



Board Special Meeting

Work Session: Strategic Plan

Monday, October 29, 2018, 4:30 – 6:00pm

Board Auditorium, John Stanford Center

2445 – 3rd Avenue South, Seattle WA 98134

Minutes

Call to Order

Director Harris called the meeting to order at 4:31 p.m. Also in attendance were Directors Pinkham, Geary, Mack, and Burke. Staff present were Superintendent Denise Juneau and Erinn Bennett, Executive Director of Government Relations and Strategic Initiatives.

Work Session: Strategic Plan

Ms. Bennett introduced Hosanna Mahaley, Senior Advisor, and David James, Senior Associate, both of the District Management Group (DMGroup). Ms. Mahaley and Mr. James spoke to their background working with school districts to develop and execute strategic plans.

Ms. Mahaley outlined the goals of the work session and described the experience of DMGroup, which includes working with districts across the country of all sizes providing professional development and consulting services, such as strategic planning. Ms. Mahaley noted the members of the project team working with Seattle Public Schools to develop a new strategic plan and outlined the project workplan. Phase 1 of the process has included the formation of a steering committee, which met earlier in the day and on which Director Geary is participating.

Director Mack requested a list of the steering committee members with notations for those who are district staff and those who come from other organizations. Ms. Bennett noted that a list with additional information will be provided and added that the community members are representing broader communities by which they were nominated, rather than specific organizations. Carri Campbell, Chief Engagement Officer, spoke to the linkage between the Superintendent's Listening and Learning Tour and the development of the steering committee.

Director Pinkham asked how representation from the Native community was selected, and how it aligns with the timeline for the upcoming Native American Listening Session on November 15. Ms. Campbell addressed the timing of the steering committee formation. Director Mack asked about representation from the special education community and whether other communities are missing. Superintendent Juneau spoke to the relationship between the steering committee membership and communities that were part of the Listening and Learning Tour. Director Geary noted that the steering committee is mindful of the limitations of the representation and that no one member will be able to speak for an entire community. Director Harris addressed the prior strategic planning process and the limitations of an expansive representational structure.

Director Geary summarized the steering committee meeting held earlier in the day, which included small group work. Ms. Mahaley outlined key dates in the strategic planning process and points for Directors to provide input, including during the December 1, 2018 School Board retreat. Ms. Mahaley noted that feedback from the current work session will also be provided to the steering committee for their consideration in the development of a draft strategic plan, which will be presented to the Board for review and approval in March 2019.

Mr. James spoke to the framework being used to develop the strategic plan. Design will include a theory of action, priorities, and measurable goals. Implementation will include initiatives and action steps.

Ms. Mahaley summarized the priorities offered by steering committee members earlier in the day, which fell into five thematic areas: community and family engagement, equitable access and opportunity, high-quality instruction, human capital, and systems and accountability. Ms. Mahaley invited a discussion among Directors about their proposed priorities in each area.

Director Burke asked what the drafted theory of action is and how the work is being prioritized within that. Ms. Mahaley noted that the intent was to finish the draft theory of action during the day's steering committee meeting, but that it had not been completed. Director Burke spoke to the importance of building from a research-proven theory of action. Directors discussed the role of the theory of action within the strategic planning process.

Directors discussed their priorities within the thematic area of community and family engagement.

Director Geary stated that student engagement is a priority in order to ensure there is ownership by students and that the plan is responsive to their needs. Director Mack spoke to the ways in which all district interactions with students and their families equate to engagement and the importance of robust engagement before changes are made that impact families. Director Pinkham spoke to meeting communities in their spaces, where they are comfortable. Director Harris spoke to the importance of a feedback loop and stated her interest in reporting back to the community more often about what's been heard and how it has impacted decision-making at the district. Director Burke stated that community engagement must be about putting students first.

Ms. Mahaley noted that a theory of action and additional work by the steering committee will be provided for the December 1, 2018 Board retreat. Director Harris asked that information be shared with the Board as far in advance of the retreat as possible.

