



## STATEMENTS OF RECOMMENDATION JULY 9, 2014

### INTRODUCTION

**General Agreement:** The following Statements of Recommendation express the general agreement of *Engage 200* participants regarding key points of celebration and significant obstacles to be considered when conducting long-range planning for District 200. The recommendations below are not listed in priority order.

### KEY POINTS OF CELEBRATION

- Academic achievement is high, even with changing demographics that include multiple languages, high mobility among students, varying income levels and limited District financial resources.
- District 200 has a high-quality teaching staff supported by the community.
- District 200 embraces diversity.
- A history of positive community involvement exists in District 200 and the community views itself as caring and collaborative.
- There is recognition of the high performance of students who attend District 200 schools for their entire education from Early Childhood through Grade 12.

### OBSTACLES TO BE ADDRESSED

- It is important to note and understand that funding for these recommendations may not *currently* be available.
- The level and allocation of District revenues must be evaluated to provide the funding necessary to improve student performance and sustain the current level of programs and services to meet the needs of *all* students.
- While participants recognized that diversity is a unique and positive aspect of the District, it requires an extra measure of investment of time, energy and resources in the area of support for interventions and staff development and training.
- Further, as the District strives to ensure it is meeting the needs of *all* students, a district-wide review and assessment of the appropriateness of technology, curricular and co-curricular space is needed.

## 1. STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

**General Agreement:** Student achievement was listed as the most important of all topics for the community. It is important to meet the needs of *all* students – those struggling, those excelling, and all in between. The community questions whether an appropriate level of resources and staff training are being applied to move *all students* to their full potential and remain competitive among our benchmark districts. It is important that funding and efforts be allocated to maintain and continuously improve student achievement. The Board should ensure that the tools and resources are in place to meet the individual needs of *all* students to achieve growth and success.

- 1.1 **Provide additional training and professional opportunities** for staff in the area of differentiated instruction to more effectively meet the needs of a diverse student population (academics, backgrounds, interests, etc.).
- 1.2 **Provide additional support to schools**, such as intervention teachers, to more effectively respond to the individual needs of students, including those with language challenges.
- 1.3 Continue to **explore and implement best practices in providing instruction and interventions** for all students.
- 1.4 Use parent liaisons to more **effectively involve parents** of non-English speaking students.
- 1.5 Examine the appropriateness of **providing 1:1 technology devices**.

## 2. PROGRAMS & SERVICES

**General Agreement:** District 200 provides a variety of programs and services for its students. *Engage 200* examined three areas: Special Education, English Language Learners (ELL) and Co-Curricular Programs. Several common themes emerged from the discussion about these program areas – the need for appropriate space (facilities), appropriate funding, more parent involvement, more student involvement, equity/parity among schools and partnerships/volunteers. It is not implied that volunteers can replace professional staff.

- 2.1 Provide the **quantity and quality of staff, staff support (development/training) and resources** to ensure these programs are operating at an effective level.
- 2.2 **Add research-based programs and materials** for students with special education needs. Provide general education teachers, as well as specialists, **additional training and development** in order to collaboratively meet the needs of special populations.
- 2.3 Determine and implement additional strategies to **utilize volunteers and partnerships** to enhance these programs where appropriate.

### 3. FACILITIES

**General Agreement:** Participants generally agreed there was a need to continuously update technology, as well as modernize curricular and co-curricular learning environments. All early childhood learning environments, including Jefferson Early Childhood Center, were acknowledged as areas in need of improvement.

- 3.1 **Identify and prioritize district-wide facility and technology needs for the delivery of instruction and co-curricular programming** based on 21<sup>st</sup> century best practices and develop a **Facilities Master Plan** to address them.
- 3.2 Ensure that the Facilities Master Plan includes **a solution to address early childhood education facility needs** and implement a plan to address these needs in the District. The solution should consider:
  - the specific inadequacies of the current facilities in terms of impairing effective care and instruction of students of this age;
  - and samples of how benchmark districts have responded and provided leadership in optimizing the learning environment for early childhood education.
- 3.3 **Sustain the District's technology infrastructure at an appropriate level** to support *future* needs of students and staff and the devices they will employ.

### 4. FINANCE

**General Agreement:** Levels and allocation of funding were mentioned frequently as obstacles to be addressed by the District. The community is aware that continued reductions in State and Federal funding are anticipated, but also reinforced the need to maintain quality staff and programs. As a result, the status quo is not an option. The Board will be required to make difficult decisions, such as staff reductions, in the coming years. Specific areas for the Board to address are included below.

**When providing regular financial updates to the community:**

- 4.1 Provide **comparative data from benchmark school districts**.
- 4.2 Include **current and projected status of the pension systems** and the potential impact to the financial well-being of the District.
- 4.3 Describe **efficiencies gained** by implementing energy conservation measures, outsourcing of particular District functions, utilizing online resources, etc.

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#### 4. FINANCE *(continued)*

When considering potential reductions, consider the following.

- 4.4 **Continue to foster a balance of quality staff** (experienced and new) while still optimizing instructional excellence and fiscal management.
- 4.5 **Continue to review and negotiate all contracts** to ensure maximum quality at minimal cost.
- 4.6 **Continue to explore opportunities to collaborate with other agencies** to reduce or restrict spending—business partnerships, park districts, the buying power of multiple districts purchasing, etc.
- 4.7 **Continue to review budgetary efficiencies** to ensure the leanest operation possible.

When considering future streams of revenue, consider the following.

- 4.8 Encourage local city governments to increase commercial development within District boundaries.
- 4.9 Continue to seek additional, meaningful and sustainable private funding sources—businesses in the community, competitive grants, corporate sponsorships/partnerships, estate planning, private money from citizens/groups and alumni, and naming rights to facilities/stadiums.
- 4.10 Consider an increase of fees – student activity fees, registration fees, fees for extra-curricular activities and events.
- 4.11 Consider a referendum (tax increase) for operations.

#### 5. COMMUNICATIONS AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

**General Agreement:** Participants expressed the need for establishing a long term, meaningful and ongoing communication process with the residents of the District. There should also be separate communications that increase public awareness and understanding of early childhood education. Participants also recognize the importance of effective communications and transparency. It is important to meaningfully engage the broader community in key decisions that impact the future of the District.

- 5.1 **Develop a plan for communicating** *Engage 200* recommendations to the District community.
- 5.2 **Host community-wide sessions** like those modeled in the *Engage 200* program to promote a two-way communication process regarding key decisions that impact the future of the District.
- 5.3 **Review areas of community “surprise”** gained through the *Engage 200* process, and **tailor specific communications** to promote understanding.
- 5.4 **Develop and implement a comprehensive communications plan** to increase public awareness of the need for and merits of an effective **early childhood education** program. The communication plan should include educational research that supports the importance of early childhood education and its impact on student achievement.