

City of Lynchburg
Task Force on the Future of Education in the City of Lynchburg: PreK-12 and Beyond
December 9, 2020 Meeting Notes
Virtual Zoom Webinar – 5:00 p.m.

Members in attendance

Dr. Michael Gillette, Chair
Ms. Gloria Preston, Co-Chair
Ms. Susan Morrison, Steering Committee Member, City School Board Member
Dr. Atul Gupta, Steering Committee Member, City School Board Member
Mr. Beau Wright, Steering Committee Member, City Councilmember
Dr. Roger Jones, Leading Practices in Urban Education Subcommittee, Chair
Dr. Owen Cardwell, Programming and Collaboration Opportunities Subcommittee, Chair
Ms. Pat Price, Talent Management Subcommittee, Chair
Ms. Kathy Williams, Finance Subcommittee, Chair
Dr. Steve Smith, Task Force Member, At-large
Ms. Elise Spontarelli, Task Force Member, At-large
Dr. Rachel Gagen, Task Force Member, At-large
Mr. Charlie White, Task Force Member, At-large
Mr. Joe Tucker, Task Force Member, At-large

Others Present

Mr. Kimball Payne, Operations, Facilities, and Consolidation Subcommittee, Chair
Dr. Crystal Edwards, Superintendent, Lynchburg City Schools (LCS)
Ms. Amy Pugh, Deputy Superintendent, LCS
Ms. Kim Lukanich, Chief Financial Officer, LCS
Dr. Allison Jordan, Director of Curriculum & Instruction, LCS
Ms. LaTonya Brown, Director of Student Services, LCS
Ms. Flora Cardwell, Director of Human Services, LCS
Ms. Ethel Reeves, Director of Equity and Community Relations, LCS
Ms. Janenne Daniels-Bosher, Director of Special Education, LCS
Mr. Steven Gatzke, Senior Director of Finance & Operations, LCS

Staff Present

Dr. Reid Wodicka, Interim City Manager, City Staff Liaison
Ms. Alicia L. Finney, Administrative Support

Members Unable to attend

Mr. Randy Nelson, Steering Committee Member, City Councilmember
Ms. Julie Doyle, Enrollment Trends & Demographics Subcommittee, Chair

Overview of the Task Force

Dr. Gillette provided a high-level overview of the charge to the Task Force as it currently stands. According to the Charter, the Task Force is composed of sixteen total members including the Steering Committee. The Task Force serves as a high-level, strategic visioning, and recommending body for the School Board who will ultimately discuss any final decisions with City Council. Dr. Gillette reiterated that the Task Force has no authority to make any final decisions, will not be able to write policy, and will make no personnel decisions.

The Task Force further divided into six committees: Enrollment Trends and Demographics; Operations, Facilities, and Consolidation; Leading Practices in Urban Education; Programming and Collaboration Opportunities; Finance; and Talent Management which was added by the Task Force in July 2019, as the Task Force is prescribed to do.

The Task Force's work began in August 2019 when the committees defined their scope and developed an overall sense of the issues at hand. In the spring of 2020, the Task Force began refining the view based on the research conducted by the committees. It was from these discussions that the overarching concerns, as well as, the vision for each of the committees emerged (Attachment 1). The Task Force and committees were positioned to begin the brunt of their work in terms of further research and analysis. Unfortunately, the pandemic suspended the Task Force's work.

Overview of the Schools 2019 Strategic Plan

Dr. Edwards provided a brief summary of Lynchburg City Schools 2019 Strategic Plan (Pre-COVID) and outlined how this plan overlaps with some of the work already conducted by the Task Force.

- LCS Strategic Plan Goal 1: Student Growth, Development & Success aligns with Leading Programs in Urban Education
- LCS Strategic Plan Goal 2: Personnel Growth, Development & Success aligns with Talent Management.
- LCS Strategic Plan Goal 3: Fiscal Responsibility which aligns with Enrollment Trends & Demographics, Operations Facilities & Consolidation, and Finance
- LCS Strategic Plan Goal 4: Family & Community Engagement aligns with Programming and Collaboration Opportunities.

Dr. Edwards stated that this was the plan from January 2019 and does not address a lot of issues that recently arose due to the pandemic, such as, the future of remote learning and equity issues surrounding internet access and technological needs.

Path Forward

Independent from both Schools and City governing bodies, the Task Force was created to assist by performing hard, sometimes uncomfortable analysis of issues that neither entity can otherwise conduct. As the Task Force begins digging into some of these very deep, strategic questions, however, it is not the intent of the group to demand a lot of effort from school staff in a time where their efforts need to be focused on dealing with a pandemic. Conversely, because of this pandemic, all mechanisms of education service delivery have changed. This could be an opportunity to rethink the entire educational system.

