

Truancy in Chicago Public Schools Task Force



May 12, 2014

I. Call to Order and Welcome

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Antoinette Taylor at 10:10 a.m.

II. Roll Call of Task Force Members

Chicago

Anna Alvarado
Jennifer Berne
Andrew Broy (Eric Johnson)
Rick Gravatt
Laurene Heybach
Leslie Juby
Melissa Mitchell
Antoinette Taylor
Dana Wright (Tangenese Porter)

Jeff Aranowski
Juliet Bromer
Aarti Dhupelia
Sarah Hains
Madelyn James
Representative Linda Chapa LaVia
Michael Seelig
Kevin Walsh
Jack Wuest

Springfield

Jackie Price

Arthur Sutton

Telephone

Fanny Diego Alvarez
Crystal Laura
Barbara Sherry
Maria Trejo

Mary Howard (Cassandra Thiem)
Shaalein Carroll Lopez
Paul Sarvela

Not Present

Christine Boyd
Sen. Michael Connelly
Kevin Fahey
Laura Kieran
LaTanya McDade
Representative Sandi Pihos
Neli Vazquez Rowland

Senator Jacqueline Collins
Andrea Evans
Jim Kestner
Robert Lee
Kareem Pender
Theresa Plascencia
Elizabeth Swanson

III. Approval of Minutes from the April 28, 2014 Meeting

There was a motion to approve the minutes which was seconded and approved with no opposition.

IV. Implications and Technical Assistance for Special Education

United States Department of Education - Office of Civil Rights

Ms. Taylor expressed her gratitude to the Office of Civil Rights (OCR) and to the people involved in the chain of communication between Chicago and Washington D. C. for OCR's presence at the task force meeting to address issues related to students enrolled in Chicago Public Schools who have IEPs or 504 Plans and have school attendance problems.

Aleeza Strubel, supervisory attorney with OCR, said the agency does not have an official perspective on truancy but she wanted to provide the task force with specific information related to the needs of students with disabilities for application in school attendance solutions. Her intention was to give the task force an overview of the statutes which guarantee student rights and provide funding and to address the obligations of public schools to ensure students with disabilities get an education.

OCR enforces civil rights laws that prohibit recipients of federal financial assistance, such as a public school system, from engaging in discrimination based on any personal factor, including a disability, a perceived disability, or a history of a disability. There are two anti-discrimination statutes pertaining to the rights of disabled students: Section 504 which prohibits discrimination on the basis of a disability by any school receiving federal financial assistance and the Americans with Disabilities Act which prohibits discrimination by any public entities. There is also the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) which is a funding statute for special education programs for which her office does not provide oversight as that is provided by the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE).

Ms. Strubel said her office has three means of addressing civil rights issues: complaint resolutions, compliance reviews, and technical assistance. She said there are about 600-700 civil rights complaints filed in Chicago in a year, usually by parents over issues related to their children's education. She explained further that compliance reviews are conducted when an issue is brought to their attention because of possible civil rights transgressions. For example, they launched a compliance review of CPS in 2010 over issues related to insufficient provision of transportation services for students with disabilities after being contacted by advocacy organizations. Her office also monitors the press and mines their own data for trends that are likely to spark complaints. OCR's third means of support to the public is technical assistance which they provide by responding to calls from parents and schools, presenting at conferences, and trying to bring schools and universities into compliance with the law. She explained that after OCR conducts an investigation and determines the extent of the legal oversight, they operate on a collaborative basis in order to bring institutions into compliance with the law and often negotiate voluntary service agreements. She cited the case of a Chicago charter school where a female student was being bullied because she was suffering from hair loss, and the school administration was unaware that this situation was in violation of federal statute. OCR worked with the school to address the issue.

Ms. Strubel explained that all schools have an obligation under the law to provide academic adjustments, auxiliary aids, and related services to ensure the playing field is leveled for students with disabilities. Her office is additionally concerned with the access students with disabilities have on all other levels, from their ability to navigate the school property to their inclusion in extracurriculars. OCR also looks into the disproportional identification of students with disabilities from specific racial backgrounds as this has been an historic problem, and is

additionally concerned with disciplinary issues involving students with disabilities as there is a trend toward disability harassment.

