

SD27J – Quality School Initiative Committee
January 30, 2014
West Ridge, 13102 Monaco St., Thornton, 80602
Draft Meeting Summary

Members of the School District 27J's Quality School Initiative Committee (QSIC) convened for their third meeting (*please see appendix A for list of attendees.*). The purpose of the meeting was: to learn about and prioritize operational options and develop possible packages for capital construction at different bond sizes.

I. QSIC PURPOSE REVIEW, AGENDA REVIEW, AND INTRODUCTIONS

Jody Erikson, JSE Associate facilitator, welcomed the group and reviewed the agenda/purpose. The QSIC participated in introductions.

II. REVIEW: DATA ON OPERATIONAL CHANGES – BASED ON CUTS IMPOSED IN 2010

Losses from 2010 Budget Cuts

In 2010, the state announced a 2.2 million loss to 27J resulting in district cuts. Dr. Chris Fielder provided more detail on what was lost following 2010 cuts. The key points are summarized below:

- Staff – 81 teacher jobs; eliminated substitutes; eliminated 10-11 support center staff; eliminated a gifted and talented coordinator, an English as a second language coordinator, a data entry and a clerical coordinator for substitutes; eliminated or reduced hours for 12 custodians
- Budgets - Reduced supplies budget 50% in the spring of 2010, and building budgets reduced 25% in the Fall of 2010 and this remains in place.
- Revenue – loss of \$66 million (currently the “negative factor” means 27J is funded at 84% of what the state formula says it should receive, because of a lack of state funds)
- Reduced busses, transportation and technology
- Facilities – reduced/increased temperatures in buildings (cooling and heating)
- Fees – new fees imposed on athletic and academic programs and transportation (previously fees for 6 things, now fees for 100)

Staffing Ratios

Estimated Staffing Ratios for 27J, Thompson and Littleton school districts. Staffing to student ratios include more than the teacher in the classroom. It also includes shared teachers like a music teacher. Beyond this ratio, some districts have additional staff (not including administration staff):

Level	27J	Thompson	Littleton
Elementary	23:1 + 2 additional staff (all inclusive)	23:1 + 4 additional staff	27:1 + 12 additional staff
Middle	25:1 +5 additional staff	21:1 +5 additional staff (G/T, F/R, counselor)	21:1 + 6 additional staff
High	26:1 +14 additional staff (prior to recession the ratio was 19.5:1)	22:1 +7 additional staff (F/R, G/T, ILP , & counselor ratio 350:1)	20:1 +8 additional staff

Discussion: Experiences with Operational Challenges

Following the presentations participants spoke of their experiences with the operational challenges at different grade levels:

- High School
 - Free period(s) in the middle of day (not full schedules)
 - Counselors are not accessible often enough for students
 - Fees can be up to \$1000 per year per student
- Middle school
 - Larger class sizes
 - Missing the option to be challenged academically due to lack of advanced classes
 - Lack of opportunity for all students to take band or choir early
- Elementary
 - Lack of gifted and talented programs; lack in both ends of the special needs spectrum
 - Lack of curriculum for social and physical sciences (minimal FOSS kits)
 - Lack of opportunities for music/arts
- General
 - Stress levels on teachers – some are filling two different positions
 - Conducting classes from any area available – not conducive to learning
 - Transportation - Buses at times have 3 kids to a seat

