



Meeting Scribe: Tamara Neeley

Item	Discussion
<p>Gavel-in & Welcome & Roll Call – 9:07 a.m. <i>AABSS Advisory Group Chair</i></p>	<p>The Advisory Group Chair began the meeting.</p> <p>Meeting Agenda 6.21.2023 AABSS Advisory Public Agenda.pdf</p> <p>May 17, 2023 Meeting Minutes AABSS Advisory Group Meeting Minutes 05.17.23.pdf</p>
<p>Discussion with the Governor’s Office on the Priorities, Challenges, and Opportunities to Leverage Strengths in the African American/Black Community and in the Education System</p> <p><i>Pooja Bhatt, Education Initiative Director, Office of Governor Tina Kotek</i></p> <p>9:10</p>	<p>Pooja Bhatt is Governor Kotek’s Education Initiative Director. She has been involved in different aspects of community work and policy advocacy for several decades. She has had very diverse experiences in her own education journey. Education is a social justice issue. There is a need to educate members of the legislative body on the importance and impact of the Student Success Plans.</p> <p>Overview: Governor Kotek is a strong proponent of the Student Success Plans. Since the beginning of the legislative session, she has been focusing on a “first step” on how we teach kids to read and write. The legislature initially committed to investing \$140 million in the Early Literacy Success Initiative - HB 3198 but amended the bill at the last minute, giving \$90 million to schools and \$2 to communities. Although policies are not typically changed in the budget committee, there were a series of last minute policy changes in the budget committee after it already had unanimous and bipartisan support. The legislature stated a need to give \$90 million to schools to shore up how we teach reading and writing.</p> <p>The bill also recognizes parents and caregivers as full partners in the literacy initiative, as well as sovereign tribal nations as being able to support the work. \$1 was given to a birth-5 framework to be administered by DELC and \$1 was given to an ODE-administered community grant. The legislature stated that more information was needed about how the dollars reach community organizations and tribes before giving the \$20 million they withheld. DELC and ODE will have to come back to the legislature in December to present a report in order to release the funds. There will be a significant delay in the administering of these funds which will likely not be allocated until February, and then must enter the procurement process.</p>

Q: What actions are being taken regarding collecting and providing that additional information to the legislature?

A: This is one of the first conversations about this decision. There are quarterly meetings with the tribal nations and this will be discussed there as well.

Q: What strategies are being shared with CBOs? What advocacy can be done to inform CBOs about this decision?

A: A lot of energy has gone into educating legislators about the impact of not funding Student Success Plans or other education investments. There are a lot of new members in the legislature. Between July and February, there are great opportunities to reach out to legislators with whom we have relationships to continue educating them.

Q: With a democratic majority in the House and Senate, how are they not standing beside the Governor re: her proposed budget?

A: The initial vote out of the Ways and Means subcommittee on education to not fund the Student Success Plans was unanimous. There are many reasons that the initial budget wasn't fully supported. They didn't read the whole package and didn't understand the impact of the vote. Legislative leadership has turned over recently as well.

Q: What is the status of the funding for the Student Success Plans?

A: The \$5 million that was added to the AABSS plan in the last legislative session was secured for the upcoming biennium. Any additional funding they were trying to make permanent is now part of the Christmas Tree Bill.

We need to right size expectations of outcomes related to the delay in funding.

The Advisory Group can ask about rationale for allowing funding to go to schools but not to community organizations.

Q: How is the additional \$5 million being spent/how will that impact the grantees?

A: The \$5 million in the end-of-session bill (Christmas Tree) holds the grant steady for the next two years unless more money is allocated during the short session next year.

Total funding for AABSS is \$19.4 million, which includes the \$5 million. LGBTQ2SIA+ plan funding will stay at around \$2 million. NH/PI was awarded \$2 million. The refugee plan will not be funded.

Pooja Bhatt would like to return to a future Advisory Group meeting to engage in a conversation about education and operationalization of student success plans. What does sustainability look like? What does racial justice in education look like?

Chair Harris and the Advisory Group collectively thanked Pooja Bhatt.

**Roll Call and Review of
May Meeting Minutes**

Joyce Harris, Chair

10:00

Chair Harris took roll and the Advisory Group reviewed and approved the minutes from the May meeting. Chair Harris expressed the Advisory Group “space is strong and supportive and [their] voices are being heard.” Chair Harris shared about the letters she sent out to legislators (regarding additional funding) on behalf of all Advisory Group members.