It is not simply up to the parents to inform the district that their child has a disability; the district has an affirmative obligation to locate and identify students with disabilities who are not receiving a public education (Child Find). This is an area where truancy is a key factor. The district has to proactively make their policies and procedures known and make a reasonable effort toward finding failing and non-attending students. This includes examining and analyzing attendance and achievement statistics. Of the many tens of thousands of students who are truant, a fair number of them are students with disabilities who have yet to be identified as a student with a disability, have yet to receive services, or who have benefited neither from an evaluation nor from the knowledge of a special educational professional who could facilitate the access of these children to an education.

Teachers and administrators should heed red flags that indicate a student's need for an evaluation such as a lack of achievement, manifestation of chronic behavior problems, and/or chronic absenteeism. OCR usually comes in after the fact and asks why a district did not consider the student's absenteeism, decline in performance, or repeated behavior incidents as evidence of a child struggling and in need of an evaluation.

Parents may suspect a disability and raise it with the school, and the school must respond as school authorities cannot disregard a parent's request for an evaluation. Schools also have an obligation to inform parents of their due process rights in the event the parents wish to challenge the school's determination that an evaluation is not necessary or that special education services are not warranted after an evaluation takes place. Parents need to know what is available to them if they disagree with the school.

The obligation of a district is to provide FAPE which stands for a free, appropriate public education, and this constitutes much of OCR's caseload. A student with a disability is entitled to access to an education with whatever services and resources are needed to give the child an equal opportunity for an appropriate public education. That is regardless of the nature or the severity of the student's disability within a school district's jurisdiction. Even if children attend a parochial or other private school, they are entitled to FAPE from their district. OCR's purview includes what is considered to be "appropriate" because each child is different. Evaluation data will reveal what will or won't work, based on the individual child, but the driving factor is equal opportunity rather than outcome. "We are not saying every student should have the opportunity to get straight A's. We are saying they should have equal opportunity to a level playing field, to compete and participate, whether it is in a classroom or in an extracurricular activity," explained Ms. Strubel.

Rene Heybach asked about homeless children with disabilities and their right to immediate enrollment. She wondered if the evaluation process would be expedited for them. Ms. Strubel said that enrollment should never be held up pending an evaluation as the students should be in school. During the process, there would be stay-put provisions if everyone could agree what the child needs on an interim basis, pending the results of an evaluation and a full individualized assessment, but that the child should be enrolled in school right away and the process started. If a child was homeless and not enrolled in school, this should not be a basis for keeping him or her out as identification should occur immediately.

If the process is long because of the difficulty of the diagnosis, if there is a unique set of facts, or if it is difficult to determine what the child needs, the district would be expected to provide compensatory services in order to bridge the gap from the time a student enters and is evaluated to when the Individual Education Program (IEP – a plan to provide specialized instruction and services to enhance learning) or 504 plan (accommodation plan for a student with a disability that does not impact learning) is written up and implemented to make up for missed services. There are state laws about the length of the evaluation process time period. Compensatory services can be awarded if proper services were not provided or if there was a gap in the period of time from entry to evaluation to service provision.

One of the rights provided with Section 504, Title II of the ADA, and IDEA is the right to disagree with any individualized determination and file a due process complaint. If a child has an IEP because of a specific disability that affects his or her ability to achieve, he or she is covered under IDEA, and the parent would go to ISBE to file a due process complaint. Whereas if a child has diabetes or epilepsy, special education services are not necessary. The child may need assistance with glucose monitoring or insulin shots, however, so he or she will have a 504 plan. If a parent has a disagreement with what is in the plan or the district's implementation of the plan, the parent may file an internal due process complaint with CPS (or home district). A hearing officer will determine if the plan was appropriate and adequate for the child's needs and will order specific remedies for the child if the parent prevails.

A parent does not need a medical diagnosis to get a 504 plan started. They do have a right to request a plan and the district has the responsibility to respond. If a parent disagrees with the district's determination of need, the parent has the right to file a due process complaint.

Before IDEA was revised in 2008, there was much discussion over what qualified as a disability. Congress sent a message to loosen the standards to mitigate the arguments and debates over what qualifies. Since 2008, the student identified as having a disability has to "have a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more major life activities." An impairment is defined as "any physiological condition that affects a bodily system, or any mental or psychological disorder." Major life activities include caring for oneself, performing manual tasks, walking, learning, seeing, etc. down to bodily functions.

Congress also eased the standards on what qualifies as a substantial limitation. Ms. Strubel said the theory is that we are looking at the opportunities for success, we are not looking for ways to deny children services. So the restriction does not have to be a complete inability in the area of a major life activity, but there has to be an impairment.

Ms. Strubel addressed the budgetary constraints in the provision of services to some students with specific needs and said OCR never accepts that as an excuse for not developing and implementing an appropriate plan for a student.

