



Board Special Meeting

School Board Retreat

December 1, 2018 9:30 am – 3:00 pm

Auditorium, John Stanford Center

2445 3rd Avenue South, Seattle, WA 98134

Minutes

Director Harris called the meeting 9:32 a.m. Directors Harris, Pinkham, Patu, Burke, Mack, Geary and DeWolf were present.

Staff present were Superintendent Denise Juneau; Dr. Eric Anderson, Director of Research & Evaluation; Erinn Bennett, Executive Director of Government Relations & Strategic Initiatives; JoLynn Berge, Chief Financial Officer; Carri Campbell, Chief of Public Affairs; Dr. Clover Codd, Chief of Human Resources; Wyeth Jessee, Chief of Student Supports; Dr. Brent Jones, Chief of Equity, Partnerships, and Engagement; Sherri Kokx, Special Assistant to the Superintendent, John Krull, Chief Information Officer; Stephen Nielsen, Deputy Superintendent; Michael Tolley, Chief Academic Officer; Noel Treat, General Counsel; and Ellie Wilson-Jones, Director of Policy & Board Relations. John Kim, CEO, and Hosanna Mahaley, Senior Advisor, both of the District Management Group (DMGroup) were also present.

Welcome and Icebreaker

Director Harris welcomed Directors, staff, and the public in attendance and asked Ms. Wilson-Jones to lead Directors and staff in an icebreaker. Directors and staff broke into small groups for a brief Pictionary-style activity utilizing common educational and Seattle Public Schools terminology.

Strategic Plan

Superintendent Juneau introduced the agenda item by speaking to the ongoing work of the district to develop a new strategic plan. Ms. Bennett summarized the work done to date by the Strategic Plan Steering Committee, including the development of draft guiding principles. Ms. Bennett reviewed key dates for the development of the strategic plan, including a January 30 work session during which the Board will review a draft plan and anticipated action by the Board in March. Ms. Bennett underscored the importance of the timeline in order to influence the development of C-SIPs, budgets, and work for the coming year.

Ms. Campbell spoke to a draft report, *Superintendent Juneau's Engagement Tour Initial Findings: Listening and Learning Tour, SPS Team / Staff Meetings, and Thought Exchange Participation*, and key objectives and outcomes from the Superintendent's engagement tour and reflected on the comprehensiveness of the tour. Nine key findings were identified through this engagement work, including that people appreciated the opportunity to provide feedback directly to the Superintendent, something that many communities had never had before. Racial equity and ensuring educational equity; the dual language immersion program, Special Education, Whole Child supports, and the need for consistency and predictability were other key themes. Ms. Campbell noted that further investigation is needed for two areas—first, the relationship between family fundraising and inequities, and, second, HCC enrollment, which does not reflect the demographics of the district. In response to a question from Director Harris, Ms. Campbell elaborated on feedback received regarding dual language

immersion, noting that some families spoke to having home language supported as a safety net issue while other families suggested that dual language is a way to prepare their child for a great future in a global society. Both shared a desire for dual language support but for different reasons.

Dr. Jones spoke to community engagement and recognized Steering Committee members in attendance. Dr. Jones explained that future engagement work is planned to include two large regional meetings, smaller meetings hosted by partners and cabinet staff, and additional staff engagement opportunities. Ms. Bennett noted that community engagement will be further discussed during a December 11 Steering Committee meeting. Director Burke stated that hearing from members of the community about their goals is valuable, as many constituents offer different perceptions than staff and Directors. He suggested that incorporating this broader perspective will provide better alignment with the needs of the community. Ms. Bennett stated that the second round of engagement will provide an opportunity to gather more focused feedback on a draft of the strategic plan. Director Mack reflected on the process for providing Board feedback on draft plan language to the Steering Committee and then to the broader community for input. Ms. Bennett confirmed that the Board's feedback will be carried forward to the Steering Committee and that the Board will then receive information about the next iteration of the work during a work session in January.

Ms. Bennett introduced John Kim and Hosanna Mahaley with the District Management Group (DMGroup). Ms. Mahaley spoke to the broader work of DMGroup, and Mr. Kim addressed the objectives of the day, which include gathering Board feedback to inform the work of the Steering Committee. Director Mack, Mr. Kim, and Superintendent Juneau discussed the district's mission and vision statements. Director Mack noted that they were both generally sound, and Mr. Kim and Superintendent Juneau noted that current intention is to carry them forward, with some possible refinements.

Mr. Kim facilitated a discussion about the Steering Committee's draft guiding principles. Director DeWolf spoke to racism, reflecting that it has been explicit, specific, coordinated, and intended and stated that the work to address it must echo that back. Director Geary noted that the Steering Committee had conversation on that point and will continue considering how to address structural racism. Director Burke spoke to the need for specificity and alignment, particularly with regard to outcomes. Mr. Tolley reflected on past challenges faced when working to respond to the needs of African American males and how to support school staff in that work. Director Mack reflected on the diversity and complexity of the district and spoke to her support for targeted universalism. She stated that she would be concerned if in establishing a floor expectation for the outcomes of all students the ceiling for expectations for some students were to be dropped, and requested language reflecting this.

Director DeWolf, Ms. Bennett, and Superintendent Juneau discussed the need to strategically consider what work the district might decline to take on at this time, noting that focused work can have a larger impact. Mr. Kim spoke to his experience working with other districts' mission and vision statements and the challenges with deciding what work not to do. Mr. Kim reflected on the role of a theory of action and how it can focus work to achieve larger, more impactful ends.

