

Draft Minutes of July 10 2007 Meeting of Long Range Planning Committee

Meeting convened at 7 p.m.

Present: Eric Abrams, Jose Blackorby, Charles Pelton, Darcy Brown-Martin, Steve Armand, Lovella Barney, Elsie Mallonee, Barton Carter, Mary Ann Piette, Barbara Buswell

Review of minutes from 6/26 (now posted on web); Amendments to minutes—numbers are not related to fire code but to contractual limits. Minutes approved.

Reports on Caucus Meetings:

Grades 1 to 3: About 15 people attended this meeting. Parents of children in these grades expressed frustration about class splits for these grades. Third grade parents very upset that there is no single third grade class. Lots of discussion surrounding ways to deal with future enrollment problems. There was limited volunteerism to obtain information about potential future K students living in the catchment area. Concerns expressed re expanding capacity versus lottery versus redrawing boundaries and welfare of families/children who may be diverted from Hillcrest in the future.

Incoming K parents: Asked to see the committee's report before it goes to the district. There was support for investigating Far West site for incubating K-2 program.

Committee discussed potential suggestion to district that they open a second, separate K-8 school at the Far West location. One member expressed that there are schools in the area that have been closed. The district demographers know that population in schools is increasing in schools above the 580 so it does not make sense to close schools in those neighborhoods.

Grades 4-5 and middle school: These groups were combined due to absence of the 4-5 representatives on the 26th of June. They reported on what's happened in committees to date. People were generally interested in and supportive of the work that's been done. Concern re potential for survey to suggest to future families that there will be a spot for their child at Hillcrest when that is not true. Concern re what the survey can actually tell us since some people move but most everyone there was very supportive of gather information on the pre-K group. One person felt that collecting data will in fact increase demand. Discussion of the process by which students enter the school at the later grades since that is unclear [and remains unclear following the discussion].

Pre-K Caucus: Had 12-15 parents. This set is probably the least informed about the school so information flow is more one way. Cascading down what the committee is doing. Primary focus was to see the results or the proposed results before they're presented to the OUSD. Discussion of potential for boundary adjustments. People wanted to know when it would happen and who would be impacted. Explained that all boundaries in the district are being reviewed in this district-run process.

General Discussion:

The extent to which the people in the caucuses have access to the materials we circulate amongst committee members. Idea was that everybody would have access to the minutes, but there are other documents that people know exist and would like to see.

Agreement that Jose's best practices information can be shared. Also, Neal's history of the last six years would be useful to publish.

Discussion of need to look at best practices around multi-age groupings in single classrooms (what some people call "splits". This is a model that has a lot to it and has been endorsed by many educators. There should be more communication about how multi-age classrooms can benefit the learning environment of the older and younger children involved and this may help assuage some of the parents' fears.

Recognition that the concern about multi-age classes – especially for 2007 and 2008 acts as micro-managing the principal's job.

Expression of desire that this committee be institutionalized and that can commit to thoughtful long-range planning. It's very powerful.

Expression of "goal" for committee to come up with a long range plan that makes limited use of multiple age classes. We're trying to have a limit on enrollment that would allow us to have a fairly stable population. Next year, we've got the beginning of a rabbit passing through a python. This committee has little to do with the short-term response.

Demand Subcommittee Report

No new news as we have posted results from the survey of existing parents. We are now implementing the pre-K survey and hope to have results by July 24 meeting. That survey is proceeding apace.

Supply Subcommittee Report

This group is updating its initial data gathering to reflect the input of the committee from the last meeting.

Best Practices Subcommittee Report

They have made contact with Kirstin Vitale at the district who appears committed to the work of this committee and considers it helpful. Her group is now analyzing the enrollment in the entire district and looking at boundary adjustment. The historical data is somewhat skewed by the Options Program and the way people are moving around but the district recognizes that there is more 'sustainability' in the hills schools. Note that there is a bevy of new schools in the flatlands – 40 new tiny schools have opened in

Oakland in the past 4 years and been incredibly successful. Not just retention in the hills, but families seeking out these new small schools.

There is an amazing commitment to what she calls programmatic diversity, which means that if a school is succeeding in and of itself, they're not going to disrupt that process. They do not intend to make k-8 schools into k-5 schools if the program is working. One school was a k-8, but it was not doing well so they went to k-5. Yet, the plan is to grow that school back up to a k-8 and make it successful. There's one school that's a 5-8. The message is that if a school has it together in whatever terms the program is defined, the district will support it.

There are 108 schools in Oakland. They have to figure out what to do with those that aren't doing well, and it may mean more school closures. Enrollment in Oakland is stabilizing however despite recent significant declines in enrollment.

District staff plan to go to the board with boundary adjustments in the fall and the intent is to redraw boundaries in time for fall 2008 entrances. Note that siblings of existing students may not be grandfathered in if there is redistricting. Some of the other districts do not grandfather siblings.

Research on school lotteries by the Best Practices Subcommittee. Lotteries are mainly used to achieve racial diversity. Lotteries are controversial because people don't trust the process, there's often suspicion that the lottery is being tampered with behind the scenes. The Denver Post ran a story about people coming to the school on a Tuesday night with their energy bills, putting them in the pot, and picking names so that there could be no question that the process was fair. Everyone witnessed it. One scholarly paper by Rand Europe, The use of lottery... Outcomes are equivocal, but they're controversial. That's the conclusion!

General Committee Discussion re Options for the Report

Decision to list all of the possible options for recommendations.

- Redraw the boundaries of the Hillcrest catchment area.
- Maintain the same catchment area, but run a lottery for K entry.
- Institute a lottery for K entry; but reserve the right to redraw catchment boundaries in the event that you continually have a huge disparity between the number of applicants and spaces available.
- Redraw the boundaries AND run a lottery for K entry.
- Maintain a wait list for entry into Hillcrest in grades higher than K.
- Allow more K entries and figure out how to do a split campus with K-2 classes somewhere other than the current site.
- Suggest that the district found a whole new K-5 or K-8 school at a location within the current catchment area.
- Move Hillcrest to a year-round school schedule.
- Build a second story on Hillcrest's main building to increase space.

- Remodel current interior space of HC main building to better utilize space.
- Move to phase-shifted school bells.
- Institute a lottery for middle school entry that happens when students are either in fourth grade (for sixth grade entry) or in fifth grade.
- Maintain status quo. (If we have over-enrollment, teaching will be more difficult, test scores will go down, and people will leave on their own.)
- Accept fewer students from catchment area and then fill spaces with inter-district transfers through the Options program.

More parents in incoming group would be on the side of redrawing boundaries so that they would know with certainty where their child will go to school in the next year, as opposed to going through a lottery that might send their child to a program improvement school geographically distant from home.

Next meeting

July 24, 2007, 7 pm.