IDEA and 504 define disabilities differently. To be protected under IDEA, you must have a disability listed in IDEA and need special education and related services. Under 504, a qualified student with a disability is protected regardless of whether the student needs special education. Some students are entitled to both IDEA and 504, such as those with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder or oppositional defiant disorder. Parents should be present when either plan is being developed.

OCR has found that some students cannot get to school the same as their nondisabled peers, and transportation problems for students with disabilities in Chicago are huge. Social workers are spread out among a number of schools and students receive fifteen minutes of services in a month which compromises the effectiveness of that service and prompts an eventual provision of compensatory services if the matter is pursued by parents.

Ms. Taylor said when IEPs are developed, the team is mindful of costs and will not write in a service that is cost-prohibitive, especially if the parents are uninformed and not aware of their rights. Many parents perceive the school staff in the room are experts in the matter concerning their child and defer to their expertise.

Michael Seelig explained there is almost a disincentive to serve students with disabilities and English language learners and how the funding structure has recently been changed in California to address this issue.

Representative Chapa LaVia said Illinois legislators are working on a similar measure. She also said if schools take federal dollars, they better provide the services. If they have no intention of providing students with disabilities the services they need under the law, they should decline the special education funding. In view of decreased funding across the board for special education (formerly 40% from the federal government, currently at 17%), she advocates for equity in funding across the state so special needs students do not miss out on vital services.

Representative Chapa LaVia also referenced the ongoing problem with charter schools not providing adequate services to special needs and English language learners (ELL) populations but hastened to point out part of their problem is they receive only seventy cents on the dollar as compared to CPS schools. Ms. Strubel said her office is beginning to field more complaints from parents of students enrolled in charter schools and that they have planned mandatory trainings for all charter school principals and case managers in Chicago this June and July on the laws they are required to enforce. When OCR did research on charter schools, they couldn't find their Title IX coordinators or their 504 coordinators.

Melissa Mitchell asked about the process for a child's educational plan to follow if he moves, and Ms. Strubel said the plan follows child and schools either have to implement a plan from the other school or come up with their own.

Rene Heybach asked about the affirmative obligation to locate, identify, and enroll students with disabilities and the fact that in the city there is an ongoing battle about establishing residency when you are in a temporary living situation. She said no one seems to be trying to facilitate this situation. She said most homeless students experience delays in and barriers to enrollment. Ms. Strubel said districts are careful about enrollment because they do not want to pay for the education of a child from another district, but said her office is very aggressive in pursuing the rights of the homeless.

Jeff Aranowski said if there is an IEP or 504 plan component to a delayed enrollment situation for a child, they are definitely entitled to compensatory services. He asserted the problem for nondisabled children lies in the fact that Illinois law does not have a process for parents to appeal a district's refusal to enroll in the absence of suitable paperwork.

Ms. Strubel said her office responds immediately to complaints of this nature and drafts a resolution agreement with the district which is monitored very closely. She explained they also tell districts to reconvene their IEP teams for students with disabilities and consider the services the children need to close any gaps that exist, particularly if there was a time delay in enrollment.

Chairperson Taylor said this happens in the juvenile justice system where 504 plans and IEPs are not implemented. She said the reason the state has not seen more legal action around it is because the parents of students in this situation are probably unaware of their rights. Ms. Strubel advised members of the task force who advocate for children that they should alert parents to the fact that OCR can field their complaints. She said they have a rapid resolution process where they pick up the phone and call a school or district on behalf of a family and ask if officials know they will be on the hook for compensatory services.

Madelyn James asked about child find in the juvenile justice system because it would be likely that many of these teens would have learning or emotional/behavioral disorders.

Rick Gravatt said they look at records to see who has a disability because they are so aware of the correlation between students who have failed in school and the juvenile justice system. When necessary, they do an evaluation, but since most of their students are older, they do very little of these as most have plans already in place.

Ms. Strubel said a parent does not get to decide what the plan should be but they do have a voice. She also cautioned that no decision about special education can be made categorically because every child is different. You cannot place a child in a particular educational setting because of his or her disability. You could have twenty-five children with the same diagnosis, and you will not have twenty-five similar IEPs. Every 504 plan will also be different for children with the same medical situation such as diabetes because children handle their disease differently. She explained that once all the data is gathered on a child being considered for special education services, a team of people, including the parent is assembled for the discussion about placement. The parent may insist on things like a one-on-one aide or a certain assistive technology program and the district may decide to forgo those suggestions. Although the parent has a voice on the IEP team, the parent does not decide the plan. If the parent is dissatisfied with the IEP provisions, the parent has the right to file a complaint with ISBE. She said if they contacted her office to file a complaint, OCR would send the parents to ISBE because they are civil rights lawyers, not educators.

