



June 22

2020

REPORT OF THE STRATEGIC ENGAGEMENT AND PLANNING COMMITTEE

The Board Committee and the Strategic Engagement and Planning (StEP) Committee met on Wednesday, June 17, 2020, 4:00 P.M., via the Blue Jeans Video Conferencing Tool.

ATTENDEES

Board StEP Committee Members

Ryan Messer, Chair; Eve Bolton; Pamela Bowers

Board Members

Carolyn Jones, Ben Lindy

StEP Committee Members

Michael Beck, David Brenner, Marlena Brookfield, Virginia Corsini, Kate Eisenpress, Valda Freeman-Karmo, Heather Gerker, Carol Gibbs, David Hapner, Renee Hevia, Stacey Hill-Simmons, Yolanda Lawson, Kareem Moffett, Craig Rozen, Mary Schlueter, Vanessa White, Susan Wilke

Administration/Staff

Laura Mitchell, Superintendent; Tianay Amat, Deputy Superintendent; Krista Boyle, Chief Strategic Communications Officer; Dan Hoying, General Counsel; Shauna Murphy, Assistant Superintendent; Jennifer Wagner, Treasurer

Cincinnati Federation of Teachers

Julie Sellers, President, CFT

Future of Cincinnati Public Schools

Superintendent Mitchell provided the Committee with an additional overview of the Strategic Plan that includes changes in the following measures: *Student-Centered Decision Making, Health and Safety, Community Engagement and Influence, Optimized Capabilities and Growth*, due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The new measures will be available at the end of the summer and based upon the work that is currently being done.

Mrs. Mitchell updated the group on processes and services that the District put in place to serve students and staff due to COVID-19 and mandates by Governor Mike Dewine.

She also informed the group that the Administration has done robust research in determining ways to open schools, and that the goal is to open in August 2020.

Krista Boyle, Chief Strategic Communications Officer, updated the group on the community and employee survey.

Deputy Superintendent Amat updated the Committee on the following various learning options to be considered for the future of schools.

- In Person Five Days a Week
- Blended – One to Two Days a Week/Face-to-Face
- Distance – Five Days a Week Away from Home
- Remote
- Hybrid
- Informed the group about the Digital Academy

Treasurer Wagner updated the Committee on a summary of the budget and her following key messages.

1. COVID-19 and its negative impact on finances
2. School as we know it has changed – working to see what the model will look like
3. Each model will have budget reduction implications

The StEP Committee members provided the following comments.

- (1) Remote Learning via cable access needing to be available for all CPS families and (2) how CPS is addressing remote learning for students who may be out sick based on the proposed options.
Response from Administration: (1) They are in contact with public broadcast for more CPS families to have access as well as lessons being posted on the CPS YouTube channel. (2) There is a quick closure plan in place in case the schools need to close quickly due to a COVID-19 resurgence.
- Concerned about the financial aspects and items in the strategic plan being funded by the levy. Would be helpful to have a conversation about how levy funds will work upon re-imagining the schools to be more collaborative and have a conversation about funds in-order to be able to serve students in a different way
Response from Administration: Levy funds will not be allocated to the Strategic Plan.
- CPS needs to tell its story about budget cuts to the District. CPS was the number two hit of any school. Need to talk about how this will hamper education going forward. Have an engagement campaign with parents and community members to tell the financial story
- Likes Blended Learning. Want to see middle and high school students show up once a day or once a week. What will the day look like? Consider more SEL and less curriculum focus on that day. Kids missing social interaction and gets lost in remote learning. Engage in a more robust way, due to not having conversation. Improve robocalls. Be more proactive in engaging the community. Make sure the timing and days of the robocalls go out on a consistent basis. Include information about the District in the calls.
- Complimented the Administration on their Plans for the Future Presentation done at the June 10, 2020 Board meeting. (1) Are students locked into those options or one of those for the entire school year, or will it start with one option and then roll into a second option. (2) Has consideration been given to the arts? What will the curriculum look like?

Response from Administration: (1) Will start of face to face build the teacher/student connection. (2) Exploring different ways on how to extend art education.

- Expressed concern about parents becoming teachers and not being prepared. How will the gap be filled? Parents may need skills on how to teach their special needs children to do their work. A struggle with students that need one-on-one instruction and hands-on instruction as far as that being done distantly. What will happen with parents that have to work outside the home and special needs kids doing distant learning?

Response from Administration: There are gaps in learning and the State is working on what should be taught. The District will be coming up with a way on how it will be done, by using District-adopted materials along with pacing. The Curriculum department is currently looking at the pacing guides and standards, and putting it on Schoology with model lesson.

- Concerned about engagement. Are there plans to use community partners to supplement what the District has to do differently? Put community partners to task to benefit CPS. Is there opportunity to teach parents? Put the information on CPS TV, and on the YouTube Channel about how parents can engage with their children differently, including parents with disabilities. Put a small three minute lesson and professional development for parents on YouTube. Connect Powerschool with Schoology. Do robocalls at the beginning and the end of the week. Change the voice from who the message is coming from. Teach Parents how to teach kids during this trauma. Parents are in Trauma as well. Will help where needed.

