

STATE OF NEVADA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

ADVISORY COUNCIL ON PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT
MEETING MINUTES FOR May 14, 2008

Barbara Clark, Member
Thad Ballard, Member (absent)
Mary Clair, Member (absent)
Rollins Stallworth, Member
Senator Joyce Woodhouse, Member (absent)
Debi Millett, Member
Alison Turner, Member
Assemblyman Ruben Kihuen, Member (absent)
Patricia Lopez, Member (Absent)
Darrin Rohr, Member (Absent)

Staff Present:

Gloria Dopf, Deputy Superintendent for Instruction, Research and Evaluative Services, NDE
Lori Johnson, Administrative Assistant for the Parental Involvement Council

Audience in Attendance:

Denise Hedrick, Executive Director of the Education Collaborative
Eva Melendrez, Parent Involvement Coordinator for Clark County School District
D'Lisa Crain, Grant administrator for Washoe County, PIRC and the Education Collaborative

1. Call to Order; Roll Call

Chair Clark called the meeting of the Advisory Council on Parent Involvement (PIC) to order at 9:50 a.m. in the 1st Floor Conference Room # 113, at the Clark County School District office at 5100 West Sahara Ave. Las Vegas, Nevada. Roll call showed members present as indicated. There was no quorum present. Chair Clark asked about the mechanism for reappointment of members who have not been able to attend any of these meetings. Darrin Rohr has requested to be removed as he is traveling out of the country extensively for his job. Dr. Rheault is looking at a replacement for his seat. Members present agreed to a flexible agenda. Minor changes to the February minutes were suggested.

2. Reflections and Comments on the Parental Involvement Summit 2

Chair Clark asked for comments on the Summit on Education. She commented that she thought the Summit went very well. Chair Clark asked about what the members thought about the workshops.

Ms. Millett made a suggestion that the notice to employees of the CCSD to attend should come from the Superintendent's office.

Ms. Melendrez suggested a presentation about the Summit to the NASS group for their future support.

Alison commented that a bigger push should be made for principals from rural areas to attend. It would be beneficial and would be of more interest to the rural employees if the invitation came with an official blessing.

Chair Clark said that there was a dilemma on whether to invite people who are already involved with Parent Involvement or invite those who are resistant to that idea.

Member Stallworth expressed a desire to get more parents to attend the Summit. He suggested that each school be aggressive in bringing a team of parents and administrators. Perhaps the next summit (2010) the workshops could be geared toward parents.

Chair Clark commented that it is a fine line to drive registration and stay in line with budget. Ms. Melendrez suggested setting the goal of attendance at 300 of which 100 must be parents.

Member Turner said that the budget cuts have served as a distraction to the idea of parental involvement.

Ms. Dopf suggested that the group look at the recommendations that came out of the first summit regarding the systemic issues surrounding the issue of Parental Involvement and to use that and the we had made progress and gains in the terms of advancing the systemic issues and in light of budget issues the Parental Involvement issue had been put on the back burner and it is an important enough issue that this Council entertain the concept of asking for funding from the legislature. And reinstatement of the Consultant position which would be a significant asset.

Member Turner asked about Anna Severens who took Janie Lowe's place at the NDE and if she is available to help on this issue?

Ms. Dopf answered that she is NDE Early Childhood Consultant but that position was never intended to be devoted to the parental involvement issues. She then explained that the only way to restore the Statewide Parental Involvement Consultant would be if the State Board puts it back into the budget as an enhancement unit to the 2010-2011 budget proposal. There is no formal placeholder for this Consultant position any longer in our current budget. The State Board will then prioritize the requests for enhancement (new) units. If the budget is so severe that no enhancement units will be included, then that leaves this Council's report as the only other opportunity to

reinstate the position through Legislative Council on Education (LCE). LCE then makes their requests to the full legislature.

Gloria further explained that following the report due to LCE in July, the LCE goes into a work session.

Ms. Crain said that PIRC and the Education Collaborative uses UNR Center for Program Evaluation as an outside source for getting survey results and it might be possible to get at least this part of the information back in time for July report.

Ms. Dopf recapped that this Council may decide to ask the legislature for support, or dedicated funding to hold the parent summit or possibly a share-fair type gathering periodically, in addition to the reinstatement of Parent Involvement Coordinator.

