

**SD27J – Quality School Initiative Committee**  
**January 16, 2014**  
Prairie View HS, 12909 East 120th, Henderson  
**Draft Meeting Summary**

Members of the School District 27J's Quality School Initiative Committee (QSIC) convened for their second meeting (*please see appendix A for list of attendees.*). The purpose of the meeting was: review and gain mutual understanding of possible options to address capacity/space challenges (both from QSIC brainstorming, as well as others) and develop mutual understanding of the challenges with achieving high academic/operational success.

**I. QSIC PURPOSE AND PROCESS - CLARIFICATION**

Jody Erikson, JSE Associate facilitator, clarified the purpose of the group, from the approved Operating Protocols, and the process/steps to achieve the purpose.

- **Purpose:** to provide a recommendation to the superintendent to make SD27J a great school district, specifically whether to request, and if so what would go into a bond and/or mill levy override for 2014.
- **Process:**
  - Six step process
  - Two separate tracks for the first four steps - space/capacity track and operations and programs track: 1. Problem definition; 2. Option generation/understanding; 3. Packaging and evaluation; and 4. Draft selection and tweaking
  - Consideration of how the packages would be funded will be considered and used as criteria at the “packaging stage” and following stages (weather bond and/or mill levy)
  - One track, combined for total recommendation - final two steps: 5. Complete draft package recommendation and tweaking (both space/bond and operations/mill levy); and 6. Agreement and implementation.

**II REVIEW: LIST OF ELEMENTS BRAINSTORMED BY FUNDING TYPE**

The groups reviewed their brainstormed list of elements that would make a great school district divided into how they would be typical funded:

- School construction bonds – e.g., facilities/buildings
- Mill levy overrides – e.g., operations
- Either bond or mill levy – e.g. technology, class size (depending on what is asked for; e.g., technology infrastructure is bond, while operating/internet service is mill levy)
- No additional funding needed – e.g., how schools or district are organized or managed

### III. PRESENTATION: CAPITAL CONSTRUCTION OPTIONS

Joy Gerdom and Terry Lucero of SD27J presented the list of options (from QSIC brainstorming and additional options), their corresponding costs and seats provided.

**Key points** (below are only a few highlights; please see presentation for more information):

- 5 year seat needs (chart) – showing the 5 year seat needs analysis (including charter schools), and projected enrollment
- Planning areas – North and South (divided by 128<sup>th</sup> ave), West (bounded on the east by Riverdale Road) – and location of schools and students (including those who attend 27J and are within 2 miles, but outside, of the boundary)
- New school construction options: 1 new high school, 1 new middle school, 2 new elementary schools, 1 expansion, and 2-classroom modular
  - Land was purchased in 2011 for a future high school in the west
  - The two new elementary schools could be built in 2016 and 2018
  - Modular(s) could be purchased any time
- Expansion/Renovation and other building options: phased new high school; expansion/renovations at BHS, VMS, OTMS; renovation at Heritage; expansion at PVHS; technology infrastructure; and deferred maintenance
- Temporary/Non-Build options to relieve overcrowding:
  - Flexible grade configurations - K-5 schools being K-8 or K-6
  - Overflow busing: Certain grades from overcrowded school move to another school where there are openings
  - Boundary adjustments - redraw the boundaries to equalized number of students from overcrowded and less crowded geographic areas
  - Flexible scheduling - split schedule (HS level – half in AM, half PM) or extended day
  - Multi-track year-round calendar - elementary level would add 20-25% capacity; not all students attend at the same time (attend for 9 weeks, off for 3)
  - Off campus classes - Currently occurring; school at Brighton Resource Center (Brighton Online Learning for Tomorrow); offers additional space
  - Alternative Programs - Charter schools; online courses (offering students the ability to gain credits)

#### **Questions/Answers/Comments**

- Q: *Will the layouts of the elementary and middle schools be the same as the current model?*  
A: The cost estimate is based on the Brantner model which was cost effective and shorter in construction time (this is a different model from other schools). Middle school estimate is based on Prairie View Middle.

