

Minority Teacher Recruitment Policy Oversight Council (via Teams)
Minutes
November 18, 2021

Council Members and Guest Present:

Elsa Nuñez
Sal Escobales
Isaac Gottesman
Jason Teal
Ryan Donlon
Rebecca Good
Sam Galloway
Subira Gordon
Robert Radar
Kevin Walton
Werner Oyanadel
Terrell Hill
Madeline Negrón

Guests:

Teresa Alexandru
Claudine Primack

CSDE Members:

Shuana Tucker
Christopher Todd
Cynthia Cassada
Mary Glassman
Teresa Alexandru
Madison Csejka
Nancy Velez

Dr. Shuana Tucker, Chief Talent Officer, convened the meeting order at 9:02 a.m.

- I. Welcome, Introductions, Recap Recommendations and Purpose of the Council

Dr. Tucker thanked everyone for attending and introduced new Council members and staff. Chris Todd, Bureau Chief, reviewed the MTR Council's recommendations and purpose of the council. (add 5 points?)

- II. Minority Teacher Recruitment Policy Oversight Council Recommendations for 2021-2022

Cynthia Cassada, Education Consultant, reviewed the PowerPoint and provided a status update on the Council's five recommendations.

Recommendation #1

Ms. Cassada reported that CSDE and the RESC Alliance have a signed contract pending Attorney General approval to develop resources and tools to support districts in their efforts to diversify the educator workforce. The Council will have a presentation at the January 2022 meeting.

Recommendation #2

Ms. Cassada reviewed the RESC Alliance work to create a train the trainer model. The department has worked with 11 districts and the focus is to hold five professional learning sessions to engage districts in MTR in strategies. The six RESCs will engage a minimum of 5 districts each to create IED plans.

Dr. Tucker reported she has been working with CASPA. The department has also met with Yancy Forum representatives who are looking to offer their services. There will be an update at the January meeting.

Recommendation #3

Mr. Todd will update the Council on ongoing certification efforts at the March meeting. The department has also partnered with WESTed to create a foundational document to reflect the regulations as they currently exist and implemented. This is essential to have a common talking point before reopening the regulations. The department is also partnering with an outside university to conduct a multi-measures approach to demonstrate content mastery in lieu of PRAXIS. For many educators, PRAXIS II allows opportunities for cross endorsements, so we don't want to remove it as a pathway, but other pathways should be available to demonstrate content mastery. There are several legislative proposals that will be presented in March.

Recommendation #4

Teresa Alexandru from TEACH CT provided an overview of the online platform. TEACH partners with CSDE, EPP programs, and 75 school districts to support students, staff, and future teachers.

Since the program launched in October 2018, she said about 900 future teachers have applied to EPP programs with 500 applicants supported this year. TEACH was funded the first three years by philanthropic dollars and will be funded by philanthropy and ESSER funds through 2025.

She said the cost to run the non-profit program decreased from \$3,750 per future teacher to \$915 per future teacher this year. In the 2021 year, 500 EPP applicants were supported this year – 41% were identified as people of color; 39% in subject shortage areas and 25%

TEACHCT.org is free tool and tries to reduce common barriers to entry by providing scholarships and finding ways to provide financial support; information on EPP programs; to understand certification; to help apply to a program and checklists to apply to EPP programs. The program is advertised and marketed to potential aspiring teachers and includes students and career changers.

Questions:

Mr. Teal asked for the definition of “people of color” and numbers of black and Latino candidates. years?

Ms. Alexandru said the definition includes “any people who identify as non-white”. She said the majority of 40-45% of candidates of color were black and Latino. She will share statistics.

Dr. Nunez asked about the financial aspects of the program. The money is being raised by philanthropy and if the program continues to grow what is the vision for the financial piece.

Ms. Alexandru said the program annually awards five \$1,000 scholarships and \$100 in fee reimbursement to anyone who applies and enrolls in an EPP program. They also provide information about securing financial aid resources.

Mr. Oyanadel asked about the impact of COVID on recruitment efforts and what can the state do.

Ms. Alexandru said COVID has certainly impacted the teaching profession, but it's been inspiring that the interest in teaching is still there. Teach CT hosted twice the number of sessions this year of people particularly with career changers inspired during the pandemic.

Recommendation 5

Ms. Cassada reviewed the "Grow Your Own" programs in which middle and high school students are introduced to educator careers. CSDE continues to reach out to districts to partner with higher ed institutions.

Dr. Tucker reviewed the second year of the program in which the district pays a nominal fee of \$3,500 to participate. There are currently 18 districts participating. Alliance Districts can use Alliance or ESSER funds.

EdRising Pilot - Dr. Tucker said the department is scaling up EdRising with two pilot sites for males of color with five students in East Hartford and six students in New Britain. The young men will be assigned mentors and plan is to host an in-person event before the holidays and partner with Quinnipiac University to host a male educator symposium in the spring.

NextGen program – Ms. Cassada explained the NextGen program in which CCSU partnered with CSDE to create a teacher fellowship program that was piloted in Bristol thanks to Dr. Galloway. The program is open to undergraduate teacher candidates with priority given to underrepresented groups and teacher shortage areas. CCSU provides the students and support and CSDE provides fingerprinting with background checks and mentors – collaborating with BLAC and CALAIS. The goal is to replicate the program with other districts and higher education institutions.

Dr. Galloway said the program in Bristol was successful but remains challenged to fill the pipeline with candidates of color. He said the hope is that through continuance of the program, students of color will be encouraged to see teaching as an exciting and viable career. Ms. Cassada reviewed the data of students in the program.