2. Discussion of this Advisory Council acting as an informal Board providing guidance to PIRC.

Denise Hedrick, executive director of the Education Collaborative explained the proposal to have this Advisory Council act as an informal board to Parent Information Resource Center (PIRC) with regard to statewide initiatives on issues of Parental Involvement.

The Educational Collaborative is the host for Nevada PIRC and they would like to establish a special advisory board in an effort to create a systemic network of resources and opportunity for partnerships that are in step with the same objectives this Council has. Ms. Hedrick asked Ms. Crain to further elaborate what the Technical assistance piece is of the PIRC federal grant.

Per Ms. Crain the federal agency who monitors the PIRC grant has asked for an informal state board that serves the entire state and includes key players from the PTA and NDE and legislative members to be formed. PIRC administrators thought that would just be a duplication of this Council.

Chair Clark asked if there was any statutory preclusion that this body could not act as an advisory board to the PIRC.

Ms. Dopf said that she was not certain but if this Council met with the PIRC with a quorum of this body present, it would have to follow Open Meeting Law.

Ms. Hedrick stated that all of the PIRC meetings observe the open meeting law requirement now.

Ms. Crain said that in addition to this council there would need two more people, one representing NVPEP and one from NDE, specific to Title I representation.

Ms. Dopf reminded them that she, as a representative of NDE, is staff to this Council but not a member.

Ms. Crain stated that this would be an informal board and possibly if the PIRC could have input through this Council to reach the southern areas and rural counties within the State they would be better serving all of Nevada. She clarified that the PIRC has an advisory committee of the parents that are served, but that is mostly informational.

Ms. Turner asked why the advisory committee of parents only involves the Washoe area.

Ms. Crain answered that it is more of a logistical and cost-related problem to get Clark County parents more involved.

Ms. Dopf pointed out that this is a scenario of how this Council can help the PIRC involve other counties as statewide initiatives or recommendations.

Member Stallworth said that this Council certainly is benefiting from PIRC relationship as they are able to fund this Council's transportation costs, since the Legislature did not fund this Council.

Chair Clark asked staff to place a standing item on every agenda of PIC for a report from PIRC. They would have that time to ask for recommendations regarding statewide Parental Involvement Issues.

3. Review of District Title 1 plans for Parent Involvement

Ms Dopf explained that the previous meetings distribution of the Title 1 district plans had not been reviewed for compliance due to time constraints. Since then NDE has determined that the only compliant districts on first review were Douglas, Storey and Washoe. The other districts have since made changes for compliance but those updated copies have not been distributed.

She explained that the Federal Title 1 agency monitoring documents require a cookie cutter approach in order to meet their check-off list perspective. The further the report gets away from federal language, the more the district will likely be sited for non-compliance. Federal language is not particularly user-friendly. She will have staff will pull together the "community/parent outreach" part of the District Improvement Plan(DIP) and also the Accountability report by district so they could see each district response to the "parent communication information" requirement but everyone will notice that the districts use the same federal language. Further she stated that this might be an issue this group would like to pursue, that of the dichotomy which is that the federal language does not promote plain explanation to parents. Chair Clark asked how the NDE actually knows if the policies as stated in the plans are actually used and implemented.

Ms. Dopf explained that Title 1 served schools must have a component of parental involvement policy and when their plans are reviewed; if the District policy was in compliance there would be no further follow up.

Ms. Crain asked about a new form she thought was being put into effect about actual implementation rather than compliance. Ms. Dopf will follow up with Janie Lowe.

Chair Clark suggested that this Council might put together some recommendations to LCE for further steps regarding implementation.

Ms. Melendrez pointed out the necessity of sensitivity to forcing “unfunded mandates” on schools that see the work of parental involvement as an added burden, since they do not have a person who is responsible for this issue.

Member Stallworth suggested rather than judge each district, the Council inform the schools/districts of some best practices they can use for implementation. This Council could be a clearing house for distribution of models/ best practices and make it easier for some of the more rural schools to use the same idea that they know is already working in another district.

Ms. Turner stated that further information should be given to administrators on the proven links to student achievement so that parental involvement is not seen as a burden, but as a way to raise those district assessments.

Member Stallworth recounted the message he took to his principal at Hug High School after attending the Summit, which was to spend less time on rigor and more time on parent involvement. He said because of Hug’s structural makeup that of 4 houses that operate independently, they are able to experiment and are opening up their doors and phone calls to prove the viability of this issue. He said that he would like to have the parent group from New Mexico ENLACE who had a breakout presentation at the Summit address a parent night at HUG.