Questions/Answers/Comments

- *Q: What is the ratio for high school for core classes? Personal experience is that the ratio is higher (personal experience was a much higher ratio)?*
A: The ratio shows an average of core classes which means some may be larger or smaller. Elective classes can have a much larger ratio.
- *Q: Where does funding come from?*
A: From the state; in comparison other districts are better funded outside of state allocation.
- *Q: Why is the additional staff support number so large for high school?*
A: There is a need for additional secretaries, counselors; generally, there is more administration needs at the high school level.
- *Q: What is the “negative factor”?*
A: School districts are currently funded under a 20-year old law and allocates district funds based on a formula. When the State cannot afford to pay the formula allotment the difference between the formula number and actual amount the State can afford is called the “negative factor”. 27J’s “negative factor” is 16%; we are paid 16% less than the formula allotment states; or 27J gets 16% less than the formula allocation.
- *Q: Was the AVID program lost?*
A: It was lost at the middle school level. It is currently in high schools, but is dwindling. One elementary school also funds AVID.
- *Q: What is the difference between an attendance liaison and community liaison?*
A: A community liaison was designed to be a resource for each school to problem-solve; to get resources to families so students could come to school (e.g., getting people to the right agencies outside of the school, food, clothes, shoes). Previously, there were 12 community liaison positions. After budget cuts, there are 4 staff and positions was retitled: attendance liaison. Now this position is focused only on attendance/truancy.

III. PRESENTATIONS AND DISCUSSION: REVIEW LIST OF OPTIONS (PREVIOUSLY CREATED BY QSIC) AND PRIORITIZATION

Will Pierce, 27J, presented the operational options to the group in five categories:

- Educational Design and Delivery Systems
 - Students able to attend full schedule with offerings needed
 - Increased quality of teaching and learning (higher academic goals for students, greater attention to student learning and feedback toward this learning and improved learning experiences that promote student engagement
 - Increased focus on science, social studies, and technology
 - Increased focus on art and music
 - Small class sizes – staff
 - Restore materials and supplies budgets

- Additional Support for All Students
 - Gift and Talented – programming, training and staff
 - At-Risk of Educational Failure – counseling, truancy, academic interventions, citizen development
 - Community services – homeless
 - English language learners –staff
- Quality Teachers and Staff
 - Implementing the system to evaluate teachers (one assistant principal per school (quality assurance); Instructional coaches
 - Reasonable compensation packages
- Safe Schools
 - Improved security systems –security staff, hardware, software
 - Ongoing support to maintain facilities
- Resources to support technology for students
 - 1:1 ratio with learning devices
 - Staff to support systems – teachers, technicians

After reviewing the list above, the QSI participated in a prioritization exercise (prioritizing only the sub bullets, not the category headings). The exercise was to start dialogue and give some direction for additional data, but was not the final decision. The following were the top priorities identified by the group, receiving more than 10 sticky dots each:

- Gift and Talented – programming, training and staff
- At-Risk of Educational Failure – counseling, truancy, academic interventions, citizen development
- Reasonable compensation packages
- 1:1 ratio with learning devices
- Students able to attend full schedule with offerings needed
- Increased quality of teaching and learning (higher academic goals for students, greater attention to student learning and feedback toward this learning and improved learning experiences that promote student engagement
- Small class sizes – staff

Group Discussion/Thoughts on Prioritization

Following the prioritization exercise there was a discussion of the results:

- Education is a people business – prioritization results show heavy emphasis on people
- Balance is needed to attract and encourage people who are engaged and willing to be committed to the job in the long term

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- Communication is a big part of successful passing of a mill or bond – voters need to understand where the money is going. QSI is helping to clarify the needs, but it is important to have a plan for how to make voters aware.
- Voters will relate to the list if the items are more touchable/tangible (e.g., “1:1 technology” is tangible, while “higher academic goals” is not and vague). The dichotomy for education is people want to see tangible/touchable things but education is a person driven business – find the balance
- Need a grant writer to expand additional revenue streams
 - Grants can be used for operational funding.
 - A grant writer would raise funds to cover their salary plus much more.
 - QSI should consider this in conjunction with a mill levy.
 - 27J is not attractive enough to win large national grants; large grant funders tend to want highly attractive and visible districts.
- Addressing the dropout rate issue can be a challenge with families who have many members that have dropped-out.
- Current teacher evaluations meet standards, but the caseload of people doing evaluations is too large for effective feedback. The district would like to see better evaluation, above the standards.
- There may be an opportunity for one-time technology dollars with pressure given to local representatives.

