

Comprehensive Planning – Community Forum

Minutes

April 22, 2014, Bala Cynwyd Middle School

In attendance: Wagner Marseille, Megan Shafer, Gerry F. Doria, Brian Cote, Members of the LMSD Community

The meeting was called to order by Dr. Marseille at approximately 6:45 p.m.

Dr. Marseille welcomed everyone and thanked them for their attendance. He briefly summarized the Agenda for the evening describing it as a collaborative effort for “things” to take place in the future, and that the collaborative work would ultimately go back to the district’s “Mission Statement”.

He further explained that “Simplicity”, “Clarity”, and “Priority” should drive the conversations toward the district’s “Values”, and that the Comprehensive Plan should not simply be a document which is difficult to navigate, but should be clear to all stakeholders....administrators, community, teachers, students, etc.

Although some pieces of the Plan are state mandated and must be addressed, the district will go beyond the state mandated items by looking into the future and visualizing what our district will “look like” ten years from now. The district is committed to active participation; several focus groups, surveys, and forums have been scheduled in order to obtain input/ideas which will be forwarded to the Steering Committee for inclusion into the Plan.

Insyte Partners, a strategic plan consulting firm, has been contracted by the district to facilitate meaningful conversations in Community Forum groups as well as the Steering Committee sessions.

Dr. Marseille then turned the meeting over to the consultants, Liz Alperin Solms and Marie McCormick, of Insyte Partners. Introductions of attendees took place; several members of the audience had children attending LMSD. Liz summarized the approach to be taken:

- Different methods are needed to plan for the future
- If you pay attention to the topics raised, there are clues about what the future will look like
- Inside Partner promises to be good listeners to guide the District and keep the focus on the process/goals
- Intend to facilitate collective understanding
- The document will be in compliance with the state, but also “understandable” to others as well

Liz invited the attendees to verbally express issues that are important to them. By doing so, she created the Agenda for the evening. Topics mentioned were:

- Standardized Testing/Assessments
- School Start Times
- Physical Wellbeing of Students
- Teacher/Parent Relationships
- Technology in Education – Various applications and their educational effect on the students

Inside partners then instructed participants to choose the topic(s) on the Agenda in which they interested and to participate in meaningful discussions. They organized two session (30 minutes each). Each session was documented by a note taker for the group. These notes will be posted on the District's website for public review.

At the end of the one hour period, the group reconvened to briefly discuss the outcome(s) of the group sessions as listed below:

What is coming into focus?

1. We all want to be on the same page. Communication is the key.
2. PSSAs are not worth the anxiety we put on our kids for the value we get out of them. And we want our kids to meet their goals/targets.
 - a. We wonder if too much testing is going on.
 - b. We need to give careful thought/dialogue to our assessments. We need to drive our own assessments.
3. There is lots of interest in changing the start time of school. Perhaps flip-flopping start times of high school and elementary school. Some of the issues regarding this are bussing and athletic schedules.
4. Reduce the static/focus on core priorities. Parents, District, PA, NCLB all have priorities. Find ourselves/our clear path among all of the noise.
5. We need the voices/involvement of our teachers. They are a central part of our community and have a unique view. Teachers don't feel heard/valued. Parents don't feel heard/valued always. Let's close that disconnect. Relationships and communication are important!
6. Kids need/deserve outdoor time/fresh air to regenerate minds, time to daydream and they need fresh whole foods. Our kids feel pressured and we need to insert quality time / slowing down time. We exceed academic standards but only "meet" nutrition standards.
7. Technology: We have great tools, but tired applications, e.g. World Book. Why not read War and Peace on iPads, use the online dictionary to look up words and study for SATs?
 - a. The real question is "what is the educational impact of that technology on student performance?"
 - b. Look to students for insight about what they connect with.
8. Think about life skills mandatory course at every level.
9. Tap into expertise at every level and in all our stakeholders.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 9:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sally Reynolds
Esther Novak



LMSD STRATEGIC PLANNING: LISTENING FORUMS (BCMS)

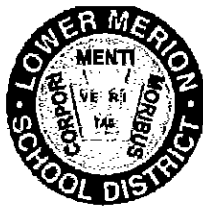
DISCUSSION TOPIC: CORE STANDARDS and ASSESSMENTS/TESTS

Key discussion points:

independent and different element schools tests - teaching to test
 DIEBELS - once only it meet grade level
 dialogue about testing
 parents
 administrators
 what's necessary
 how do we scale back
 if district doesn't love assessments, can we scale back
 How tied to curricula are we? ^{what can parents do?} What do administrators ^{What is future like} do?
 Our messages to the Strategic Planning Steering Committee as you consider the future of LMSD:
 challenge district to think outside FSSA's curriculum tied to CORE - are we tied
 description of all assessments -
 how do we determine what are appropriate standards
 community - what can we do w/ school and independence of school district

Convener: PATRICIA RASMUSSEN Note Keeper: PATRICIA RASMUSSEN

Participants: SPENCER GOLDEN, LUCY KLAIN, CARLA KRASH, BRIAN LOTE, SONDRA DILLON, MIKE YAROS, SIGAL, ITAMAR



LMSD STRATEGIC PLANNING: LISTENING FORUMS (BCMS)

DISCUSSION TOPIC: Changing start/end times for H.S. & Elem.