Directors discussed their priorities within the thematic area of equitable access and opportunity.

Director Burke discussed the ways in which equitable access overlaps with choice and the ongoing work to evaluate what level of choice is equitable. Director Geary reflected on the ways private contributions impact equitable access and opportunity and the importance of adopting structures that ensure that private contributions are promoting that priority. Director Pinkham spoke to addressing the needs of all students and eliminating the opportunity gaps and the challenges in doing so. Director Mack discussed the challenges associated with inadequate state funding for education. Director Harris spoke to establishing a baseline of what is provided throughout the district, noting the value of alternative educational options and also of having a simple framework across the district.

Director Mack requested that more be done to define and map out which programs are offered and where, and to use that as a tool for charting out equitable access. Director Mack supported an earlier comment about establishing a baseline of what is offered across all schools. Director Geary noted a concern about establishing a baseline in an underfunded system, and the potential to create a system that is equal but not equitable. Director Harris suggested reframing as a minimum baseline. Director Mack stated her support for defining equity within the strategic planning process and suggested that it means all students are getting what they need. Director Geary reflected on the open nature of the definition and suggested more tailoring around what student need is. Director Burke spoke to the risks of inefficiency when setting a common baseline and to the need to put more resources and focus around students who have greater needs and traditionally have received less. Director Pinkham offered as a definition of equity that all students will go to school feeling like they matter, that they are cared about, and that they want to go to school.

Directors discussed their priorities within the thematic area of high-quality instruction.

Directors spoke to ensuring that instruction is racially responsive and culturally informed and that it is accessible, engaging, and relevant. Director Harris stated that high quality instruction also reflects differentiation and professional development. Director Burke discussed the challenges with ensuring all instruction is relevant or exciting and suggested that it should build stamina and work ethic as well. Director Geary reflected on the perspective of a students that are not engaged currently and what it will take to close the gap, and the importance of exciting students' imagination. Director Pinkham highlighted relevancy as a priority and the need to incorporate student involvement by providing students an opportunity to join in the teaching. Director Harris spoke to the debate over the value of project-based learning and suggested arts-based education as a priority.

Directors discussed their priorities within the thematic area of human capital.

Director Geary stated that the district's well-trained teaching force should be equitably distributed throughout the district. Director Mack suggested an alternative framing for the term, human capital. Director Geary highlighted the share of the district's budget that personnel account for and the need to utilize the teaching force and their skills equitably. Director Harris noted her desire to see more diversity and more equitable pay for teachers and instructional assistants and for finding a way to ensure experienced teachers are working within higher needs schools, within applicable agreements. Director Pinkham suggested expanding the definition of human capital to include resources in the community. Director Geary noted the importance of resourcing the implementation work that results from the strategic planning process, including investing in human capital, in order to achieve an impact. Director Harris stated that citywide mentorship programs are a priority. Director Mack suggested human resources as an alternative to the term human capital, and spoke to the importance of staff feeling safe, comfortable, and engaged in the community. Director Burke requested that there be celebration for successes in the human capital area and that there be associated positive accountability measures.

Directors discussed their priorities within the thematic area of systems and accountability.

Director Burke suggested building a quality improvement and enterprise risk management system into the district. Director Harris asked whether it would include project management. Director Burke suggested that it would depend on the system. Director Mack suggested reframing as performance auditing or continuous improvement, with the focus being on ensuring the district is meeting goals as efficiently as possible. Director Geary suggested that the system should ensure accountability for resources being devoted toward district goals and that central staff should be better used to avoid duplication across schools. Directors discussed the ways in which there could be added accountability for utilizing resources to address gaps. Director Pinkham reflected on the way bureaucracy can create barriers and the need to be accountable for mistakes and to learn from them. Director Harris spoke to putting students first and ensuring their safety.

Ms. Mahaley thanked the Board for their feedback and summarized next steps and future opportunities for Directors to provide feedback.

Adjourn

Director Harris adjourned the meeting at 5:55 p.m.