

At-Risk Student Advisory Council

Meeting Summary

January 23, 2017

1:00 p.m.

James R. Thompson Center
100 West Randolph Street
Fourteenth Floor, V-Tel Room
Chicago, Illinois 60601



Alzina Building
100 North First Street
Third Floor, V-Tel Room
Springfield, Illinois 62777

I. Procedural Business

A. Call to Order/Roll Call

Donna Schertz called the meeting to order a little after 1p.m. and took roll call

Present in Springfield: Dirk Muffler, Sharice Yates, Erin Clotfelter, Julie Wollerman

Present in Chicago: Representative Litesa Wallace, Chris Baehrend, Paul Goddard, Martin Torres, Donna Hardy, Beth Malik, Michael Crowley, Stefanie Polacheck

Present by telephone: Laura Stewart

Not present: Representative Joe Sosnowski, Phil Jackson, Jacqueline Moreno, Patrice Hunter, Brandi Brown

B. Welcoming Remarks/Introductions

Ms. Schertz welcomed members to the first meeting and asked for those present to introduce themselves, what entity they are with and why they agreed to be on the Council or why they feel it is an important council.

Rep. Wallace noted that the original Legislative left out a few key pieces and that a trailer bill was signed on Friday January 20th to include Troy LaRaviere, President of Chicago Principles and Administrators Association, and someone from School Management Council. She indicated that Mr. LaRaviere will participate in today's meeting as a public participant and will hopefully have the appointment completed shortly.

C. Submission of Required Ethics Training/Open Meetings Act Certificate for 2016

Sue Taylor advised that everyone will be required to complete the Ethics Training and the Open Meetings Act for 2016 and indicated who had completed both and sent the forms in. Ms. Schertz explained that we will need to have them completed for both 2016 and 2017 per Legal Department at ISBE since Council was put into place in 2016.

II. New Business

A. Selection of a Chairperson

Ms. Schertz asked for volunteers or nominees for someone to chair the Council. Chris Baehrend asked what the roles and responsibilities would be of the Chairperson and Ms. Schertz explained that the Chairperson would run the meetings, help create agendas and make sure that all members are following the Open Meetings Act and Robert's Rules of Order.

Rep. Wallace volunteered her services as Chairperson. With no other volunteers or nominees, Ms. Wollerman made a motion and Mr. Goddard seconded the motion to accept Rep. Wallace's offer. Rep. Wallace was confirmed as Council chair by unanimous agreement of all members present.

B. Review of Public Act 99-0721

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Ms. Schertz brought attention to Public Act 99-0721 and asked for Rep. Wallace to walk the Council through it.

Rep. Wallace explained that it was proposed last spring and signed into law over the summer and it gave this Council authority to explore questions listed in legislation and go beyond those. It sets forth who shall serve, the organizations that members represent, the terms of membership and, moving forward, terms will be set to one year, two year and three year memberships. It provides for the public meetings act and requires that the Council will submit an annual report to the legislature.

Rep. Wallace mentioned the Trailer bill which added two additional members from the administrative level. The trailer bill was not available at the time of meeting.

Ms. Schertz asked for questions or discussion regarding Public Act 99-0721. Martin Torres asked regarding the scope of students, if it is throughout the educational curriculum, K through 12, Pre-K through 12 or Pre-K through college and Rep. Wallace advised that the P.A. was proposed for traditional K-12 but believes it will evolve further.

C. Discussion/Adoption of the Rules of Procedure

Ms. Schertz brought attention to the draft Rules of Procedure for discussion/adoption. She indicated that it was borrowed from the Attendance Commission and was changed to fit the Council's purpose. She touched on a couple of sections and how they would be discussed later in the meeting, particularly (a) section 3 – Meetings indicates that the Council should meet at least quarterly and that it will be discussed during the Next Steps section of the agenda; and (b) section 5 – Committees and it will be discussed later with regards to what kind of committees we want to envision for the Council. She advised that it is walking us through what we want the Council to look like and go by as far as the rules. Ms. Schertz asked Mary Gallagher if there was anything to add based off of her assistance with the Attendance Commission, and she mentioned that voting rights were extended to proxies due to meetings being held every month. Ms. Taylor advised that it was included in the Rules of Procedures for proxies to be allowed to vote and count towards a quorum.

