

Education Cost Sharing Task Force

MEETING MINUTES

Thursday, November 3, 2011

2:00 PM in Room 1A of the LOB

The meeting was called to order at 2:00 P.M.

Chairman Barnes explained that Chairperson Stillman would be absent for the meeting and introduced Stefan Pryor to the task force. Stefan Pryor will serve as the new Commissioner of the Department of Education.

Commissioner Pryor gave an introduction to the task force and also explained goals and objectives he had for his new position.

Chairman Barnes gave a quick review of the New Haven meeting.

Mary Loftus Levine passed out handouts to the members regarding questions from the New Haven meetings.

The task force collectively introduced the idea to “attach strings” to the money being given to schools.

Dudley Williams explained that he doesn't have a problem with this if it helps improve schools.

Mark Benigni wants to make sure that the rules are backed by specific data that supports the idea that the “strings attached” are helping. He also expressed his desire to secure a portion of the cost sharing money to go towards extended hours for children in need.

Barnes explained that it is important to devise a method to reach equalization for the different school systems. There is more information to look at before exploring options of who deserves what.

Ted Sergi wants to focus on the CMT testing scores and utilize them more when creating the formula. Also, the importance that those with need get the additional help.

Commissioner Pryor explained that funding is just one of the many problems and that it is extremely important to look at the old formulas to ensure that they are cleaned up

Bill Davenport reminded the task force that it is important that we are trying to focus on graduating students into successful adults who join the local workforce.

Elsa Núñez agreed with both the Commissioner and Davenport. She explained that the graduation numbers need to go up and as a state there needs to be a measure of success regardless of the size of the town.

Loftus Levine expressed her desire to focus on what is working in our various school systems. Also, that there needs to be a focus on what is going on outside of the hours of operation within a school system.

Núñez disagreed and explained that it is important to keep the focus on the children and what they do in school hours.

Toni Harp wondered if there are any more incentives besides cash to be gained.

Barnes backtracked to the idea of “strings attached” explaining that as schools excel or begin to excel oversight can be relaxed. He also wondered what steps are to be taken regarding race to the top?

Harp wants to stay away from expensive consultants regarding the issue. It is more important to work with parents on language development for the children.

Benigni was curious about the schools that are doing well. Do they lose resources as they begin to improve?

Sergi said that there should be a reward rather than a punishment.

Commissioner Pryor reminded the task force that no system is perfect and voiced his wish that the task force would construct its own system.

Sergi explained that the approach to the system should be small and personal rather than broad and unfamiliar.

Harp brought up the subject of dinner for kids. She also wants to utilize the use of after school workers.

Barnes wants to provide funding to allow local districts to make decisions about all methods to help their individual needs.

Benigni responded that choice programs need to be balanced. With the high scores needed to be accepted to certain schools and programs it becomes “elitist” which must be avoided.

Barnes noticed that the task force was running out of time and moved on to discuss future speakers. He explained that there would most likely be three speakers on 11/17.

Williams added that it would be beneficial to hear a speaker regarding the funding of special education.

Len Miller added also that the task force could invite speakers from public schools with a high track record of success and explore their tactics.

Barnes announced the next meeting would be a data rundown meeting.

Harp asked that adult education also be looked into because it is often abused with enrollment of students that should attend regular High School classes.

Barnes replied that he also wants to look at the adult education programs. He announced the agenda for the next meeting would be available online in the next few days after approval.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:00 P.M.