IV. DISCUSSION: DEVELOP LIST OF CRITERIA FOR ANY PACKAGE OF ELEMENTS TO CREATE GREAT SPACE/FACILITIES

The QSIC developed the following list of criteria for use in guiding development of packages at any level of funding:

- Addresses needs (seats) and safety
- Sustainable (last a while /life cycle)
- Minimize impact to the community
- Minimize impact on staff and students
- Minimize impacts or added pressures on existing infrastructure
- Balanced benefit to all (something for everyone)

V. EXERCISE: SPACE PACKAGES (WHAT PACKAGE AND TIMING WOULD BEST CREATE GREAT SPADE TO ADDRESS CAPACITY AND IMPROVE GREATNESS?)

In small groups participants developed draft packages for four different scenarios or assumptions:

1. Low/No Cost scenario – although there would be a cost, there would be no bond
2. Small bond of \$50 million
3. Medium bond of \$125 million
4. High bond of \$200 million

Each group developed a package for two scenarios. Below shows the possible packages, differences between the packages and the reasons for them (for further detail, please refer to Appendix C):

Low/No Cost Package – (no bond)

Group One	Group Two
- Year-round schedule	- Year-round schedule
- Modular (17 units in 9 locations)	- Modular (prefer not to use, but needed at middle school, if necessary use ones currently owned)
- Redistrict	- Redistrict
- Overflow bus	
- Phase implementation	
- Stop open enrollment	
- Bond vote in 2 years	- Bond vote in 2 years

Reasons:

- Solves space issues/seat needs for longest duration
- Need to redistrict and bus overflow to spread the kids to available seats
- Prefer 4-track year round to split schedule
- Downsides
 - Big elementary schools (@1000 students)
 - Year round schedule is hard on parents – multiple students, vacations, cultural shift
 - Overflow creates student transitioning to new school every year
 - Does not increase/improve quality
 - Gives district 3-5 years before a new solution is needed

Small Cost Package - \$50 million bond

Group One	Group Two
- Brantner Expansion	
- Redistrict	- Redistrict – Elementary
- Elementary #12 (temporary K-12)	
- Vikan Middle School Expansion	
- Modular additions – High school and middle school	
- Split schedule high school	- Prairie View High School Expansion
	- Critical deferred maintenance: \$7 million
	- Technology Infrastructure: \$1 million

Reasons

- Meets high school and middle school needs
- Seats were a higher priority than critical deferred maintenance
- Considered community impacts

Medium Cost Package - \$125 Million

Group One – raised total to \$145M	Group Two
- Critical deferred maintenance	- Critical Deferred maintenance
- Technology Infrastructure	- Technology Infrastructure: \$5.2 Million
- High School #3 (West) (if \$125 million bond, possible phase)	
- Elementary #12 (South)	- Elementary #12 (South)
- Middle School #5 (if \$125 million bond only, phase construction)	- Middle School #5
	- Prairie View High School Expansion
	- Brighton High School Expansion

Reasons

- Balance across levels – diverse
- Meets almost all seat needs through 2018
- Biggest bang for buck
- Desire to use existing rather than build new

High Cost Package - \$200 Million Bond

Group One	Group Two
- High School #3 (North)	- High School #3
- Brantner Expansion	- Brantner Expansion
- Elementary #12 (North)	- Elementary #12 (Commerce City/South)
- Middle School #5 (North)	- Middle School #5
- Heritage Renovation	
- Vikan Middle School Expansion/Renovation	- Vikan Middle School Renovation (not expansion)
- OTMS Expansion/Renovation	- OTMS Renovation (not expansion)
- Technology Infrastructure: \$1 Million	- Technology Infrastructure: \$7.5 Million
- Critical deferred maintenance	- Critical deferred maintenance