Often a team will decide on a plan and the principal will differ for reasons related to costs or personnel. Teams have to be careful about what they put in a plan because the federal government insists the IEPs be implemented as written.

Goal is inclusion because students with disabilities should be with their general education peers as much as possible. There are services provided on a pull-out and push-in basis. No child should be separated from their general education peers for the entirety of the school day. They should be included in a meaningful way in some general education classes

Ms. Strubel said charter schools need to improve their services to students with disabilities. She said they can only get better as they could not be worse. They need to educate their staffs on what has been written into law. Parents can file a complaint with her office if their child was

denied enrollment in a charter school because of a disability or if they were kicked out of a charter school because the school could not provide services.

Re-evaluation of a student should occur when teachers see declining achievement and increased absenteeism. Reconvening the IEP team helps in the provision of appropriate services when need changes and gives parents due process rights, the right to contest the placement decision. Re-evaluation also occurs on a planned basis every three years.

Ms. Strubel explained you can discipline students with disabilities, but if you discipline a student with a disability for ten days, that constitutes a significant change in placement which triggers a need for re-evaluation. The same is true if there is a pattern to the discipline of the child. A manifestation determination hearing must be held to determine if the student's behavior which inhibits his/her progress is a manifestation of the disability. You must address the behaviors because you cannot punish a child for his or her disability.

Some parents complain that their child's placement was predetermined, which is not an acceptable process. Many times it is a resource problem because you have a case manager with a docket of kids. OCR does not accept that nor do they accept placements made out of administrative convenience. Vaguely worded plans are a problem also because no one knows what the child is entitled to. OCR will look at the plan itself when parents complain. They also look at meeting notes and interview team members to try and get to an understanding of what the plan requires. District and school staffs must be trained to write plans clearly so there can be no room for ambiguity. Procedural safeguards must also be clearly written to be understood.

If a child has an aide in school, he or she may need one for extracurricular activities. It is important to remember aides and services in the extracurricular context and give students with disabilities an opportunity to participate.

Representative Chapa LaVia referred to House Bill 4527 which she sponsored (which amends the Charter Schools Law of the School Code and requires a charter school to comply with all federal and State laws and rules applicable to public schools that pertain to special education and the instruction of English language learners) and referenced INCS's opposition to it. The bill was brought on by the U. S. Department of Education because of the things that were not codified in the Charter School Statute. She said that they are on top of the charter schools because they are not doing what they are supposed to do for students with disabilities and English language learners, but it is because their statute does not say they should.

Mr. Aranowski said the addition of special education and bilingual instruction is almost declaratory in nature. He said it might not be in their Charter School Code, but these services must be offered in view of federal statutes obligating federal funding recipients to structure programs to serve these student groups.

Ms. Strubel said when these complaints come in, they go after CPS because it is their funding that is on the line as the charter schools come under their umbrella in Chicago. Representative Chapa La Via pointed out to CPS that they could be stripped of their funding because the charter schools aren't doing what they should to serve these student groups, and the charter schools operate under a code that doesn't mandate it. She said the charters think she is jumping all over them for no reason. She said some charters are trying to provide services, but most aren't.

Ms. Strubel said guidance is coming out next week because this is a problem with most charter schools. She said that in all fairness, the charters have never said to OCR that they didn't have to comply. She said OCR has provided training to some charters schools. It is really about awareness and understanding; they are not saying federal statutes do not apply to them. Eric Johnson of INCS likes the idea of collaboration rather than legislation which prompted Representative Chapa LaVia to ask why the charters are opposed to the new bill (which has since passed both Houses and was signed into law by Governor Quinn on June 9.

OCR is coming out with a brief about greater charter school cooperation because this is a problem with charter schools nationally.

V. Implications and Recommendations for High Schools

University of Chicago Consortium on Chicago School Research

Stacy Ehrlich, Eliza Moeller, and Rachel Steele of the University of Chicago Consortium on Chicago School Research (CCSR) were present to share an overview of the consortium's study which focused on the long term effects of interventions at the ninth grade level to stem absenteeism and truancy and thereby increase graduation rates. They displayed a graph which depicted the level of chronic absenteeism (missing 10% or more of school days for any reason) from pre-kindergarten through senior year of high school during the 2011-2012 school year. Their focus is the huge jump in absenteeism between eighth and ninth grades.