Ms. Crain also mentioned that common challenges can be shared among districts to assess parent involvement even if the districts are different.

Chair Clark commented that this Council needs an assessment from the parent’s perspective, possibly a survey that would provide a base of knowledge. She then asked how to translate such information into a link to better achievement that can then be brought to the LCE.

4. Review of Districts Accountability reports Pursuant to NRS 385.347 (2) (j)

Ms. Dopf shared information on the accountability reports that are available through the NDE website by going to nevadareportcard.org. She handed out copies of one of the shorter ones to use as an example of the type of information that is available. The districts craft their report in their own way, to include demographics. Some are more narrative in their method; she suggested that the Council members look at them

on the NDE website so the Council can make a finding as to whether the data is sufficient noting your review.

Ms. Millett brought up the issue of parents that do not have access to computers and do not speak English or Spanish and they are worried about putting food on the table so parent involvement is not important to them. She asked for suggestions on reaching these parents who need this help the most. Ms Millett expressed her concern that the available resources are not known to these parents.

Ms. Turner stated that everyone is concerned about those children and their families and making sure that children's basic needs are met is the first step in parent involvement.

A break was taken at 12:12p.m. Meeting resumed at 12:20pm

Discussion was held on whether this Council should ask for school or district level implementation. Member Stallworth suggested that this Council deal with the issues at a District level since this Council is unfunded and time limited.

Ms. Dopf recapped that the first level is "did each district have a parent involvement policy that conforms to the State Board policy". Having reached that determination what is the expectation for implementation? Ms. Dopf suggested asking for language to be added to the statute that enforces implementation. She suggested asking the LCE fund a state wide survey to determine what practices have been put into place to implement the parent involvement policy. The legislators need to help the state move to the next step, from policy to practice. In all of the discussion there was a continual reinforcement of the need for a Statewide Parental Coordinator. Ms. Dopf stated that districts are currently conforming by putting a policy into place which is all that has been legislated at this point.

Ms. Crain asked if the NDE has a way to assess the efficacy of parent involvement within any current forms of assessment.

Ms. Dopf answered that no mechanism currently exists to systematically assess the level of parent involvement efforts. She stated that in her opinion, Senator Raggio's expectation of the Report to Parents (NRS 392.456) and the Educational Involvement Accord (NRS 392.4575) was to establish a relationship that encouraged parent participation and responsibility for their student's achievement. Ms. Dopf elaborated that since this communication is currently voluntary and lies with the teacher to initiate this tool, assessment would be unavailable.

Ms. Crain stated that the burden is on schools to engage parents and perhaps data already exists in other assessments such as the Student Achievement Gap Elimination (SAGE) which she thought had a component for parent participation.

Ms. Dopf explained that the SAGE process is a component of the State Improvement Plan (SIP). This is a statutory requirement NDE has embedded into the SIP and DIP process. The plan assigns actions and follow up to areas that need improvement. Each school has a different orientation to this process. The DIP usually focuses on improving communications. Depending on the district this could manifest itself in dealing with ELL and hard to reach parents by accommodations or interpreters.

Ms. Dopf stated that the description contained within the DIP is usually not a comprehensive piece of information.

Ms. Melendrez admitted that in her role as Clark County Coordinator for the Office of Parent Services, even she, is not aware of what each individual school is doing. She just found out about a Skilltutor program at Valley High School which uses collaborative tutoring for ELL students and parents, which has been very successful for that school.

Chair Clark asked if the NDE can try to separate out the parent involvement policy and/or implementation within the District Plans. She would like to use existing data that is available instead of completely reinventing another study or plan. She also and is there some particular questions to add to the DIP.

Ms. Dopf said that she would extract what she could on this issue in each District Plan. She reminded them though that some of the information is interspersed throughout the document in relationship to different programs.

5. Task Force Reports on specific duties for LCE Report

Ms. Crain handed out informational worksheets used by Washoe County for the purpose of assessing parental involvement in the family, school classrooms and district levels.

Ms. Crain explained that Washoe County provides for Parent Involvement Facilitators (PIF) at each Title 1 school. They are classified staff hired through Title 1 funds for a minimum of 15 hours. Some schools have this position full time organizing school & parent events, build day to day relationships with parents and help in the parent resource centers. There are a total of 35 including 9 who are at middle and high schools who are funded through SB 185. PIRC provides professional training for these facilitators and would like to also provide training for clerical and office staff in the value of their role in how the community perceives the school through their phone call and communication.

