

EQUITY COMMITTEE

Summary Minutes – November 19, 2010

In attendance: Dawn Anderson Rascher, John Border, Linda Heiden, Clyde Mayfield, Ellen Reilly, Carmen Rivera-Jackson, Deb Stevenson, Susan Strodbeck, Pamela Telsrow, Englie Turner, Michelle Turner, Trish Turner,

High School Graduation Initiative Grant (HSGI)

- At the meeting, committee members were given a two-page handout that highlights the HSGI Grant.
- Dawn wants the Equity Committee to be a part of the success of this grant.
- DCSD has the 2nd highest drop-out rate in the state. It will take the entire community and school district to solve the problem.
- The grant will impact the efforts at the Kimberly Center East (KCE) because that building met the requirements for the funding for the HSGI grant. One qualifying factor is that KCE has a higher drop-out rate (40%) than the state average.
- The Davenport Community School District partners with EICCD for the drop-out prevention program and they are a partner on the HSGI Grant.
- This grant will help the community and the school district share services and information. The Juvenile Courts work with the same kids that we are losing to dropping out of school. We want to be able to share more information between each other.
- Information must be shared between entities that address if there are problems at home, is there a parent working 2nd/3rd shift and therefore having a hard time getting the student to school? Does the student have to care for younger siblings and therefore tired and having a hard time getting to school? What do we do for students who have a parent (or parents) deployed in the war? What do we do for students who have incarcerated parents?
- Social and emotional needs are important as well for drop-outs. Mental health therapists will be on site at the Kimberly Center. As some kids get closer to graduation, they start to “flake out” for one reason or another. Some of them do not want to leave school because they are comfortable and secure and it is the one thing stable in their life. Again, the mental health therapists can make an impact on their needs.
- Case Managers will be hired for KCE to work with the mental health therapists. The Case Managers can help with resources that might be necessary to help the student stay in school. Perhaps, the student needs Title 19 assistance or some other sort of assistance.
- Drop-out rates for DCSD were shared with the committee. The numbers were going down until the reporting system for the state changed. When the new system went in to place with the state, the number of drop-outs increased for DCSD.
- Drop-out rates and graduation rates are completely different by state reporting. The state looks at incoming 9th graders and then follows them to 12th grade. If they do not graduate in four years, then they do not count as part of the graduation rate.
- This grant will help make relevant connections. For example, is there a way a student can get dual credit so they get part high school credit for their diploma but also for college credit? This type of scenario could help promote the idea of college to some of the kids.
- If a student takes even one course for a GED, they are done with the school district. They are considered a drop-out once this happens. The intent of taking the test constitutes dropping out not passing the test itself.
- Who is the right person from the city to serve on the Equity Committee to help? Clyde Mayfield stated that he will bring the grant information up to the Mayor of Davenport. All committee members felt human contact to folks within the community will have a bigger impact on getting them involved rather than sending an email or calling them.
- Some committee members suggested showing a dollar amount on how much the drop-outs cost us as a community. Dollar amounts can get people’s attention.

- How DCSD spends the grant money is very specific; otherwise, the district would not have received the grant. There are federal reporting guidelines for this grant so that the government can see how well the grant initiative worked.
- Some high school students do not even know the basic math concepts such as integers, fractions and multiplication. How are they passing grades when they do not even know basic concepts? And, this type of situation seems to be happening more and more.
- Some of the committee members were interested in seeing facts on the number of 8th graders that failed two or more core courses but still moved on to 9th grade. This type of scenario can set a student up for failure.
- Any student who is under the age of 21 years and is a resident of the City of Davenport, can go to the EICCD's drop-out program and never even step foot in a public school. There were 59 students in the City of Davenport that did this last year. All of them were counted as drop-outs even though they never went through DCSD. The DCSD Board of Directors still want those kids to get a high school diploma even though the school district may end with a higher drop-out rate.

Drop-Out Facts:

- Attendance: a first-grade student who attends school less than 80% of the time will have a 70% chance of NOT graduating from high school
- Attendance: have a sign in the schools stating 95% attendance. This can serve as a reminder to students that this is the attendance rate that will make a student successful.
- Extra Curricular Activities: students that participate in these activities seem to do better at school.
- Reading: if a third-grader cannot read at their grade level, the prison system uses their reading scores to predict how many prison beds will be needed in the future.
- They may physically drop-out of school in high school but the student has been disengaged for quite some time.
- Every 9 seconds a student drops out of school.
- Kids out of school for two to four years have a harder time NOT dropping out because they already dropped out and then they come back to the same thing they went to before they dropped out. What can we do different for them to engage them back into getting a high school diploma.
- Having discussions with students using "on track for graduation" wording is better than telling a student what they are failing at or how behind they are.
- Many of the committee members felt that research shows that the problem starts early so they wondered if there is anything we can tie in with the grant to start helping students in elementary school.
- Conditions are getting worse... drop-out rates are higher, quality of outcomes of our seniors are not the same as the seniors were 5 to 10 years ago.
- Every time a student moves they lose an equivalent of 3 to 6 months of their education. So, kids that are moving around a lot suffer more in school.
- Some students want/can do well but their family may start chastising them for being smarter than them (make the student feel as if they think they are better than the rest of the family just because they are doing well at school and perhaps the rest of the family has not).
- Dawn shared a graph that showed reasons why students were leaving school. This graph is attached for your review.
- Schools will have national ID numbers soon for students.
- John Hopkins University has a curriculum called Freshman Seminar regarding how students study, how they resolve conflicts, etc. Perhaps, the school district should also have something like this something like this for transitional students.
- Online credit courses: should every student be made to do this? The Des Moines School District does this.
- The state no longer breaks out racial and ethnic information for drop-out statistics. The state just provides raw numbers now.
- How do school districts make learning relevant to some of these students? In today's world, some students do not see the importance of what is being taught to them because of the vast amount of information one can find on the internet.

Committee Assignment

Read the handouts “Grad Nation” and “Too Big to Be Seen” to begin a discussion at the next equity meeting about how the Davenport Community School District needs to move our efforts forward in graduation rates. At the January meeting, Dawn would like us to put together a timeline for the HSGI grant and come up with ideas on how to engage the community more. If you have any ideas or suggestions, please email them to andersonrascherd@davenportschools.org

Next Meeting Dates: January 27, 2011 (5:00 – 7:00 pm) ASC Board Room
There will be an April meeting; however, we are still working on securing the date.