

## 4.29.08 Minutes of Achievement Gap Task Force:

So sorry we missed Will but all enjoyed his birthday cakes!

### Progress and Updates from April 15 Meeting

Clarke update, Steve Flynn

Upon careful review of schedules there are certain blocks with no studies and areas in which no kids fit profile. Invitation out to kids so things could start on Monday – but misunderstanding with Central Office meant no subs until beginning of May (after April vacation). Have 8-10 staff volunteers trying to work around lunch duty, prep time. Focus on Math; No more than 5 kids per group with both Boston and local kids involved.

Diamond update, Abbi Maxton: Study halls and faculty on board Diamond to start after April vacation. Kids will be selected and assigned this week.

#### Follow up questions:

1. Will the cap of 5 and scheduling issues bump any Boston kids? What kind of priority are we setting up to capture Boston kids?
2. What measurement are we using to capture data on effectiveness?
3. How are we going to report back to School Committee on gains?

Teachers need to keep logs; Quarterly assessment will be taken again. DOE website does provide targeted questions and material for specific subjects.

#### LHS update: Bill Cole

Very difficult to get staff volunteers. No lack of interest just time: Remember the difference - Middle school staff teach 4 classes up to 90 kids; load in high school of 5 classes with up to 125 students plus more duties.

Teachers already stretched with:

- teaching loads
- NEASC finishing
- end of year approaching.

Even “usual suspects” among teachers are maxed out. English teachers most receptive: taking away one of five duties was appealing. Math dept. help room currently staffed by parent volunteers; doesn’t count as duty.

Suggestion: What about offering 2 for 1 duties? Quick why not: most teachers at one duty because of increased class load.

Follow-up questions: School staff is under a lot of pressure to make things happen this year. Is it worth going forward when we might burn bridges?

Would it be advisable to let the school administration know what the hurdles are and develop strategies/programs to be implemented in the fall?

- Systemic problem of racing into a situation
- Pay a stipend for duties – no
- 22 instead of 21 contact hours
- Number of kids in load already large – even duty time is used as prep block

- Provide planning time for future efforts instead of looking for quick win
- Teachers could not commit to more work even for a small load, because there is always more to do already.

Elementary update – Elaine Mead

Principals meeting right after our last meeting

Concern Books on Tape not really going to hook the kids. People wanted a chance to be thoughtful, avoid quick fixes

1. Develop an action plan developed with specialists and teachers at each building coordinated by principals to share best practices
2. 3 sub days (18 hours total); make this an arm of every school improvement plan
3. Right now we could develop some parent workshops in Boston. Title One night is coming up (May 28). Push usefulness of meeting Open to all parents

**Follow-up questions:** Social workers and METCO staff need to be included in broader conversation so we can all benefit from one another, experience and expertise.

If there are funds for extra hours, do principals have the authority to request METCO tutors to move up to 19 ½ hours?

Principals feel out of the loop on METCO coordination of staff. Who supervises Instructional Assistants (IA)?

Bus monitor & social workers have very important role in the interaction with the children. i.e. Harrington bus monitor is an untapped resource and all are fully supportive of the goal. All staff would like to work more closely with the METCO office staff.

**Short term recommendation to School Administration:**

1. 1 Professional planning time– this could drive everything else
2. System wide coordination of disparate efforts
3. METCO social workers and guidance counselors need to be part of team measuring academic progress (as well as social). Can they also be a connection between school and home?
4. As we move forward with these initiatives we need to make every effort to align and communicate what students need to learn K-12. All who are monitoring need past data and current standards.

**Recommendation to Superintendent:**

Need better, more reliable technology and training on technology

Upgrade management of information across all levels. This is so much more than entering the data. NOT APPLE WORKS

**Commentary and Questions:**

K-12 curriculum task force is working hard on full coordination of material, assessments and data. What technology/software is easy to use? Curriculum mapping software – can this be purchased for k-12 coordination?

Some quick response and possible resources: Summer workshops?, PTSA money?  
LEF grants?

We need to develop a deliberate list of tasks and a timeline make sure we don't lose teacher buy in.

**Coordination issues:**

Middle and elementary schools have grant requests for developmental assessments. How will this be coordinated? How will individual school initiatives, trials, and successes be shared?

\*\*K-12 through Central Office needs a person to coordinate (map) grants, trials, task forces and committees to help end overlapping requests and efforts.

\*\*Teachers being asked to do very specific assessment for many individuals. Training on data management, evaluation, assessment and reporting must be provided.

Better understanding of structure and communication of METCO program for better coordination and interaction.

Firm commitment from METCO and Central Office to have a representative at each AGTF meeting

Do we disband as a large group and report back via email subcommittee to whole AGTF?

Consensus: Not ready to move to subcommittees without better understanding of broader view and timeline. Only the large group can make recommendations.

**What are critical next steps for this group?**

- Divide into Sub committees? (research, evaluation, home/school communication, writing)
- Monitor and reporting on gap closing: Middle school is where we focus right now
- Small group to monitor, synthesize and update committee on most current research
- Create a 3 year action plan

**Homework:**

Ask Superintendent for sub days for elementary schools this week (Vito)

Read article from Superintendent on School to College literacy remediation

Draft action plan based on initial report (Steve and Vito)  
With timelines, costs, staffing

Home/ school communications (Rachel, Debora, Will, LaDawn, Edie)

List of committees and initiatives currently in place (Elaine and Stephanie)

Get the pulse of the teachers-anecdotal (Sharon)

MSAN, Ron Ferguson's work to pull out outstanding programs (Bill and Jen)

METCO overview of organizational structure (Cheryl)

Synopsis of past minutes (Debora)

Agenda: Action Plan and reports

**Next Meeting Date: Tuesday June 3<sup>rd</sup> 9-11 at Clarke (changed to June 10)**