Ms. Crain continued with information on the Washoe SIP template which includes a strategic plan for parent involvement. Washoe County Title 1 department requires more information from each school such as activities, who is participating, how these activities relate to standards and how can the school evaluate effectiveness. The district wants to know that the school is doing more than a PTA meeting and a

newsletter. When we started the parent involvement issue in an era of decision making based on data, we had none on this issue. So we looked at each schools SIP to find what was working and what was not. Washoe County was able to dedicate staff but it was a start from scratch.

Mr. Stallworth informed that HUG HS has a parent involvement coordinator but it is not a full time position. It takes a couple of years for that person to acclimate to the students and teachers and parents and unfortunately there is a lot of transition for that position and many times that position is used to fill in other capacities, they also have an interpreter those liaisons with the PIC position.

Ms Dopf asked if the self assessment forms that Washoe is using are embedded with intent for analysis, is there a focus on key items within the guide that we could use for a further survey.

Ms. Crain said that there were basic things like signage (environment) & communication. These forms are relatively new and they are just starting to train staff next week because there is some confusion about how to use the groupings and to bring back different perceptions from different levels of administration and focus groups.

Ms. Dopf mentioned that she met some rural administrators that were excited about the Pre-K-tool kit that was available at the Summit. A possible idea is to package ideas that Washoe and Clark have developed as tools to start implementation to some of the other more rural districts.

Chair Clark asked if this was something the Council could recommend for all districts to use as a type of tool or snapshot? (Look at the National family friendly website first step assessment tool), to get a picture of the individual school and the community. She said that this Council along with the help of a Statewide Consultant should show the districts how to move from policy to implementation to practice.

Ms. Dopf suggested that parental involvement should be viewed from a systemic structural issue and that the State should be a resource for all Districts to viewing this issue. She asked if Clark County has a snapshot of best practices.

Eva Melendrez said the Clark DIP has a list of programs used throughout the county but is broken down further into regions which utilized different programs. Her position in Clark was asked for through legislation for the last 8 years and it never materialized so it was recently created through the Clark County general fund.

Chair Clark also asked that for future reference the Council pull together job descriptions for the various positions of a PIC or PIF so that can certain skill levels can be maintained and add respectability to this position. In order for school site administrators to take the issue seriously the legislators may have to mandate this position or dictate the skill level

Ms. Crain discussed the task force rubric they put together to show other states best practices and or research. She suggested that common systemic issues be identified. She called attention to the following ideas, (1) California giving employees time off for education related activities, (2) having parents serving on state board., (3) professional development of parental issues with student teachers at college level.

Ms. Turner went over her task force matrix worksheet regarding outreach and ELL. Shea gave an example that the PTA recently partnered with McDonalds in southern Nevada and put their message on the paper liners for the trays that hold food. According to Ms Turner education needs to be marketed aggressively and the parent involvement issue is one that fits a distribution effort. The southern task force found the same issues and concerns that northern Nevada task force identified.

Ms. Turner commented that staff and administrative personnel, while working hard, have lost sight of the fact that the consumer of public education is parents and communities. Children's education is the product of public education.

6. Discussion of Statewide Parental Involvement Consultant

Chair Clark talked about all the discussion the Council has had in regard to the need for the State Consultant. Everyone on the Council agreed that the major obstacle to moving forward on the Parent Involvement issues is not having a statewide consultant.

7. Discussion of additional items needed for the Legislative Report due July 1

Chair Clark asked Ms. Dopf to give the Council ideas to move forward and wrap up this report.

Ms. Dopf commented that while there has been great discussion for future ideas the report for July 1 should focus on immediate needs, relative to what can be accomplished with LCE. There will be plenty of time to focus on structure and systemic issues by the time the legislature reconvenes in February of 2009 and this Councils final report will be due.

The report, due in July, should focus on high priorities that the LCE can help the Council with. Ms. Dopf and Lori will take the minutes of the past meetings, notes and comments of the task forces and focusing on the 10 statutory duties, draft a preliminary report that will give the group something to start with. She said that once the draft is pulled together, hopefully by June 6th, there needs to be a final follow up meeting.

The group agreed on June 18th for a meeting to finalize the document. Lori will try to make arrangements to videoconference the meeting from Reno to Las Vegas.

8. Comments from Council Members

There were none.

9. Public Comments

There were no public comments.

10. This meeting was adjourned at 1:30p.m