Director Harris spoke to the importance of sustainability and a strong feedback loop and noted that evaluation needs to underlie the theory of action for the district.

Director Burke reflected on his experience with private sector strategic planning work and differences in the outcomes that are being sought. Director Burke spoke to the need to sustain work that is successful while utilizing the strategic plan to identify the areas where there are gaps and to implement needed changes.

Director Mack spoke to the district's role in providing fundamental resources like supplies, the educational environment, and buildings and noted that this grounding is not reflected clearly in the

theory of action. Mr. Kim spoke to the role of a theory of action, which is a fundamental belief around how an organization becomes successful. Mr. Kim noted that many of what are termed strategic plans tend to be operational plans and distinguished the two plan types, noting that an operational plan would reflect the day-to-day work of the district. Director Mack spoke to the importance of operational planning work. Director Pinkham noted challenges with providing definitions around, for example, a “new normal” and suggested instead focusing on norms. Mr. Jessee spoke to the present needs of students and how ongoing work to serve these current students runs parallel to strategic longer-term work.

The meeting recessed at 11:17 a.m. for a break. The meeting reconvened at 11:30 a.m.

Mr. Kim facilitated a discussion to gather further Director input. Director Burke asked first to address the topics of equity and racial equity, in order to develop a clear shared definition. Directors and staff spoke to the importance of ongoing work as individuals and together to understand and work for equity. Dr. Jones shared a working definition for racial equity in Seattle Public Schools to be used as context for the day’s work. Directors and staff moved into two smaller groups to engage in discussion regarding the development of the strategic plan and draft strategic plan priorities.

Mr. Kim asked the two smaller groups to report back out. Director Burke reported out from the first group as follows: The group liked the draft theory of action, with some suggested wordsmithing. The balance of student, staff, and system was appreciated, as was the focus on students receiving high-quality instruction. The group asked questions regarding accountability and ensuring the district measures what matters. Language referencing the whole child and high-quality instruction resonated with the group. In discussing priority one, the group discussed potential edits to the language referencing data systems within MTSS and a desire to reflect MTSS more broadly. The group also discussed changing the phrase “accelerate learning” to “accelerate growth.” In discussing priority two, the group spoke to racial equity as manifested in Board policy, speech, and actions. In discussing priority three, the group had a rich conversation around developing a diverse culturally responsive workforce. While workforce speaks more broadly, the group focused in on those with a first touch with students as a particular priority and spoke to creating a warm welcoming environment. Because the draft strategic plan was created from the DNA of the Seattle community, the group felt that it is closely aligned with the most important needs of the community, noting the similarity across the Thought Exchange and the Listening and Learning Tour. The group felt that the the nine priorities from the engagement report were well reflected. Director Mack highlighted the intersectionality between racial equity and special education and English Language Learners and noted there was uncertainty whether that intersectionality was adequately reflected.

Superintendent Juneau reported out for the second group as follows: The group had substantial conversation about the terminology and jargon used, discussed referencing underserved students rather than historically underserved students, and spoke about race and identifying a focus on African American males. There was robust conversation around targeted universalism without an ultimate conclusion as well as discussion about feedback and evaluation. The group proposed reordering the priorities to make the current number two the fourth priority. For the engagement priority, there was discussion about the meaning of authentic and who defines authenticity and the lack of clarity about the end the priority is seeking to achieve. There was also a desire not to have the addition of language about the end or goal be limiting, in that it could require unfocused engagement on everything without consideration of other district needs. Ultimately, the group expressed a feeling that there was more work to be done. Director Harris also noted the expense of engagement and the tension with other priorities given limited resources. There was discussion in the group about the use of the word “diverse” and the group proposed alternative wording that speaks to a workforce that is reflective of the students they serve. There was also discussion about the distinction between seeking greater representation within the workforce and ensuring the current workforce is culturally responsive and the

need to retain both parts of this goal. For priority four, there was input that communities should also be added to the list, along with students and families. There was discussion about this priority being about students', families', and communities' experiences with SPS systems rather than about how the Board and staff feel about systems. There was discussion about taking out the annual staff climate survey from the sample measures. Director Harris noted that the group also suggested including "and school functions" after central office. Superintendent Juneau spoke further to the community engagement priority and the end that it seeks to achieve and noted that some of the potential ends discussed were to support the strategic plan, to eliminate opportunity gaps, and to support students.

Mr. Kim provided concluding thoughts on the strategic plan discussion and outlined next steps. He noted that feedback received during the retreat will be reflected back during the next Steering Committee meeting on December 11. From there, there will be work to develop a revised draft that comes back to the Board on January 30 and to the broader community for feedback. Mr. Kim highlighted the accelerated timeframe for the strategic plan and thanked the Directors for their work.

Board & Staff Communication/Collaboration

Director Harris facilitated a discussion about Board and staff communication and collaboration. Directors spoke to their current practices when communicating with staff and inclusion of the Superintendent to ensure she is aware of and can connect work across issue areas. Staff spoke to the ways in which their divisions work to ensure Directors receive timely, accurate, and responsive information.

The meeting recessed at 2:35 p.m. for a break.

2019 Board Committee & Liaison Assignment Preferences

The meeting reconvened at 2:45 p.m. Each director shared preferences for 2019 committee and liaison roles for the Board president to take into account in making assignments.

The meeting adjourned at 2:58 p.m.