

African-American Affairs Commission
 Public Meeting, Minutes for Wednesday, February 6, 2008
 Legislative Office Building – Room 1-B

Present:

Commissioner Michael Jefferson
Commissioner Rosetta Jones
Commissioner Derrick McBride
Commissioner Fred Pierre-Louis,
Commissioner Alphonse Wright

Absent:

Commissioner Kristen Clark
Commissioner George Logan,

Also Present: Glenn Cassis, AAAC Executive Director; Cheryl Harris Forbes, AAAC Public Affairs/Special Projects Coordinator, Dr. Mark McQuillan – Commissioner – State Department of Education, George Coleman – Deputy Commissioner - State Department of Education, Dr. Jay Voss, - Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee for Secondary School Reform, Alan Taylor – Board Chairman, State Department of Education, Rep. Kenneth Green, Scott X. Esdaile – President – Statewide Conference of NAACP Branches, Duckworth Grange – Department of Children & Families, Dr. Vivian Cross – Foundation for Educational Advancement, Jim O’Neill – CHRO Legislative Liaison, Dr. Yemi Onibokun State Department of Education, Rep. Bill Dyson, Donna Thompson, Director of Upward Bound Program – Wesleyan University

Members of the Public: Dee Ana White – Newington, Paulette Fox – New Britain

Agenda Item	Discussion (<i>brief summary</i>)	Action (<i>and by whom</i>)
Meeting called to order at 5:10 PM	Call to Order Roll Call	Chairperson M. Jefferson Cheryl Harris Forbes

Agenda Item	Discussion (<i>brief summary</i>)	Action (<i>and by whom</i>)
Public Comments	<p>AAAC Executive Director Glenn Cassis recognized CHRO’s new Legislative Liaison Jim O’Neill. Mr. O’Neill made brief introductory remarks and invited all present to contact him regarding issues of concern related to his office.</p> <p>Mr. Cassis introduced Dr. Mark McQuillan, Commissioner of the Connecticut State Department of Education, noting the appointment occurred in April 2007. Mr. Cassis stated Dr. McQuillan’s presentation will focus on secondary school reform and invited the public to limit questions and comments to two minutes the presentation.</p> <p><i>Presentation Introduction</i></p> <p>Dr. McQuillan stated the purpose of the presentation was to invite questions and comments so that the proposed plan could be improved and refined. He noted that Dr. Jay Voss, - Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee for Secondary School Reform would review the <i>Building Blocks of Reform</i> and Mr. George Coleman – Deputy Commissioner - State Department of Education would explain the <i>Matrix of Choices and Requirements</i> and his return to conclude with the context in which the goals could be achieved.</p> <p><i>Plan Overview</i></p> <p>Dr. McQuillan gave an overview of the data that supports the urgency for school reform which would begin with the high school Class of 2015. He further detailed that the focus of the plan would be on systemic and broad gauge reforms that would stimulate high levels of achievement for all students. After providing a historical overview of the Ad Hoc Committee for Secondary School Design, Dr. McQuillan referenced Governor M. Jodi Rell’s proposal to increase graduation requirements for all students – and for students to pass all 4 of the CAPT exams. Secondly, he mentioned another proposal from higher education institutions that called for similar requirements.</p>	

Agenda Item	Discussion (<i>brief summary</i>)	Action (<i>and by whom</i>)
	<p><i>Ad Hoc Committee Charge</i></p> <p>Dr. McQuillan stated the charge of the Committee was to develop recommendations that would lead to legislation to improve high school graduation rates, and to prepare students for successful entry into college, vocational education or the workplace. He emphasized, The same set of recommendations would be required of students regardless of their plans to enter college or the workforce and that the new benchmarks would delineate necessary skills for transition to college and/or the workforce in a global economy.</p> <p><i>Required Curriculum & Financial Impact</i></p> <p>Required courses would be determined as well as an equivalent default high school curriculum, as well as relevance of coursework to assessment tools. Dr. McQuillan pointed out the Ad Hoc Committee's charge to recommend the end of course examinations that all students must pass (by 2015) in order to graduate high school is perhaps the most significant, since it would for the first time institute a statewide standard for high school completion. Commissioner McQuillan informed the Board of the Department's outreach activities to solicit a broad response base and the need to analyze the financial impact of the recommendations.</p> <p>Dr. Jay Voss, - Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee for Secondary School Reform provided information regarding <i>Building Blocks of Reform</i> noting that the committee was focused on three themes - Engagement, Rigor and 21st Century Learning</p> <p>He stressed student success was inextricably linked to quality classroom instruction and the ability of teachers to accommodate different learning and instructional styles, that high expectations and</p>	

