a school principal.

Dr. Santa Cruz said he is impressed with what has been achieved so far in terms of establishing a form of accountability. Dr. Santa Cruz stated that the logistics of test administration can be complex and that the negatives function around the formatting and implementation, not necessarily the standards or instructional pieces of the test.

Dr. Gonzalez stated that from the student motivational perspective when the Phoenix Union High School District first started taking the AIMS test the student performance was very low and when the test became a requirement for graduation student performance doubled. Dr. Gonzalez also said that although this was a motivation for students, special population students need to be kept in mind for the best interest of the students and the teachers in this area.

Dr. Storm said there the test can be a de-motivator for many students who cannot pass at the 10th grade level and there are students who are not staying for other chances they have to pass the test.

Dr. Zaharis stated that as a representative of the business community students need to have standards to be better prepared to succeed. Standards and assessment is critical. He also stated that an objective and major argument is to have more credibility not more higher-stakes.

Mr. Yanez stated a copy of the law would be provided to the Task Force members at the End of the meeting.

Topics for Discussion:

- **Review first draft of group statement**
- **Should AIMS continue as a graduation requirement?**

Dr. Zaharis asked to begin the review of the Guiding Statement Draft and asked the members if they would like to review the draft step by step. Dr. Zaharis also stated that the essence of the statement is that the current AIMS high school test is *essential, initial but insufficient*.

Dr. O'Reilly stated it would be purposeful to review the document page by page. Dr. Gonzales and Dr. Santa Cruz concurred that it is important to have a clearly defined purpose and guiding principles.

The task force members also agreed that a better word or definition was needed for the word *insufficient* in the statement.

Dr. Zaharis asked Dr. Garcia if he could start the review of the guideline statements

Dr. Garcia stated that the summary of essential had two major points.

- The measure was essential for school accountability and not so much for student achievement.
- The conflict of having one measure of testing for 100% of the students.

Dr. Zaharis agrees that the notion of 100% is not wise and needs to be clarified, and as to the point of school accountability it is a valid point but student accountability is important. Graduates need to possess and demonstrate the skills required.

Dr. Storm stated that the statement should have clear plan for exempt students.

Dr. Zaharis said the statement of 100% could be an inspirational goal and a rational and procedure must immediately follow that statement for the exempt population of students. Another option would be to have a statement less than 100% that from the beginning acknowledges the exempt population.

Dr. Storm said the provision in place currently covers the exempt population but stated he does not think it is monitored and administered well by some districts.

Dr. Zaharis said the current policy level may be appropriate but the implementation level may need fine tuning.

Dr. Gonzales said that there are measures in place currently that monitor the percentage of students classified as exempt. Augmentation is another resource in place that allows policy to make adjustments however there are some conflicts and in the process of recognizing these conflicts it is important to make sure the accountability system makes appropriate adjustments.

Dr. Garcia asked if the task force would approve of him working with Dr. Storm in the research for special populations.

Dr. Zaharis asked the opinion of the task force and the members agreed. Dr. Zaharis asked that Mr. Yanez be kept informed of this information.

Dr. Zaharis moved to review the second paragraph on Initial.

Dr. Storm said that students are put in remedial studies and this becomes a student's high school experience.

Dr. Zaharis said he would like to put the responsibility on the educational system and the instructional methodology to achieve the goal and motivate students.

Dr. Zaharis asked Dr. Garcia to make the special populations research part of the final report.

Dr. O'Reilly asked to change the second sentence to "The test, however, does not measure the outcomes we expect at the end of high school."

Dr. Zaharis asked to move on to the third paragraph on Insufficient.

Dr. Gonzales asked to make a change to the first sentence and state that AIMS as a single measure cannot feasibly become a quality indicator of workforce or post secondary readiness.

Dr. Garcia explained that the following paragraphs in the draft were topics of future direction in the development of the three central themes of the purpose statement.

Dr. Zaharis to remove the sentence on the subject of a dual diploma in order not to limit the options and suggestions.

Dr. Garcia said that the objective of the sentence was to make the members aware of the State Board's stance on the topic and would not limit discussion or alternative options.

