



GRADUATION GUIDELINES TASK FORCE

Tuesday, September 29, 2015

3:30 – 5:00 – EAC Willow

Meeting Notes

I. Welcome and Introductions of those not in attendance at the last meeting.

Present: Stephanie, Sean B., Shannon, Laurie, Jay, Diane, Dan, Karen, Koryn, Sarah, Clark, Holly, Richard, David, Joanna, Karin, Mario, Rhonda, George, Laurie, and Lacy

Absent: Val, Kolette, Bob, Tracie, Rosie, Riley, Dan, Molly, Sean S.

The group welcomed two new students who weren't in attendance last time, Colin and Jay, and Riley will join us next time – that gives this group the voice of three students. We continue to seek a MS counselor, and invitations have been sent to many by Karin and Melissa.

II. Norm Setting Reminder:

- One voice at a time.
- Be engaged and invested.
- Be on time.
- Be respectful of all opinions.
- Honor all voices.
- Focus always on what's best for kids.
- All support the final product.
- Presume positive intentions.
- Remember student diversity.
- Come prepared.

III. Menu of Options – updated September 2015 by the SBE

The members spent time on this discussion, and a handout was provided that delineates the options in more detail as approved by the State Board of Education earlier this month. This is the document from which we will work as we enter the discussion about Phase II of our graduation guidelines, now called graduation requirements by the State of Colorado. Karin reminded the team that Colorado is the last state in the nation to engage in this discussion and require graduation requirements. Even this menu of options, though, provides opportunities for districts to make choices that address and align with their community needs and expectations. Last year, this task force agreed on the Phase I requirements with the revision of our graduation requirements policy – still requiring 50 credits in specific coursework – knowing that this year's discussion of Phase II will add requirements from the menu of options.

IV. CDE Toolkit (rev. September, 2015) Discussion of homework – each member will share what they highlighted following their review.

Karin provided a new CDE Toolkit that has been updated with the new menu of options and includes a few other revisions of less significance. This is the version from which the group will work this year. Members shared their thoughts about the Toolkit that they reviewed for homework, and Karin reminded them to get rid of the version provided in August, or at least label it as such, and use the new version (in color) which they might label “September, 2015” going forward. During this discussion, the following was highlighted on page 16 of the document as members has asked for D-20 numbers in comparison to the “Colorado Numbers” presented in the Toolkit:

- *76.9 percent of Colorado students graduate – 91% of D-20 students graduate*
- *55.2% of Colorado’s high school graduates enroll in college – 77% of D-20 students enroll in college in the 1st year after graduation and that number is 82% in year two. Karin also shared that 56% enroll in 4 year institutions, and 19% enroll in two year; and, 57% are in state, and 25% are out of state colleges. Females enroll at a higher rate than males (85% to 78%). She reminded the task force that this data comes from the National Student Clearinghouse, so there are some variables in this data (military academies are not included, etc.) so data should be considered estimates.*
- *More than 1/3 of high school students participate in career and technical education courses in Colorado – in D-20, that number is about 1/2.*

V. Media/community response to new graduation **requirements**

Karin shared three articles that were published following the state board’s new list of menu options as they speak to some history and reaction to the changes. The group discussed the ideas in these articles, and there was some consensus around the idea that we want to be aspirational for our students and not make excuses for why they cannot do something or be expected to perform to high standards. There seemed to be some of that happening across the state.

During this discussion, one member of the group expressed hopes that we might consider looking at competency based graduation requirements v. time-based requirements as we are doing with the 50 credits that the group approved last year during Phase I. This member felt that this might be the perfect time to disrupt some thinking and force the conversation about this. Is it possible, a member suggested, that a student could test out of an English course requirement/credit, for example, by earning the necessary score on the ACT exam in ELA? All agreed that this would be possible per the state menu of options and their graduation requirements, but members suggested that we need to address the whole child, so last year’s task force went above and beyond by suggesting that the 50 credits remain in place with the as demonstrated in the updated policy approved last year, and we need to discuss this year, in Phase II, what we will add as we meet state mandates.

Another member suggested that we are not changing much if we don’t push this toward bigger change. This member also expressed concern that the emphasis on 21st century skills did not seem to be a part of the new options but that they were now merely mentioned as something that needs to be considered with ICAP and PWR standards.

Other members suggested that we wished for the 50 credits to continue in order to address the whole child and not base our entire discussion on the standardized tests and other measures that are included in the state’s menu of options. There was mention that we see value in course work and interactions with other

students and teachers. In addition, one member suggested that educating a child is about more than math and ELA – it's about all learning in all areas to prepare students for the world of work.

Another member reminded the group about the Higher Education requirements and how we need to be cognizant of their expectations as well.

All seemed to agree that, while we certainly need to be engaged in the important discussion about grading practices, standards-based instruction, and competency based instruction, we need to remember our charge is to “ensure that District 20 graduation requirement meet and/or exceed new Colorado Department of Education and State Legislative mandates by reminding this year's members of the 2014/2015 Phase I discussion and focusing on Phase II of the Graduation Guidelines discussion in the 2015/2016 school year.”

A question remained: Will we want to include an opportunity for an option in our requirements to demonstrate mastery outside of coursework in exceptional cases is proficiency can be demonstrated in other ways? This will continue to be discussed going forward.

Karin reminded the task force that we need to make decisions that represent our community and those we for whom we advocate. We want to be cautious to stick to our charge and to remember that the conversations outside of that, while important, will need to happen in a different venue. We always want to be cognizant of readiness of our community and the way change happens best.

VI. Small group work: Deciphering the options and listing pro's and con's

Karin assigned eleven small groups to look at each of the options and to report out next time, using 2 – 4 slides, about the option, the pro's and con's and the whether we feel that this is an option we should consider for our students. Groups will do some homework on this between now and the next week, and they will have 30 minutes to gather at the beginning of the next meeting prior to presenting their topic.

VII. Next meeting: 10/20/15 from 3:30 – 5:00 in Willow

Agenda topics include: report out from small groups and sharing of data around how these options would have impacted our seniors last year.

Karin reminded that group that, while we have meetings set until May when we must have recommendations to the BOE, if we finish early, we will not meet until May.