

English Mastery Council English Proficiency & Academic Achievement Subcommittee Meeting Minutes

Thursday, March 5, 2020
9:00 AM

Meeting Locations:

Video Conference

OFFICE	LOCATION	ROOM
Department of Education	2080 E. Flamingo Road Las Vegas Nevada	Board Room
Department of Education	700 East Fifth Street Carson City Nevada	Board Room

Call to Order; Roll Call; Pledge of Allegiance

Mr. Blakely Hume, Education Programs Professional with the Nevada Department of Education called the English Mastery English Proficiency and Academic Achievement Subcommittee Meeting to order at 9:04 AM on Thursday, March 5, 2020. A roll call was conducted and **quorum was established** (4 members present).

Subcommittee Members Present:

- Antoinette Cavanaugh
- Lorna James-Cervantes
- Bettye Haysbert
- Karl Wilson (designee of Jonathan Moore)

Others Present:

- Blakely Hume

Mr. Hume led the group in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

Public Comments #1

There were no public comments from Carson City or Las Vegas.

Approval of Flexible Agenda

- Motion:** Approve Flexible Agenda
- By:** Lorna James-Cervantes
- Second:** Antoinette Cavanaugh
- Vote:** Passed unanimously

Election of Subcommittee Chair 2019-2020

Mr. Hume explained the roles and responsibilities of a Chair. He opened up the floor for nominations and stated that self-nominations were welcome.

After a brief discussion of members’ background such as geographical locations, length of tenure, and experience, the members were delighted that Commissioner Lorna James-Cervantes volunteered to serve as Chair.

Motion: Elect Lorna James-Cervantes as Chair of the English Proficiency & Academic Achievement Subcommittee
By: Lorna James-Cervantes
Second: Antoinette Cavanaugh
Vote: Passed unanimously

Mr. Hume congratulated Chair Cervantes, thanked her for her willingness to serve, and passed the baton over to her to run the rest of the meeting.

Introductory Discussion of English Proficiency & Academic Achievement

Chair Cervantes said at the last full EMC meeting, they talked about some ideas such as looking more into the Read by Grade 3 work being done in districts across the state and how that's being tracked. She asked are the needs of the students in the 25th percentile being addressed throughout the State of Nevada and are there areas of research to be pursued. She asked were there any other areas that the group would like to discuss that they think should be actions of this committee this year.

Ms. Cavanaugh said one of the things that came to light at Monday's meeting was the idea of literacy plans and how those were developed either by district or by school, and then how data is collected and used from those literacy plans once students have been placed on them. She said if they were going to delve into the data generated from those plans, they need to determine what types of plans are developed and which are the best plans for generating increased student performance.

Ms. Haysbert said she was not really clear on the definition of their work. She asked what it was.

Mr. Hume said the newest responsibility for the English Mastery Council comes under Responsibility 7 in AB 92 that states the English Mastery Council will make recommendations to the State Board to improve the English proficiency and academic achievement of pupils who are not English Learners and who have scored at or below the 25th percentile in the subject area of English Language Arts in an examination administered pursuant to NRS 390.105.

Chair Cervantes asked if it specified what examination(s) were to be used.

Mr. Wilson said NRS Chapter 390 Section 105 refers to the "Administration of criterion referenced examinations" for grades 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8. It is the assessments for English Language Arts and Mathematics, and it specifically states using the SBAC assessment.

Chair Cervantes asked if there were any recommendations on how they should then drive their work around the information. She suggested starting with asking Dr. Nagarro questions to help them research methods being used in other states to address students in this lowest 25th percentile and their achievement or lack of achievement on these proficiency exams or use insights into how other states have been addressing this, for instance the 909090 schools.

Mr. Wilson said if they go back to the wording in Assembly Bill 92 that gave this new responsibility to the English Mastery Council, it is the English Mastery Council that makes recommendations to the State Board. He stated it is in two areas: to help build English language proficiency and to build academic achievement for students who are below the 25th percentile in Reading English Language Arts. He suggested that they think about the kinds of recommendations that address the root causes they might generate and the research involved to help the subcommittee make very specific recommendations to the full English Mastery Council about what they believe would improve the English language proficiency and academic achievement of these students.

Ms. Cavanaugh reminded members that in quartile reporting, there is always going to be a lower quartile. She stated that the quartile is made up of the people who take the test.

Introductory Discussion of EP&AA (continued)

Ms. Cavanaugh asked was it to increase academic achievement or was it academic achievement measured by student performance in their ELA classes or reading proficiency.

