

Minority Teacher Recruitment Task Force

MEETING MINUTES

Monday, November 30, 2015

4:00 PM in Room 1E of the LOB

The meeting was called to order at 4:19 PM by Chairman, Sen. Gary Winfield.

The following committee members were present:

Members:	Arias A, Comer A, Barzee S, Gates J, Rodriguez O, Hernandez S, Wilson T, Gloster T,
Legislatures:	McCrary D. 007, Winfield G. 0010 , Porter R. 094

Absent were:

OPENING REMARKS

Chairman, Sen. Gary Winfield made opening remarks and gave the floor to Rep. McCrary.

Rep. McCrary gave a brief overview of his history as an educator, and the absence of minority teachers during his time, Rep. McCrary stated this as his number one priority and reminded the task force that they have to be steadfast in their commitment to see their recommendations through.

Sen. Winfield introduced first speaker Don Harris, Chair of Bloomfield Board of Education and CAFE Board Vice President.

Don Harris gave a brief overview of his history as an educator. He provided a timeline of efforts done 40 years ago to increase minority teacher recruitment by districts.

Don Harris stated the state has been doing this in bits and pieces for a number of years: CREC has a minority teacher program and fair. However, he is not sure how successful it is given the current situation the state is in, Mr. Harris questioned why there is an

apparent underwhelming number of minority students in enrolled as education majors. He remarked that CAFE is limited in what it can do, but preliminary conversations with SDE Commissioner seemed hopeful.

Don Harris identified the Praxis testing as the killer, a death toll for many people since its enactment in 1986. He commented on the statics of Praxis performance he recently retained in a report, they were terrifying. He then stated that one does not need certification to teach private school questioned the validity of that piece of paper. Mr. Harris then commented on the absence of minority teacher retention and reciprocity – teacher with 15 years of experience ultimately needs to pass the Praxis to teach in the state, this taking away a district's flexibility and contributing to the dwindling numbers of teachers of color.

Sarah Barzee commented on teacher reciprocity, claiming the State is working on reciprocity and it is correct that Connecticut's participate in an interstate agreements through NASDQ, giving it reciprocity with all fifty states and due to last year's legislation. SDE is working on recognition agreement with territories such as Puerto Rico, which has chosen to not participate in the interstate agreement. She noted under the NASDQ interstate agreement that if a teacher has 3 years of successfully outside of Connecticut, that such success is recognized within the State.

Jane Gates commented on the CSU's portion of Don Harris' presentation, specific to Western Connecticut University involvement: She has seen a significant decline of minority students admitted in the university's Education Major. She stated that it may be due to high GPA entry scores, lack of opportunity to explore teacher preparation earlier on, and other barriers. In addition, she remarked that she would like to see testing occur at the end of the student's education, after receiving years of teacher preparation, and has begun conversation with the Associate Dean of Students – due to a decline in enrollment. She also mentioned the sudden mid-year cuts in minority teacher scholarships in Western Connecticut State University and the impact these types of fiscal decisions have on the state's underrepresented groups.

Tamara Gloster asked if Don Harris was able to collect any exit data on those who were recruited, but left the field, as to why they were leaving the school district.

Don Harris responded by stating he will gather exit data for task force.

Arlene Arias asked Don Harris if he believes it is important piece to minority teacher recruitment to give districts more control over their respective recruitment efforts. She noted Waterbury where there is evident disparity between teachers, staff, and students.

Don Harris noted the superintendent of Bloomfield public schools spoke strongly about district flexibility; however, the state's efforts are pushing for regionalism, but districts are not yet fully collaborating. Based on his experience he believes that giving districts more control of the efforts is an important piece.

Rep. McCrory addressed Teacher Preparation Standards, recalling when the legislature was looking into teacher preparation reform, specifically standards, and the resistance with lowering the standards for potential teachers. Rep. McCrory would like to keep the GPA entry level for Education Major to 3.5

Andrea Comer opened her remarks with stating the name of the report *Performance and Passing Rate Differences of African American and White Prospective Teachers on Praxis Examinations* and reciting a finding in the report on using GPA instead of Praxis testing. She asked Don Harris if barring the Praxis and similar standards would eliminate the shortage of minority teachers.

Theresa Wilson gave introduction of herself and work she does with VP teacher Prep Program - runs a college prep program, and takes students on college tours. Based on her experience she believes students are not being introduced early to the field or being enticed to become a teacher, specifically salary and personal experience in the classroom.

