

Minutes of the High School Graduation Issues Task Force
Meeting date: September 6, 2012

Call to order:

A meeting of the High School Graduation Issues Task Force, was held in the LOB, Room 1-B, Hartford, CT on Thursday, September 6, 2012. The meeting convened at 1 P.M.

Members in attendance:

Joe Cirusuolo
Jay Voss
Kristen Ann Record
Michael Freeman
Dr. Karissa L. Niehoff
Michael Yamin
Ann Sweeney
Stephen McKeever

Summary of Meeting:

A meeting of the High School Graduation Issues Task Force was called to order. The task force commenced a discussion of regarding revision of high school graduation requirements.

1. Karissa Niehoff moved that the following be the recommendation of the task force and incorporated into the final report. Ann Sweeney seconded the motion.

To recommend that the requirement that students take end of course exams in specific subject areas be eliminated.
The reasons for this decision are:

The degree of standardization that would result from this requirement would stifle ongoing curriculum development and improvement due to the need to change the end of course exams every time a substantial change needs to be made in the content of the course. Changing end of course exams would be a time and money consuming project and as such, would be a motivator to not engage in curriculum development and improvement.

Lack of funding has itself stifled the development of end of course exams to date. Presently only one of the specified exams, Algebra I, is being developed. There are presently no funds available for the development of any other exams

and there may not be sufficient funding available for even the completion of the Algebra I exam.

To preserve the rigor that has been established by the requirements specified in the secondary school reform program.

After discussion, the task force voted unanimously to adopt this provision.

2. Karissa Niehoff moved that the following be the recommendation of the task force and incorporated into the final report. Michael Yamin seconded the motion.

To establish a procedure whereby districts that want to pilot multiple systems for graduation requirements to do so with permission from the Commissioner of education which would be granted if the proposed multiple systems meet pre-established requirements.

After discussion, the task force voted unanimously to adopt the provision.

Furthermore, the task force discussed whether to replace Carnegie units completely with a competency based system of graduation requirements; replace graduation requirements system based primarily on Carnegie units with one based on a combination of units and demonstration of competencies; or preserve graduation requirements system based primarily on Carnegie units.

The task force engaged in discussion of this issue. Joe Cirusuolo reported to the task force that 10 Connecticut high schools and 15 states are working toward competency based diplomas. Michael Yamin expressed concern that a system would have to be created to translate competency based student evaluations (i.e., report cards, grades, and diplomas) for institutions of higher education. Karissa Niehoff suggested that the State Department of Education establish a task force to study competency based student evaluations.

The task force also discussed Student Success Plans (SSP) and how they are reviewed. Currently SSPs are reviewed in 6th and 9th grade. It was recommended that SSPs be reviewed annually throughout high school, however, Kristen Record suggested that annual review would not be feasible considering the effort involved. Rather, bi-annual review would be a more appropriate and practical schedule of review. Stephen McKeever explained that SSPs are a new concept and more time must be spent on evaluating the effectiveness of SSPs before issuing a mandate requiring annual or bi-annual review in high school.

Announcements:

The next meeting of the High School Graduation Issues Task Force will be held on Thursday, October 25, 2012 from 1 P.M. to 4 P.M.

Adjournment:

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