

Minutes
Task Force on Family Engagement in Learning
Thursday, March 11, 2021, at 1:55 PM

The Arkansas State Board of Education (State Board) Task Force on Family Engagement in Learning met on Thursday, March 11, 2021, in the ADE Auditorium at Four Capitol Mall, Little Rock, AR 72201.

Present: Charisse Dean, Chair; Chelsey Moore; Dr. Kazandra Wilson; Freddie Scott; Shannon Green, Karen Bergh

Absent: n/a

Ms. Charisse Dean called the meeting to order at 1:55 p.m.

Consent Agenda

Chelsey Moore moved to approve the minutes of Dec. 10, 2020; Freddie Scott seconded. The committee voted to accept the minutes without change or discussion.

Action Agenda

1. Update from Core Team

1. Update from Core Team:

Chelsey Moore presented the newly formed Engagement Unit has been working on its Jan-June Objectives to promote engagement internally and externally. In its work on unit “branding,” becoming known and providing additional value beyond technical assistance to school Districts in the state, the team has developed a Vision Statement which will be published on the website:

Vision: The Engagement Unit moves beyond basic compliance by inspiring districts, agency partners, families and communities to engage in meaningful relationship-building in which all voices are equally valued.

Modules

Ms. Moore also presented the Unit’s plans to develop and deliver training modules, and is seeking feedback and content resources for curriculum in the subjects of Engagement, Diversity, and Goal-setting. Ms. Moore relayed the concept of an Engagement Academy, beginning with a set of trainings that could be characterized as an “Engagement Bootcamp.”

Ms. Dean commented on the team’s suggestion of a “bootcamp” and said she was excited to see what the Engagement Academy will produce. She suggested searching out parents who are veterans and could serve as models and coaches for younger parents or those who want to be more engaged in their children’s learning. Church leaders may help provide suggestions for

mentor-type parents whose experiences could provide the foundational information and support needed. She suggested that parents may teach parents, and that the trainings could be co-developed. She emphasized the importance of “empowering” parents who can take responsibility for these actions in their own families. Moreover, the expression of training may be deployed not “just to parents” but to the family itself, in cases where the term “parent” does not exclude other caregivers who may hold or want the responsibility to strengthen learning at home. Peer-to-peer support is vital.

If you start the Academy, how do you find the leaders you need, who know which parents are engaged and/or know how to do it well? It is important to find the support within the community itself. Ms. Moore suggested that Carli S.’s team within ADE has Refrigerator Lessons within the grade-level curriculum that can be shared as part of parent training, to support a student’s academic lessons and growth at home.

Internal Partners

Ms. Moore reported on the initiatives that the Engagement Unit has worked on in the past quarter to develop and / or promote the programs of other units in ADE whose work impacts families and communities, including

1. RISE; Brandon Waddel
2. SMACTalk; Ray Girdler
3. Assessment; Rachel Horn ([commissioner’s memo](#))
4. Coordinated School Health quarterly meeting ([recording](#))

External

Ms. Moore also reported on the Unit’s external work over the past quarter, including the Office for Education policy’s Parent Survey. ([report of survey results](#)) Parents were invited November 9-22, 2020 to participate in a survey that canvassed their concerns about their student's learning during COVID. The OEP, which designed and conducted the survey, reported that 17,836 parents/guardians responded to the survey, representing 30,381 individual students and about 6% of the parents/guardians of K-12 students in the state. Results of the survey were presented to the SBE in January 2021 and subsequently reported in the Arkansas Democrat-Gazette:

<https://www.arkansasonline.com/news/2021/jan/10/poll-of-parents-seeks-to-gauge-how-pupils-faring/>

Ms. Dean commented on the perception that there was not broad enough representation. Ms. Moore mentioned the outreach that Dr. Kazandra Wilson did to extend the survey to Spanish-language families. She said it was a successful exercise because there was a liaison group that helped with the outreach, and we were specific in asking for what we were wanting them to do (in this case, helpers called Spanish-language households to ask them to take the Parent Survey, and to let them know it was in Spanish, and required only “one click” online).