Don Harris remarked that students are not seeing themselves as teacher, perhaps because of who is teaching them are not of the same ethnicity.

Sen. Winfield asked Don Harris is there was data on CREC's teaching fair success rate.

Don Harris will get information on CREC's teaching fair's success.

Arlene Arias asked Sen. Winfield if the task force can get Praxis pass rate by gender and race, and certification area?

Sen. Winfield was informed the task force can.

Tamara Gloster asked Don Harris if he can acquire data for Bloomfield on changes in terms minority recruitment and its best practices.

Don Harris remarked that Bloomfield has undergone multiple changes over the past four years, one being the Superintendent who is now of color, and the administration prioritizing minority teacher recruitment –looked high and low for teachers of color. He stated Bloomfield's current percentage rate in teachers of color is 24 %, which is one of the highest in the state.

Andrea Comer requested to have Dr. Thompson, Bloomfield's Superintendent, report to the task force to discuss his strategy.

Amanda Aronson, Principal of Aronson Consulting, prepared a report on reciprocity and certification support. She noted that the work was comprehensive and although the material collected had to relate to Hartford (as it was a district grant), all the work was interconnected and good work already was being done and this report was going to augment on what else needed to be done. .

PRESENTATION OVERVIEW

Ms. Aronson was able to confirm that in-state programs are not producing enough black or Latino candidates for a variety of reasons, not the least being financial. Alternative route to Education Office reported their enrollment was down a third and that their majority of students were Caucasian.

The report continued by expressing Hartford is attracting strong candidates coming from very well-prepared backgrounds, and they are having trouble being hired

Amanda Arnonson asked the task force to prioritize the examination of the State's policy and reciprocity,

In the research, Ms. Arnonson began looking at how to Hartford can strategically start working with HBCUs. Many teachers and students Arnonson spoke mentioned a lack of cultural competency in classroom –they are talking about content and preparation which students from HBCUs and HSIs bring to the table. There is a benefit of bringing back those students studying at HBCUs and HSIs; the level of preparation is unique, and when paired with local demographic knowledge, stating that creates a much more powerful balance, which will allow them to do some of that good work.

Arnonson noted that since the reciprocity and certification piece were out of their hands they decided to focus on examining pathways for bachelor prepare professionals who are either on the paraprofessional level, CDA (Child Development Associate) level, or support staff to a certified level. Arnonson refers to this process as LIFT. This process places a heavy reliance on colleges and universities partnerships, but ethically their role is to help their enrolled students, therefore they have a limited capacity to help students who are not going to attend their schools, making this reliance sometimes not realistic). This is a significant point to get pass not to mention the financial and praxis point.

QUESTIONS FROM THE COMMITTEE

Rep. Porter questioned the teachers left Hartford, and why are they were choosing private vs. public?

Arnonson responded by stating administrators and teachers left not because of their salaries, but due to a lack of support systems.

Mr. Arias referred to 2011 research conducted by the University of Pennsylvania on why teachers of color leave; The lack of instructional autonomy and not being part of school wide decision making were high ranked reasons

Arnonson replied there are different barriers within the state and some are going to be financial, praxis preparing, especially depending on the level of education the student has before entering college, also timing of exposure to the teaching field.

Barzee commended Arnonson's *grow your own efforts* report. Hartford and three other towns were allocated. SDE created reports on retention and attrition in 2006, 2011 and again in 2015. Comparing teachers who serve high poverty, high minority with low poverty, low minority populations,

McCrory remarked to be careful with reciprocity, as low levels of minority teachers is a national phenomenon.

Arnonson replied that this is why reciprocity is such a complex issue, intertwined with many factors.

CLOSING REMARKS

Sen. Winfield announced the next meeting on Monday, December 14th, and opened the floor to questions or remarks.

Mr. Rodriguez requested for someone from RESC to present.

Ms. Gloster would like to talk about Praxis data and report recommendations that were sent out.

Ms. Barzee suggested Maxine Urserly, doctorate on minority teacher recruitment and retention.

Ms. Gates would like individuals from state universities, including University of Connecticut.

Ms. Barzee suggested the task force look at UConn AACTE grant to recruit.

Mr. Wilson would like to hear people who tried to become certified and were not able to finish.

A motion was duly made and seconded to adjourn the meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:52 PM

Leslie Navarrete
Committee Clerk