

Student Advisory Board Meeting Minutes Regarding Student and Community Workforce Agreement

Jan. 11, 2020, 1-3 p.m., Room 2700,
John Stanford Center, 2445 3rd Ave. S, Seattle, WA 98134



Opening: The meeting began at 1:20 p.m.

Attending: Fred Podesta, Harvey Wright, Nancy Locke, School Board President Zachary DeWolf, Stephanie Colbert and students (Ella Guo and Angelina Riley).

Introductions were made. Director DeWolf said there may be another opportunity to take this information back to the student advisory board for more input. Locke began the presentation with the purpose of the task force and our efforts to create a pipeline for students in the construction field.

Locke reviewed the basic concept of how the agreement would work. It's about building a relationship with labor unions. The hope is for students, women and people of color to have better access to the construction trades through an agreement. The agreement is actually with the contractors, Colbert clarified. Guo summed up what she was hearing. Who would it involve, Guo asked. All skilled trades: painters, electricians, carpenters, etc.

Is there an interest the construction trade, Podesta asked. Is there a better way to connect with students and their possible interest in trades? DeWolf mentioned the recently approved levy and how he would be proud if we could have students working on these school projects related to the levy. Locke said there is pride in being able to say that people from the community worked on a project. Wright elaborated on this point.

Construction is a huge industry, said Podesta. If we could help our students and their families, that would pay dividends.

Construction incomes were provided. Colbert elaborated on the numbers: Less than one percent women, less than three percent are people of color. This task force is one way addressing institutional racism. DeWolf asked if Guo would be willing to talk with other students.

Another student arrived. The group reintroduced themselves. Guo summarized what was covered so far. Locke supplemented the summary. This pipeline also would be for students who may not have graduated.

Schools in California use this pipeline process. In Washington state, this process is used by only government. We would be setting new ground, Locke said. Schools in the state don't use a pipeline.

Locke returned to construction incomes and how they can pay more than a college grad would make.

Income in Seattle highly driven by race, Locke said. Gender is also an impact. Locke shared incomes by race. The data was not broken down by what career path a certain race is on. The task force is trying to improve race and gender inequities.

Do our students leave high school with a career pathway that gets them to where they want to be, Locke asked. Race plays a part. DeWolf said this is pre-Seattle Promise data. Wright said this shows we

focus on how success looks like a four-year degree. We are trying to offer another option. Success could be measured several ways. Are we pushing a model that doesn't lead to the outcomes we would like for students.

Locke shared data from student six years after high school. Wright said it shows who is completing degrees. There is an attrition, so we are rethinking opportunities.

Guo asked Locke to restate the agreement. Locke said it's an agreement that is negotiated with the unions to prioritize workers on construction projects. Priority would be SPS grads, women, people of color and those from economically distressed areas of Seattle. Colbert said think of pre-apprentice program as a degree program. You earn while you learn, and it is hands on. You do go to classes, depending on the trade. Hiring is done by contractor, but union helps with hiring workforce.

Podesta provided an example of the process using Mercer Middle. An agreement would mean putting a bid to contractors, who would work with unions under guidelines put in place. It's a partnership with us, contractors, and union and nonunion workers. We have to agree first on how that relationship will look like. We want dollars to stay in the community.

Locke showed the high demand for construction workers in our region. A lot of public dollars for Sound Transit, SPS, UW, etc. A lot of tax dollars go toward this. There are not enough workers locally to do that work. This is an opportunity to fill those jobs with SPS students. Let's find a way to train and prioritize hiring for those associated with SPS (students, families of students).

Guo asked where would workers go after a project is done. DeWolf clarified this program is also for nongraduates. For all associated with SPS (current, past student, grads, those that dropped out, etc.). Wright said the average age for those starting trades is 28. Podesta said there are many ways this pipeline could benefit students. If a parent is hired in trades, that would benefit student. Colbert explained the career pathway for those in trades (commercial vs residential). We are talking about commercial. General contractor is the employer. The union helps with process. Contractors might use a student for another job or tell another contractor about the student's work. When does that not work? Colbert said when the economy goes down, but students could work anywhere in the world. DeWolf said all jobs are susceptible to the economy. Colbert said some students could become a contractor or teachers. Locke said union connects workers with contractors. Podesta said Seattle fared better during the last recession. Wright said it's all about education and preparing students for careers, whether four-year degree or trades. Locke said this is also a value statement about SPS. We want money spent in a socially and racially equitable way.

Locke said City of Seattle has had this type of process in place for about five years, and it's working. Locke showed data of employment potential and how they increased for people of color and distressed areas after changing process. Locke noted that these numbers show workers from other areas. Few from Seattle, but the agreement changed that. Number for women are more dramatic, but not on chart. Guo asked why categories changed. Software change, Locke said. Immigration policy might have had an impact. DeWolf said some people think of themselves of multiracial. Colbert said 1 percent of women and less than 3 percent of people of color currently on SPS projects. DeWolf provided Seattle's racial demographics according to last census. Numbers after agreement match the population better than prior.