Interim ODE/EDI Director Mariana Praschnik-Enriquez was able to join the meeting and introduced herself to the Advisory Group.

**For the Good of the
Order**

*Shelaswau Crier,
Coordinator*

10:04

Meeting Schedule

Unless anyone has an objection, in planning for next year, we will continue with the same calendar cadence. Tamara Neeley will send out a new calendar sequence continuing in September (Advisory Group takes July and August off). Be on the lookout for an email regarding renewal terms and applications.

The 2022 Legislative Report contains the pilot study and lots of information on grantees. The full external evaluator report is available on the website. Please read the Legislative Report, especially pages 9-11.

New ODE Director

Interviews are ongoing. The first set of interviews were in April and five candidates were whittled down to three. Colt Gill’s exit date has been adjusted and is based on hiring a replacement. Director Colt will help facilitate the transition to a new Director.

Data Collection

Saleem Ahmad is working to compile the updated 2021-22 student-level data collection. It took a month for him to get data access. We are in the process of hiring a Research Analyst. Two finalists have been invited to interview. Saleem will assist with training and transition once the Research Analyst is hired. A data presentation will likely be presented at the October Advisory Group meeting.

Grant Extension

Regarding the grant extension, the coordinator is hoping to have preliminary recommendations by next week. The plan is for a 1-year grant extension for current grantees. In-depth review of those applications is being done now. Since we don’t know what final funding will be, we only have a starting point for extension budgets. We might need to adjust amounts based on what the legislature approves. There are several grantees who have requested less money so there will be a threshold to make sure they are funded in such a manner as to not hamstring their programs. Grant extensions decisions will be based in part on the numbers of students served and final budget approval. Some programs had challenges (hiring, etc.) so there will be some money returned since a lot of budgets were predicated on hiring. It is not an indication that the money isn’t needed; rather it is an indication of a very specific problem.

For grantees that had significant challenges, there is a potential to extend but with some restrictions set as a red, yellow, green system. Red level means you might have some additional requirements (submitting expenditure reports more frequently, for example). Funding could be halted at 6 months if adequate progress is not being made (particularly with partners). For government entity grantees, we might also require MOUs between the

government entities and all community partners. We have been reluctant to require that of CBOs in case they are working with hostile districts.

Hiring has been delayed because funding was delayed due to the procurement process which is being addressed. The current hiring market is problematic across the board. Districts are often more successful at hiring than community organizations and even districts are struggling. Solid data numbers in the fall will show areas where certain practices are really effective. Late decisions on funding severely compromise our ability to get services out to students.

Q: What happens to unused funds? Can they be reallocated?

A: Unused funds go back to the state for reallocation or back to the Statewide education fund student investment account (they don't stay with the program).

Q: How much money are we talking about?

A: Last week's amount showed about \$5 million unclaimed but final expenditure reports for the last quarter haven't been submitted yet. \$400k was held for a grantee; however, the grantee ultimately refused to accept the funds and the coordinator is unclear how that will show up.

Q: This sounds like a timing issue. What will the optics of this be in terms of the legislature telling us we don't need the money since it hasn't been spent? Giving back money is a big no-no. We want to make sure the Advisory Group is aware of how much money is going back to the general fund. Moving forward, can we know sooner how much money won't be spent so it can be reallocated before the end of the grant period? When is the cut-off date for spending the money and how can the Advisory Group be kept in the loop? Who made the decisions and who does the Advisory Group need to be in touch with?

Additionally, there are a number of restrictions on how the money can be spent which also impacts how much money can be spent.

Advisory Group members inquired regarding grant expenditure limitations, specifically regarding things that were included in the Plan, like incentives and HBCU trips. The Advisory Group expressed that they would like to be notified when such expenditure changes are being considered. When were these changes made? The plan was accepted. So why is it being denied now? HBCUs were in the plan. When a directive comes down that funds cannot be used in ways that were approved in the plan, Advisory Group needs to know. And who in the department makes these decisions? Those are the people the Advisory Group needs to be talking to.

There are things the Advisory Group needs to know and be very clear about so that they can advise the department. And in some cases, the Advisory Group disagrees with the department. Members of the group want to be part of advocacy.

Q: What was the rationale for the HBCU decision? There are significant implications in terms of Black students having access to a worldview that counters white supremacy.

A: The department doesn't allow out-of-state travel.

What information does Advisory Group need on a regular basis? What do we do with that

information? We also need to look at what's happening with the grantees. Colt used to come to Advisory Group meetings. That hasn't happened for awhile. Advisory Group needs contact with ODE leadership.