Mr. Wilson said the wording within AB 92 doesn't specifically identify how they will measure the phrase "improve the English proficiency and the academic achievement of pupils," so he thought it was a keen insight from Ms. Cavanaugh. He stated it is asking them to start with those students who are scoring at or below the 25th percentile. He asked what the common needs were of those students in order for the state to improve their English proficiency and their academic achievement. He said it could be that there are different ways of measuring the concept of improvement. He said it could be reflected in terms of standardized test performance, but it wouldn't necessarily be the only indicator. He asked what the current barrier or a stumbling block is. He asked what is in the way of achievement for these students when it comes to English Language Arts. He said there are pieces that they can research that would help them to understand that although there are certain populations that have typically been underperforming, they know that there are practices where there is high performance in schools that you wouldn't expect to see because of the demographic or whatever else, but they're doing some things that are right.

Ms. Haysbert said she thought one of the things that would be important for them to study would be the students who are marginalized because they do not learn the academic language as other people do, through the spoken word in their homes, for example. She said they're learning what is spoken in their homes which often does not parallel with what they're being asked to use in the schools in reading, writing, etc.

Ms. Haysbert said when that happens, that's an impediment to achievement, and if that's taken away, it widens the pathway to achievement. She said out of that came the Ebonics situation that turned everybody off except school districts like Los Angeles, Oakland and Milwaukee. She said those districts have been successful, so maybe the commission should take a look at them. She said it's appropriate for the Commission to be looking at it under this umbrella as a language and begin to use some of the methodology that is used in regular English language classes to teach these learners.

Chair Cervantes said also their job in the schools is to assist students with really understanding standard language, standard English that's used in the school setting and make those connections for students similar to what they do with English Language Learners who are coming in with a language from their home. She said they also see similar concerns with students of poverty.

Chair Cervantes said she thought it might be worthwhile for the next meeting if some research was brought forward that they could share as a team to see what is being done in some of the other districts like L.A., Oakland and Milwaukee or any other schools that are having great success in moving the needle for students that are not speaking standard English in their homes. She asked could the Department of Education provide that information for the next meeting. She said the commission could use some of the work from that research to help them to see if there are any parallels that they could make between the work already being done in schools around work with English Language Learners and this work with students who are coming in in the lowest 25th percentile with concerns with their standard English language development.

Ms. Cavanaugh agreed. She said she thought it was important to take a look at the research on performance in the effective programs that lead to better performance academically for English Language Learners and literacy proficiency. She said it is also important for them to know who their 25th percentile and below students are, where are they from, what are their demographics, what are their resources and what services do they have to increase their literacy, as well as their academic performance. She said if they know what their resources are, they will be in a better position to make recommendations. If they don't know who those students are statewide, then it's difficult to make recommendations regarding service delivery and action and make recommendations as to the action necessary to improve their literacy.

Introductory Discussion of EP&AA (continued)

Chair Cervantes said that was an excellent recommendation. She wondered if the team from the State Department of Education would have access to that data to bring it forward to them as far as who the students are that are performing in that lowest 25th quartile right now or those students who are struggling with their English language development that are mentioned in this piece of the legislation. She asked what resources are available for students within their school districts or their school settings and is that something that can be brought back to them from the State Department of Education through their resources.

Mr. Wilson reminded members that the NDE team provided a complete breakdown of students in the current bottom quartile. He said it was broken out by ethnic groups and various student populations. He asked did they want to revisit that data. He said they are going to need to identify the root causes; what is going well for those students; what is not going well.

Mr. Wilson said that another valuable resource might be the Read by Grade 3 program and the components that come with it. He said schools are to assess three times a year, and identify which students are struggling and then develop a specific reading or literacy improvement plan to monitor progress, to identify interventions. He said it might be wise for them to invite someone from the Read by Grade 3 team to come in and help them as a group to understand that resource.

Mr. Wilson said the state adopted more rigorous standards that are very dependent on students developing language, whether it's the language of mathematics, the language of science, or the language of English Language Arts. He said many of the students who are struggling haven't developed the academic language. Part of the English Language Development Standards Framework is a set of practices that help teachers of all students, including English Learners, use strategies in their classrooms that build academic language. English Learners really benefit from this, but other kids do too in terms of building the language that isn't part of their day-to-day experience, and they need to be successful.

Chair Cervantes said she agreed. She said they do see the benefit in the classrooms where excellent strategies are being used like the ones Mr. Wilson talked about. She said the benefits are not for one group of students, but they're for all students that are being engaged in that work.