- Q: *If the Vikan Middle School campus is land locked, where will an expansion occur?*  
A: At Vikan, the existing north wing would be demolished and a new wing built in its place. The building would also be expanded from the music room to the east. Overland Trail has a little more land for expansion.
- Q: *Does Heritage Academy have a historical landmark designation?*  
A: Yes and is bound by the rules within the designation.
- Q: *Is the desire to have new elementary, middle and HS in the same area?*  
A: QSIC will determine the best actions and locations, taking the needs of the entire school district into account. Building a school in a certain area could serve to alleviate congestion in other schools.
- Q: *In terms of renovation, is clean up of the older buildings accounted for in the cost estimate?*  
A: Yes, the architect was tasked to bring all schools up to the same standards.
- Q: *Are the Charter schools being considered?*  
A: The charter schools have been asked to bring their needs to the table. These needs could be included in the solution package. *Following the meeting all charter school principals were contacted and requested they provide any capital construction needs by the next QSIC meeting (2/20).*
- Q: *How would a multi-track system impact sports and extra-curricular activities?*  
A: The students remain eligible and continue to play through their 3-week academic break.
- Q: *How do the students get TCAP testing if they are off track?*
- A: TCAP makes concessions in scheduling for students that are off track.  
*Comment:* It is important to note, it would take a minimum of 2 years to make the year round schooling a reality.
- Q: *Would it be possible to have quantifiable factors (costs and seats it provides) to apply to the options?*  
A: Cost and seat estimates will differ depending on what level they are applied to and where openings exist. Multi-track, year-round are quantifiable – teachers needed and impacts on transportation and food service can be quantified.  
**ACTION:** Will bring more data on the non-build temporary options.

***Discussion: What are the tradeoffs or impacts of the options?***

In small groups, participants talked about the tradeoffs and impacts of the various space/capacity options. Each group had a facilitator from the school district with a worksheet of questions to ask and record the answers. Questions included: the tradeoffs of the capital construction options; new options to add to the list; and additional data needs, packaging/timing suggestions, concerns.

Below is a brief summary of the small group discussions (from facilitator worksheets, see appendix B for full notes):

- Renovations provide relief in terms of seats (less expensive option) but may lead to overcrowded common areas and may not be possible in current schools that are land locked.

- New construction would it be efficient; helpful if land for construction is already owned by district
- Temporary grade configurations options could be used selectively to maintain efficiency but may be a hard transition for students to have multiple schools in certain amount of years
- Shared spaces (high and middle schools); year-round for certain grade levels; phase into temporary schools
- Voters: why they don't vote; getting a clear and concise message of need; what a certain dollar amount provides

#### **IV. PRESENTATION: CHALLENGES WITH ACHIEVING HIGH ACADEMIC SUCCESS** (*OPERATIONAL CHALLENGES*)

Will Pierce and Kelly Corbett of SD27J provided details on the philosophy and challenges with SD27J's academic achievement and academic greatness.

##### ***Key Points***

- Philosophy: "Thinking Classrooms" – the three keys are the **learning goals, experience and environment**; these must be planned for to allow and encourage students to take ownership of their own learning (learning, thinking, and self-regulating)
  - Students have to play a larger role as the driver
  - Encourage more rigorous learning goals for students.
  - Changes teaching method from lecture to application learning
- Challenges:
  - District is working toward a conceptual framework for better curriculum, better teachers, but has not achieved as much success as desired
  - Working as hard as possible with fewer staff than other districts
  - 2009 cutbacks seriously decreased staffing (i.e., principals are on lunch and recess duty; 1 staff for X(program) compared to 3 in other districts)
  - 2 FOSS kits instead of a desired 8 kits in the program
  - Teacher to student ratios, current actuals: at middle school 29-1; elementary 25-1 ; and high school is 27-1

##### ***Questions/Answers/Comments***

*Question focused on data requests to better understand the problem (i.e., "do you have numbers on teacher to student ratios"; "what was lost in the 2009 cutbacks"), so the facilitator moved to a discussion to develop a list.*

