
Achievement Gap Task Force

Final minutes for APRIL 15, 2008

Announcements: School Committee accepts proposal and allocates \$12,000 for subs at LHS and middle schools as recommended by AGTF sub committee

School Committee members asked:

- how many kids would be targeted,
- what's the criteria for selection,
- both Lexington & Boston kids,
- how will outcomes be measured

They have a clear desire for data to support any efforts.

LEF Board: more program grants than every before (47); ¼ mention goal of closing achievement gap; \$500,000 in requests for \$270,000 in possible funds.

Timing is an important factor, i.e. Elementary and middle schools missed concept deadline for joint proposals which is why they are separate.

AGTF hopes overlapping and partial proposals can be combined for increased effectiveness.

Discussion of book It's Being Done was wide ranging. These are a few of the most repeated ideas:

Attitude Shift and support

- Success = concrete procedures and huge attitude shift
- Public relations to get buy-in
- Mechanics will be simple compared to attitude
- Use the data and use it often - will be a large culture change
- Transparency will not feel comfortable at first
- So many data points are good that we have to push harder to make change
- Message from district "not a snapshot, but a long term effort in all schools"
- More mentoring and professional development

Concerns

- Implementation- teachers are going to feel uneasy about this and need support
- Faculty will have to be supported through anxiety about use of data for evaluation.
- Not just evaluation this goes to core identity. If one has always thought "I'm successful" or "those kids cannot be taught" where does one move now?
- Teachers need to feel supported; morale needs to be built up; worried about snowball effect with students slipping back
- These schools were worse than ours. Sometimes desperation launched change; we are not at desperation so it will be harder to get buy in.
- Everything is allowed to be re-done and re-written. Where do we find the time for that? Work must be completed at grade level even as curriculum moves on? What about the snowball effect?
- These schools had a high percentage of children of color with whites the minority – how will we tackle subtle and obvious racism in Lexington?

High Expectations for all at all times

- Every single school worked on expectations (no excuses). Parent participation was important but not the main focus. Conditions are a reality. Focus on what we have control over.

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- Clarity of purpose; come prepared and we'll meet you more than ½ way; every student from the time they get on the bus until they are home are all hours of impact
 - Statewide data shows that we are losing some kids; that's irrefutable.
 - LHS will have a lot of anecdotal data. Just completed coordinated program review (DOE) esp. SPED information, followed by NEASC: critics are in the group will especially voices on kids we are leaving behind. Ron Ferguson's work is important because it parallels our system.

Report on Immediate Interventions (9:15 – 9:35)

- School Committee Approval of Secondary Schools Use of Subs (Reports from Bill Cole, Steve Flynn, Abbi Maxton)

Clarke is focusing on Math. Student selection was MCAS driven; beginning with all Boston students with study periods and how targeting those not in proficient category. List grew exponentially when Lexington residents in same category were added. Teachers will be asked to volunteer beginning the Monday after vacation (currently 6 teachers)

Large group of faculty already volunteering to mentor and teach during studies
Students will have very different needs, but it will be a small group so individualized instruction is possible.

Loretta McCormack will find materials to begin interventions

Dr. Ash needs feedback on student performance as well as teacher needs and obstacles to success.

Diamond has 10-12 faculty members ready to volunteer. Still need to identify kids and keep the group small for concentrated performance and piloting
Frequency of intervention will increase over time. Right now we are looking at two intense weeks between April vacation and MCAS

LHS: goal is to prepare struggling students for final exam in Math and English

Plan outline - Pulled all Boston students and local students below a 2.0

Will be divided by biggest hurdle into Math and Science. Removed kids who are doing well. Removed kids who are "overly complex" already being served by a full array of services. Ended up with 51 students (50/50 mix, Lex/Bos)

3 kids at a time, each faculty asked for one 50 minute per week, faculty members who teach 9 & 10 graders targeted

Will require 2 rooms with 1 sub per day. Only kids from "useless" study – defined as study with teacher not on their schedule. Plugged in existing faculty whenever possible

How will we gather data: Ideas include

- Survey kids: what do you think you'll get/ teacher: what do you think child will get and then re-survey just before final
- Suggestion to pick certain area from final and pre-test student in that area before the intervention begins
- Can tests already taken in class be used for pre-assessment
- Teachers will be asked to keep a log on process, ideas

Math teachers already have common study hall – in this model this intervention will be in study hall and non-selected students will be moved to another room

These are a couple of areas where LHS will not be using the sub and would like to use the sub to allow teachers to observe more proficient colleagues.

