

Community Committee on Neighborhoods and Schools
Summary of Meeting
August 14, 2007

Member Attendance:

(See attached list)

Others in Attendance:

Lorie Barzano

Joey Crumley, AISD Planning & Community Relations

Heather Dalrymple, AISD Planning & Community Relations

Dr. Janis Guerrero, AISD Planning & Community Relations

Proceedings:

- The meeting was called to order at 5:50 p.m. in Conference Room A-230 of the AISD Carruth Administration Center.
- There were no citizens communications.
- Joey Crumley presented information on: the revised AISD Strategic Plan and Strategic Plan website; a recent report on the Austin economy by Market Street Services, Inc; an example of an AISD Communications Plan used for Webb Middle School; a sample of a 2006-2007 Campus Profile; the 2006 AISD Balanced Scorecard; a map showing locations of predominantly Hispanic neighborhoods; and committee-requested reports on principal attrition rates, campus enrollment and permanent building capacity, Fall 2006 campus enrollment by ethnicity, and campuses located in predominantly Hispanic neighborhoods.
- Discussion points included:
 - ☞ The revised strategic plan contains the same vision and priorities as the original plan. Some changes have been made to the strategies and performance indicators. The information in the revised plan is the same as that already provided to the committee.
 - ☞ Campus Profiles, which include a glossary, present a one-page picture of a campus and serve as a campus-level communications tool.
 - ☞ Dr. Zoe Griffith in AISD's Student Services/Records department puts out a campus enrollment report every six weeks.
 - ☞ Joe Silva of AISD's Facilities department will address remaining questions on school capacity determinations in an upcoming meeting.
- Rachael Proctor May began discussion of strategies to gather community input by reviewing related components of the committee charter.
- Discussion points included:
 - ☞ An effective method of gathering community input is to meet with existing community groups.
 - ☞ Committee members may want to concentrate their efforts on the first weeks of school as that is a time when attention is focused on schools.
 - ☞ Committee members have been provided with a facilitator's kit, written in both English and Spanish, to help them in organizing their community involvement activities. Members should review the kit to see if any modifications need to be made.
- Dr. Janis Guerrero reviewed methods used by prior AISD task forces to gather stakeholder input. These methods should not be considered an exhaustive list of possible ways to get input, but they do represent methods that have been used successfully in the past.

- Discussion points included:
 - ☞ Because they involve school staff, parents, and students, CACs are often good sources of public input.
 - ☞ AISD has compiled an extensive “Key Communicators” list that can be customized to reach targeted groups.
 - ☞ Personal interviews are important because they can provide an in-depth look at the information behind data collected through more formal methods.
 - ☞ Telephone hotlines have been effective in reaching the Spanish speaking population.
 - ☞ In addition to using a variety of methods to collect input, committee members should plan to hold at least one public meeting as part of the public involvement process.
- Heather Dalrymple presented research findings on preferred practices for promoting and maintaining community engagement.
- Discussion points included:
 - ☞ The importance of allowing community members to voice concerns that may not have a direct bearing on the committee’s work. Members need strategies to aid them in keeping discussions on topic.
 - ☞ The possibility of having a sub-group meeting to learn about the “Integrated Communications Network” used by the San Antonio school district to involve the community on school issues and evaluate its applicability to the Austin community.
 - ☞ Concern that the community does not perceive the issues being addressed by the committee as urgent enough to compel their involvement. The committee needs to frame its message in such a way that people become interested in getting involved.
 - ☞ The committee needs to recognize key cohorts and conduct rigorous focus groups.
 - ☞ The type and degree of resources available for the committee to use to conduct targeted focus groups.
 - ☞ Buy-in of campus principals is an important component of an effective process.
 - ☞ Whether the timetable for completing the committee’s work should be maintained as it currently stands or if it should be extended. Keeping the original schedule would allow the Board to implement the recommendations in the next school year.
 - ☞ Because they serve as direct links between parents and schools, Parent Support Specialists should be targeted for involvement.
 - ☞ Some community members may have difficulty trusting AISD and believing that their input will influence the outcome of the committee’s recommendations..
 - ☞ The committee needs to recognize that it is unlikely to involve 100% of the community, but it needs to reach the largest percentage possible.
 - ☞ The committee needs to be concerned about economically disadvantaged parents because they will have the fewest options if their schools close.
 - ☞ Using letters and fliers is an effective way to reach Hispanic community members.
 - ☞ Committee members need to take advantage of any available opportunities to talk to community members.
- Current suggestions for effectively gathering community input include: talking to the San Antonio expert; conducting rigorous focus groups; reaching people who need child care; having Back to School Night presentations; involving Parent Support Specialists; using automated school messaging systems; meeting with neighborhood associations; having a booth at HEB; getting principal buy-in; giving low-income parents alternatives; having

formal ID badges for committee members; sending invitation letters; and canvassing before and after school.