Key discussion points:

1st Period: - Students are functionally asleep.

- Use of caffeine to
- 8³⁰ start shows improvement in grades & S.A.T. scores marked reductions in car accidents / youths.
- A lot of our Parents support this.
- Late to school; Parent anxiety & excuses; detentions.
- H.S. homework keeps them up late. Use school time more effectively to include homework time.
- Later start = well rested = takes less time to do the homework.
- Narrow courses by department to need-to-know only.
- Bus schedules. Athletic schedules. As other districts adopt the schedules (games) will be changing anyway.

Our messages to the Strategic Planning Steering Committee as you consider the future of LMSD:

Address this as soon as possible.

It's biologically natural for the older children to go to bed later & wake later and for elementary students to go to bed early and wake up raring to go.

Convener: Sigal Ben-Porath

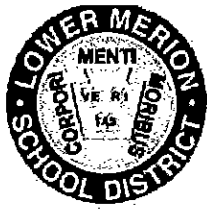
Note Keeper: Muneera Walker

Participants: M. Walker

W. Marseille

Sigal Ben-Porath

Itamar Ben-Porath



LMSD STRATEGIC PLANNING: LISTENING FORUMS (BCMS)

DISCUSSION TOPIC: What does teaching to the whole child look like?
How do we address physical well being?

Key discussion points:

- Adults get regular breaks 15-60-15 minutes. kids deserve at least that.
- Could extend day?
- Consolidate subjects to optimize minutes and get more freetime for recess
- integrate movement in learning sessions along with art
- PE every day with fitness as a separate priority
- Breaks refresh the brain and improve performance
- we can't add to the obesity issue
- we need to exceed national standards on nutrition as we do on academic national standards
- farm to table program to supply more natural/healthy food
- students' garden to incorporate real life learning and nutritional
- highlight Wellness Council - doing great work.

Our messages to the Strategic Planning Steering Committee as you consider the future of LMSD:

For our students to be optimal learners, we propose increased movement and outside, unstructured time as well as better whole food based nutrition.

- ↳ • Big "Ah-Ha" moments come during downtime - when day dreaming

Convener: Cheryl Masterman Note Keeper: Megan Shafer

Participants: Megan Shafer
Munera Walker



(T) = Teacher
(P) = Parents

LMSD STRATEGIC PLANNING: LISTENING FORUMS (BCMS)

DISCUSSION TOPIC: How the District can Promote & Foster Authentic Parent/Teacher Relationships

Key discussion points:

- (?) Where do you think the breakdown begins?
- (T) seem overwhelmed AND there's not a lot of room for (T) to go the extra mile to foster better (P) relationships
Example: FAMILY GAME NIGHT
- Technology might not being used well
- (T) should have time to communicate w/ (P)
- Not the open dialogue or transparency
- District should set the expectations for communication & transparency
- Question about EBOARDS? Concern it's just a board posting
- District should create consistent parameters for communication (example: template)
- Maybe we should ask the (T)?
- One parent shares that his son's middle school (T) email's weekly

turn over →

Our messages to the Strategic Planning Steering Committee as you consider the future of LMSD:

- We believe that the quality of relationships between (T) & (P) is paramount
- Standard for expectations for communication
 - emails should be week - is a basic standard
 - what do we do for (S) who may not have someone receive the email?
 - Many parents set the expectations.

Convener:

Note Keeper:

Participants:

- Same P shared that he requested weekly email communication
- Ultimately this is about the C
- Alignment to S. PLAN - District should set expectations - the Communication Builds Relationships
- "unusual" check w/ other parents share
- How do we support G who don't or might not have same level of P support
- Should there be a requirement of P communication?
- P shared that she sets the expectation.
- the communication might be an assumption not an expectation.
- P shares: sends preliminary email "Please contact challenges & struggles"
- P also shares a son has 2 P that generates 2 emails weekly.
- P values the work of the P
- P feels there is not a lot of transparency -
- District might need to address what the Back to School Night should look like.



LMSD STRATEGIC PLANNING: LISTENING FORUMS (BCMS)

DISCUSSION TOPIC: How to more effectively use technology

Key discussion points: inside & outside the classroom.