***Discussion: What does the QSIC need to know about the problem?***

Collectively and then in small groups, participants identified what they need to know to better understand the operational problem (see appendix C for full small group notes):

- Average class sizes at each level
- Student ratios– teacher to student, extracurricular teacher to student, total teacher/admin to student – and what does this mean (e.g. planning time per student)
- Number of – students, core teachers, extracurricular teachers (one school and district wide)
- Comparison of numbers and ratios with other school districts
- 2009 losses in the district (while adding four schools)– what did the district lose due to 2009 cutbacks – teachers and programs
- Define the gap
  - Gap between: A) What are the minimum staffing needs; and B) What programs and staffing are needed to achieve an ideal – where does SD27J want to go and what is needed to get there
  - Staffing needs to go from performance grade “C” to performance grade “A”
- What programs do schools have now (art, core, orchestra, technology, etc.)
- Voter concerns, values regarding the school district – what are their needs; where do stakeholders stand, a survey would be helpful
- What did Denver or other school districts do to pass bond and/or mill levy overrides
- Number of voters and the number of voters that are parents with children in the school district

A brief answer was given to the question: what the District lost in 2009 and/or what is missing (while adding four schools)?

- District gifted and talented coordinator
- English language coordinator
- 2 instructional coach teachers
- Data entry classified position
- Coordinator/clerical position
- Coordinator substitute teacher
- Public information officer
- Ground staff down 1
- Dropped or reduced hours: 11 custodians
- Lost advanced placement program
- Increased counselor to student ratio
- Lost teachers (81 teachers, 105 classes)

**V. PRESENTATION: FINANCES AND FUNDING**

Chris Fielder, Superintendent, provided data on SD27J's funding.

**Key Points**

- SD27J's funding is 174 out of 178 school districts in the State at \$6394 per pupil for 2013-2014 school year (148<sup>th</sup> was \$6247 per pupil)
- Funding comes from school finance and mil levy override funding
- SD27 is funded at an 'F' level and performing at a C level (using the bell-curve system used by coloradoschoolgrades.com)
- Positives, even with less money SD27J:
  - Is better and more creative because district is lacking in funding
  - Teachers are getting better supervision and coaching from principals which will make for a better district and instruction
  - Has the highest graduation rates of larger school districts the last 5 years; and exceeds the state graduation rates
  - Is the highest performer in Adams county (according to State assessment)

**Questions/Answers/Comments**

- Q: *What is the source of coloradoschoolgrades.com?*  
A: The University of Colorado (Denver) conducted the study. They used the State's information and applied to a bell curve. The FAQs on their website provide more information on their sources.
- Q: *If the district is at 'F' funding, what would performance levels be if funding was at a 'D'?*  
A: There is no corollary dollar amount and performance grade; we could not promise that 'D' funding or \$X more dollars improves the performance grade from a 'C' to a 'B'. The district has done more with less and believes it could do more with more. The greatest need is teachers and classified people.
- Q: *What are other outside funding sources, like grants?*  
A: There are grants out there, but they often come with limitations and are not guaranteed every year. St. Vrain and Denver received Gates' grant funding as an additional resource.

**VI. NEXT STEPS** - Next meeting: 1/30/14 @ West Ridge, 13102 Monaco St., Thornton, 80602

**APPENDIX A: Attendance**

**QSI MEMBERS:**

- Flora Aguirre-Diaz
- Meredith Berman
- Johanna Brown
- Kate Brown
- Janell Collins
- Christy Dowling
- Valerie Escatel
- Barb Fasbender
- Chris Fiedler
- Lynne Fox
- Nate Golich
- Ty Gordon
- Virginia Guzman
- Stephanie Happ
- Melissa Hoelting
- Natalia Ledezma-Rollins
- Jason McEldowney
- Dick McLean
- Paul Natale
- Ben Ploeger
- Brian Pritchard
- Rodger Quist
- Melanie Sheehan
- Christine Shock
- Howard Thomas
- Karen Vaughn
- James Vigesaa
- Chris Wahrle
- Amy Werpy
- Troy Whitmore
- Isaiah Wilson
- Michelle Witham
- Sean Woytek

