



Meeting Minutes for February 4th, 2010

12:00-4:00 p.m.

Battelle for Kids

1160 Dublin Rd., Suite 500

Columbus, OH 43215

Members in Attendance

Deborah S. Delisle, Chair

Dayvenia Chesney

Michael Dawson

Nathan DeRolph

Rep. Stephen Dyer

Lynn Elfner

Robyn Essman

Neil Gupta

Dave Huelsman

Alan Hutchinson

William Leibensperger

Kathryn Lorenz

Richard Lukich

James McClure

Rep. Randy Gardner

Bill Hiller

Richard Murray

Adrienne O'Neill

Jan Kennedy

Richard Petrick

Jack Pierson

Sen. Tom Sawyer

John Scheu

John Stanford

Sue Taylor

George Wood

Members Not in Attendance

JoAnn Johnntony

Renee Middleton

Opening, Chair Delisle

Chair Deborah s. Delisle called the meeting to order at 12:01 p.m. and welcomed Council members and guests.

Approved minutes of the Jan. 19th meeting

Dr. Wood moved to approve the minutes, and Mr. Elfner seconded the motion. Sen. Tom Sawyer moved that the minutes be amended by adding a full description of the Education Reform Tracking subcommittee's charge, which was accepted without objection. The minutes were approved unanimously as amended.

Focus of Council discussions

Coordinator McDonald discussed the documents included in meeting packets, including: a list of subcommittees and subcommittee membership; printouts of the PowerPoint presentations to be used in the meeting; a summary of the member email procedure; the Regional Education Lab Midwest Summary of Research and Resources on state school funding formulas; a copy of an email from the Ohio Ethics Commission outlining Council duties with the relevant Ethics Commission decision attached; and a discussion guide for subcommittees.

Chair Delisle reviewed the Council's tasks, the Council's charge, and the importance of focusing on the task at hand. Chair Delisle also suggested the use of a "parking lot," where topics not presently being discussed but raised during a meeting could be postponed until a later date in order to keep discussions focused. Those items will be kept in a running list, and can be reconsidered as time allows or can be assigned to a subcommittee.

Members expressed the need to not forget the “parking lot,” and the need for a “parking lot attendant” to keep issues top-of-mind and on the agenda. Chair Delisle noted that the Council staff will be sure to keep track of parking lot issues.

Chair Delisle notified the Council that in response to a number of requests from Council members, ODE staff has been in touch with Drs. Allan Odden and Lawrence Picus, the researchers who developed the evidence-based model, about giving a presentation to the Council. The Chair asked members to think clearly about their questions so that the discussion with Drs. Odden and Picus can be most productive. Coordinator McDonald stated that the date of their presentation will be determined later on, but the visit will probably take place in March.

Mr. Dawson proposed inviting Dr. Eric Hanushek, a critic of costing-out approaches such as the evidence-based model, for an alternative view on the model’s components; Chair Delisle responded that this would be considered. Dr. Hiller objected to offering an invitation to Dr. Hanushek, noting that the charge of the Council is to examine the components of the model, not the validity of the model itself. Mr. Dawson agreed that the proposal was offered to view the components.

Public records presentation, Assistant Attorney General Lisa Whittaker

Assistant AG Whittaker delivered the presentation included in member packets concerning Ohio’s public records law. The presentation clarified that any documents (including electronic documents) created or used by the Council in the course of conducting its business would be considered public records.

Members were counseled to contact Coordinator McDonald immediately if they are approached with a public records request, so that such requests can be handled consistently and in compliance with Ohio law with the assistance of ODE counsel.

In response to a question as to whether personal identifiers such as Social Security numbers can be redacted, Assistant AG Whittaker affirmed that they can be. Assistant AG Whittaker also noted that members are not personally liable for failing to fill requests, but that there can be court actions towards the Council for failure to comply with public records laws. Assistant AG Whittaker said that she would work with Coordinator McDonald and ODE counsel to create a records retention schedule. Until that point, she advised members to retain personal copies of all documents and emails.

Coordinator McDonald said staff will gather hard copies of letters received by members from concerned individuals, and Chair Delisle assured members that they would be converted to PDF format for easy access and sharing.

Communications presentation

Coordinator McDonald discussed ODE email addresses for Council members, processes for accessing email, setting passwords, and who to contact with questions. Coordinator McDonald explained that emails can be forwarded to personal addresses, but noted that using a personal account requires a carbon copy (cc) be sent to the ODE email account in order to keep email public records organized. Email will be sent to the Council members’ ODE email addresses exclusively starting after the Council’s February 16th meeting.