- Teachers should not be replaced by technology... Technology needs to be leveraged in to effectively support ~~the~~ instruction
- Teacher Training? More technology positions ^{in the district?}
- Is our technology dated? Are there better choices?

Our messages to the Strategic Planning Steering Committee as you consider the future of LMSD:

- Parent Training?
- How can we keep ourselves fresh as a district... esp. w/ pending approval of appropriate programs?

Convener:

Participants:

- Note Keeper:
- Technology Based Curriculum Resources are wonderful (on e-boards)
 - E-boards are not updated enough

- Does each teacher need to have
an e-board? ~~e-boards~~ # Grade Level
E-board? (maybe an alternative
is to have 1 eboard per
grade level that is kept current)



LMSD STRATEGIC PLANNING: LISTENING FORUMS (BCMS)

DISCUSSION TOPIC: SHIFTING FROM FOSTERING ANXIETY TO FOSTERING RES

Key discussion points:

WHY ARE WE LETTING THE CULTURE OF FEAR ~~BE~~ RULE?

How many parents want their children to be problem solvers? (ALL)

How many want their children to have problems? (NONE)

How then do we expect them to master the art of problem solving.

Our messages to the Strategic Planning Steering Committee as you consider the future of LMSD:

WE NEED TO SHIFT FROM A CULTURE OF FEAR AND DEFEAT THE CULTURE OF FEAR. PREPARE

Promote grit! INFUSE THE DISTRICT WITH SPEAKERS, BOOKS, FIELD TRIP & OPPORTUNITIES THAT PROMOTE RESILIENCE, CONFIDENCE.

Convener: Gael Levin Simon

Note Keeper:

Participants: Harry Mobley Sr.



LMSD STRATEGIC PLANNING: LISTENING FORUMS (BCMS)

DISCUSSION TOPIC: In the field/real world learning

Key discussion points:

- Montessori model - younger kids learn experientially
- How badly would LM students do if they didn't prep for tests?
- Concern that confident, project-oriented senior teachers will be phasing out and junior teachers who are oriented to standardized testing won't know how to be creative, project-oriented teachers

Our messages to the Strategic Planning Steering Committee as you consider the future of LMSD:

There is a great desire for more meaningful, engaged educational experiences. The curricula/extreme focus on testing constrains & disengages teachers and students. Would advocate for project-based learning as part of intentional mission of district, particularly expand the experiential learning, project-based models to MOST middle schoolers and expand down to elementary schools & up to high schools.

Let's ask the question - How ready is the community to let the test scores NOT rule?

Convener: JULIA GLACKMAN

Note Keeper: Gael

Participants: Darcia Mubley
Megan Srafer

Cheryl Masterman



LMSD STRATEGIC PLANNING: LISTENING FORUMS (BCMS)

DISCUSSION TOPIC: Coherecy and Buy-in From Top to Bottom

Key discussion points:

- How do we ensure the core messages (collective message) is being implemented with fidelity.
- How can we prevent the message being lost as it passes from central office - building principal - Asst. principal - teachers - 3rd other
- Do we truly have collective buy-in.
- how can we help teachers move away from being overwhelmed
- Everyone has to be focused on the same conversation

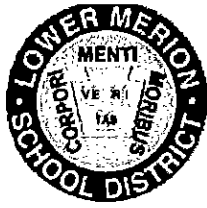
Our messages to the Strategic Planning Steering Committee as you consider the future of LMSD:

- have a handful of clear focused prioritize.
- Think about the big picture, not the details. focus on the end result. - Don't get caught up the details
- What is necessary? what can be overlapped.

Convener: *Sarcia Mubley*

Note Keeper:

Participants:



LMSD STRATEGIC PLANNING: LISTENING FORUMS (BCMS)

DISCUSSION TOPIC: Life Skill AND Personal Finance

Key discussion points:

- course in:
- Budgeting
 - money management
 - investing
 - saving
 - BASIC economics
 - How A BUSINESS WORKS ; PROFIT / LOSS, ASSETS, LIABILITIES, income, expenses
 - BASIC ACCOUNTING principles
 - STOCK MARKET - How IT WORKS
 - A "project" at every level
 - PRIVATE vs PUBLIC sector / TAXES / AID / welfare

Our messages to the Strategic Planning Steering Committee as you consider the future of LMSD:

we need a ^{mandatory, (not elective)} course in Life skills and personal finance geared to student level to encompass all of above starting in elementary, - but also in middle and high school.

Convener: MICHAEL YAROS

Note Keeper: MICHAEL YAROS

Participants: JULIET GLUCKMAN / CARLA
CHYNELL SCOTT / TRASH