

City of Lynchburg
Task Force on the Future of Education in the City of Lynchburg: PreK-12 and Beyond
January 30, 2020 Meeting Notes,
Central Virginia Governor's School - 1:00 P.M.

Members in attendance

Dr. Michael Gillette, Chair
Ms. Gloria Preston, Co-Chair
Mr. Randy Nelson
Ms. Susan Morrison
Dr. Atul Gupta
Dr. Roger Jones
Ms. Julie Doyle
Mr. Charlie White
Dr. Owen Cardwell
Dr. Steve Smith
Ms. Pat Price
Ms. Elise Spontarelli
Dr. Rachel Gagen
Ms. Kathy Williams
Mr. Joe Tucker

Mr. Kimball Payne

Unable to attend

Mr. Beau Wright

Staff Present

Dr. Reid Wodicka, Deputy City Manager
Dr. Ben Copeland, Deputy Superintendent
Ms. Alicia Finney Campbell, Administrative Support

Review of Available Resources

Dr. Gillette reaffirmed and reviewed the mission charged to the Task Force: to serve 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 stated that up until now, the Task Force has spent time outlining the subcommittee charges, populating those subcommittees, and giving those groups time to meet and begin their preliminary research.

Dr. Gillette reviewed the available resources made available to the Task Force. City Council has allocated \$33,075 in funding for the Task Force's use. Of which, \$5,000 has been used for data collection with the Weldon Cooper Center. There was discussion about additional appropriation requests, including: additional demographic requests outside of the Weldon Cooper study; travel

to other school systems in different localities for the Leading Practices in Urban Education subcommittee; survey costs associated with the Talent Management subcommittee.

As an aside, Dr. Gillette stated that City Council has reserved \$1.2 million in funding for actionable recommendations brought forth by the Task Force.

Committee Reports

Subcommittee chairs gave a brief status report of work accomplished.

- *Enrollment Trends and Demographics (ETD); chair, Ms. Julie Doyle:* Ms. Doyle referenced the work being done by the Weldon Cooper Center. The first report detailing these findings is expected on February 14, 2020. Ms. Doyle reiterated the need for guidance from other subcommittees to determine next steps for the ETD.
- *Operations, Facilities, and Consolidation (OFC); chair, Mr. Kimball Payne:* Mr. Payne updated the Task Force of the work conducted by the OFC subcommittee. In addition to its regular meetings, the OFC conducted facility tours at the following elementary schools: Heritage Elementary School; Sheffield Elementary School; Bedford Hills Elementary School; Paul Munro Elementary School; Linkhorne Elementary School; RS Payne Elementary School; Bass Elementary School; Dearington Elementary School for Innovation; T.C. Miller Elementary School; Perrymont Elementary School; and Sandusky Elementary School.
- *Leading Practices in Urban Education (LPUE); chair, Dr. Roger Jones:* Dr. Jones and the LPUE subcommittee met twice since November. The first meeting focused on the City's strategic plan, known as the Lynchburg Plan, and how education fits into that plan. The second meeting featured a diverse focus group of teachers. This meeting was of an unstructured format and allowed the group to voice their visions for the future of education in the City of Lynchburg. An impending document with the findings will be made available to the Task Force once published.
- *Programming and Collaboration Opportunities (PCO); chair, Dr. Owen Cardwell:* Dr. Cardwell and the PCO subcommittee recently administered the national survey titled, "Measure What Matters", and are expecting a report with the findings sometime in the spring. Also, Dr. Cardwell collaborated with the Bridges to Progress group to procure funding from City Council. This funding will go toward training 20 community- and faith-based organizations on how to properly facilitate family relationship building sessions that focus on five areas of relationship development: expressing care, challenging growth, providing support, sharing power, and expanding possibilities. The PCO subcommittee will be working on how to advertise and select organizations for these trainings at its next meeting. The PCO subcommittee is also working on determining a proper vetting process of organizations that would like to work with the school system.
- *Talent Management (TM); chair, Ms. Pat Price:* Ms. Price updated the Task Force on a first draft of a teacher survey the TM subcommittee plans on administering to full-time, classroom teachers. Ms. Price referenced the link between the work the LPUE

subcommittee is accomplishing and asked to connect with Dr. Jones before finalizing the survey to ensure related data is captured. There was discussion about associated costs with the survey; it was decided that the survey will be created in-house by City staff (Dr. Wodicka and Ms. Campbell) and any accompanying costs will be addressed as they arise. The TM subcommittee specifically requested that the survey be sent from the City of Lynchburg. Dr. Copeland stated that the spring is a more opportune time to conduct surveys.