Response from Administration: Parent training will be offered. Conversations are taking place with CPS partners. Will have a better idea of what is needed after the *Future Plans for the Schools* has been approved.

- Send robo calls in languages that are spoken in the homes. How will buildings that provide service to the community be managed?

Response from Administration: There is guidance on how to structure operations if back in session face-to-face. CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) protocols are in place around keeping the environment safe.

- Go to school as many days as possible. Can there be a hotline for parents to call in to get specific training on things that are specific to know in educating their children from beginning to end? Will help in managing and working the hotline. Consider looking at opening up schools on the weekend, one day from 3pm-9pm for extra-curricular, a place to social distance and study. Liked that recreation centers and libraries are safe places for kids to go to. If recreation centers, elementary schools, and high schools are close by and open during the school day, use those locations as well for students to do other things. Need more consistency in parent feedback. Hire a black-owned company called POSSIP to do the parent surveys. Have two to three permanent subs in every building.

- Be clear and upfront with parents, teachers and students. Five percent of those who completed the survey said they would not come back to school if a vaccine is not available. Will those families be enrolled in the Digital Academy? What school will they return back to? Will learning be synchronous or asynchronous for Blended and Distance Learning?

Response from Administration: The CPS model will not hurt students and they will not be penalized nor put out of their school. Blended Learning will be closer to asynchronous. StEP Committee Chair Messer recommended having back-to-school training.

- Will parents have to sign a form if a child develops COVID-19 stating that the District is not responsible issue?

Response from Administration: (1) Not a primary concern for parents to sign to release liability. (2) A waiver has a limited affect. (3) District enjoys a Political Subdivision Immunity. Causation is tricky.

- What happens with childcare when school is not in session? Is there discussion around before- and after-school care given by an outside source? Will this be available or will parents need to find childcare outside of the building. Childcare needs to be a much more learning environment than just baby-sitting.

Response from Administration: Before- and after-school care are under consideration. Guidelines that are already in place will be extended to before- and after-school care.

- Purchase of computers. Can District use its volume power to negotiate a price for an inexpensive computer and pass it along to the parents? Example—Google Chrome Books.

Response from Administration: Will make sure that all students receive a device. They are in the schools and need to be updated and reconfigured before sending home to students. CPS leases devices. The District is constantly working with partners to develop programs to get reduced costs and free devices for students.

- Access to WiFi.

Response from Administration: Parent survey revealed that approximately 11,000 children in their homes did not have access to WiFi. CPS was able to get an “unbelievable rate” through Cincinnati Bell for families to have WiFi in their homes. Connect Our Students.org., the Greater Cincinnati Foundation, and several other partners partnered with Cincinnati Bell to help offset cost of the reduced service. The yearly service cost is approximately \$200 annually for 12 months. The goal is to raise funding for zero cost to families. Five schools are being piloted at this time.

- The August-December block calendar. Will the Thanksgiving break have the schedule in place, will that be changing? If changes, it will be hard for parents to adapt. Have parent and community engagement and ask students what worked and what did not work. Some teachers have done good job in engaging have not heard from some teachers. Sixth grade going to seventh grade missed graduation at their schools, is there a specific plan in place to deal with large group in transition?

Response from Administration: Conversation has taken place about this as well as incoming kindergarteners.

- Expressed the following concern. No decision will make everyone happy, nor will every child be where they need to be—this is a pandemic, in an environment about racism and white supremacy going neck to neck, people are on edge. Need to make a decision. StEP made a commitment to stand behind the strategic growth and development of this District. Eighty percent on this call are not the ones most impacted by decisions that are made. Need to bring families onto this Committee who need equity the most. It would be a different conversation and not hearing about testing. The community is more woke in playing a role to supporting the District. People want to know what the decision is so they can prepare and know what to do. Don’t take too long in making a decision. People are trying to make this happen in informal ways. Make a decision to put these strategies in place. There are those willing to do it. Kids are in poverty.

StEP Member Bowers summarized the feedback as follows: Teaching parents how to teach students, having a hotline, community engagement, being transparent, and partnering with recreation centers, to name a few.

StEP Member Bolton stated that safety and health is priority one to the Board's thinking. Equity in transportation still needs to be addressed.

She advised the Administration to do all that they can to make sure that the 11,000 children have access to WiFi and multiple devices per home, as needed.

CFT President Julie Sellers reported that everyone needs to call Senator Portman to vote on the Heroes Act, and that this will be the second round after the Care dollars. Need more resources, not less. The vote needs to get passed through the Senate and the House. She urged everyone to contact Portman to tell him to make sure they vote on it, so students in this country get what they need.

The meeting adjourned at 6:12 P.M.

Strategic and Planning Engagement Committee

Ryan Messer, Chair

Eve Bolton

Pamela Bowers