

## **October 15, 2015 SOCUSD Community Forum Questions & Answers**

### **Ideas/Priorities**

Q: Total school district % split among teachers salaries not included in sports and other expenditures?

A: 80% of the M&O Budget spent on salary and benefits. Purchased services such as transportation and food service employees are not included which would bump up that amount to 85% spent on salary and benefits.

Q: Why is student enrollment decreasing and is it being researched why students are leaving?

A: There were 20 less kindergartners entering BP as compared to the number of exiting 8<sup>th</sup> graders moving to Red Rock High going into the 9<sup>th</sup> grade. The other 38 students had various reasons for leaving from, moving out of state, moving to Phoenix, or away from our district. Those 38 students were tracked either by their withdrawal forms or direct contact with school personnel. Mr. Litwicki communicated this information to the governing board in a public meeting. Mr. Lykins also discussed affordable housing and opportunities for sustainable industry as obstacles for families to remain in our community.

Q: Has the district considered a 4-day school week?

A: The district has looked into and compared to local area districts where savings being closed for 1 day the savings do not add up to help reduce the overall M&O budget since it does not reduce staffing. It also adds a burden to the community and to our young families in finding childcare providers for 1 day per week.

Q: Will BPCS be closed?

A: There has not been discussion with any board member, any administrator or anyone about schools closing. Once again, there has been zero communication about a school closing. Closing a school is the last resort. There are other avenues to explore prior to that.

Q: What about out of school district students, such as cottonwood. Would we be paid for them?

A: Arizona is an open enrollment state where we accept students from out of district. The \$ follows the student we receive from other districts regardless of where the students live. We currently accept students through open enrollment to our district from surrounding communities. However, all Verde Valley Superintendents have agreed not to "poach" students from nearby districts by sending busses inside other districts boundaries. Charter schools are not part of the

Verde Valley superintendents group and so they act on their own and don't follow this practice. We have no control over that so Desert Star sends busses and vans to our district.

Q: What are the numbers for charter schools and how much do they get for funding?

A: It is very difficult to make a general statement as charters are fundamentally funded differently than public schools. The accountability system is completely different; they do not have an elected governing board. On YCESA.com there is information on how many charters are in Yavapai County and more information about charters.

Q: Is there any value combining school districts in the Verde Valley?

A: In the state of Arizona, the law requires the voters to approve it. It is allowed to combine school districts and unify school districts in Arizona. 5 years ago, it was discussed at the state level and was found combining school districts did not show adequate savings to do so. There have been only 2 districts in the state that have combined to the county Superintendents knowledge. It is open for the community to move in that direction if they so choose.

Q: What does our district need most moving forward to support our students?

A: We need more conversations moving forward. We know we have declining dollars. A collaborative, trust building process is a key element moving forward. We must have accurate communication and a trusting relationship moving forward between the district and community. We must advertise, market and continue discussing our successes to attract new students.

Q: Why am I now just hearing about a decline in enrollment?

A: Mr. Lykins commented that he couldn't respond on why a single individual hasn't heard this news before. He also indicated in his PowerPoint in the last two years alone he presented over 30 times in either public or school based presentations this same exact information of our current reality. In addition, communication about declining enrollment in our district was included in override presentations and materials starting in 2012. It was presented to the community and discussed in multiple public meetings when the override failed. There were numerous presentations at schools, site councils and board meetings concerning declining enrollment.

Q: How do we tap into the abundance of money in the local community?

A: Directly contribute to the Sedona School District foundation, tax credits are an easy way to contribute, forming private partnerships with local organizations or business to support specific programs at schools. Only limited by imagination on how the partnerships can be created.

Q: Undocumented immigrant impact on funding not addressed-why?

A: The state is a border state and employer laws have been put in place to go after undocumented workers, which has impacted school districts all across the Verde Valley and the state.

Q: To increase enrollment, have ideas like adding tech specific classes, multi-age programs, or any other creative opportunities for students been considered?

A: The district was founded with multi-age approach in place. BPCS has the multiage program in K-2. Our facilities such as the SPAC are avenues to create magnet programs such as a performing arts academy. Public and Private partnerships have already started forming as a result of the March 5<sup>th</sup> 2015 community form surrounding the Sedona Performing Arts Center. STEM programs such as Engineering is Elementary at both K-8 Schools and partnerships with NAU and the Arizona Science Center have already been formed as a foundation to build on in the future. Community partnerships are being cultivated to capitalize on resources and facility usage as well. The marketing of our district is important and having ongoing open dialogue will assist in building trust and relationships with our stakeholders.

Q: How is the Yavapai County Superintendent lobbying for more funding in education?

A: Mr. Carter spends two days per week in the legislators' offices and communicates with them on a weekly basis. His job is to advocate for all schools and charters in Yavapai County. The community needs to take part with building relationships with their local representatives and that is where it is more meaningful to the legislators, when it comes from the community.

Q: Why was this format selected for a forum?

A: Accurate information needed to be conveyed to the community on our current realities as a school district. Information can be shared on the website for others to be informed. Baseline ideas can be generated at this level to move onto the next process/round. This research-based model is recommended to start discussions to engage a variety of staff, parents, and community to help inform everyone on our current reality in an attempt to build a foundation moving forward.

Q: Why limit the number of participants for the next step of the process?

A: Research based model that our planning team identified as a model that would create diversity amongst our stakeholders that would lend it to successful outcomes. Mr. Lykins mentioned members of the planning team including: Dr. Nancy Alexander, Karen Loftus from ASBA, Colleen Toscano and for Informational Technology Mike Dipalma.

Q: How will additional all of the ideas generated be conveyed?

A: A webpage has been created to establish a place for ongoing dialogue and a place to post additional supplementary information to keep stakeholders educated and involved. Prior to the end of the meeting teacher at SRRHS, Jeremy Ferguson, demonstrated how to access the link in from the SOCUSD homepage. By clicking on "Public" tab and selecting "Community partners" page it will take you to all information that will be posted on this page as well as how to register for the upcoming roundtable on Nov. 7<sup>th</sup> in the Village of Oak Creek.

\* notes were taken as multiple comments were occurring. This is not inclusive of every word said, but tracked the main ideas and conversations that took place on October 15<sup>th</sup>