

**Summary**  
**Education Committee Focus Groups**  
**June 16, 2006**

This is a summary of input that we have received from our various meetings at various school sites with teachers. This Education Committee Summary is divided into 4 major areas including **Community Center/Holistic Approach, Vocational and Non-Traditional Approaches, Successful Practices, and Other Issues and Ideas**. These general themes seemed to come up frequently.

Because there is much overlap among committees, this summary also lists comments relevant to other committee areas.

**EDUCATION**

**A. Community Center/Holistic Approach**

- Develop different educational models for high poverty schools (i.e. apprenticeship programs, extended day, extended year, schools within schools, community centers within schools, full care centers serving families and their children beginning at birth or before.)
- There needs to be more communication between outside service providers and schools.
- There is a lack of coordination of services.
- The emotional needs of the students need to be addressed.
- Develop school models that address the needs of students from pre-natal through high school.
- Family Resource Centers have proven effective at some schools.
- Provide more parent education opportunities.
- Provide high quality family and community resource personnel in schools and communities.
- Establish school based community resource centers to address the various child care, health care, and mental health needs of students and their families.
- Family meal nights are a popular way to get parents to the school.
- Family Resource Centers have provided families with more access to the schools as well as after school involvement.
- Poetry, Art, and other Enrichments need to be incorporated into the curriculum.
- More counselors are needed so that teachers can teach.
- Faith-based partners can play a larger role.
- Provide poverty workshops for teachers and staff to help them understand the implications of poverty on their students and families.
- Identify potential dropouts in elementary school and remediate.
- Provide more funding for smaller class sizes and more focused attention on the students and their families.
- Parent Education classes are important for parents to be accountable.

- Provide educational programs in prisons.
- Honest race conversations are needed.

### **B. Vocational and Non-Traditional Approaches**

- Provide high quality vocational programs at the middle and high school levels.
- Seek different models to serve the needs of all students. Seek best practices.
- Develop programs to recruit back those students who have dropped out.
- There is a need for more post-secondary school opportunities for parents.
- High school students need to see beyond their current circumstances—need mentors.
- Have career fairs beginning at elementary schools.
- Develop school models that address the needs of students from pre-natal through high school.
- Do a better job of promoting what comes after high school. Vocational schools, community colleges, and trade schools need to be promoted.

### **C. Successful Practices**

- Successful programs and models should not be discontinued by the district.
- Provide small class sizes.
- Provide adequate materials and supplies.
- The alternative school is able to provide structure and support.
- Teachers contacting parents.
- Provide parent meetings and conferences in the communities.
- Orientations for parents.
- Get parents to sign contract to support their school.
- Provide full-time social work services.
- Students need field trips and other access to broader life experiences.
- Literacy coaches and public library staff have been helpful in working with teachers and parents.
- Extended schedule at a couple of school sites was effective and there is a desire to continue.
- Transition Program at middle school level.

### **D. Other Issues and Ideas**

- Low graduation rate indicates we are losing a lot of kids.
- Transience is a big issue.
- There are language issues with Hispanic speaking families.
- If students change schools have the money follow the child to provide incentives for not losing children.
- Teachers need ongoing professional development.
- There is limited vocabulary in high poverty families.
- Policy makers need to be in the classrooms.

- We need to become more knowledgeable and involved in local, state, and national education policy.
- Create positive learning environments for teachers and students.
- The Banner Herald can recognize businesses that encourage employees to be involved in schools.
- Students coming from poverty backgrounds come to school academically behind.
- Language Development is lacking.
- Over half the teachers quit within 5 years
- Need to address the sex issue and babies having babies.
- Child care centers in the schools
- Consistent discipline
- Need strong leadership in the schools.
- High schools are too large for some.
- Schools and community need to build partnerships and collaborations.
- Students need basic clothing and school supplies
- The alternative school should not be seen as punitive.
- Parents are uncomfortable being at the school as many have had bad experiences themselves.
- Often homework is not followed up at home.
- Disabilities often go undiagnosed.
- Don't punish schools with high numbers of poverty students.
- Discipline support is needed to address the chronic behavior problem.
- Pay teachers more and empower them more as professionals.
- Get rid of trailers at the school.
- Basic needs of students (jackets, bookbags, etc.) should be provided.
- Fighting is often seen as an appropriate method of handling conflict. This creates a problem in the school setting.
- Stigma is often associated with being poor and this effects student behavior and expectations.
- There is often a cultural and racial divide among parents, teachers, and schools.
- Parents love their children.
- It is important to listen to one another and develop trust.
- Provide alternative methods for measuring school success. AYP is measured by one test. NCLB needs to be looked at.

### **DEPENDENT CARE**

- High quality child care is important in order to have students academically ready when they begin school.
- Establish school based community resource centers to address the various child care, health care, and mental health needs of students and their families.
- There is a lack of coordination of services

- There needs to be more communication between outside service providers and schools.

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## **TRANSPORTATION**

- School, child care, health services, etc. need to be accessible to parents. Transportation is an issue.
- Field trips are extremely important to expose kids to the larger world and larger visions.
- Transportation needs to be provided for high quality extended day and extended year programs.
- Student mobility is an issue.
- Transportation for field trips is important for student learning.
- Bus transportation for parents getting GED or jobs is an issue.
- There is a lack of coordination of services
- Creative transportation partnerships need to be established. such as free bus passes during conference week.
- There needs to be more communication between outside service providers and schools.
- Churches have vans and people to help provide students with role models and experiences.

## **HOUSING**

- There needs to be more communication between outside service providers and schools.

## **HEALTH CARE**

- Students often come to school sick.
- Students often come to school with family and emotional issues that need to be addressed.
- Self-esteem is a huge issue for some students.
- Provide healthy foods at school.
- Students come to school sleepy.
- Disabilities often go undiagnosed.
- Students need insurance or peachcare to get dental services.
- Establish school based community resource centers to address the various child care, health care, and mental health needs of students and their families.
- There is a lack of coordination of services
- There needs to be more communication between outside service providers and schools.

## **WORKFORCE**

- Parents have difficulty getting off work to make school conferences and visit schools.
- Employers need to provide time off for parents to visit schools.
- Have the university pay a living wage for their employees.

- GED classes are important for parents.
- There needs to be more communication between outside service providers and schools.
- Summer employment opportunities and internships are needed for high school students.
- University of Georgia needs to become more of a partner and support of its employees.
- Families working multiple jobs have a problem spending time on school issues.