Partner districts

Shannon Green reported on the Program Advisor team's initiative to invite five (5) districts each from different areas and demographic regions of the state to work one-on-one on their Parent and Family Engagement Plans, and seek their input as advisors to our own work and the tools that we develop for them and their peers who have similar roles at their districts. These relationships involve regular communication and support, as well as extend their expertise to the larger Advisory Group that meets monthly. All Coordinators and Facilitators attend these monthly meetings, where we walk through the required components of the Engagement Plan that those who attend the Advisory Group meetings are responsible for. In addition, we videotape these sessions so those who cannot attend can watch and learn more later when they can.

Alas/Wings -Dr. Kazandra Wilson has partnered with the Arkansas support group, Alas/Wings, to provide webinars through their Facebook Page that help inform Arkansas' Hispanic families in Spanish about various aspects of public education in Arkansas for issues and concerns that impact their school-age children. The series of webinars started with an overview, including the grade levels in schools, and what is expected in order for their child and families to participate.

Dr. Wilson said that the webinars are expected to continue through July.

Ms. Moore asked Ms. Dean if there are other external groups or internal groups: High Quality Instructional Materials and Student Success Plan initiatives may be good for Engagement to "plug into" for the benefit of parent strategies.

Other Engagement Unit work and resources mentioned:

Advisory Group ([padlet](#))

Engage Arkansas ([website](#)) The Engagement Unit team met with Arkansas' Education Renewal Zones (ERZs) and Graduation Alliance to participate in ENGAGE Arkansas training that supports and re-engages students who have been most highly impacted by the pandemic.

Statewide Community Resource ([portal](#))

2. Discuss Upcoming ADE Family and Community Engagement Work

Ms. Moore mentioned the three (3) Annual Summit sessions that the Engagement Team is working on ([sessions](#))

1. "12 Signs Your Engagement Strategies are Winning Hearts"
2. "4 Profound Strategies for Building Partnerships with Community Assets to Support Student Success"
3. "Engagement Essentials in Action"

Revisiting the coalition

Building upon the efforts of this task force, let's keep the momentum by now bolstering the next phase of the Coalition. What does Phase II of the Coalition look like? How do we encourage them to "[live the essentials?](#)"

Ms. Dean suggested reaching out, communicating with members again and inquire about their barriers, and what has been working in their area? What are their best practices? How do we share? She also said we should fill more positions intentionally, such as faith leaders, where there are “holes.”

Ms. Moore mentioned that of the 80 original Coalition members, only about 18 replied to a January touch-base ask to share the Parent Survey. She continued to describe her thoughts about the next phase requirements: What is the ask? What should the composition of the Coalition be?

Ms. Moore suggested a kind of “Infinite membership” that is active and engaged but not overwhelmed. Ms. Dean agreed that the focus should be on putting the essentials in action, and to tell us about it.

What role should this task force play in shaping parent communications?

How should the task force continue? Ms. Dean said that the Task Force should stay focused on relationship building. And, that there should be some funding to support initiatives, or develop some in-kind services.

3. Outline Next Steps

Action items

Connect with other internal units, as suggested.

Investigate Parent-to-parent training as part of or as an adjunct to the Engagement Academy. (“Parent Academies”)

Reestablish the Coalition (“Coalition 2.0”) and ask them to put the essentials into action and communicate about them; consider hosting virtual conversations, recording them and making them available. Also consider ability to post the topics and / or recordings, and inviting public comment that can be recorded and played back later, and retain anonymity.

Work one-on-one with Ms. Dean on the Annual Summit presentation of the “12 Signs” topic.

Lisa Crook, Education Alliance, is a good resource for home school best practices for digital learning, as well as to help communicate the difference between home schooling and virtual learning.

Next meeting of task force:

June following the Board meeting (June 10)

Next agenda:

Outline form, similar to today.

4. Adjournment

Ms. Dean moved to adjourn the meeting at 3:05 p.m.

Minutes recorded by Karen Bergh.