The Chair said she thought there were three recommendations being brought out. The first was bringing research on what's being done in other districts across the country to meet the needs of students who are native speakers of English but not necessarily standard English users, whether they are children of poverty, students from African-American homes using an Ebonics or other language in their homes. The second recommendation was to revisit the data that they got in December to take another look and just remind themselves of who the students are falling within this lowest quartile of students. The third recommendation is to look at some of the resources that are available. They could ask for a presentation from the Read by Three group as well. It's important that they don't forget about the rural counties.

Ms. Haysbert said she appreciated that the commission was trying to integrate whenever possible with whatever exists as opposed to just creating something totally different and standalone. She said it is important to figure out ways to increase these learners' ability to function in the English language.

Ms. Cavanaugh said they should also look through the data to determine where there are pockets of data-based improvements. She said if there are pockets where there has been a turnaround of student performance in a given school or location or district, what is being used instructionally, programmatically or material instructionally, what is being used that has turned student performance around in ELA. She asked do they have any of those in our state, and if they do, why was there an improvement.

Introductory Discussion of EP&AA (continued)

Chair Cervantes said that was a good recommendation, so they could add that to their list. She said the four recommendations for the group are:

- 1) Do research around how other states or districts have met the needs of students who are may be English speakers but need to increase their standard English language development and use of academic language.
- 2) Review data around who the students are and what resources are available to them but a deeper dive in the data as far as the resources.
- 3) Presentation about the Read by Three even bringing in people from school districts to speak about how that is being implemented within their districts as a whole.
- 4) Study successes of schools that have had some success with raising the English language development of students who are increasing their English language development skills and proficiency and their use of standard English in the classroom.

Chair Cervantes said she would also recommend that they look at that as both the growth of students toward proficiency and the students meeting proficiency. She said they see many schools that are making high growth of students, and they're growing students a year to a year and a half at a time in their English language development skills or their reading skills. She said much of what's measured on the SBAC is the students' reading levels. She said it goes beyond that because students are being asked to compare and contrast different pieces of the literature and write about those. She said they will keep in mind that some of the work has already been done elsewhere and maybe could be paralleled in Nevada. She said maybe they could have Dr. Sophia Masewicz share with the committee the work that was done with the English language development framework so that they could see kind of where those parallels are. She stated that maybe that's a step to be taken in the future.

Chair Cervantes asked if NDE could bring some of those data items and research for the next meeting. Mr. Wilson said yes but suggested that each member be active in doing part of the research too. He said they can forward info to NDE, to Mr. Hume specifically. He said if members do that, the commission will go further and faster than if they just rely on NDE.

All the members were in support of Mr. Wilson's suggestion.

Chair Cervantes said each one of them should participate in research around the topics that they discussed and send their info to Mr. Hume before the next meeting. Members should forward the study or a link to the study with a short description of what it entails and what it found, like an executive summary, and then NDE can send that back out so that people will have a chance to review before the meeting.

Research, Data Collection and Next Steps

Chair Cervantes said they already covered the research and data they would gather before the next meeting. She said if there were specific people within a school district that they should invite to present on the rollout or the use of the literacy plans as part of the Read by Grade 3 legislation, then they probably should reach out to them and see if they're available.

Chair Cervantes said if members know of schools within different districts that are doing good work, maybe the principal or teachers within those schools can present to the group as to what they're doing and finding success with within their school setting.

Mr. Wilson said the NDE team would come back with data around student populations. The focus would be on those populations that regularly land in the bottom quartile (Hispanic, African American, Native Americans, and Pacific Islanders).

Ms. Cavanaugh said she had much experience with the Native American student population; she was an educational consultant for a mining company that allowed her to work with eight indigenous tribes in Nevada. She found that the majority of those tribes did not have access to books. The parents did not read, nor did their children. She thought they could dig deeper into finding out what the resources are or are not for the tribes across the state.

Mr. Hume said along with the full English Mastery Council materials, he sent out the updates in terms of meetings. He said there's a meeting slated for this subcommittee on April 2 at 9:00 a.m. He said they also have April 23rd or May 7 available. He said if members could send him an email indicating if they can attend either one of those or both, that would be very helpful in terms of moving forward. Mr. Hume said he would connect with Dr. Sharolyn Durodola and Dr. Jonathan Moore via Karl to see about those days as well.

Public Comments #2

There were no public comments from Carson City or Las Vegas.

Adjournment

Motion: To adjourn the meeting
By: Antoinette Cavanaugh
Second: Bettye Haysbert
Vote: Passed unanimously

Chair Cervantes thanked everyone and adjourned the meeting at 10:16 AM.