

<p>Community Committee on Neighborhoods and Schools Summary of Meeting August 28, 2007</p>

Member Attendance:

(See attached list)

Others in Attendance:

Jennifer Bennett

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 5:45pm in Conference Room A-230 of the AISD Carruth Administration Center.
- There were no citizens communications.
- Joey Crumley presented 2007-2008 data on schools offering NCLB Choice, receiving students under NCLB Choice, and on schools sending and receiving transfers. He also presented research findings on strategies for keeping meetings on track.
- Discussion points included:
 - ☞ On the NCLB Choice matrix, “withdrawn” means withdrawn from school.
 - ☞ The totals on the tables showing schools transferring and schools receiving students differ from each other because some students, typically children of AISD employees, transfer from schools outside the district.
- Paul Saldaña reviewed the proposed guiding questions committee members submitted last week and began discussion of how to best structure the final question format.
- Discussion points included:
 - ☞ Committee members may want to start the public engagement process by asking a framing question to learn where school performance and enrollment issues are on the community radar. Beginning with this type of question would help to determine participants’ awareness of the issues and shape the problem solving process.
 - ☞ Because they may have a different understanding of the issues than people with children in the AISD system, people without children in AISD may need a different approach to answering the guiding questions.
 - ☞ Committee members need to remember that questions that work well at one school may not work as well at another. They need to select questions that will work most effectively with the greatest number of people.
 - ☞ The number of questions needs to be held to a manageable number so as not to overwhelm people. The suggestion is to limit the questions to a total of five.
 - ☞ The questions need to have a narrow enough scope that the committee is able to get the information from the community that it needs to meet its charge.
 - ☞ Developing questions that lead naturally from one to the next would help to guide the focus of the discussion.
 - ☞ The committee needs to be clear with community members about factors that can get a school closed and then talk openly with them about possible solutions.

- ☞ Instead of being gathered at formal focus group sessions, community input will mostly be obtained more informally as part of other scheduled events such as Back to School Night or neighborhood association meetings.
- ☞ This less formal public engagement process may attract more Hispanic participants who have a cultural preference for building relationships with trusted partners.
- ☞ As part of its charter, the committee is charged with developing definitions of overcrowded and under-enrolled that the board can use in decision-making.
- ☞ An underlying assumption of the committee's work on issues threatening schools is that all planning and policy stages will include a community involvement component.
- ☞ Austin is growing rapidly. The district has to adapt to that growth and build trust within the community at the same time.
- ☞ If presented with a selection of options instead of more open-ended questions, some people may feel that the decision of what to do has already been made. This may result in their not seeing any point in speaking up or becoming involved in meetings.
- ☞ Generally, the parents who will attend the meetings will already have some knowledge of the issues and formulated some opinions as to what should be done.
- ☞ In the guiding questions, the committee needs to develop a clearer definition of "opportunities for interlocal collaboration." Along with multi-purposing of school facilities, this phrase also incorporates school attendance, safety, and other issues.
- ☞ The guiding questions need to be linked to the committee's charge.
- ☞ Community ownership of school issues is important. The committee needs to find ways to get people's attention on the issues without unduly alarming them.
- ☞ Community involvement should begin as soon as a school shows the first signs of failing to meet academic performance indicators instead of waiting until it is further into the sanctions process and closure is imminent.
- ☞ Austin has a rapidly changing population. The people shaping policy decisions today may not be living here when the policy being developed is implemented.
- ☞ In its policies, the district wants to increase transparency and public participation.
- ☞ Both School Choice and NCLB can rapidly shift school enrollment figures.
- ☞ The district needs to inform parents of the capacity of their children's schools. Once that capacity is reached, the district may need to consider transfers.
- ☞ The committee may want to meet with the San Antonio school district to learn how they handle their transfer policy to see if it has applicability to Austin.
- ☞ The committee's goals include 1) improving communication with the community and 2) engaging the community in finding solutions to school performance challenges.
- The committee's finalized guiding questions, which are numbered for reference and are not presented in any particular order, are as follows:
 1. How should AISD inform and engage stakeholders regarding important school issues and concerns?
 2. What do "over-enrollment" and "under-enrollment" mean to you, and how do you see these issues affecting your school and your neighborhood?
 3. How should the district identify and consider alternatives for over-enrolled and under-enrolled schools? What steps should be included in the decision making process? Who should be involved and how? What is a reasonable length of time for this process?

4. Who in the community should be involved in helping neighborhood schools increase enrollment and performance?
 5. Other than enrollment, what factors should AISD consider in making decisions about your school?
- Discussion points included:
 - ☞ Converting the finalized guiding questions into a survey, which will allow the committee to quantify the information it collects.
 - ☞ Collecting demographic information, including ZIP code, of survey respondents will help the committee become better informed as to which issues are important to different groups of respondents.
 - ☞ Because school closure is an engaging topic, the committee can probably anticipate many survey responses.
 - Discussion then moved to strategies the committee might use to obtain stakeholder input both before and after drafting its recommendations to the board.
 - Discussion points included:
 - ☞ Reaching people without email access can be challenging. As many people have cell phones, one potentially effective method would be to use text messaging.
 - ☞ The finalized guiding questions can be distributed in fliers.
 - ☞ The committee needs to be sure to contact people connected to schools, such as Webb, that have already been affected by the prospect of closure to get their input.
 - ☞ If people have been given an opportunity to provide input to the committee, they may be more satisfied with the outcome because they knew their participation was an option, even if they did not choose to become directly involved in the process.
 - ☞ This initial public engagement process is only the first of two phases of community involvement. The second phase comes when the committee goes back to the community to get input on the draft recommendations they formulated after the initial input process.
 - ☞ Committee information needs to be placed on the schools' websites and the AISD and Travis County TV channels. The committee web link and hotline number needs to be distributed.
 - Discussion shifted to planning for the open house activity.
 - ☞ Holding an open house sends a message that the committee is truly interested in getting input from everyone that wants to be involved.
 - ☞ The open house, whose location remains to be determined, is tentatively scheduled for Tuesday September 25, 2007 from 6-8 pm.
 - ☞ A school would be a good location, as it would have rooms that could be used as breakout space for small group discussion. Whatever facility is used, the location should be geographically closest to the schools likely to be affected by closure decisions.
 - ☞ AISD will provide snacks, childcare activities, and interpretation services while committee members will lead the open house.
 - Committee members requested information on the impacts of school overcrowding on student performance.
 - Committee members were reminded to email Joey Crumley or Janis Guerrero with a list of the community groups they are meeting with so a master list can be compiled.

- The committee's work schedule has been pushed back two weeks from the original calendar. The ending date has not changed but some presentations have been combined in order to finish the work on schedule.
- The next meeting will be held on September 11, 2007. It will include presentations from the AISD Facilities and Boundaries department and the City of Austin Neighborhood Planning department.
- The meeting was adjourned at 7:40 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