Agenda Item	Discussion (<i>brief summary</i>)	Action (<i>and by whom</i>)
	<p>supportive environments are necessary for student engagement. He stated one goal of the proposal is to use technology to support student learning and to allocate resources to support a major emphasis on professional development.</p> <p>Dr. Voss noted that the proposal asserts a students' high school experience is not necessarily limited to a fixed 4 year term, but has the flexibility to be completed in as little as 3 or as many as 5 years. Additionally structured support programs, i.e. extended day, extended school year, summer school or in-school structures could be established to strengthen student skills and performance on end-of-course exams. He also mentioned the possibility of flexible assessments.</p> <p>Dr. Voss restated the vital role of Student Success Plans in the engagement process and that ideally, such plans could begin as early as 6th grade no later than 7th grade to help – role of middle school in helping students begin career exploration and achieve high school expectations The plan also recognizes that smaller learning communities are needed.</p> <p>Dr. Voss explained that the default curriculum is a core group of required courses for all students and that the State will bear the responsibility of developing model curriculum and making it available to all districts along with benchmark assessments to indicate student learning.</p> <p>Additionally, 21st Century learning skills, such as technology proficiency, communication skills time management and personal responsibility will be imbedded in the state curriculum and the senior demonstration/capstone project.</p> <p><i>Course & Graduation Requirements</i></p> <p>Deputy Commissioner of Education George Coleman provided an overview of the <i>Matrix of Choices & Requirements</i></p>	

Agenda Item	Discussion (<i>brief summary</i>)	Action (<i>and by whom</i>)
	<p>Mr. Coleman noted that the plan calls for an additional four credits than currently mandated, raising the total number of credits necessary for high school graduation to 24. He further detailed the Required Credit Distribution as follows:</p> <p>Math – 3 Science - 3 English, Language Arts, Reading - 4 History /Social Science - 3 World Language - 2 Career/ Technical Education & the Arts -2 Health & Wellness -2 Electives: Full and half year course -4 Senior Demonstration -1</p> <p>In 11 curriculum categories the State will assume responsibility for developing curriculum for the subjects which will be made available to all districts. Every student would be required to take the end of assessment examination for the designated courses.</p> <p>For chemistry the State would assume responsibility for developing performance task for chemistry (statewide). The assessment would be scored by the State and the results given back to the district. Other end of course evaluations would be scored locally.</p> <p>As proposed the core curriculum would include:</p> <p>Math: Algebra I, Algebra II and Geometry</p> <p>Science –Biology, Chemistry or Physical science and full year of laboratory exposure</p> <p>English & Language Arts - Including study of literature, Composition 1 & II (4 years required)</p>	

Agenda Item	Discussion (<i>brief summary</i>)	Action (<i>and by whom</i>)
	<p>History & Social Science- U.S. History, Civics, international studies (new requirement of 1 credit) and a half credit elective</p> <p>World Language (2 credits)</p> <p>Career & Technical Education and the Arts - (2 credits) Student's choice of arts, career & technical studies</p> <p>Health & Wellness (2 credits) – Courses that develop habits of mind to positively impact and manage personal health and healthcare choices.</p> <p>Physical Education (1.5 credits)</p> <p>Electives – (4 credits -Full or half year credit courses)</p> <p>Senior Demonstration / Capstone Project – This new addition will integrate student knowledge and skills into project and/or presentation.</p> <p>COMMENTS & CONCERNS Dr. Vivian Cross asked the Department of Education (DOE) staff to consider including requirements for the teaching higher order cognitive strategies, noting the use of similar methods by the National Urban Alliance. She also expressed concern about the need for early intervention (as early as pre K) and online courses indicating the need to have funding available for distance learning implementation.</p> <p>Chairperson Jefferson inquired about the process of incorporating public feedback and comments into the plan.</p> <p>Commissioner McQuillan responded by saying the Ad Hoc Committee and upcoming statewide fall conference provided mechanisms for inclusion and refinement.</p>	

