

August 2, 2018 Highlights

Reggie substituting for Bob Ormsbee.

We began the session by conducting introductions and reviewing the Code of Ethics that was agreed to during the initial session:

- Respect
- Open-minded
- Trust
- No side conversations or interruptions
- Listen and ask questions
- No ideas are bad
- No questions are dumb
- Keep it to the committee
- Support committee
- Regular attendance at meetings
- Right to voice opinion

We reinforced our agreed-upon priorities: Doing what is best for students while bearing in mind taxpayer considerations and related efficiencies.

Updates Pertinent to Our Work

- Carol Dinco has chosen to resign from the Explorers. Columbia will have the opportunity identify a replacement and will notify Carole Martin once this is accomplished.
- The Explorers contact information list was circulated; all were requested to make sure their information is accurate and to reply to Carole's e-mail to verify that all are receiving e-mails being sent to them.
- The Colebrook Academy exploration is off to a slow start; they will have a recommendation soon. Brian will liaise with John, the chair, and keep us informed.
- Toby initiated a meeting of the school board chairs to discuss a potential approach to school collaboration. He did this without the awareness of or agreement from the Explorers group. Not all board chairs were in attendance; Toby stated that he initiated contact with all but did not reach them. It remains unclear whether all chairs were aware of the invitation.
 - Given the agreed-up Code of Ethics (see above), several Explorers voiced strong disapproval of this tactic. The interpretation is that it violates two fundamental principles upon which the Explorers work is based: We seek to build trust, we agreed to keep it to the committee. Failing to inform and seek agreement in advance of a meeting of this nature siphons valuable energy away from the agreed-upon work. In this instance, the primary driver of the model presented at the meeting was funding – financial efficiency – and not putting the students first, which is another fundamental tenet of our work. Student well-being first; financials, while very important, second.
 - After substantive discussion, the Explorers were polled. Each person gave their word that they will honor the Code of Ethics and not commit a violation of this nature again. Whether initiating or participating in, all are equally accountable for a transgression of this nature.
 - All agreed that exploration of alternatives outside of the Explorers group structure are detrimental to trust, transparency, and working as a team. There is no favored status for school board members; all on the committee are equal in importance.
 - All also agreed to convene at 5:30 for the September 6th session to address this incident directly with Bob Ormsbee.

- The Explorers also reach agreement that substitutes will be able to attend in the case of an Explorer's absence; participation is limited to that of a session guest. The rationale is that as the work advances, it will become increasingly difficult for anyone not in regular attendance to meaningfully weigh in.

Data Sets Review and Additional Needs Identification

- All data sets identified in the July session were distributed either electronically or in paper form, with the exception of cost per pupil. Copies are available for those who missed the session.
- Additional data/refinements of data distributed include:
 - Student concentration, by town, by class category (Karen)
 - K-5
 - 6-8
 - 9-12
 - A breakdown of trades/college prep existing courses (Tami)
 - Cost per pupil, per town, and tax rate (Rob)

Conducting the Options Analysis and Determining a Course of Action

- It was agreed that two teams will be formed:
 - Student Opportunities Team (Tami – liaison to Carole – and Sheli, Richard, Dan, Kristin and Karen)
 - They will analyze:
 - Common curriculum
 - Variety of classes
 - Programs/Trade
 - Extracurricular activities
 - Student schedules
 - What is offered to all/some and what could be offered
 - Building Utilization and Transportation Team (Brian – liaison to Carole – and Chris, Frank, Toby, Mike, Skip, Bruce and Sally)
 - They will analyze:
 - Building utilization
 - Transportation
 - Focusing on grade appropriateness and highest and best use of each existing building
- The first step for each team is to form a work plan with the sequencing of tasks to be accomplished and an estimated timeline for the work.
- Tami and Brian will each update Carole one week prior to the Explorers meeting on progress made so that the Explorers sessions can focus on interpreting and forming recommendations based upon the teams' efforts.
- Tours of all buildings will occur in early September. All Explorers are invited to participate; the Building Utilization and Transportation team will schedule the tours and create consistent criteria that will be used to evaluate each building. They will notify all explorers of tour times well in advance of the tours.