Reasons

- Started with biggest need – high and middle school
- Delivers across total district area
- Technology costs are underestimated

Discussion

- During the last bond issue there was a lack of understanding in the Commerce City area. This led to opposition. We need better communication, and need to determine the most effective presentation method.
- All geographic areas need to be considered in order for the bond to pass.
- Existing renovations, if focused only on more seats, would put greater stress on common areas and would impact current students and buildings. Expansions should include expansions to cafeteria, gym, halls, etc
- New construction gives greater flexibility especially in common areas.
- It seems fairly clear that the small bond/\$50 million is not likely to solve the problems and lead to a loss of trust toward success of Bonds to improve problems in the future
- "Low/No Cost" isn't really no cost; there are costs associated with changing schedules

VII. NEXT STEPS - Next meeting: 2/20/14 @ Overland Trail Middle School, 455 N. 19th Ave., Brighton, 80601

APPENDIX A: Attendance

QSI MEMBERS:

- Flora Aguirre-Diaz
- Johanna Brown
- Kate Brown
- Janell Collins
- Barb Fasbender
- Chris Fiedler
- Nate Golich
- Virginia Guzman
- Stephanie Happ
- Melissa Hoelting
- Jason McEldowney
- Paul Natale
- Brian Pritchard
- Rodger Quist
- Chaz Tedesco
- Karen Vaughn
- Chris Wahrle
- Amy Werpy
- Troy Whitmore
- Michelle Witham
- Sean Woytek
- Marla Wynn

SD27J Staff

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

Facilitation Team: JSE Associates

- Jody Erikson
- Niki Koszalka

**Appendix B: Chris Fielder – Notes
Data on Operational Changes**

APPENDIX C: Worksheet Notes from Small Group Recorders

What package and timing would best create great space to address capacity and improve greatness?

Low/No Cost Package - (no bond)

Group One:

- Element: Year round schedule
- Element: Modular units
 - Assumption: 17 modular units in 9 locations
- Element: Redistricting
 - Assumption: Turnberry area
- Element: Bond - Two years
- Element: Phase/Progressive implementation
- Element: Stop open enrollment

Why this package? Why not add more/less or different elements?

- Solves space issue for longest duration
- Need to redistrict and bus overflow
- Downsides
 - Big elementary schools (@1000 students)
 - Year round is hard on parents – multiple students, vacations, cultural shift
 - Overflow creates student transitioning to new school every year
 - Does not increase/improve quality
 - Gives district 3-5 years before a new solution is needed

Group Three:

- Element: 4-Track Year round schedule
 - Assumption: More options for kids in off time
 - Assumption: More convenient to year round working parents
 - Assumption: District provided options for off time
 - Assumption: Multi-student families offered same track
 - Assumption: At risk students show increased success rate
 - Assumption: Only purchase modular units if needed, reuse currently owned modular units if possible

Why this package? Why not add more/less or different elements?

- No money to spend
- Prefer 4 track year round to split schedule
- Attempt for bond in 2 years
- Could make a greater impact in areas with smaller enrollment by using modular that district already owns
- Seating needs are met for two years

Small Cost Package – \$50 million bond

Group Two:

- Element: PVHS Expansion - \$14 million
 - Assumption: Gets the most seats for the money
- Element: Phased construction on Middle School #5 - \$28 million
 - Assumption: Provides some flexible seats
- Element: Critical deferred maintenance - \$7 million
 - Assumption: Something for everyone
 - Assumption: Taking care of prioritized needs
- Element: Technology - \$1 million
 - Assumption: Meet as many needs as possible

Why this package? Why not add more/less or different elements?

