

The Community Oversight Committee Report to the State of Ohio

The Community Oversight Committee was established in compliance with the House Bill 269 and is required of all school districts under mayoral control. Its purpose is to review, evaluate and write a report on the following areas:

- The Financial, Operational, Academic, Community, & other issues involving the Cleveland Metropolitan School District,
- The General Condition of the Cleveland Metropolitan School District, and
- The Goals & Accountability Standards established by the Board of Education

Committee Membership: Manuela Weeber (Chair), Joyce Fair,
Jacqueline Gates-Davis, Judy Nasser, Terrell Sanders

February 25, 2008

Overview

On February 29, 2008, the Community Oversight Committee Report was completed and forwarded to the State Department to the following areas:

- Speaker of the House of Representatives
- Minority Leader of the House of Representatives
- President of the Senate
- Minority Leader of the Senate
- Chairpersons of Standing Committee of Each House of General Assembly Having Primary Jurisdiction Over Elementary and Secondary Education Legislation
- State Superintendent of Public Instruction

This report represents the review and evaluation of the Cleveland Metropolitan School District by the Community Oversight Committee as mandated by law under H.B. 269 and the Ohio Revised Code. This report addresses the four principal components identified in H.B.269 and includes current status, future outlooks and committee recommendations regarding the major areas of academics, finance, buildings and operations, school management, communications and other issues involving the school district.

The Community Oversight Committee was appointed by the State Superintendent for Public Instruction of Ohio January of 2007, and is chaired by Manuela Weeber. The Committee worked in concert with administrators and support staff of the Chief Executive Officer, Dr. Eugene T.W. Sanders. To compile information for this report, the chiefs and deputies of all major divisions within the District were available for consultation and information gathering and prepared briefings for the Committee, during which extensive question and answer sessions were conducted. Informational documents from each briefings session have been included as the appendices to this report. This report has been reviewed by the designated Board of Education member and is now being submitted as the 2007-08 year report from the current standing Community Oversight Committee.

Community Oversight Committee Report

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1. Academic Areas

The administrators for the Academic Areas of the District include the Chief Academic Officer, Deputy Chief of Curriculum and Instruction, Deputy Chief of State Federal, Foundations, and Special Education, and Deputy Chief of Research and EMIS Assessments. The team's focus is on the academic achievement of the District's students, and they were pleased to announce that the District achieved the ranking of Continuous Improvement for the 2007-08 school year Report Card. This is the highest academic ranking in the history of the District and was a significant accomplishment that required strategic planning and implementation. The District is currently implementing the following actions to maintain the status of Continuous Improvement and is strenuously working towards moving even higher in academic rank

Current Status (2007-2008)

- Improving student performance in literacy and math by focusing on monitoring Literacy/Math and the hiring of Coaches in these areas
- Maintaining a student-teacher ratio of 20:1 for class sizes for grades K-3 as part of the 3rd Grade Guarantee initiative..
- Using School Net as a platform for the preparation of OAT/OGT
- Providing Principal Mentors for newly appointed principals.
- Providing CEO Seminars for Principals and Assistant Principals
- Innovations currently include opening:
 - 4 Single Gender Academies grades preK-8 (2 female and 2 male)
 - The Ginn Academy (for at risk High School males)
 - The Promise Academy, an In-District charter academy offering on-line courses

Future Outlook (2008-2009)

The District will build upon its current academic success and programs and will continue to implement initiatives and add additional opportunities and school choice options. Some of the planned actions for the coming year are as follows:

- Professional Development Quarterly CEO Seminars
- Principal Mentors
- AP Academy for Advanced Placement offerings
- Learning Together a program in which 6-8th graders tutor 3rd graders
- The Twilight Program
- The 3R's Social Studies Initiative
- The STEM. Academy
- The Industrial Design Academy will open in Fall of 2008.
- International Baccalaureate School focusing on global understanding and Chinese Language proficiency.
- Continuation of several initiatives that have been put in place to increase the graduation rate:
 - New Century Learning

- The 3R's, Social Studies Initiative for HS – 10th Graders in which hundreds of Cleveland Attorneys provide tutoring designed to align with the standards for the Social Studies portion of the OAT/OGT
- Assessment for Learning
- The Twilight Program, an acceleration program for over-aged 8th grade students
- The Close the Achievement Gap Initiative for 9th Grade Males, funded by the State for three years.