Bill Cole notes that he has yet to speak to any faculty members but 3 students is a very manageable number. *See Bill's email of 4/10

▪ **Elementary Schools: Report from Elaine Mead**

Logistics of coordination and inter-connections related to crossing 6 schools makes utilization of Thursday afternoons this year very difficult.

In short conversations: staff is already committed on Thursdays; even willing staff only have a couple available days, not every Thursday. Part time literacy and math teachers are working part-time on purpose.

What else is possible and can we use the money next year?

Another issue that was raised was about family friend activities. The program would be protected in the long run, but not in the short term interventions.

Family friends coordinators will make accommodations when academic interventions are necessary.

What is the best use of elementary funds for this year?

Can the funds be used for planning between the 6 schools this spring to bring program on board for next year? Measurable by plan; ready to fly in the fall.

Can Books on Tape i.e. *Play-Aways*, all digital pre-recorded books elementary set \$1000 for set of 20? Measurable by: how many kids take advantage of it and whether behavior changes on the bus

School Admin will try to get permanent subs for each school

Take a long hard look at the school schedule and reap all lost time

2. Administrators Report on Possible Scheduling Changes for Next Year (0809)

There is time in each week that can be used more directly for learning. It will take hours of time drafting alternative schedules and may not be possible to implement any one by September. Some changes will be made, but not a full revision of the schedule.

How will we provide intervention and enrichment in the schedule? Support of teachers to make the best use of their time. Visit other schools with alternate schedules, speaking to administrators in other schools for options

LHS notices unintended consequences to changes: i.e. 5th period per week for intervention means fewer choices for all students.

- How do we protect critical electives that keeps student coming to school?
- Do some curriculum choices get moved to after-school activities? Push back from parents in limiting choices?
- In short run choices may be limited – then brought back in.
- What about changing choices?

Elementary is already looking to create an intervention block (LEF grant from Bridge to create a daily intervention block as well as sample lessons)

Goals for next year: Systemic commitment to 2 hours literacy, 1 hour math and 1 hour intervention/enrichment

Suggestion is made to make sure fine arts dept is in this conversation (Walter Pavasaris) for ease and cooperation in organizing traveling specialists

ie: LHS schedules music during elementary intervention because specialists cannot be there.

ELL/ Math/ reading specialists also need to be folded in

Math support has been increased next year to provide one specialist per elementary school next year. (E.L. There will be 6 full time positions for next year, an increase of over 1.0 making it POSSIBLE to have one specialist in each building. However due to grade level focus and the reality that 6.0 positions will be serviced by 7 people, the scheduling may not be one full time person in each school covering K-5.). What happens for *everyone* during the intervention hour? PLC workshop speaks to what can be provided during that time. Common assessments given and then interventions developed based on need. Other people might be brought in so further sub-division of class into working groups is possible.

Notice is made that many of the schools we read about took a year to analyze data and discuss changes. Are we going to do this? Faculty needs time to learn how to analyze and use data effectively. High School needs to catch up with PLC and action research. We don't even have the technology to support data research on the teachers' computers. Looking into technology shift in Arlington where they have begun to use excel with everyone for data management.

Run planning proposal by Lynne Sarasin for LHS and Elementary

3. Discussion of Summer Programming Options for Both New & Returning Students

Currently student must show regression over the week between Pre-test and post-test for inclusion.

Summer school currently available for SPED students. Anecdotally, SPED instructors feel some pressure not to recommend students for summer work

METCO and LEX students at LHS who fail courses have to take summer school courses, currently the responsibility of each family. Providing this is a big tkt item, but the data is available to support a proposal.

Money needs to be spent on PR to bring parents on board for everything from limited electives to non-negotiable in-school tutoring to summer school.

Manage Expectations by developing a time-frame; are we going to take a year to develop our plan. Can we use people who have already done this, to work with us and our data over the summer to move us forward faster?

