

Maryland Council for Educator Effectiveness (MCEE)

Minutes from Meeting of May 2, 2011

Absent:

Delegate Anne Kaiser

Dr. Bonita Coleman-Potter

Minutes

Nancy Grasmick, MCEE Co-Chair, opened the meeting at 9:00 a.m. and asked members to review the Minutes of February 14, 2011. With no discussion, the minutes were approved as presented.

Revised Timeline

Dr. Grasmick reported that an amendment was forwarded to the USDE regarding extending the operational timeline for implementing the Performance Evaluation System to 2013-2014. She said that she will report back to the Council when an answer is received.

Dr. Grasmick also reported that Maryland's Teacher of the Year, Michelle Shearer, was selected as the National Teacher of the Year. She gave a brief overview of Ms. Shearer's career noting that, as a chemistry teacher, she is contributing to the STEM effort in Maryland.

Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) Conference

Dr. Grasmick announced that David Burton and Dawn Pipkin attended a CCSSO Conference in Washington, DC focusing on educator effectiveness.

Mr. Burton said, "We were humbled by the experience." He said that he attended with Ms. Pipkin, along with leaders from the MSDE, and they found Maryland is moving along much faster than a lot of other states. He reported that some states moved too quickly and are now meeting stumbling blocks.

He referenced a document entitled, "InTASC" that provides teaching standards which are more about building capacity than accountability. He said the conference convinced him "We are getting things done the right way."

Ms. Pipkin said she learned of the importance of all stakeholders in the Council reaching consensus on the work being done since other states have had their work “unravel” following their decision-making.

Dr. Grasmick asked if any other states requested an amendment and Mr. Burton responded that Delaware has requested an extension for implementing the evaluation system by another year.

Mr. Burton suggested training not only for teachers and principals is needed, but also for superintendents and board members. Dr. Finan suggested higher education personnel should be trained as well since they are training the first wave of educators.

Dr. Grasmick thanked Senator Kelley for her support during the Maryland General Assembly session. Senator Kelley noted that teacher preparation instructors need to be trained as well. Dr. Grasmick said the group needs to agree on a list of people who need training in the new evaluation system.

Ms. Streckfus said the P-20 Council will be finalizing their priorities and that this training should become a priority for them. Dr. Grasmick said she will be attending a monitoring session with the USDE when the P-20 Council meets and asked Ms. Streckfus to represent the Council to make sure that this becomes a priority for the P-20 Council.

Dr. Grasmick said that the timeline chart which was prepared and distributed will be revised in the event the amendment to the operational timeline is approved.

Ms. Bost expressed concern about the demands to be placed on teachers and principals. Dr. Grasmick said that the first year’s pilots will define what professional development (PD) is needed.

Dr. Finan said, “We acknowledge that there is no fault, if it’s not working.”

Dr. Grasmick said, “We have an idea of what the PD should be, but teachers and principals will help define this.”

Ms. Bost expressed concern that there isn’t collaboration in all seven local school systems that are going to pilot the program. She suggested that MSDE staff have meetings with local leaders and teacher organizations in piloting counties and Dr. Grasmick agreed.

Senator Kelley suggested that the State Board be asked to provide funding to coalesce a cadre of people to work with the piloting counties and respond to any problems encountered the MSDE will pursue the need for additional resources.

Dr. Leak cautioned that the group needs to look at existing regulations to make sure they are in line with the evaluation program.

Dr. Jim Foran, RTTT Manager, said it is very hard to predict what the response from USDE will be, but that Dr. Grasmick said that she will appeal the decision if the request is denied. Dr. Grasmick also noted that she will be requesting a response prior to June 30th.

Ms. Weller noted that professional development for piloting counties will not end in the fall but will continue throughout the year.

Dr. Leak expressed the need to start working immediately with the piloting counties to ensure that their professional development is included in their school calendars. Ms. Weller said that local teacher associations have been told by school system administrators to wait until the Council makes its determinations before requesting professional development days.

Senator Kelley suggested that non-piloting county leaders be informed of what is transpiring in the piloting systems.

Dr. Alonso said this needs to be integrated with the common core standards. He said, "My hope is that there is room for innovation."

Ms. Streckfus said, "How do we make people feel like they are not guinea pigs but rather pioneers?" She suggested the importance of online and electronic communications with the "pioneers."

Dr. Grasmick said there is an existing evaluation system that will continue throughout the piloting year(s).

Framework for System to Evaluate Teachers
Framework for System to Evaluate Principals

Ms. Bost expressed concern that the Framework does not meet the narrative in the April 14 minutes. Dr. Grasmick noted that not everyone agreed during the rich discussions that took place at the last meeting but her impression was that everyone felt good about adding what is reflected on the chart.

Ms. Pipkin suggested adding the conversation that Ms. Bost alluded to as an addendum to the Framework. She reported there is a national board process in which teachers define the environment in which they are teaching. She agreed to bring the information to the Council and suggested that might be an important attachment to the chart. She also suggested adding “developing effective teacher” under performance standards.

Ms. Bost said she would support this suggestion for the teachers who would want to take on a higher level of assignment.

In response to a question by Dr. Grasmick about whether someone can be “developing” indefinitely, the group countered “no.” Dr. Grasmick said rules would have to be in place. Dr. Alonso said that principals would have a difficult time rating a teacher ineffective and they often see teachers who are “developing.” He said, “You can’t be in ‘developing’ for more than one or two years.”

Mr. Burton said, “It’s easier with a new and non-tenured teacher.” He explained the difficulty of telling a teacher who has received a satisfactory evaluation for ten years to be told they are now ineffective. He said he provides professional development to teachers who are struggling and after they receive the tools, if they continue to struggle, they could be deemed ineffective.