Ms. Schertz asked for any questions or discussions regarding the Rules of Procedure. Julie Wollerman asked about the definition of at-risk students on page 1 and Sue Taylor advised that it was taken straight from legislation. It was believed that it was very limited and that it did not include truancy. Rep. Wallace advised that it was agreed upon language because there is already an Attendance and Truancy Commission and several organizations around the truancy issue, it was opposed language in the bill so it was agreed to remove it.

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Michael Crowley asked for clarity about at-risk students being students already enrolled in school, K through 12, who meet all the other criteria and not young people who have already dropped out, opportunity youth. Rep. Wallace advised that the goal would be to provide recommendations for those who are still actively engaged in educational setting.

Rep. Wallace motioned to adopt the Rules of Procedure, Michael Crowley seconded the motion and they were adopted based on a unanimous vote by all members present.

D. Discussion of Scope of Work

Donna Schertz asked Rep. Wallace if she had anything to share regarding the scope of work and she said that she would like for members to share what they believe they will be bringing to the Council.

Chris Baehrend asked if expectation would be that we are going in front of Governor and General Assembly with the 10 questions listed in legislation specifically answered at the end of the year. Rep. Wallace advised that the goal is to submit a report by the end of year that will hopefully address the questions in legislation along with anything else that immerses from discussions.

Ms. Schertz mentioned that there is a lot to talk about and questions are where and how we start and what we do and asked if anybody had any thoughts regarding that.

Rep. Wallace motioned to allow Troy LaRaviere to engage in the discussion. Paul Goddard seconded the motion to allow pending a full introduction from Mr. LaRaviere and it was unanimously decided to allow his engagement.

Troy LaRaviere, President of Chicago Principals and Administrators Association, is hoping to bring insider experience to the Council from his having served both students that are homeless and students whose families own multiple homes. He said that in one district he served, kids were coming into school in Kindergarten two to three years behind kids that were coming into school in Kindergarten in a different district he served. And that the school is being labeled as failing by our system based on the condition in which the kids were coming to them. No accountability is being held anywhere besides the schools for the condition that kids are coming to school. He is interested in looking into factors that contribute to the day one gap and how to address those factors. In one district, kids were coming in at 12% meeting math standards and they were able to up that to 36%, but in another district kids were starting at 79% and they were able to increase it to 89%. However, as one district grows so does another district so there will still be a gap until there is a way to end the gap where it starts. He is hoping to keep the focus on

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the time frame in a child's life from conception to ages 3 to 5 when the gap starts and to hold people accountable for that to eliminate it and come up with recommendations to address it.

Stefanie Polacheck said that what Mr. LaRaviere mentioned is in part of what she is hoping to bring and added that her on the ground experience of working with youth in DCFS care before working with the policy side, long history of child welfare, studying cases and trauma and things that impact learning outside of the classroom. She also hopes to address how to change kids coming to school who are unable to learn.

Rep. Wallace feels that what has been mentioned is well within the scope of the Council to discuss and move forward with recommendations for these issues. She said that while we initially talked about the K-12 and university aspect, we will see that there are other things that happen and we will be able to get a clear pattern that allows us to justify our policy recommendations.

Michael Crowley agreed with Mr. LaRaviere and mentioned that he works specifically with high school youth and the approach that his agency takes is a youth development, strength based approach. The general time interval he deals with students is 14-18 years old but it is a spectrum and ages 0-21 are all contributing to where his agency intersects. He is hoping that anything he can contribute from his experience working with those students will be valuable to younger kids/students as well.

Paul Goddard also agreed with Mr. LaRaviere and added that educators do have a role to play. Schools engage a large number of a students' waking hours and community resources and there are responsibilities with that to think about all the kids. Also have a unique role in that schools/educators intersect with population discussed and whether the school is directly providing, teachers are directly involved with servicing the At-Risk youth, if there are partnerships in which school plays a central role, or as a physical location for other things that help At-Risk youth, educators do have an essential role in kids early childhood through twelfth. He also mentioned that a couple of things regarding the Council's tasks/charges directly refer to curriculum and academic programs and we will need to engage educational expertise in regards to that.

Martin Torres added that there is a large chunk of At-Risk students and agreed with Mr. LaRaviere that children are living in circumstances that affect them beyond the confines of the classroom based on where they live, capital parents bring to home and circumstances of neighborhoods/peers. Would like for Council to have the ability to think about policy interventions beyond scope of what is taking place in schools. Feels he has a good grasp on what the state has done to build supports for At-Risk youth and

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many instances torn down those assets based off of his experiences managing government relations at state level.