4. Review of Current LPS Interventions

Math spurred by Title 1 system wide common assessments in 1st & 2nd grade three times per year. Children assessed through interviews, scores, recommendation by teacher and specialists. Every 1 & 2 grader is rank ordered across system with higher score being most needy. This selects children for immediate intervention. Item analysis of MCAS. Looked for specific strand. Gap appears most remarkably in 3rd grade and continues. 3/4/5 review and intervention will continue. Teachers focus on state standards through better curriculum mapping. Most critical standards need to be addressed. *Everyday math* goes further than state standards so teachers are looking at going deeper in certain areas to make sure state standards are truly met by everyone. 5 professional development days have already been used to support teachers

Literacy: Literacy is much better staffed than math by almost 3x. We see many more students in direct service mostly in primary grades. Direct service is provided to teachers to improve literacy

Tiered intervention: Working on a system in which children are not identified as SPED until they have moved through 4 tiers of identification and service, beginning with classroom teacher. Developing a tiered intervention targeted for each child. Effort is being made to make sure SPED and Reg. Ed. are closely aligned.

Need a coordinated 3-5 year Professional development plan

High School Information

By the time kids get to LHS, students already face scheduling limitations. De facto tracking happens because kids that struggle in one area can't always get into advanced courses in other areas because of schedule. LHS students on IEPs need this kind of skill and functioning techniques taught, sometimes instead of and certainly as well as homework support. Skill development through homework is not always happening
Learning center in math has long history and every attempt is made to have course teachers in study hall

Study skills program in science, math, English and SO/OED accommodates about 200 kids, in both homework support and skill based. No data except grades and test prep. Students identified by 9th grade teachers and Guidance Counselors; program runs during regular class day. METCO homework club after school exists, Data by grade. High achieving LHS students currently help tutor elementary school students in literacy and math

Middle School: Executive Functioning class for children have guided study to learn organization skills, homework support and tactics to manage Middle School schedule, includes study skills, homework management (esp. projects) Measurement will be evaluations, grades, regular-ed placement. There was no negotiation about placement in EF class and kids lost electives. But as kids improved they moved out. (LEF grant to provide professional development for teachers to help with executive functioning)
Early intervention is the key

Parental involvement and information about scheduling changes and expectations

- Time management is even more critical for kids who spend so much time on the bus
- Expectation of academic achievement is already imbedded in parents – that's why parents send their kids to Lexington schools. Make the most of that fact.
- Need to do a better job of informing parents of the need for children to stay for extra support ie: on Thursdays
- Give parents more specific information on curriculum
- Make sure we educate parents on how to support children at school

How do we make the outreach more systematic? Information and transportation- key to participation by Boston students

Most Lexington administrators feel lack of systemic support is leading factor in AG. Classroom teachers are a critical part of making intervention and learning centers effective

Suggestions:

1.) Lynne Sarasin (or someone) needs to coordinate and align the work of so many groups and initiatives. Can a Leadership meeting be organized once a month to share information, avoid redundancy, and coordinate efforts?

2.) AGTF votes to support Elaine Mead/Vito LaMura in going to Central Office to request funding for Play-Aways and planning grant for elementary school intervention program to be implemented in Fall 08.

5. Long-Term Steps

- Action Plan for next 3 Years including Viability, cost,

Put on agenda for next meeting:

- Brainstorm Subcommittee Formation and Charges
 - le: ongoing research
 - Scheduling, data use
- Action Plan writers
- Support, mentoring and monitoring for/of subs, teachers,
- Parent communication
- Keep our eye on mid-level students – read article on Brookline African American Studies program

6. Next Meeting Tuesday, April 29 9-11, Clarke Middle School, Lexington

Next meeting dates may need to be at times outside of school day. Bring calendar

General hopes, ideas, commitments:

Create meaningful subcommittees – organizational suggestions

Make sure we do our homework and communicate between meetings

Create timeline for Task Force (subject to change)

Grant development (Arlington contracted with Robert J. Miller for \$32,000 to develop grants to bring in up to 10 times their fee – can this work for us in Lexington? (original AG report missed action plans and cost)