

SD27J – Quality School Initiative Committee
April 24, 2014
Eagle Ridge Academy, 3551 Southern St, Brighton

DRAFT MEETING NOTES

Members of the School District 27J's Quality School Initiative Committee (QSIC) convened for their fifth meeting (*please see appendix A for list of attendees.*). The purpose of the meeting was: to build agreement on a recommendation to the superintendent on whether to seek a bond and/or mill levy override package on the 2014 ballot (if yes, the amount and broadly what would be included) and to gather input on the possible campaign before the 2014 ballot.

I. Polling Results Relative to QSI Recommendation

The poll was not conducted nor are the results owned by SD27J. The full results are not finalized, but Terry Lucero was able to provide the top-line results he had received. After thanking the Parents of 27J for funding the poll, Terry presented some key highlights related to QSIC work:

- 300 people were polled to reflect the community– 150 people were polled on a bond for \$148 million and a mill for \$7.4 million, the other 150 people were polled on a bond for \$75 million and mill for \$3.9 million
- Support was nearly the same whether for the \$148 million bond or \$75 million bond (definitely yes or yes they'd vote for it)
- Support was nearly the same whether the mill levy override was \$7.4 million or \$3.9 million.
- Huge change in the perception of SD27J - in 2011 it was not very good, but in this poll over half the people thought 27J was going in the right direction

These results showed SD27J that a bond/mill levy override is winnable though there is tremendous amount of work to be done before the vote. The district will work on focused campaign messaging, in part, tailored to various response groups, such as geographic location (zip code), gender, age, etc.

Questions/Answers/Comments

- *Q: Why the big change in perception of the district?* A: The reasons indicated were a better economy and the district efforts in public outreach. While the polling indicated the district is headed in the right direction, it is not there yet and still needs to achieve increased test scores and higher graduation rates.
- *Comments:*
 - Pleasantly surprised by polling results
 - Best numbers in 30 years

II. Build Agreement on a Recommendation and Language

In small groups, QSI members discussed what the recommendation should be – neither a bond nor mill levy override, either one or the other, or both as suggested at the last QSI meeting. All groups agreed to the draft recommendation that was polled: Recommend seeking both a \$150 million bond and \$7.5 million mill levy override (*see recommendation language below*).

Discussion:

- To maintain credibility with the public; messaging has already started (community is growing aware of amounts and what the district is pursuing), it is important to remain with the bond and mill levy amounts previously agreed upon by the QSI.
- Polling numbers look favorable and the \$150/\$7.5 amounts could solve district issues for years rather than band aid the current situation.
- Polling indicates no difference of support for the higher or lower bond and mill levy amounts; the higher amounts should be pursued.
- Very encouraged by the polling results, but would have liked to see a higher percentage for a yes vote.

QSI Consensus Recommendation:

The Quality School Initiative Committee (listed below) is **unanimously** recommending to the District Superintendent to seek a **\$150 million** bond and **\$7.5 million** mill levy override on the fall 2014 ballot. Broadly, the bond and mill levy override should include the elements discussed from handouts at the QSI Meeting 3/20/14. This recommendation best balances the following needs and interests of the committee mentioned throughout the process:

- Quality schools
 - Curriculum that meets all needs/levels/styles (e.g., gifted and talented, special education)
 - Opportunities for students to excel
 - Quality teachers/teaching
 - Encourages learning
 - Safe facilities
- Meets growth/seat needs for District managed and charter schools
- Improves learning/teaching – to prepare students for college and the 21st century workforce
- Keeps pace with technology
- Keeps students in school
- Offsets a portion of the financial loss of State funding since 2009
- Respects teachers and staff work
- Minimizes taxpayer impact
- Passable – voters will support it/not too much impact

After reaching consensus on the recommendation, QSI members felt:

- Hopeful – strong possibility of getting things done; great to have support so early in the long process
- Grateful - a good QSI process that sets a good foundation – open and honest, range of perspectives at the table
- Ready for the hard work ahead - getting the bond/mill passed will be a big job and hard work for the campaign committee
- Happy the messaging has already begun – hearing voters trust and believe in the district already
- Excited – the district needs the higher amount of funding to improve schools, students and the community

III. Communication/Campaign Effort - *what are important values or needs?*

There is a small steering committee meeting to establish a Parents for 27J Campaign Committee. Jason McEldowney, Committee Chair, provided some thoughts from their first meeting. QSI has done a great job and the Campaign Committee will keep this energy moving forward. Parents and business community will need to be out front in this effort, not just staff and teachers. QSI members were asked to help the Campaign Committee in any way – committee members, area lead/captain, or tasks as needed.

QSI then provided additional thoughts on the campaign:

- Message to the community: business community + great students = great community
- Clarify costs of certain elements (e.g. why \$77 million for a high school)
- Human scale/impact; match to values (e.g., better learning, full schedules, reduced class size)
- Tell stories from all sides, levels etc. – help understand and own the district as a whole
- Communicate the consequence if not passed (reality), including a deadline of when it would initiate (make it more real)
- Balance between positive and negative consequences
- Manage expectations – inform that the initial messaging and ballot language may look different
- Phase the campaign - educate before asking for commitment
- Poll business, chamber of commerce, higher education, law enforcement, professional associations on impacts to them
- All involved in the messaging should consider their connections to businesses, many of these will be more likely to advocate than the general public
- Messaging: this is not a school problem, it is a community problem
- Messaging: it is a generational obligation to provide a first rate education to the students in our community

Questions/Answers/Comments

- *Q: In terms of messaging, what can teachers/administration do before and after ballot language is approved by the Board?*
A: Once the Board of Education has certified the question, teachers and staff can be involved in messaging, as long as no district resources are being used. After school hours, teachers/administration can do anything in terms of messaging (off the clock). The Campaign Committee can have school district members on it but the use of district resources is not allowed.
- *Q: (District will poll again in August) After August polling, if the numbers change drastically, does the recommendation change?*
A: The superintendent has the ability to change the recommendation or ask for help from the QSI. The Board has a good and clear picture of what is happening in the district (no bond has passed in 8 years and the student population has doubled). There is much confidence that a recommendation given from the superintendent to the board would be accepted.

APPENDIX A: Attendance

QSI MEMBERS:

- Flora Aguirre-Diaz
- Meredith Berman
- Janell Collins
- Barb Fasbender
- Chris Fiedler
- Lynne Fox
- Nate Golich
- Virginia Guzman
- Stephanie Happ
- Melissa Hoelting
- Natalia Ledezma-Rollins
- Jason McEldowney
- Ben Ploeger
- Brian Pritchard
- Rodger Quist
- Melanie Sheehan
- Christine Shock
- Chaz Tedesco
- Karen Vaughn
- Chris Wahrle
- Troy Whitmore
- Michelle Whitman
- Sean Woytek
- Marla Wynn

Observers

- Brian Connor
- Crystal Nelson
- Mandy Thomas

SD27J Staff

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

Facilitation Team: JSE Associates

- Jody Erikson
- Niki Koszalka