Agenda Item	Discussion (<i>brief summary</i>)	Action (<i>and by whom</i>)
	<p>Commissioner Jones expressed concern about the seeming lack of vocational and technical training and inquired if the proposal would help to close the achievement gap.</p> <p>DOE staff responded by stating the plan does have a flexible component (7 credits) that would allow students to pursue career exploration and technical skills.</p> <p>Commissioner Wright encouraged the DOE to include components to address parental involvement as an important part of engagement.</p> <p>Commissioner Pierre Louis inquired about strategies to address teacher shortages especially in the areas of math & science.</p> <p>Mr. Duckworth Grange of the Department of Children & Families asked whether early behavioral health interventions for youth were included.</p> <p>NAACP Conference Branch President Scott Esdaile inquired as to whether or not the NAACP's and African American community's proposals could be included in the plan and if Mr. Gary Highsmith could join the Ad Hoc committee.</p> <p>Commissioner McQuillan responded saying - Ad Hoc meetings are open to the public and that he welcome the NAACP's participation and feedback at the Statewide conference. Alternatively he offered the possibility for expansion or reconstitution of the Ad Hoc Committee.</p> <p>Ms. Dee White of Newington stated her concern about high rates of minority students are going into military service. She also asked how DOE would evaluate the plan's efficacy.</p> <p>Commissioner Pierre Louis asked for the Commissioners vision of the AAAC's involvement in the partnership.</p> <p>Commissioner McQuillan asked that in addition to becoming more</p>	

Agenda Item	Discussion (<i>brief summary</i>)	Action (<i>and by whom</i>)
	involved in the Ad Hoc Committee and work groups, that the AAAC help communicate the urgency for citizen involvement. He also stated the Department's willingness to speak to community groups.	
Approval of January 5, 2008 Meeting Minutes	<p>Commissioners Jones and Pierre-Louis requested hard copies of the Board Minutes prior to each month's meeting. Commissioner McBride requested that copies of the minutes and Commissioner's meeting packets also be made available at each Board Meeting.</p> <p>Approval of minutes postponed to March 5, 2008 meeting.</p>	
Treasurer's Report	<p>Mr. Cassis noted that he and Commissioner Wright had reviewed the budget and there were no concerns regarding it. Mr. Cassis stated he and Commissioner Wright would meet to further review the budget and make transfers if necessary.</p> <p>Chairperson Jefferson inquired about sponsorship of community group events for \$500 or less. Mr. Cassis stated that similar events have been considered.</p> <p>Mr. Cassis – noted the inclusion of figures for the 2008 Classic Awards budget in the packet.</p>	
Chairperson's Report	Chairperson Jefferson directed attention to his distributed Chairperson's Report reflecting the January 23, 2008 AAAC Executive Board Meeting. He highlighted his attendance, along with Mr. Cassis at a meeting with NAACP officials and the Commissioner of the State Department of Education, progress regarding concerns of New Haven cab drivers including Sen. Martin Looney expressed intention to request that the Program Review and Investigations Committee study	Chairperson M. Jefferson

Agenda Item	Discussion (<i>brief summary</i>)	Action (<i>and by whom</i>)
	<p>the taxi cab industry.</p> <p>Chairperson Jefferson stated the Governor’s Prevention Partnership’s desire to work with the AAAC to seek out mentors, especially African-American males. Chairperson Jefferson asked Commissioners to review correspondence regarding SAGE Juvenile Detention Facility and suggested a meeting with high ranking officials in the Department of Children & Families. He also asked Commissioners to review materials regarding the MAAFA and asked them to consider a request for sponsorship of the event to benefit the attendance of youth from Hartford, and New Haven. The Chairperson asked the Executive Director to determine details of the sponsorship and for staff to post the event on the website calendar with a hyperlink.</p> <p>Chairperson Jefferson stated his recommendation and forthcoming resolution that Mr. Gary Highsmith serve as the AAAC’s primary representative to the Department of Education’s Ad Hoc Committee on Secondary School Reform, and that Mr. Cassis also serve as expansion of the ad hoc committee allows.</p> <p><u>Legislative Agenda</u></p> <p>Chairperson Jefferson noted Commissioner Jones comments regarding the legislative agenda and asked that Mr. Cassis forward them to the Board. Chairperson Jefferson also encouraged Commissioners to add to the agenda as they desired.</p> <p><u>Education</u></p> <p>Commissioner Pierre Louis reported his attendance at a New London parents' advocacy meeting, as well as various education meetings at Central Connecticut State University and the National Black MBA Association.</p>	