**Observer**

- Brian Conner

**SD27J Staff**

- Kelly Corbett
- Joy Gerdom
- Terry Lucero
- Will Pierce
- Ruth DeCrescentis

**Facilitation Team: JSE Associates**

- Jody Erikson
- Niki Koszalka

**Appendix B: Facilitators' Notes**  
**Discussion: Impacts and Tradeoff of Space/Capacity options**

***Having hear the numbers, what do you think are the impacts of the capital construction options (new buildings, renovations/additions, or other)? What are the tradeoffs?***

- New construction is most cost effective but are they efficient
- Renovations better utilization of existing space and prioritize immediate needs and provides a savings to the district
- Expanding current schools adds seats cheaply and would benefit all areas but would result in crowded common areas
- A combination of renovation and construction could benefit all areas providing equality
- Deferred maintenance is essential to the remedy
- Temporary options could be used selectively to maintain efficiency but may be a hard transition for students to have multiple schools in certain amount of years
- The idea of renovation is great but does not provide enough seats
- Northern schools need attention and to be brought up to educational specifications
- Balance “building” with caution of long range population growth
- Need more “yes” votes in core Brighton
- At times the voter perception is: New Schools = Rich People
- New construction is sensible when property is already owned
- Renovations may be difficult at Brighton High School as it is landlocked

***New options to add to the list?***

- Expansion/renovations at Northeast and Henderson elementary schools
- College campus model (multiple buildings)
- Grant writer – to hire
- Flexible building space
- Impacts to students
- Shared spaces: High school and middle school
- Year round school only for certain grade levels
- Phase into temporary solutions

***What else do you want or need to know in order to package the options? What are some additional data needs?***

- Survey data – what is the appetite of the voting public
- Impacts on special education programs
- What causes people not to vote (helpful to tailor a message and have simple talking points)
- What does a voter get for their money (breakdown)



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- Growth expectations and growth plan with the city and regional plans
- How to determine the tolerance level of voters
- What are the needs of the existing schools
- Non-negotiable expenses the district is approaching
- What are the frames for expansion
- What does \$1million buy (technology)
- Costs for seats/adding to core building time table

***Packaging/Timing suggestion that arise***

- Informing the public of the district reality: how many schools we need now and in the future to avoid asking the voters again and again
- Thornton roof top replacement timing
- No growth - when this is anticipated to happen for the district
- Sites that are owned or dedicated to the district

***Concerns that any package needs to address***

- Providing something for everyone
- Growth
- Charter and online schools: separate considerations and line items
- Having enough core space

**APPENDIX C: Notes from Small Group Recorders**

**What does the QSIC need to know about the operational/program problem?**

- Has there been a survey lately as to “what the market will bear” in an election?
- How to effectively get PTOs engaged in election efforts?
- What programs were lost and what was the impact (materials, curriculum, etc.)?
- Lower performance at MSS – what could make a difference (counselors, programs, etc.)?
- Visible learning strategies – what has the greatest effect on size?
- MS case loads
- Effect/cost/size
- Material supply
- Programs: Art, physical education, etc.
- S.R.Os
- Vocational programs
- Post-secondary education
- SPEP
- Outside source
- Quantify: true class size, right teacher, and right support (what is the “sweet spot”; what is the gap; what would it take to meet these goals)
  - In order to increase reading scores what is the number of reading coaches needed to meet that goal over a 5-year time frame
  - How does the district move from a “C” grade school to an “A” grade school
- What will make a convincing package to the parents and voters? What will people rally behind
  - Here is what the mill levy/bond will buy
  - Appealing to all demographics
- What are high performing schools doing – what can the district invest in with x amount of money that will make an impact
- Quantify number of teachers, staff, money cut and impacts