

**MEETING MINUTES
COMMITTEE OF THE BOARD MEETING
October 2, 2012**

PRESENT:

Board of Education:	Elona Street-Stewart, Jean O'Connell, John Brodrick, Mary Doran, Keith Hardy, Louise Seeba, Anne Carroll
Staff:	Michael Baumann, Ivar Nelson, Joe Munnich, Tim Caskey, Andrew Collins, Sharon Freeman, Efe Agbamu, Steve Unowsky, Darlene Fry, Matt Mohs, Michelle Walker, Jacqueline Statum Allen, Jackie Turner, Christine Osorio, Willie Jett, Elizabeth Keenan
Other:	Frank Forsberg, Rachel Oberg-Hanser, Mila Koumpalova

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 4:32 p.m.

II. AGENDA

A. Update on Twin Cities' Strive Initiative

Strive originated in the metropolitan area of Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky in 2006. It brings together key individuals and organizations to identify common goals for improving education from early childhood through early employment, to publicly report on progress toward meeting those goals and to use a quality improvement process to remove roadblocks and improve outcomes. It is not intended to operate as a program that provides direct service to students, families or schools. It is a framework that brings educators, youth development organizations, non-profit organizations, philanthropic organizations, businesses, government agencies, political leaders and others together to pursue common goals using data-driven strategies for improvements. It is intended to help meet the needs of communities that are program-rich but system-poor.

Despite millions of dollars of investment and numerous programs by the public, private and nonprofit sectors, the Twin Cities still has

- A gap between students of color and white students that is one of the largest in the nation.
- Unacceptably low graduation rates for children of color and low-income children and
- Disparities in every measure of children's well being.

One of the main reasons the Strive initiative is being implemented in the Twin Cities is "coherence." A growing body of research shows that high-performing educational systems that get all kids (regardless of income, race or gender) to high levels of achievement are defined by their coherence. The pieces fit together from classroom to the community to the family to the policy environment. In the U.S., in general, and the Twin Cities, in particular the educational system can be said to be defined more by major school districts, two cities, two counties and numerous other school districts across the seven county metro area, many of which do not correspond to the cities in which their students reside. There is also a large charter school community, a very high percentage of youngsters in informal, home-based day care and preschool in addition to center-based early childhood programs. A huge array of secondary and postsecondary options becomes available in the high school years.

Strive did an informal survey of initiatives that are underway across the various communities to close educational achievement gaps and found more than 500 distinct initiatives that reported they were working to close the gaps. Those initiatives were focused on many

different priorities and even those that focused on the same priorities often measured success in different ways. There were also few systems for identifying and replicating what does work (best practices) across the community's many educational providers and there was no common "table" for making strategic decisions about the direction of the entire community.

Strive has identified five core elements of Collective Impact:

- A Common Agenda – all participants have a shared vision of change including a common understanding of the problem and a joint approach to solving it through agreed upon actions.
- Shared Measurement – collecting data and measuring results in a timely fashion, consistently across all participants to ensure efforts remain aligned and participants hold each other accountable.
- Mutually Reinforcing Activities – activities must be differentiated while still being coordinated through a mutually reinforcing plan of action
- Continuous Communication – consistent and open communication is needed across the many players to build trust, assure mutual objectives and appreciate common motivation
- Backbone Organization – creating and managing collective impact requires a separate organization with staff and a specific set of skills to serve as the backbone for the entire initiative and to coordinate participating organizations.

Two initial strategic goals proposed for the Twin Cities are:

- Ensuring all students read at grade level by the end of 3rd grade and
- Ensuring all students complete a credential or degree after high school.

Strive's Student Roadmap to Success plots the course of a student's journey from cradle to career in a holistic, systemic approach. This is a guide for the student, but also for all members of the community with an interest in seeing that students have successful journeys. It highlights specific research-based competencies and experiences, as well as key transition points to ensure students are on target developmentally. If they are not at these critical points, the potential for long-term success is greatly inhibited.