- Meets high school and middle school needs

Group Four:

- Element: Brantner Expansion - \$6.5 million
 - Assumption: \$50 million is not enough
 - Assumption: Must do whatever necessary to create enough seats
 - Assumption: Big area vote – big bang for the buck (lots of seats)
- Element: Change attendance boundaries
 - Assumption: Balance for numbers – we can move students
 - Assumption: Adds space
- Element: Elementary #12
 - Assumption: K-8/K-12
 - Assumption: Use the space for numbers of students
 - Assumption: Could even use it for high school space; could relieve space crisis at multiple schools with capacity issues
- Element: Purchase modular units at high school and middle school
 - Assumption: None indicated
- Element: Split schedule at high school
 - Assumption: None indicated

Why this package? Why not add more/less or different elements?

- Couldn't afford critical deferred maintenance – needs seats as higher priority
- The community will suffer
- May lose credibility in this bond unless we say every year a new bond issue will be presented

Medium Cost Package – \$125 million

Group One:

- Element: PVHS Expansion
 - Assumption: Add \$2.2 million for common areas
- Element: BHS Expansion
 - Assumption: Add \$2.2 million for common areas

- Element: Technology Infrastructure
 - Assumption: None indicated
- Element: Elementary #12
- Element: Critical deferred maintenance - \$10.5 million
- Element: Middle School #5

Why this package? Why not add more/less or different elements?

- Balance across levels – diverse
- Meets almost all seat needs through 2018
- Biggest bang for buck

Group Three:

- Element: Critical deferred maintenance
 - Assumption: Needed
- Element: Technology
 - Assumption: Needed
- Element: High School #3 (West area by golf course)
 - Assumption: More programs offered
 - Assumption: More seats = full schedules
 - Assumption: Populations of other schools decrease
 - Assumption: Ability to house middle school in new high school temporarily
 - Assumption: 1500-1800 student population
- Element: Elementary School #12 (South)
 - Assumption: Alleviate overcrowding at Turnberry
 - Assumption: Growth in Reunion – need school
- Element: Middle School #5
 - Assumption: Raise bond to \$145 Million to allow
 - Assumption: King Ranch area

Why this package? Why not add more/less or different elements?

- Excluding voters by not spreading the wealth; population change may impact voting
- Possible to phase middle and high school to stay within \$125 million

High Cost Package – \$200 million bond

Group Two:

- Element: New High School
 - Assumption: By the time another bond is needed, we will be 1000+ students/seats short
 - Assumption: High school space avoids community catastrophe
 - Assumption: Beyond 2018 – good investment
 - Assumption: Students are in dire need of a new facility (common space, cafeteria, more than an expansion offers)
- Element: Brantner Expansion
 - Assumption: Seat needs
- Element: Elementary #12 (Commerce City)
 - Assumption: Must do something in Commerce City for political interest
 - Assumption: Alleviates Turnberry growth and overcrowding

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- Element: Middle school #5
 - Assumption: Need to address seats needs past 2012
 - Assumption: School needed on the west side
- Element: Technology Infrastructure
 - Assumption: Increase to \$7.6 million
 - Assumption: Must do – if plans for technology (use, growth, expansion) in the future
 - Assumption: 1:1 education/future of technology
- Element: Critical deferred maintenance
 - Assumption: Simply must preserve our investment
 - Assumption: Student safety
- Element: Vikan Expansion/Renovation
 - Assumption: Need to sweeten package for Brighton
 - Assumption: Renovate at lower cost
- Element: OTMS Renovation
 - Assumption: Renovate at lower cost

Why this package? Why not add more/less or different elements?

- Delivers across total district area

Group Four:

- Element: All new constructions – except Elementary #13
 - Assumption: Build out and be ready
 - Assumption: Meets needs of high and middle school space
- Element: All expansion/renovation – except BHS and PVHS
 - Assumption: Needs met by new high school
 - Assumption: Should VMS be torn down and rebuilt?
- Element: Critical deferred maintenance
 - Assumption: Takes care of existing schools
 - Assumption: Something for everyone

Why this package? Why not add more/less or different elements?

- Started with biggest need – high and middle school