Rep. Wallace explained that Public Act 99-0721 does not limit the Council to just the 10 questions presented but are a minimum and are types of questions that will need to be addressed and that the language in the legislation was made to be as flexible as possible to allow Council to be flexible in how we view what is going on and help broaden approach.

Sharice Yates said that as a parent she appreciates how different levels of government, city and state officials want to come in and try to help At-Risk youth but at what point do we try to help the parents. She believes that the gap when children are coming to school behind is coming from the parents or custodial guardian of child. Ms. Yates does not feel that it is the city, state or government's responsibility to fill the gap for children to come into school prepared. She said that community resources have been mailed to parents associated with state of Illinois schools to help prepare for school but was only available to parents who were willing to accept it.

Rep. Wallace did not disagree with Ms. Yates and believes that we do need to empower the household and create the agency to be able to go out and look for the resources she mentioned. She agreed with Mr. LaRaviere in regards to who is being held accountable for those resources being available. She stated that there is currently limited access to child care assistance programs and low income parents do not have the funding to send children to facilities once state funded programs are at maximum capacity.

Mr. LaRaviere clarified his previous statement and said that he did not disagree with any response he has heard. He addressed Mr. Goddard saying that he mentioned the math standards improvement because it is our responsibility as schools to take students we have regardless of condition they come to us in and help them grow as much as possible. Hopes that Council puts forth recommendations to ensure that continues to happen and also wants to emphasize that we try to ensure that they do not end up at the door in that conditions. He addressed Ms. Yates by stating that he believes that parents are a part of the failure not the entire reason. Mr. LaRaviere gave statistics regarding lead paint exposure in different communities and feels that as a community we need to decide what type of healthy housing stock we make available to low income families. He supported Ms. Yates with regards to research on word gap, linguistic richness in our households and the impact that has on how children show up prepared for school and it is in direct result of parent talk or the lack there of, but feels that as a community through government we still need to work with parents on that aspect.

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Donna Hardy said she hopes to find programs that help parents realize they are the child's first and most important teacher and to provide them with the tools and resources they need to help mirror learning in school at home. She sees her role as being the voice for parents who feel disempowered or not as engaged as they would like to be with schools and being a mediator between the principal and parents who are upset with the schools and to help parents understand how to have partnerships and collaborative relationships with schools. She also hopes to be able to expand that and reach more parents and make sure they know they have a voice and they do matter within the school.

Chris Baehrend said that it has been a wonderful discussion and feels that Mr. LaRaviere's comments put things into context as far as it not being an education problem but a poverty problem in the Country and schools are being blamed for it and we are excused from doing something about expanding real opportunity and living in a more equal society. He hopes that we will have a wide ranging discussion on when there are specific things to blame. He wants to come out with a program that not only identifies ways to live in a society that's more fair and at the same time schools need to be places that address their strengths and that we are not doing deficient thinking of education. He hopes that we will look at their cultural funds of knowledge and that we have a pedagogy that is relevant and that we are doing restorative justice and that ultimately students will be advocates for themselves.

Beth Malik brings a unique perspective of working with students experiencing housing instability. She feels that schools can struggle to meet the needs of students/families that are living in not just poverty but extreme poverty. She said that she spends a majority of her time working with unaccompanied young people, facing homelessness without a parent or guardian. She proposed the question of how do you support young people and encourage them to stay in school and do their homework and succeed academically when they do not have a place to stay at night. She sees herself as bringing the perspective of working with young people that lack housing and look to schools for place of stability and supports when those places (schools) struggle with meeting legal mandates to enroll and provide transportation if necessary and the more rich services and supports students need that they are not getting.

Troy LaRaviere responded to Ms. Malik in regards to the out of school based accountability that he mentioned earlier and mentioned the mobility rate and that it impacts the ability to create and implement a cohesive and coherent academic program. And it is due to the housing instability and homelessness and that the larger political body needs to be responsible for addressing. He feels that the recommendations put forth to address those issues are critical to the Council.

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Julie Wollerman said that she does not disagree with anything that has been said and the one thing she has concerns with in regards to comments is the idea that schools are graded on students that they have never had. She also mentioned that it tends to be easier to look at 3, 4, 5 year old students as at-risk and find ways to help them and their families and we tend to forget at-risk populations the older they get. She said that we need to remember as a Council and as a state that funding for the older students and their families is very important and just as important as the younger students.