Ms. Gordon asked why Waterbury has no male students and 100% white females and what is being done to shift the demographics especially in areas predominantly of color.

Dr. Tucker said the EdRising program at the high school level is focused on increasing the number of males entering the field of education since the numbers are abysmal. The goal was to enroll 10 students, but the department was able to attract 11. The goal is to expand to ELL students next year and diversify the program. She said the NextGen program is entering its 2nd year and is helping LEAs with staffing shortages, but the program can only work with students already enrolled in the EPP programs. She said it also depends on how flexible higher ed institutions are willing to be to give students time for students

to be in the districts. The requests from districts for students has been overwhelming with 73 CCSU students placed in districts; along with University of St. Joseph and SCSU placing students.

She also said there is an effort to look at freshman students of color with undeclared majors to persuade them to major in education and to work on 6-16 pipeline to take students into community college and four-year EPP program. Also looking at marketing and branding to target students of color.

Mr. Teal asked how districts were chosen for the program. Dr. Tucker said districts are not chosen and the program is open to all districts. So far, 22 districts have responded.

Mr. Teal asked how we can get more urban districts interested. Dr. Tucker said it must be the district decision.

Dr. Galloway encouraged another outreach to urban districts because the program works.

Mr. Walton said he has been involved in equity work for a long time. He said his focus is on paraprofessionals who come in through alternative route to certification programs. The answer sits in our district with paraprofessionals. He said we need is to look at both short term and long-term efforts and the need now is immediate. The opportunity is to look at certification differently – look at the folks in the districts who work in our district and live in our community and concentrate on them.

Dr. Tucker said those are district decisions – urban districts have Alliance funds and should commit a certain amount funds to diversification efforts. She said there are a variety of ARC program and districts have funds to support paraprofessionals and other non-certified staff. This is a district decision and HR directors can target teachers of color to receive the teacher loan subsidy at a reduced rate.

Dr. Good said long term programs are good but districts need to also do short term efforts gained through TEACH and EPP programs. She said certification regulations are very confusing and districts are confused about how to use Alliance funding. There is a lot of information that is confusing. To simplify, we can look at regulations and give guidance to districts about how to close the gaps now.

Subcommittee Recommendations:

Ms. Glassman reviewed a proposal to create subcommittees to work in between regular meetings to review MTR initiatives. She reviewed three subcommittees and asked for feedback. 1. Development of partnerships; 2. Marketing MTR strategies and 3. Oversight of Increasing Educator Diversity Plans. She asked if members could volunteer to serve on a committee and asked members to sign up on the link on the chat.

Dr. Hill – Paras are our first option and I hear about marketing but if you want someone there has to be money behind it. I advocate that we put money into recruiting and Mr. Walton has brought it up for many years. We need teeth in these equity plans from the state and the legislature. We need to bring in districts who can't find teachers of color and find out why. We have hundreds of minority teachers who are certified who do not have jobs so there should be incentives or disincentives for districts.

Dr. Good said if we are going to participate in committee work, she is more interested in holding boards accountable; creating information so districts can understand how to use the Alliance money to diversity; thinking about the certification regulations that are incredibly confusing.

Dr. Tucker shared her experience in a district where she took the initiative of using Alliance funding for minority teacher recruitment by first asking how much was allocated to minority recruitment and retention. It must be mapped out how you use the funds. The Alliance funds do not come out of the Talent Office.

Dr. Good asked maybe the money should go directly to cover costs when you go into the EPP programs; money directly to becoming teachers.

Mr. Todd said he has reached out to Turnaround Office to find out how funds can be used and will report back to the Council which could further define what oversight is needed for MTR plans. Maybe the subcommittee can look at the language of the law and explain what is required from CSDE and the legislature.

Ms. Cassada put the survey in the chat and asked members to fill it out.

Mr. Walton said he is glad to hear people are talking about putting teeth behind some of the mandates. In terms of the subcommittees there might be other better ideas for subcommittee work. Can we have common language on ARC that can be used.

Dr. Nunez said the Council does make a difference. Her interest right now would be to see a map as to where the money flows. She said Dr. Tucker's point is very powerful and many people at the lower level may not understand where all this funding is. She would like to see a major analysis of these pathways so we can better articulate how districts can fund MTR initiatives. She doesn't know where this fits in with subcommittee work but would volunteer to work on that.

Mr. Teal would like to see a remix of these subcommittees; the certification process if a major barrier; Barack Obama cannot be a public-school teacher. We need to add teeth to the regulations and doesn't want to waste time on marketing unless there is a real budget.

Dr. Tucker said she has been at the state for 18 months and has had major conversations about certification that need to be overhauled. She said she is totally committed to doing that and it is not going to happen overnight, but the process has started. We are with you and when it comes time to support the changes, we will come to you to speak up and testify.

Dr. Hill agreed with Dr. Nunez to not to leave on a negative note. He said if he is needed to speak to the Governor or to legislators, he can do that.

Dr. Gottesman said he is excited about opening discussions on regs and that it is essential to all EPP programs. He also asked if there is something the Council can do to work with school boards who often are a barrier.

Mr. Rader said CABE is willing to work on these issues and doesn't want to see mandates but willing to talk to people and change minds.

Mr. Teal said direct action and money will bring change. We need to tie funding to district's MTR efforts.

Ms. Glassman and Ms. Cassada said they will review the survey.

Dr. Tucker thanked everyone and adjourned the meeting at 10:43 a.m.