Q: Can there be subgroups or other meetings (more per month) when Legislature is in session or when things are moving quickly?

A: That's up to the Advisory Group.

A motion was brought to stay as the large group instead of breakouts. The Chair will be sure to call on folks who haven't had a chance to speak.

Group Discussion
Furthering Support for African American/Black Students through the Advisory Group
11:05

Comment/Q: Giving money back is a huge concern. If you can't spend what you have, why should we give you more? We were able to keep better tabs on grantees when they were more consistently in the Advisory Group space. Are site visits still happening? There used to be these checks and balances; perhaps there are other grantees on deck that could utilize these funds. If existing grantees can't fulfill their obligations, are there grantees in a second tier that we can shift funds to? Instead of giving it back, can we give it to organizations prepared to take it on? Can we be creative about how we track the money and what we do if it isn't being spent? The Advisory Group can provide extra support to the coordinator if needed (for site visits, tracking, etc.).

Comment: When initial proposals are evaluated, it would be helpful to have a list of runners up/second tier. This is a collaborative space and not a compliance body. This is a great opportunity for the Advisory Group to continue to evolve (and consider whether the current model is still working). We need to have different experts in the space (invite grantees back in, ODE leadership, etc.). Given the amount of suffering in our communities, it's difficult to imagine money having to go back to the state because it isn't being spent. The needs are great.

There are also internal ODE processes that are changing to ensure these sorts of checks and balances.

There is a disconnect now between Advisory Group and grantees. Advisory Group used to be able to provide support. There was a suggestion that Advisory Group and grantees meet in person at least 1 or 2x a year (ideally, quarterly).

Comment: There is a lot of work that needs to be done. And there are people in the Advisory Group that barely attend. We need people who are prepared to work. If you can't make it for 3-4 months, pass the torch. Everyone is stretched thin - and that is compounded if there are those that don't attend and the others are expected to contribute more. We should consider restructuring and ensuring accountability. Also, culture in Oregon, particularly with CBOs, shows lack of understanding re: assessment and accountability with funding. They've never been challenged because the white majority is afraid to call out misuse of funds because they don't want to be called out as being racist.

Higher ed: There is a great opportunity to support college/post-secondary students. Post-secondary is often overlooked by our grantees. Maybe there is a knowledge gap. The Chair suggested that those in the Advisory Group that work in higher ed take on the responsibility of

educating communities about opportunities and to keep the Advisory Group informed.

Concern: We don't know what is happening with other programs. We need to be able to advise and support each other. Many others have the need to know what is happening/what is needed to be fully engaged and connected.

Grantees were originally in the mix because there were no grantees and ALL people involved in the creation of the plan were at the table. It was never the intent for grantees to stay at the table once they were awarded. Over time, the recipients dropped off the group because of the potential COI with grantees being part of the decision-making body. Many changes have been made over time. Grantees should be involved with the Advisory Group more than just sharing a presentation and a slide deck. We need to have more concrete conversations particularly around evaluations and what we are trying to achieve.

The Advisory Group must be fearlessly engaged. Our voices need to be heard. We need to be present. We need to be on the same page.

How can we get ODE decision-makers in here as well so that we can hold them accountable to what was written and agreed to in the plan? We need to be careful about how we talk about leadership (ODE) that look like us. The department has an executive leadership **team** which is where most of these decisions get made. Which voices carry the day? The people saying no have other people in their ear.

Please look at the Legislative Report. Someone from each organization represented in the Advisory Group needs to attend these meetings. We can revisit reorganizing this group if it's not functioning well. We can consider adding parents and students. Who isn't at the table that needs to be here? We can invite legislators, the Speaker of the House, department leadership (E-Team), the Governor (or her reps).

Comment: Can we have grantees write into their program descriptions, external partners (not the government) who can serve as consultants to provide support (technical assistance)? The Advisory Group can create a pool to share out with grantees.

Please write up potential recommendations for this body to consider.

Advisory Group did reach out to OCF to be an advocate outside of ODE re: accountability. Part of their responsibility was to ensure accountability around the department. Our initial contact moved on so we need to have another meeting with them to see how that relationship has changed and how we might better leverage their support. There is no new person in that position (it is being interviewed for right now).

Come up with a date to meet to get a plan together ahead of the September meeting. Chair Harris will send out messages over the summer to coordinate strategy meetings.

Community Announcements & Updates	
Adjourn - 12:07	Chair adjourned the meeting at 12:07

Next Meeting: September 20, 2023

Check chat for comments, questions, etc.