Committee Recommendations

The Community Oversight Committee is pleased with the current academic progress of the District and finds the future plans to be appropriate and well planned. We support the District's efforts and offer the following additional observations and recommendations:

- Provide additional professional Development in Problem-Based pedagogy and Differentiation
- Continue to implement plans to support the District goal that by 2010 there will be no Achievement Gap in reading and mathematics on the State tests for the District's 3rd graders
- Focus on a curriculum plan for middle grades to assure these students in grades 6-8 will have receive additional academic focus along with other curriculum initiatives.
- Although the k-8 grade school structure is acceptable, we recommend a continued focus on the curriculum and school management of the Middle School Grades (6-8).
- In order to achieve the goal of all CMSD graduates continuing their education at the post secondary level, it is recommended that additional school counseling focus on the 9th grade students and their families in order to provide additional information on available financial resources and post-secondary enrollment opportunities.

2. Finance Areas

The Community Oversight Committee met with the Chief Financial Officer and the Deputy Chief of Finance to review the District's financial successes, issues, concerns and future plans. A thorough report was presented and while some terminology and processes were specific to the field of finance, questions were raised and answered in a clear, concise and easy to understand manner. The Committee is very comfortable with the manner in which the finances of the District are being handled and are pleased with the efforts and ways in which the department is maintaining its fiscal solvency. (A complete report of the Five Year Forecast from the Financial Division is included in the appendices.). The highlights of the committee review of the Finance Division's management are as follows:

Current Status (2007-2008)

1. A detailed review of The District's October 2007 five year financial forecast was conducted by the Community Oversight Committee.
2. All areas of the Financial Report were in order.
3. The Finance Division was recently audited and received an unqualified opinion, which in layman's terms translates to an excellent audit.
4. CMSD ended the 2006-2007 school year with an actual unreserved balance of \$80.4million--

Future Outlook (2008-2009)

1. The District's financial position remains solid through the 07-08 and 08-09 school years.
2. The District's financial status beyond June 2009 is uncertain due to external forces.
3. The current State Budget Bill (which determines funding levels for school districts) expires June 30, 2009.

Committee Recommendations

1. It is recommended that the District continue to aggressively pursue outside funding thru grants and other forms of external financial support.
2. The Committee also recommends that the District share information regarding external support with the schools and community whenever possible.

3. Buildings and Operations Areas

The Community Oversight Committee's review of the Buildings and Operations Division includes plans regarding school facilities renovation, removal and rebuilding; school nutrition, technology, transportation, and safety and security.

A thorough and transparent report on **Capital Improvements** and the Master Facilities Plan was presented by Deputy Chief of Operations. This plan is in the process of internal, external and community review and revision based on declining enrollments and a previous underestimation of costs for building renovation, removal and new construction. The Committee was impressed with the extent to which the District has involved the various communities affected by the Facilities Master Plan and its implementation.

The **Safety & Security Plan** proposes additions to the safety hardware and equipment as well as enhancements to the "human-ware" currently provided.

Questions were raised regarding the decisions and procedures involving **Transportation** and **School Nutrition**. The committee was able to gain a clear understanding of school busing issues and resolutions, as well as the issues, concerns, positives aspects, and possible solutions for the school breakfast and lunch programs.

Current Status (2007-2008)

- A **Safety and Security** audit has been conducted and plans for improvement in both hardware and human-ware areas have been enhanced.
- The new **Facilities Plan** was presented to the public in the form of community forums in late 2007. Additional community forums are currently underway to assure further community understanding, input and communication.
- The **School Nutrition department** launched an all-district application effort to comply with state regulations regarding the free and reduced meals program. A current committee concern is that some K-8 buildings are serving the same portion to both Kindergarteners as well as 8th graders and some schools do not have adequate equipment for food preparation and refrigeration.
- An audit of equipment and available **Technology** has been completed and a technology plan has been developed to equalize technology resources throughout the District and to include state-of-the-art technology in all aspects of buildings and operations wherever possible.

Future Outlook (2008-2009)

- Implementation of recommendations from the **Safety & Security** audit will continue.
- The final **New Facilities** plan will be rolled-out to CMSD Parents in February 2008.
- The **Nutrition** department will begin to implement initiatives presented in the Five Year Strategic Plan (see appendix)
- The **Technology Plan** calls for state of the art equipment for academic delivery, building operations and security.

Committee Recommendations

In general, the Committee found the Buildings and Operations areas to be on the appropriate path to providing our school district the necessary services and supports required. In some cases we found the services in these areas to be exceptional. The Committee supports the strategies identified in the District's Five Year Strategic Plan and recommends the continued implementation of the initiatives outlined for the areas discussed. (see appendix)

- The attached **Facilities Plan** details and timelines of the 5 year plan for new and renovation of all buildings.
- **Nutrition** Initiatives will address proportion sizing, healthy food choices and fresh fruits and vegetables options for all schools as equipment becomes phased in and available..
- The **Technology Plan** is in compliance with State regulations and receives a great deal of support from E-rate. It is also recommended that the student's progress reports be accessible on-line for parental review.