Locke said we have community experts, union reps, etc. on the task force looking at this agreement and how to make it meaningful. She reviewed how we would execute it. Colbert explained terms: pre apprenticeship, priority hire or direct apprenticeship. The agreement would make this part of the process for hiring for school projects.

Locke stated which organizations we have worked with for recruiting. We are looking at how aware students are of the programs and how we can get the word out. Wright echoed we are trying to gauge how aware students are of opportunities in trades. Is there interest? How do we make that happen and make sure it's successful?

Guo said she is on the recruitment committee for NOVA. She attends Garfield High. One of the things they do is outreach. Guo suggested we go to schools and put ourselves out there. Make this a class on what this is and provide Career Technical Education (CTE) credit. She took college and career class in middle school, but students need time to dive deep. Have people dedicated to teaching about this pathway. Guo said CTE credit is difficult for them to understand. CTE credit is a must, so students will take the class. This may spark interest. Also, have an online presence and be on social media.

Riley said her school (Rainier Beach) does monthly college fairs. Trades are kind of glazed over in this process. Have people without a bias to talk about it.

NOVA and Rainier Beach have opportunities during lunch for people to talk to students.

Naviance questions provided to students to help with career path decisions. Wright asked if the students have accessed to high school beyond and counselors. Not much was the response. Naviance is a tool. Wright wanted to know where the students were getting support.

Riley said her school needs more information on opportunities. School might be the only way students at Rainier Beach get information on what is out there for them career wise. Show us the options.

Locke asked about other community resources. Are students being exposed beyond the school? Riley said maybe at the community center and library.

Guo said she meets with an advisory teacher to learn steps she needs to take. Rainier Beach doesn't have that. Wright said every high school is different and is not consistent on helping students with their high school beyond plans. DeWolf asked if it is meaningful for students to see income outlooks. Definitely, said the students. Guo feels her generation is more aware of costs and terrified of student loans and debt. Debt makes some student reluctant to go to college.

Colbert said with Seattle Promise there is a trade curriculum that allows another pathway.

DeWolf said we are in time of growth in equity. Money is being put toward economically distressed areas. The city is putting millions toward this. DeWolf also wants to prioritize families of students. Parents could be an example for students and be a vehicle for marketing other opportunities. Podesta echoed that hiring from local households is what we would like to do because it likely would benefit students.

The group reviewed a slide on those who complete a degree in six years again. Podesta said we have projects delayed because we don't have enough people to do the work. What is the students' gut feeling on trades: Guo said she would do this if not financially ready for college. It could be a jumping of point.

She isn't sure how many people would want this because there is a negative feeling on trades. They are viewed as less paying.

Wright said having been shared this information, do the students see there is false information and lack of information. Guo said yes. She wants to learn more and is willing to have another meeting. Teach it and put more information out there to get students on board. Riley echoed what Guo said. Riley isn't personally interested in trades but knows students that are interested. Tell people the perks. Many students are motivated by what can get them the highest pay. People perceive the best jobs as doctors and lawyers. DeWolf asked where will these folks work and live?

Locke asked how can we get more in the group interested. Could they help with interest on the subject, DeWolf asked? DeWolf said college is for some people, but it's not a failure if you don't complete four-year degree. College is not a fit for all.

Podesta said colleges are worse on career path help. Students get less help in college than high school on thinking of what they want to do career wise. We want to leverage our dollars on helping SPS students.

DeWolf shared his personal story with student debt.

Wright said he has heard that equality is based in income and being able to buy a house.

This topic would have been great for six-hour meeting, Guo said. There is a meeting in February. Guo wishes the Student Advisory Board (SAB) met more often and not as long.

Colbert suggested sharing videos of trades to pre educate what these professions are. Guo said talk with Sherri Kokx and the Superintendent about attending meeting. Guo would endorse using the SAB time to discuss this topic. With more members involved, we can have an open conversation.

DeWolf talked about the task force's timeline and said we need to come back to SAB soon for their input. DeWolf mentioned the city agreement is 20 pages. Locke can share the LA school district agreement. Students were thanked for their time.

Riley said Rainier Beach community sees construction happening around them as gentrification and displacement. Things being built are not for the people of color community. It's an emotional trigger, DeWolf said. Locke said there is urgency behind this because we have Rainier Beach and Van Assault projects in the future. We want students to know who built that. Locke gave a personal example of being able to look around the community and point out what part they had in building something in their area.

Colbert shared how her community has changed and how it's related to institutional racism.

Riley talked about BEX levy in regard to Rainier Beach High and how long it has taken to rebuild the school. She sees the school changing with rebuilding and the gentrification of community. We need to be transparent with black and brown youth when building and acknowledge the people who have lived there. Wright said it's about who you are building it for and making changing for the community that is living there.

DeWolf talked about the strategic plan and making sure we use racial equity tool in the task force recommendations. He wants a reminder of what effect these recommendations will have.

Next opportunity to meet is Feb. 1, 10 a.m.-4 p.m. at the SAB meeting.

The meeting ended at 2:58 p.m.

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