Absences are highly related to key outcomes for students as there is a tight link between going to class and grades, test scores, and graduation rates. They have found ninth grade is a really pivotal year. Another graph demonstrated the connection between absences and grades among a group of students who had all scored a 16 on the eighth grade EXPLORE test. In ninth grade, the students who attended school with minimal absences (five or fewer days) had 3.0 grade point averages (GPAs) while those with attendance problems had averages that fell in relationship to the number of school days missed. As a result, students who had missed twenty or more school days had a 1.8 GPA, a situation which affected 23% of the students in this cohort.

Once the link was established between non-attendance and failure, the researchers wanted to be able to predict who was going to fail by examining different data. Their examination of demographic and economic background characteristics led to the conclusion these factors were responsible for only 7% of course failures and eighth grade test scores accounted for only another 5%. Student behaviors were found to be the greatest predictor of failure 61% of the time during this study because when students choose to neither attend school nor make any effort toward achievement, they fail.

Another slide demonstrated the relationship between school attendance and graduation rates. Students who missed four or fewer days in ninth grade had an 87% graduation rate. As attendance rates diminished, so too did the graduation rates. Student who missed five to nine days, graduated at a rate of 63%, those who missed ten to fourteen days had a 41% graduation rate, and the remainder had graduation rates in direct proportion to their attendance habits.

The same students had many more unexcused absences in ninth grade than in eighth grade (3.7 days versus 12.1 days). Total absences – for all reasons – nearly doubled from 8.4 days in eighth grade to 16.5 days in ninth grade for this same group of students in the studied cohort.

Questions were raised about the possibility of the ninth grade data actually reflecting a number of students who failed to transition from elementary school to high school, and Stacy Ehrlich said CPS is really stringent about the transition process. Aarti Dhupelia explained there is a transfer verification process within CPS but that it does happen occasionally that a student will not show up at the anticipated high school and enrolls in a different high in or out of the district.

Rene Heybach reported that as many as 300 homeless students are identified as unable to be located.

Ms. Ehrlich said the overwhelming bulk of the problem is, in terms of the numbers of kids who are chronically absent and setting themselves up not to graduate, is not due to homelessness or any other severe social problem; it is from the transition to high school and the fact that some students become disengaged and attend school sporadically. If you want to find the best time to intervene, it is in that moment when kids are becoming acclimated to high school.

Some of the reasons for increased absences in ninth grade include the following situations:

- Getting to school on time
 - Transportation issues
 - Waking up on time
- Safety concerns
- Increased suspensions
- High school context

Students report their biggest adjustment to high school stems from the last bulleted item as they find the switch from constant teacher monitoring on the elementary school level to the relative freedom of high school to be disconcerting. In eighth grade, teachers organize the whole learning process for their students, whereas in ninth grade the teacher delivers course content and gives students a tremendous amount of responsibility. Teachers have an expectation of self-reliance in their students among whom self-reliance varies greatly.

Classroom factors are also relevant as some teachers have more students absent than others do as students pick and choose whose class they will attend. Students tend not to miss classes in the middle of the school day, classes that are smaller in size, and classes with high-achieving peers.

Schools with more supportive environments with a high degree of teacher support and student/teacher trust elicit better attendance numbers.

School attendance would be improved if there was someone on staff who could coordinate issues related to health care, transportation, and safety. Ms. Ehrlich explained that the most successful high schools organize themselves around data and seek solutions through thorough data analysis, particularly in ninth grade when students need to be monitored and supported.

CCSR's Eliza Moeller heads up the Data Practice Collaborative to help high schools diagnose and solve their own problems through data collection and analysis. She explained that tracking district attendance data and disseminating it in a timely way is a best practice and that the data should be easy for teachers to access and should be focused on the right indicators: attendance and grades.

Such data will dissuade an algebra teacher from automatically sending students with poor grades to tutoring. The data would enable the teacher to look at who is in the building, who is not, and who is not attending class. The more teachers are able to engage in that kind of problem-solving, the more they will realize a tutoring intervention is only appropriate for a small number of kids, the kids who are present every day but not mastering the content.

They found in some high schools there was an intentional reorganization to create teams of teachers across departments to discuss student progress/attendance and consider solutions when either diminishes. This collaboration is necessary in view of the fact a ninth grader is likely not to ask for help. Most high schools are not organized to foster the discussions about why students are not in class, and Ms. Moeller said fourteen year olds are persistently adolescent. She said they have been studying ninth graders for twenty-five years at CCSR, and the one thing that does not change is the nature of fourteen year olds.