Dr. Gillette stated that he sees the work of the Task Force heading in one of three different directions:

- 1) Dissolving the Task Force
- 2) Hold off until pandemic is over
- 3) Reengage, but with a different focus

Ms. Morrison suggested that there is a fourth option; she recommended that the Steering Committee reconvene. It was decided that the Steering Committee would meet to look at the Charter and reassess what is most meaningful in the Charter and potentially what needs to be changed or eliminated. The group would then bring those recommendations back to Council and the School Board to get their stamp of approval.

With no stated opposition, the meeting participants agreed to the course of action, but cautioned about not losing the momentum already built by the Task Force.

Personnel

Due to personnel changes within both the City and Schools administration, new staff liaisons to the Task Force needed to be named. Dr. Edwards designated Ms. Pugh as the new Schools Staff Liaison. Dr. Wodicka will name his replacement at a later date.

Adjourned

6:12 p.m.

Meeting Notes prepared by: Alicia L. Finney

Task Force on the Future of Education in the City of Lynchburg: PreK-12 and Beyond Charge To The Committees

OVERARCHING CONCERNS

This set of questions apply to all of the committees.

1. What are the most challenging trends (relevant to each committee's focus) that we can currently identify and what must the school system do to mitigate or reverse them?

DEFINING THE VISION

This set of questions applies to the work of all the committees. Each committee must ask itself how the recommendations that it makes will tie into the school system's stated values. If a recommendation does not connect to a stated value, then the possible addition of more values should be considered.

2. What are the core values of the Lynchburg City School system? Are there any policies, procedures, or commitments that need to put into place to the mission, vision, and values?*
3. What efforts must the City Schools make in order to advance efforts at equity and inclusion (which are not currently mentioned in the mission, vision, or values statements)?
4. What other values might be relevant and how should they be incorporated into the strategic goals of the school system (e.g. health, lifelong learning)?

***LCS Mission Statement**

Every Child, By Name and By Need, to Graduation.

LCS Vision Statement

A Tradition of Excellence for All.

LCS Core Values

We believe...

INTEGRITY is doing the right thing in an ethical and transparent manner.

RESPECT is valuing self and others.

TEAMWORK is collaborating and communicating to work together in accomplishing a common goal.

LEARNING is acquiring and applying knowledge and skills in an effort to grow and develop.

DEMOGRAPHICS AND FACILITIES

This set of questions applies specifically to the Enrollment Trends and Demographics Committee (Julie Doyle) and the Operations, Facilities, and Consolidation Committee (Kim Payne).

1. Over the next twenty years, how many students are we likely to have in Lynchburg, where will they live, what will their demographic composition be, how many of them are likely to attend public schools, and what will their specialized learning needs be? (Julie)
2. What does our research reveal about the possible need for attendance zone readjustments or other mechanisms for assigning students to particular schools? (Kim and Julie)
3. Based on an analysis of current and future demographics, would it be appropriate to request removal from the current desegregation order? (Kim)
4. Over the next 25 years, how many school buildings will we need and where should they be located? Do we need to plan for new construction, demolition, or consolidation? What about deferred maintenance on existing structures? (Kim)

PEDAGOGY

This set of questions applies to the Leading Practices in Urban Education Committee (Roger Jones).

1. Given pedagogical and demographic trends, what should the major foci be in our educational plan? What new programs will we need to prioritize in order to meet our student's needs, considering both brick and mortar resources along with new potential pathways of learning?

PARTNERSHIPS

This set of questions applies to the Programming and Collaboration Opportunities Committee (Owen Cardwell).

1. How can the City Schools enhance partnership opportunities with area businesses, faith communities, institutions of higher education, and local government, and what can we do to enhance interaction among these parties? Do other stakeholders need to be invited to the table?
2. Are partnership opportunities provided consistently across the school division?

WORKFORCE

This set of questions applies to the Talent Management Committee (Pat Price).

1. Are current Lynchburg City Schools efforts to recruit, retain, and professionally develop our education workforce sufficient, and what specific recommendations can we make to improve all three components of a healthy workforce?
2. Do changes need to be made to the structure of faculty/staff compensation?

FINANCE (current and projected future resources, sustainability, and efficiency)

This set of questions applies to the Finance Committee (Katherine Williams).

1. Is the School System currently managing its financial resources to maximal effect and are there any strategies that could be employed to improve efficiencies and effectiveness? How much money will it cost to meet the priority needs identified by the other committees (e.g. resources for changes in educational plan, restructuring or constructing buildings, changes in compensation), and what sources and strategies are available to help us meet those needs?

TASK FORCE LEVEL QUESTIONS

This set of questions will be considered by the Task Force as it reviews the work of the individual committees.

1. How can the City Schools properly fit within a broader educational environment that includes public, private, home-school, and regional magnet or specialty program options in order to best meet the needs of Lynchburg's children?
2. How can we ensure that public education continues to be regarded as a reasonable and excellent choice for our citizens?
3. How can the public education system pursue opportunities for cooperation with other educational institutions within the city?
4. Based on the information gathered, how is the LCS system currently doing in meeting all of the identified goals and what are the most important opportunities for improvement?

Revision Date: 2/27/20