

Superintendent's Community Advisory Committee on Investing in Educational Excellence

Inaugural Meeting
July 28, 2005, 7:30-10:30 a.m.
John Stanford Center Auditorium

Welcome

The Co-chairs welcomed the committee and thanked them for participating. During their opening comments, they emphasized the importance of keeping a sharp focus on the committee's charge, remembering that problems can be fixed and that there is a sense of urgency. Above all, they affirmed that this work is about the children. Participants were encouraged to think outside-the-box and remember that anything is possible.

Introductions

Members were asked to share their current relationships with the District and their expectations for the work of the committee.

Shared Vision

Committee members asked if they are supposed to make recommendations about the academic plan as well as the financial plan. The charge of the committee is specifically financial in nature as outlined in the committee charge. The focus is to find a way to fund education in the long-term. The committee is being asked to take a fresh look at the way the District is financed, how it uses those resources and then to identify options to achieve long-term fiscal stability.

It is appropriate to see how the Five-Year Plan fits into the scheme of how the District operates, but committee recommendations need to focus on how to provide sufficient stability to fund the plan as it changes.

Committee Charge

Superintendent Raj Manhas opened with his appreciation and thankfulness for the high caliber of the individuals on this committee and their willingness to serve the children of Seattle. He stressed that the fundamental issue is to stabilize our schools and classrooms, especially schools that have students with many other disruptions in their lives. He emphasized sustainability to improve stability and encouraged the committee to think boldly and to expand their horizons beyond the boundaries of their own experience. He reminded the committee that all final recommendations must be approved by the School Board before implementation.

How We Work Together

The committee reviewed their guiding principles including sharing information equally, agreeing to disagree, and leaving preconceived notions at the door.

Process

The workplan has three phases: Understand the current fiscal situation, collect options, and make recommendations. Community input will be gathered in several ways, including through community meetings, by mail, and through input on the web. The committee is looking for solutions and will encourage the community to respond with solutions as well as give feedback to proposed solutions. Most documents for public consumption will be provided on the web rather than through hard copy.

Budget Overview

Steve Nielsen, Seattle Public Schools' Finance Director, began by dispelling an urban legend from 2001-2002. At that time the District spent \$34 million more than it had. We weren't balancing our monthly cash flow or tracking expenditures adequately. We were only balancing at

the end of the year. Some people thought the money may have been stolen while others thought the District may have been hiding the money. However, the State Auditor confirmed that no money was stolen and no money was hidden. The problem was that the District spent dollars based on budget rather than on revenue and did not have enough revenue to cover expenditures. All revenue and expenditures are now transparent.

Mr. Nielsen then began a PowerPoint presentation entitled, "*Seattle Public Schools – Challenges and Opportunities.*" There was lively discussion among committee members on the topics of student enrollment and public school market share. Due to lack of time, he will complete the presentation at a later date. He encouraged the committee to look at how other District's choose to spend their dollars. He also stated that we have specific state and federal legislated expectations that are expensive.

The committee requested additional data on private school enrollment and demographics on movement trends and dollars that go with students. The committee was asked to be careful not to ask staff to do a lot of demographics work, but rather to focus on our current situation and how to provide long-term stable funding regardless of demographic shifts.

Committee Members Were Given Homework Assignments:

- Read the binder of materials.
- Read the District Data Profile book.
- Summarize what you learn.
- List your questions.
- List your requested resources (provide one week lead time to Sara).