Coordinator McDonald also presented the School Funding Advisory Council website, available at <http://www.sfac.education.ohio.gov> or by visiting the ODE website and searching for “school funding advisory council.” Coordinator McDonald notified Council members that a site is under construction

where members can share documents and information in a way consistent with public records laws, and will be available at a later date.

Education finance overview presentation (continued from Jan. 19th meeting)

ODE Director of Budget and Planning Kelly Weir continued the presentation which had begun at the Jan. 19th meeting of the Council, starting with a brief history of Ohio's school funding formula and the evidence-based model.

Chair Delisle explained the Superintendent's "flexibility factor," implemented through spending rules required in House Bill 1, which will allow local school districts with high academic ratings to have more flexibility in the use of state funds, but will require struggling districts to adhere more closely to the evidence-based model. Chair Delisle noted that this was meant to recognize the context of the community and to reward high-achieving schools.

Some members highlighted perceived issues concerning with whether or not funding certain positions within the model, such as building managers, will generate positive outcomes. They pointed out that the PASS Form makes it appear as though funded positions are in fact mandates, and makes it difficult to explain to local districts and community members what dollars are being used for.

Chair Delisle explained that the building manager position, in particular, is designed to free the principal to be more of an instructional leader rather than an administrator. Other members offered that the model is meant to identify the programs for which schools receive funds, give districts flexibility in spending those funds, and allow the public to hold districts accountable through increased transparency. Chair Delisle noted that ODE is continuing to gather information on the use of the PASS Form and will continue to listen to stakeholders and field practitioners to that end.

Other members raised concerns about ODE's process for developing spending rules, which has led to uncertainty about when components will be required for school districts. Ms. Weir noted that there will be a process for categorizing the components, and that the timetable is still not set. Chair Delisle said that a timetable would be forthcoming. Though it was clarified that school districts have no spending requirements for 2010 and 2011, some members claimed districts were uncomfortable with the ambiguity regarding whether or not components will be mandatory, and the difficulty that places on district-level planning. Chair Delisle acknowledged this concern.

Members asked how inputs used in the building blocks model of school funding, developed by the Governor's Blue Ribbon Task Force on Financing Student Success in 2005, were identified and selected, and the extent to which outputs were still a part of that model. Ms. Weir, who mentioned that she had assisted the Task Force as a staff member, clarified that the Task Force used the expenditures of successful gap-aid districts to determine the basic per pupil amount, similarly to the successful schools model proposed by Dr. John Augenblick, and added funding on top of the basic amount meant to ensure that all districts received funding for certain programs such as professional development, database systems, data-based decision making, and academic intervention.

There was further discussion regarding the elements of the evidence-based model, including organizational units, all-day kindergarten and the Educational Challenge Factor, and how they were developed. Ms. Weir also confirmed that funding for community schools is almost identical to the transfer payment system that existed for FY2009.

Members proposed that the concerns stated be classified into three areas: transitional issues, model components, and implementation of the model. It was suggested that the transition and implementation questions are outside the scope of the Council's charge. Some members asserted that the model must be considered within the context of implementation, while others noted that it is difficult to evaluate a model which has not been fully implemented, leaving it to the Council to improve the model that was adopted by Ohio lawmakers. Additional questions raised included a more detailed explanation of community school funding for FY2010-2011 and the Council's role in developing a per-pupil evidence-based model.

One member had attended a meeting with legislators from the area, in which districts were told to anticipate cuts in the coming biennium, and explained that school districts are nervous about possible budget shortfalls beginning next year. Chair Delisle recognized the concern, and noted that the economic issue is one we are all facing and trying to grapple with efficiently. She indicated that she has not been told of any forthcoming education reductions.

Chair Delisle asked that any additional questions be sent to Coordinator McDonald, and assured Council that they would be addressed at a subsequent meeting.

Break for subcommittee meetings

Chair Delisle briefly outlined the agendas for subcommittee meetings, and the Council broke for subcommittee meetings. Members asked for clarification about the process for subcommittees to add members. Coordinator McDonald and Chair Delisle clarified procedural rules approved at the Council's last meeting. (Note-Minutes of each subcommittee are separate from this document.)

Closing, Chair Delisle

Members returned from subcommittee meetings. Coordinator McDonald offered a brief tour of the Council's new website, which had been previously discussed.

- February 16th proposed meeting agenda
 - Brief report from subcommittees.
 - Presentation of detailed EBM components, ODE staff.
 - Subcommittees convene; finalize appointment recommendations (if necessary).
- Additional questions

Chair Delisle asked Coordinator McDonald to send an email to the Council inviting participation in the Education Reform Tracking Committee.

Rep. Dyer moved to adjourn, and Dr. Wood seconded the motion. Chair Delisle adjourned the meeting at 3:45pm.