- Finance Committee (FC); chair, Ms. Kathy Williams: Ms. Williams stated that she is in the process of populating the Finance subcommittee and that she will be limiting the group to four people and will expand if necessary. The subcommittee will be a balance of people who are involved with the school system and of people who are members of the community only.

Formulation of Questions to Guide the Subcommittees

Dr. Gillette reiterated that preliminary research conducted by the subcommittees has been conducted and that the goal of the meeting is to tighten the focus of the subcommittees. Dr. Gillette stated the importance of formulating guiding questions to help subcommittees refine their work going forward. Rigorous discussion ensued and the following questions were drafted and then expanded upon.

Enrollment, Trends, and Demographics (ETD)

- Over the next twenty years, how many students are we likely to have in Lynchburg? Where will they live, and what will their demographic composition be?
 - Based on data collection and analysis, what *could* the transiency rate look like over the next twenty years? (in collaboration with LPUE)
 - What are the variables that could influence these projections?

Operations, Facilities, and Consolidation (OFC)

- Over the next twenty 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?
 - What are the available non-brick and mortar options that align with current state requirements? What are some of the options to consider while anticipating future state requirements? (in collaboration with LPUE)

Leading Practices in Urban Education (LPUE)

- Given pedagogical 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?
 - Based on data collection and analysis, what could the transiency rate look like over the next twenty years? (in collaboration with ETD)
 - What are the available non-brick and mortar options that align with current state requirements? What are some of the options to consider while anticipating future state requirements? (in collaboration with OFC)

Programming and Collaboration Opportunities (PCO)

- Have the City Schools been partnering appropriately with area businesses, faith communities, and local government, and what can we do to enhance interaction among these parties? Do other stakeholders need to be invited to the table?
 - There was discussion among the Task Force to expand the list of current stakeholders to include long-term educational partners, such as local universities, and parental social groups such as PTOs and the Motherhood Collective.

Talent Management (TM)

- Are current Lynchburg City Schools efforts to recruit, retain, and professionally develop our education workforce sufficient, and what specific recommendations can you make to improve all three components of a healthy workforce?

Finance Committee (FC)

- 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, and what sources and strategies are available to help us meet those needs?

Other Questions

- What are the core values of the Lynchburg City School system, and is there a need to revise the system's mission statement? Are there any policies or procedures that need to be put into place to support that mission?
 - The Task Force discussed proposing this question first, as establishing core values is pertinent to all subcommittees. Dr. Copeland and Dr. Wodicka will send the strategic plans for Lynchburg City Schools and the City of Lynchburg, respectively, to Dr. Gillette for inclusion.

Mr. White noted that the flow of the aforementioned questions are highly dependent upon the answers to others, and as such, has offered to reorder them in chronological order.

Additional Questions and Concerns for the Task Force to Consider

- There was discussion among the Task Force to consider realignment of attendance zones. From this discussion, the subsidiary question of whether to come out of court ordered desegregation was posed. The Task Force asked for historical background concerning this matter.
 - Dr. Copeland clarified that in 1971, the federal district court ordered Lynchburg City Schools to create zoning that would achieve desegregation within the entire school system. As long as the intended outcome of the agreement is maintained, school zones can be adjusted as needed. Dr. Copeland also stated that the Task Force would be within its rights to recommend coming out of the desegregation court order.

- What are the fundamental values of neighborhood schools? How do these compare to diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts?
- What can be done to reverse challenging trends? The Task Force decided that this question should be asked across all subcommittees.
- Dr. Gagen requested, and Dr. Gillette agreed, that subcommittees perform a current assessment of strengths and weaknesses within their respected scope of the existing school system.

Dr. Gillette will reformulate the questions to include the revisions and will send to Mr. White to rearrange accordingly. A final version will then be sent to the Task Force.

Next Meeting Date

Thursday, February 27, 2020 at 1:00 p.m., at the Central Virginia Governor's School.

Adjourned

3:01 p.m.

Meeting Notes prepared by Alicia Finney Campbell, Administrative Support