Agenda Item	Discussion (<i>brief summary</i>)	Action (<i>and by whom</i>)
	<p><u>Health</u> Chairperson Jefferson asked Mr. Cassis to extend an invitation via letter to Dr. Mark Mitchell to serve as the AAAC official advisor regarding environmental matters. He asked Commissioners to consider putting forth the names of individuals who could serve as the AAAC’s health advisor. He asked Cheryl Forbes to draft a list of potential health advisors.</p> <p>Ms. Forbes distributed to the Board a report detailing AAAC health activities, most notably her participation in several health related initiatives including the Connecticut Cross Cultural Training Committee, the Statewide Stroke Prevention Plan’s Community Education and Prevention Workgroup, as well as Connecticut Cancer Partnership (CCP). Ms. Forbes provided further information regarding the CCP’s legislative ask and its programs and plans concerning smoking cessation and counter-marketing.</p> <p>Chairperson Jefferson requested Commissioners to identify groups in their communities that could provide smoking cessation services and referenced regional action councils. He asked Ms. Forbes to continue to update the Commission regarding CCP activities, outreach and smoking cessation funding in particular. Ms. Forbes provided that the CCP Cancer Prevention Plan for 2009-2012 would soon be underway and the possibilities for AAAC Board members to serve on various subcommittees.</p> <p><u>Other Items</u></p> <p>Commissioner Jefferson requested staff to forward to him the link or report of website statistics.</p>	
Executive Director’s Report	Mr. Cassis directed attention to the distributed Executive Director’s Report and asked the Commission to consider including Dr. Fred McKinney, President of the Connecticut Minority Supplier	G. Cassis

Agenda Item	Discussion (<i>brief summary</i>)	Action (<i>and by whom</i>)
	<p>Development Council in the discussion regarding the taxi cab industry.</p> <p>Additionally, he highlighted the Know-How-to-Go Program which assists students in mapping their route to college entrance with particular information assistance regarding financial aid. To date more than 2,000 website hits have been recorded from information seekers.</p> <p>Mr. Cassis announced Governor Rell's Black History Month proclamation and again noted College Goal Sunday on February 10, 2008 at six locations statewide. As many as 300 students have registered for assistance in completing the federal financial aid forms (FAFSA).</p> <p>The Greater Hartford Male Youth Program was successful and included 74 boys and 35 parents in attendance at a Saturday event at the Capitol.</p> <p>The 2008 AAAC Black History Month concourse exhibit <i>Black Women Behind the Lens</i> is on display through February 15, 2008.</p> <p>Mr. Cassis met with the President and Vice President of the Connecticut Science center along with Commissioner Kristen Clark to explore possible Science Center /AAAC partnerships to reach out to the African-American community statewide.</p>	
Resolutions	None	
New Business	None	G. Cassis
Other Business	<p>Commissioner Jones requested that notice of public hearings regarding AAAC related issues be posted prominently on the website.</p> <p>Mr. Cassis reminded Commissioners about the availability of Classic Award Nomination forms. Chairperson Jefferson asked that all commissioners receive such notification.</p>	<p>Commissioner R. Jones</p> <p>G. Cassis</p>

Agenda Item	Discussion (<i>brief summary</i>)	Action (<i>and by whom</i>)
Upcoming Events	MAAFA – February 22, 2008 – Schubert Theatre	Chairperson M. Jefferson
Adjournment	Motion to adjourn meeting. Meeting adjourned 8:10 PM	Motion by Commissioner Jones 2 nd by Commissioner Pierre- Louis Motion Approved

Respectfully Submitted _____
 Cheryl Harris Forbes
 Public Affairs/Special Projects Coordinator

Approved by _____
 Commissioner George Logan
 AAAC Secretary