4. School Management

School Management incorporates those areas involved with the structure, direction and support systems necessary to assure the District is positioned to prepare and facilitate the learning process. The District places this area under the Chief of Staff Division and includes the Human Resource Department, the PreK-8 and Secondary Schools Administrators.

Current Status (2007-2008)

- Professional Development for the leadership team has been a priority for the District. In order to produce 21st century schools, several initiatives have been provided to the District's principals and administrators. Examples of workshops and seminars include McRel Leadership Training for Principals and the Betty Steffy 3-Minute Walk-Through principal training.
- The District also maintains an academic environment through strategic initiatives (e.g. School uniforms, In School Suspension and the Pyramid of Success program, and School Safety Teams).
- Community Involvement is a critical component of school management, and the District has held numerous community involvement events. Events such as Hats Off to CMSD Kids, Army of Believers Luncheon, Community Forums on a variety of topics, Parent Round-ups, Door-to-Door visits to promote OGT preparation, and the CEO's annual State of the Schools Address have attracted and engaged literally thousands of community members.
- Human Resources is focusing on Customer Services and the District has begun to develop a Customer Service Manual and professional development modules for all of its employees.

Future Outlook (2008-2009)

- The District's 5 Year Strategic Plan is in the second year of implementation and many of the initiatives have already been implemented. Future plans include schools of choice options that will expand the academic offerings and opportunities for the District's students. (See Appendix 1)
- The optimization of academic achievement will be enhanced by safety and security enhancement within every building.
- Programs such as Girl Power/BRICK/Motivation Through Excellence, W.A.V.E., will continue and be enhanced by a major District effort to recruit and utilize volunteers.

Committee Recommendations

The Committee was impressed with the breadth and depth of the District's efforts in these areas and recommends they be continued. Some specific recommendations are as follows

- The Committee recommends that professional development be available for all job-types and suggests that there be targeted Professional Development for Principals, teachers, and other school-based support staff.
- Student I.D. Scanners to enhance security and provide better access to services such as library book borrowing, lunch ID, and transportation ID.

5. Communication

Current Status (2007-2008)

Recognizing the importance of clear and timely communications with the community, the Office of External Affairs provides comprehensive marketing communications programs designed to keep the community informed and up-to-date on all aspects of the school district. This office also provides

employee communications and assists District departments with their public relations and community relation programs. Additionally, individual departments further engage the community with various methods of information sharing. Some of the current techniques used to inform and engage and the community are listed below:

- Principals of specific schools send AP Goals Newsletters and school calendars to their students' parents
- The District's Family Liaison and School Parent Organization members hold open houses on a regular basis
- All teachers hold Report Card Conferences with parents
- All CMSD employees are currently undergoing Customer Service Training sessions.
- The CMSD Website has a functioning portal that provides browsers with multiple information opportunities.
- Media relations are enhanced by the External Affairs Office providing timely responses to media requests and requests for freedom of information records.
- The CEO will continue to present the annual State of the Schools address.

Future Outlook (2008-2009)

- Customer Service Training will continue and a Customer Service Manual will be provided to all CMSD employees
- Community Forums will continue and are well received.
- Parent Roundups are quite successful and will be continued.
- 2nd Annual (Step-up-to-Victory)
- Evening Open Houses will become a viable option
- Robust website that provides CMSD students, parents and browsers with substantial resources pertaining to the school district will be developed.
- Community Relations Manager has been charged with executing a community engagement strategy under the CEO's business model
- Media Specialists will continue to respond to media request and will canvas reporting staff to cover CMSD related stories

Committee Recommendations

The Committee values the communication provided by the District and makes several recommendations:

- Expand communication between COS & CAO Departments and Pre-K-12
- Have more parent engagement and end-of-year rallies for our students.
- Efforts are underway to re-design the CMSD website and provide greater content for browsers.
- The goal is to generate academic, facilities and community engagement assistance from parents, corporate leaders and civic groups.
- Weekly pitch sheets are sent to local reporters to advise them on events and student stories of significant interest
- Continued the positive environment of communication with parents thru Community Forums.
- For District and large school-based events open to the public, it would be helpful to submit a monthly calendar of scheduled events .to all schools and the CMSD Website.