Troy LaRaviere responded to Julie's comment saying that he was not previously addressing just pre-k but addressing joblessness and adequate housing for parents that will benefit children at all ages. And that he was highlighting the critical earlier years of a child's life. He would like to have recommendations put forth that will benefit all children regardless of age.

Dirk Muffler said that he agrees with Julie's comments. He said that there are supports services that benefit at-risk youth but does not feel that there are enough systems in traditional school systems to catch them before students end up in his organizations programs due to funding cuts. He said that he is interested to see how Council looks at challenge of funding the state is currently facing.

Beth Malik commented that a lot of the questions put forth by legislation are focused on academic achievement and feels that homeless and unstable house population is more of a retention issue versus academic achievement issue. She would like the Council to look at why students are not in school to address the retention issues versus just focusing on the student engagement in school.

Rep. Wallace said that Ms. Malik's expertise with that population of students will help the Council to go beyond the questions put forth.

Paul Goddard mentioned Maslow's hierarchy of needs. He feels that as an educator he understands that we have to address those fundamental needs before we can get to the learning aspect.

Donna Hardy commented off of Mr. Goddard's comment and said that they teach parents how to be advocates for their children's education and they do a lot with just attendance issues and stress just getting the child to school. Ms. Hardy said that once that child gets to school we do not know what is going on in their head and what they are dealing with from outside issues from home. She said that she is concerned about how we are going to go about this because there are so many issues that we could list that prevent children from learning.

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Rep. Wallace talked about the report that will be due and feels that we need to possibly have an appendix of a list of things that can be done in a school to go beyond the General Assemblies generalist way of thinking.

Chris Baehrend said that he feels it is our function in charge to be aspirational in putting forward policy recommendations that will address the issues throughout the continuum and to highlight and emphasize what elected officials can be doing to help parents throughout the state be equipped to help their children.

Paul Goddard said that he likes what he is hearing that it is not an either/or but this/and, and that we are charged to talk about the impact of socioeconomic factors but also academics. He said that in Rockford they are working on cultural competence with teachers and that can make a huge difference in kids experience in school.

Beth Malik talked about the policies and practices that schools set up to function that do not always take into mind the students and parents in the homeless population and they act as a deterrent or barrier to a more welcoming environment.

Rep. Wallace said that she feels that those concerns may be best addressed by an affidavit.

Chris Baehrend brought up the idea of community schools and mentioned that we need to find reasons for kids to come to school and for parents to show up.

Michael Crowley said that he thinks a lot of what has been mentioned is possible answers to question 1 in legislation. He feels that the Council could help to expand definition of barriers.

E. Next Steps

Paul Goddard mentioned getting everybody's cards and Rep. Wallace mentioned a directory being sent out for all members. Sue Taylor said that was fine as long as all members were ok with their information beyond names being sent to each member. Rep. Wallace mentioned to start to think about from your own perspective, area of expertise, and body of research that you are familiar with and start to pull together resources, even with your own organizations. She asked about having a central place to email that information so it is available to all members. Donna Schertz advised that we are currently working with IT to have an email established specifically for the Council and will be monitored by ISBE staff and once it is set up we will send the address to all members. Rep. Wallace asked about technology available for an online platform for engagement between members and said that will need to investigate to see how that would work with the Open Meetings Act. Rep. Wallace also asked about the website

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currently established and Ms. Schertz clarified that what is currently on the ISBE website is for housing agenda's and meeting minutes but is not interactive and does not have password protection capabilities.

Martin Torres asked how often Chairperson would like for Council to meet and in addition to the 10 questions if there will be a group process in terms of defining success.

Rep. Wallace agreed that we could have a discussion through an online platform regarding definition and then come to a consensus. She said that she feels we should meet more frequently in the beginning and then eventually phase out the meetings further. Her next step would be to help engage with definition of success and to engage in terms of when we will meet. She recommended meeting two weeks from now, February 6th, but due to scheduling conflicts the date was not available for V-tel and it was decided to meet Friday February 3rd from 1:30-4 and the next meeting scheduled for Monday February 27th 1-4.

F. Schedule Next meeting(s)

Friday, February 3rd, 2017 1:30-4

Monday, February 27th, 2017 1-4

III. Public Participation

There were no public participates in attendance.

IV. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn was made by Rep. Wallace at 2:45 p.m. and seconded by Chris Baehrend and unanimously agreed upon by all in attendance.