- Group discussion shifted to a closer look at the guiding questions that were developed in the last meeting to use in gathering community input.
- The current questions are: 1) What processes should the district use to identify and consider alternatives for underutilized and overcrowded schools? 2) What processes should the district use to inform and engage stakeholders about important school issues and concerns (e.g., when a campus fails to meet state or federal accountability standards, or when a campus continues to be significantly underutilized)? 3) Who are the stakeholders in important school issues and concerns? Who are our community partners? 4) What can the district and the community do together to ensure ongoing stakeholder participation? 5) What are some factors, values, or best practices that should be considered in the committee's deliberations on policy and process (e.g., in the areas of school facility utilization, stakeholder participation, neighborhood vitality)?
- Discussion points included:
 - ☞ The committee needs to be very direct about the type of input that is being sought and should ask questions that get at the information that is really desired.
 - ☞ The questions being asked of the community need to be framed in an understandable way and avoid jargon.
 - ☞ The questions may need to be phrased in such a way that they present different options and allow people to comment on the preferences. Instead of using strictly open-ended questions, using a variety of hypothetical scenarios may prove more effective in gathering community input.
 - ☞ The committee needs to recognize that this is a potentially contentious process and conflict cannot be totally avoided.
 - ☞ The committee needs to ask if the current questions are appropriate for all sectors of the community. If people do not have children in the school system the questions may not apply to them.
 - ☞ The answers provided by different groups should be expected to vary greatly as the issues faced by each are different.
 - ☞ It is important to ask the same questions to each group so recurring themes and "golden threads" can be recognized.
 - ☞ The committee needs to have ad hoc discussions as well as more "scientific" formal discussions. The information gained from the informal discussions needs to be documented so that it is not lost.
 - ☞ One possible question to add is what motivates parents to send their kids to schools outside their attendance zones.
- By the end of the day on Friday, August 25, 2007, committee members should email any recommendations they have on the guiding questions to Joey Crumley or Dr. Janis Guerrero. They will compile the questions and send them back to the committee on Monday August 27, 2007. They will ask the members to select their three most preferred questions. At the next meeting on August 28, 2007, the group will discuss the results of this "poll."
- When considering conducting public involvement activities in September, committee members should ask themselves: 1) Are we asking the right questions? 2) Who should we talk to? 3) What do we need to do to make it easy for people to attend? 4) What are valid answers for the questions being asked of the community?

- Committee members requested information from staff as to the types of transfers being seen at each campus. How many are coded as performance based? Majority to minority? Academic? Diversity? etc. They also requested information on techniques for maintaining public focus on the scheduled agenda when conducting public meetings.
- Committee members should email Joey Crumley about which community groups they are meeting with so a master list can be compiled to prevent duplication of efforts.
- The next meeting will be held on August 28, 2007.
- The meeting was adjourned at 7:45 p.m.

CCNS Member Attendance Record:

	2007												2008		
	5/22	6/12	6/26	8/14	8/28	9/11	9/25	10/9	10/23	11/13	11/27	12/11	1/8	1/22	2/12
Andy Anderson	√	√	√	√											
Sally Brackett	√	√	√	√											
Terry Clark	√	√	√	√											
Christiane Woodley Erwin		√		√											
Chiquita Watt Eugene															
Lourdes (Lulu) Flores	√		√	√											
Linda Gibeaut	√	√		√											
Rev. Sterling Lands	√			√											
José Marrero	√	√	√												
Rachael Proctor May	√	√		√											
Susan Moffat	√	√	√												
Leroy Nellis	√	√	√	√											
Yolanda Pedraza	√	√		√											
Rev. Ivie Rich	√		√												
Paul Saldaña	√	√													
Alfredo Santos	√	√	√												
Kathie Tovo	√	√	√	√											
Jim Walker	√		√	√											

√ = Present