Dr. Alonso suggested superimposing a set of standards for the new teachers as opposed to tenured teachers.

Ms. Walker noted the time it takes to work with an ineffective teacher and said that principals tend to move ineffective teachers out to other schools.

Dr. Grasmick said, “Understand that this ineffective part is a continuum.”

Senator Kelley said, “Moving to output may make the difference. Everyone is under a different paradigm.”

Dr. Leak said, “This framework really focuses on what this whole model is promulgated on – PD.”

Ms. Hanlin said she did not agree with adding “developing” but agreed that the model may change.

Mr. Rutledge said, “Having results pieces is so much better. That whole concept should be shown. We should have standards for professional content.”

Ms. Streckfus cautioned that there should be “parent language” for parents to understand.

Ms. Bost said, “We need a formalized process for training veteran teachers. They have it in Montgomery County through the PARR Program.”

Dr. Grasmick said, “We need to pool what we have in the state and integrate this as the backup to what we are doing.”

Mr. Barclay said, “Parents could lose confidence if we add “developing.” He expressed concern about the significant costs to providing PD to help teachers. He said, “How do you afford it? How do we advocate for it?”

Dr. Grasmick said, “If we have a strong model and there is a level of consistency across the state, we can sell this in a much better way than what we have.”

Senator Kelley said, “We need to look at a pyramid when it comes to professional development. The bulk of professional development should come in the beginning of the teacher’s profession. We are losing so many people within five years.”

Ms. Walker said that the medical profession gives their students a residency which would be useful for the teaching profession.

Ms. Pedersen expressed concern that she can’t ask for more professional development funds since the thread is “do more, with less.”

Ms. Bost expressed concern about the current professional development not meeting the needs of teachers.

Dr. Grasmick said there are tool kits that can support professional development that don’t require a lot of extra funding.

Mr. Barclay said that using technology can lower the cost of professional development. He said, “We need to be creative and aggressive. We need to give LEAs the tools from the state.”

Definitions

Ms. Weller brought the group’s attention to a list of definitions for the Teacher Evaluation Model and asked for comments.

Ms. Bost asked about “Annual Evaluation.” Dr. Grasmick said there is an inconsistency in which the RTTT application speaks to an annual evaluation and the regulations speak to evaluations every other year. Dr. Grasmick asked Dr. Foran to comment on this.

Dr. Foran said that teachers are to be evaluated on non-student growth measures every other year. Dr. Grasmick said she will discuss this with the USDE staff when they meet on Monday.

Senator Kelley expressed concern saying that feedback delayed is not sufficient and doesn’t help. She said, “Everybody needs feedback. It should be annually.”

Ms. Pipkin suggested a goal-setting meeting at the beginning of the school year for teachers and that training should be tied to the goals.

Mr. Burton suggested that “FARM” and “ELL” be removed from the definition of “Complexity Factors.”

Dr. Grasmick said that the Council’s suggestions will be incorporated into the documents and asked the group to come back to the next meeting prepared to discuss the definitions and general standards.

Development and Use of Local School System Assessments

Dr. Carol Williamson, Superintendent, Queen Anne’s County Public Schools (QACPS)

Dr. Williamson provided a profile and demographics of the QACPS schools which have received top academic honors. She discussed the use of benchmark assessments to improve education in Queen Anne’s County. She reported that QACPS does not have assistant principals in its elementary schools but rather education specialists to assist the principal. She noted that continuity is very important and explained that she meets with principals and administrators on a monthly basis to focus on instruction.

She explained beginning in 2002, each school created a collaborative team to look at data. She said her team looked at alignment between the curriculum and assessments and kept an eye on what other school systems were doing that provided success. She noted as the Thornton dollars increased, county dollars decreased. Dr. Williamson said their local assessments were a good predictor of how the schools would perform on the state assessments. Dr. Williamson explained the difficulty of being unable to share certain materials due to copy write laws. She cautioned the need to maintain rigor when producing assessments and the need for reliability and validity. She said, "If you don't take the time to show people how to use the data, what's the point in giving the assessments?" She said, "Everyone needs to buy into this process." She provided a test distribution and collection flow chart. She outlined the technology-supported instruction and assessment and said that Kurzweil Readers are critical to helping special needs students.

Dr. Williamson said that coaching support provided by specialists is the key and noted the challenges of discipline problems were defused with PBIS.

Dr. Grasmick said the Queens Anne's County Public Schools emphasized the systematic way of developing their assessment system and how they saw that assessment system as an instructional tool. She said their system depends on constant reporting back and a full understanding and support of the assessment system by all school system employees. Dr. Grasmick noted that their assessment results were not used in a negative way.

Ms. Bost asked if the benchmarks are counted on student grades. Dr. Williamson said not for reading and mathematics.

Dr. Alonso asked what problems and constraints are facing QACPS. Dr. Williamson said they are waiting to see what the Council provides. She said, "It is very difficult to help teachers feel comfortable with the challenges of their students."

Ms. Pipkin said her school is using benchmarks as instructional tools.

Senator Kelley asked if they spend much time on item analysis. Dr. Williamson said the MSDE helped with that and they are making adjustments to their assessments. She said, "Data should be reflected on teacher evaluations."

Mr. Rutledge expressed concern about the validity of the tests developed by LEAs. He said there is often no correlation between benchmarks and state assessments.

Ms. Weller thanked Dr. Williamson for her excellent presentation and reminded Council members to review the general standards and definitions for the next meeting.

Adjournment

Dr. Grasmick reported that the **next meeting will be held on May 16, 2011, from 9 a.m. to Noon at the Board of Education Building in Anne Arundel County.** With no further discussion, the meeting ended at 12:05 p.m.