

## Parent Community Engagement and Involvement Advisory Council

Meeting Minutes: **January 11, 2011**

1135 Tremont Street, Suite 420, Boston, MA 02120

In Attendance: Peggie O'Hare, Kathy Meagher, Jim Harrity, Pat Gorham, Kristine Donahue, Antonia Blinn, Kim Hunt, Joanne McCormick, Kathy Rodriguez (ESE PCEI Liaison), Julie Salois, Robert Bouvier, Barbara Krol-Sinclair, Guests: Gavin Pond (Mass PIRC), Anne Serino (ESE).

Absent: Laurie Carr, Ana Maria Chacon, Marsha Finkelstein, Courtney Rizzo, Kristen Sullivan, Abby Weiss, Chris Sposato, Brian Middleton-Cox, Jen Pinto.

### Proceedings:

- \* Meeting called to order at 10:30am by chair, Peggie O'Hare
- \* Vote to approve minutes for 11/1/2010
  - Minutes with revisions unanimously approved
- \* Vote to approve minutes for 12/10/2010
  - Minutes with revisions unanimously approved
- \* Peggie requested volunteers to review website for accuracy and completeness:
  - Barbara Krol-Sinclair volunteered
- \* Updates from Dept. of Elementary and Secondary Education (ESE)
  - Anne Serino informed the Council that authorization for meetings in excess of four per year is granted by the administrator of the unit that provides the liaison to the council. That person is currently Anne Serino and she is approving the PCEI meeting schedule.
  - Anne also informed the council that ESE is working internally to bring together the various ESE programs which are involved in family and community engagement activities. A meeting is planned with Karla Baehr, Deputy Commissioner of Education to discuss activities and common goals.
  - Kathy Rodriguez added that support for family engagement strong within the department from employees at many different levels.
- \* Peggie informed the Council that the Racial Imbalance Advisory Council (RIAC) would be meeting on Thursday, January 13, and that PCEI Council members are welcome to attend at 10:00 am.
  - Kristine Donahue and Jim Harrity volunteered to attend. [The meeting was later postponed due to weather]
  - Peggie suggested that the Council discuss briefly what messages, objectives should be communicated to the RIAC.

- Kathy R. pointed out that the language of the Commissioner’s charge was for the RIAC and PCEI Council to work together to give “advice on the content of a resource guide,” rather than to create a guide from scratch.
- Peggie asked what the council thought a realistic end goal would be, and to whom their advice should be directed.
- Kathy R. thought that the Advisory Councils have some leeway determining audiences and shaping advice accordingly.
- Kathy Meagher suggested that the RIAC would be a valuable resource to ensure that any advice given is both inclusive and culturally sensitive.
- Robert Bouvier suggested that advice include support for parents to develop their parenting skills.
- Peggie mentioned that there is significant research supporting the importance of developing parenting skills, and that it would be useful to include it in a resource guide.
- Antonia Blinn informed the council that her organization surveyed a significant number of superintendents and school committee members and found that parental involvement was listed as the most important component in educational reform by both groups.
- Peggie suggested three objectives for meeting with RIAC
  - o 1. Introductions
  - o 2. Discussion of objectives
  - o 3. Establishment of a timeframe
- Anne stated that a major goal of ESE is to close the achievement gap, and that collaboration between the PCEI Council and RIAC is likely viewed as a means to help do that.
- Kathy M. suggested that the PCEI Council work with the RAIC to identify barriers to effective parental involvement in different cultural groups and suggest ways to overcome them
- Peggie pointed out that a report recently circulated to members of the PCEI Council – “Minority Parent and Community Engagement: Best Practices and Policy Recommendations for Closing the Gaps in Student Achievement” – defines a number of barriers to parental involvement and lists several strategies for overcoming them. She then suggested that one task for the Advisory Councils would be to tailor a similar set of barriers and strategies specifically to Massachusetts.

\* Discussion of appropriate term for PCEI “standards/frameworks/guidelines etc...” [As this discussion was lengthy, complex, and involved, these minutes will only summarize the major arguments for and against each term seriously considered, and record the results.]

- “Standards”
  - o Some council members felt strongly that “standards” was the most appropriate term since it unequivocally communicates that schools are expected to engage parents according to a clearly defined set of criteria.
  - o Doubts were expressed as to whether sufficient evidence existed to irrefutably support the claim that the PCEI “standards” will result in improved student achievement.
  - o ESE has stated that it does not support the use of the term “standards.”
- “Frameworks/Guidelines” for Family School Community Partnerships

- “Frameworks” and “guidelines” were opposed on the grounds that they implied suggestions or way of thinking about family, school, community engagement, rather than expectations that all schools should meet.
- These words were supported on the grounds that they would likely be more palatable to ESE than “standards.”
- These terms were also supported by those who thought they represented a more accurate description of the level of development of the PCEI indicators than “standards”
- “Foundations” of Family School Community Partnerships
  - Some felt that foundations implied something too established and unchangeable to accurately represent the PCEI indicators, but there were no strong objections.
  - “Foundations” was supported as a stronger word than “guidelines” or “frameworks,” but less problematic than “standards.”
- “Fundamentals” of Family School Community Partnerships
  - There was no strong opposition to “fundamentals,” although some thought it was not the term that most clearly represented the nature of the PCEI indicators.
  - Similar to “foundations,” “fundamentals” was supported as a stronger word than “guidelines” or “frameworks,” but less problematic than “standards.”
- After several rounds of voting, a final vote between “foundations” and “fundamentals” was held, with “Family, Community and School Partnership Fundamentals” winning by a vote of seven to four.

Meeting adjourned at 12:35.

Submitted by Gavin Pond and Peggie O’Hare