Task force members expressed they would like to keep the sentence as part of the paragraph defining Differentiation.

Dr. O'Reilly asked to remove the "second class" status phase on the last sentence in the paragraph for Equity and Equality.

Dr. Zaharis agreed with that change and asked to emphasize on the main point which should be finding multiple pathways.

On the definition for Rewards and Open Doors Dr. O'Reilly asked to change the word *rewards* to *providing opportunities*. The Task Force members agreed that the main topic of the paragraph should be the emphasis of providing rewards that are conducive to opportunities for students

Dr. O'Reilly asked if early warning intervention would be researched and if the information could be part of a separate paragraph. Dr. Garcia said this topic would be researched and Dr. Zaharis said he would like more information also.

On the paragraph for Additive the only change requested was to delete AIMS.

Dr. Gonzales asked to modify the sentence on line 10 of page 3 to read; we are open to considering a number of high school indicators, rather than a single measurement.

No changes were made to the paragraph defining Credible and Dr. Zaharis stated this information was essential.

Dr O'Reilly stated he would like to make long term recommendations and Dr. Zaharis agreed to include in the purpose document that it is the Task Force desire to create a long term assessment model.

Dr. Storm asked to hold the review of the paragraph on Special Populations until the Task Force is provided with the further research.

Dr. Zaharis asked for a higher education review and feedback as to the recommendations.

Dr. O'Reilly asked to see information on practical implementations and clarification on what assessments are available.

Dr. Zaharis stated the first portion of the discussion was complete and asked to move to the second portion; should AIMS continue as a graduation requirement. Dr. Zaharis said he would like to come to a consensus and a preliminary agreement.

Dr. Gonzales stated that for some students AIMS has served as a motivator but an unintended consequence is the high school experience for students who take the test seriously but do not possess the skills and knowledge to pass the test.

Dr. O'Reilly stated he would like a tenth grade graduation requirement but prepare students for this requirement before they reach high school.

Dr. Santa Cruz agreed the AIMS test should be kept and efforts should be made to improve it.

Dr. Storm said he has conflicting thoughts he doesn't think the assessment should go away but he does not agree that the test should be a deciding factor and other options should be considered and the emphasis should be modified.

Dr. Zaharis said he would generally be supportive of keeping AIMS and in terms of expansion he would like to have a statement of fact to the diploma therefore giving students a positive validation of their achievement.

Dr. Garcia asked if the members would like to keep AIMS as a 10th grade assessment and graduation requirement. He also asked the members if they would still like the comparison and options in other states. The Task Force members said they would like this information.

Dr. Zaharis asked to continue the discussion on an alternative certificate that reflects the course of the study the student does achieve.

Task Force members agree that students should be evaluated by only one indicator and Dr. Gonzalez stated a diploma should mean more than time served and that the ultimate goal is fewer dropout students through a system that helps schools develop credible and meaningful experiences for students.

The general response of the Task Force was that yes, AIMS should continue as a graduation requirement and the committee would like more than the requirements that are currently in place.

Dr. Garcia reviewed the objectives for the next meeting:

- Dr. Garcia will work with Dr. Storm for further information on special education
- Dr. Garcia will work with Dr. Gonzales and Dr. O'Reilly on the recommendations on the administrative aspects of AIMS.
- A better understanding of NCLB
- Other indicators; comparison of other states

Mr. Yanez asked Dr. Garcia and the task force members to send all information to him first and he will distribute the information to the Task Force members.

Dr. Storm offered to host the next AIMS Task Force meeting on January 14th.

5. Call to the public

- Mr. Kevin Brackney, Supt. of Show-Low USD provided a one page summary and other handouts with further information on the New York's Regents Exam.
- Ms. Kris Zavoli, Senior Director for State Government Relations, for the College Board. Ms. Zavoli said she would like to a resource for the Task Force and that she has provided Dr. Garcia with information on what other states are doing along the lines of tests being used.

Dr. Zaharis thanked the Task Force members and the audience for their attendance. He also stated that the next meeting would be on January 14, 2009 and that further location information would be provided.

6. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 11:58 AM