Ms. Moeller said the attendance issue is like an onion with layers of causes: family issues, chronic illness of parents or children, community violence, etc. She said you can peel all the layers away of all those endemic, hard to solve problems until you come to this really large center which is fourteen year olds who need more supports to get on the right track in high school.

When Rachel Steele, a data strategist at CCSR, began working at Hancock High School to pilot the ninth grade intervention program, she discovered many facets to their attendance problems. Students were missing for the whole day or part of the day, they were skipping out on first and last period classes, they were trying to avoid teachers who were less than engaging, or they had no interest in an assigned class. She found also that staff was laboring under the misconception that last period classes were cut because the scheduling conflicted with the times students had to report to their after school jobs. Upon investigation it was discovered only 12% had jobs and of those, only 8% of those with jobs had a work schedule that interfered with school.

The researchers said there was some lag time (two days) on data on whether a student cut one class or was out all day. The reason for this was cited as a complication of CPS's multiple data tracking programs under their IMPACT system (SIM, Dashboard, VERIFY, etc.) which do not align as each features different calculations. Ms/ Dhupelia said CPS is working to streamline and align these data systems.

Ms. Dhupelia also explained the CPS student code of conduct, which is revised every other year, will offer a plan for a reduction in suspensions and expulsions, and professional development will be provided to staff on alternatives to suspension and expulsion.

Ms. Steele said school administrators and teachers need technical solutions to problems but also need adaptive solutions to problems. The technical solutions are a lot easier than adaptive solutions but schools have to make it part of the school culture to, for example, make calls home every day. She said timely parent notification calls have a positive effect on attendance. She said schools have to change the way they are doing things in response to student situations.

Representative Chapa LaVia said charters are good at doing that. They actually have people who go out to the homes and bring the kids in.

Ms. Taylor said it is not always about pouring more money into a situation but being more aware of what is happening in the building and diffusing data results across the learning environment so everyone is talking about attendance.

Eliza Moeller advised that school districts need not purchase a program for attendance solutions. She said you have to spend some time figuring out what your attendance problem is like Rachel Steele did at Hancock High School. A school may need extra resources to fund the cost of having people go to absent students' homes. The priority is to reorganize your ideas on the role of the high school in the lives of adolescents. Solutions start from and stem from data diagnostics and problem solving.

Jack Wuest asked about the process for culture change at a school.

Ms. Steele said Hancock had been awarded a school improvement grant and chose to partner with the University of Chicago. CCSR sent in a team of consultants including Ms Steele who was the project manager. They formed a leadership team which consisted of the school administration and the leaders of every department in the school (special education, course leads, grade level leads, etc.). They met on a weekly basis during the first year to review the data in order to understand what was really going on in the school. During the second year, they began to try out different strategies and during year three they began to work to achieve sustainability. Ms. Steele has made sure school staff is able to run the programs on their own and maintain the data gathering and analysis cycle.

Ms. Moeller explained that if someone can initiate this on-the-ground problem solving, work on aligning the data systems, get people asking the right questions in order to understand their own problems, and then seek solutions, real change can be achieved with the freshman on track movement. People on the ground have to be empowered to be problem-solvers.

Melissa Mitchell said that community partners are important because they have very different relationships with families and students and have knowledge of what resources may be available, and Ms. Moeller concurred.

VI. Task Force Recommendations Summary Debrief

Ms. Taylor referred everyone to the task force recommendations summary and asked members to review the document and make sure their individual recommendations were included. If they wished to insert additional recommendations into the document, they should highlight their addition and reference the page number in an email to the task force manager by May 16.

Jeff Aranowski asked if members could indicate which recommendations they are opposed to and Ms. Taylor said such selections should also be highlighted with an explanation offered. When we come together in June, we will look at a draft of the report by the writing committee.

Ms. Taylor thanked the members of the Best Practice Committee for their contributions to the task force as each member read and summarized at least one of the studies and reports on truancy solutions across the country. She also expressed her gratitude to the members of the Public Hearing Committee who attended hearings during the evening and on a Saturday in order to receive comments and survey community members on truancy issues.

VII. New Business/Open Discussion

Aarti Dhupelia introduced Dr. Zakieh Mohammed, Senior Manager in Attendance and Truancy at CPS.

VIII. Public Comment

There were no public comments.

IX. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 1:03 p.m.