The Greater Twin Cities United Way will serve as host organization to get Strive off the ground. They will provide in-kind resources, such as office space and HR, as well as a team of interim staff. Primary strategic partners are Wilder Research (providing data gathering and evaluation) and the Minnesota Minority Education Partnership (in the area of community engagement at multiple levels).

The Strive Board is made up of executive representatives from schools and government, community-based organizations and programs, business, higher education and the philanthropic community.

Minnesota Strive's vision is for children of all socio-economic backgrounds to be well prepared for success in the 21st Century. Its mission is to dramatically accelerate educational achievement of all children from early childhood through early career through an aligned partnership of community stakeholders. Its aims are to:

- Seek to eliminate racial and economic disparities in student outcomes while accelerating achievement for all
- Bring a sense of urgency to the work
- Make decisions based on high-quality data and analysis
- To hold each other accountable for the success of efforts and relentlessly measure outcomes
- Be willing to engage in difficult discussions of complex issues that impact children's lives and
- Engage both "grass tops" and "grass roots" to produce meaningful and sustainable change.

Phase I of the initiative will focus on the cities of St. Paul and Minneapolis. After demonstrating success in Phase I communities, expansion to additional communities will be considered.

The core components of the partnership are (1) the Strive Board, (2) Community Goals of Kindergarten Readiness, 3rd Grade Reading, 8th Grade Math, High School Graduation and Postsecondary Credentials. These goals are still being vetted and two additional may be added around youth engagement and college/career readiness. (3) Networks will be made up of big and small providers, intermediaries and funders all working around a certain topic. An initial network might be Early Grade Literacy, which may support both Kindergarten Readiness and 3rd Grade Reading goals. Both Metrics (data used for measurement and improvement) and Benchmarks (performance targets) will support the Goals and Networks.

Next steps are the arrival of the Executive Director, Michael Goar, in mid-October; public launch of the Strive Initiative on November 29 at the McNamara Center and establishment of Social Innovation Fund RFPs.

The Social Innovation Fund is a Federal grant distinguished by four key features:

- Support infrastructure – reliance on experienced, knowledgeable grant making intermediaries to select and grow high-impact nonprofits
- Evidence – emphasis on evidence-based decision-making and rigorous evaluations of program results
- Committed Funders – requirements that each Federal dollar be matched 1:1 from private and nonfederal sources by grantees and sub-grantees.
- Scaling Knowledge – commitment to capture, apply and share knowledge gained from the SIF experience.

Minnesota Strive has received a \$5 million grant (\$1 million dollars guaranteed for two years [renewable for up to five years]). Seven to ten grants awards will be made in February of 2013 from this initial funding. The purpose is to identify programs in the community showing great promise of closing the gap; making an investment in that program with the expectation there will be some expansion of the program and finally to identify the most promising programs and practices in order to build a stronger body of evidence that what is being done actually works.

QUESTIONS/DISCUSSION:

- With the two Superintendents on the Board what is the role of District Boards in this? Response: The Superintendents bring the voice of the St. Paul and Minneapolis School Districts to the table and each represents one voice on the Board. They are equal partners and have been important in the planning and execution of Strive. There are the areas of In-school time, Out-of-school time and family support all of which must be brought into greater alignment. The District School Boards have no roll in taking action on Strive initiatives except when those initiatives are expanded into or added as a new initiative to the district, those will come to the Boards for review/approval.
- The SPROCKETS effort and its attempt to create common metrics--in the long run, will the foundation community and grant giving community start to move away from individual grants to smaller non-profits if they don't buy into the metrics? Response: At this point, we are not sure how future funding will go; there is no evidence that any organizations might lose funding. As an example, if there were the college readiness network and all the out-of-school providers it could be envisioned they would come to some conclusions on what best practices are for out-of-school programs, what the continuum of out-of-school programs might be and this could be wrapped up into a recommendation which can be built into RFPs over time. It could also be used in making grant decisions. This information would be communicated to providers/funders to give them time to align or make change but in the end, Strive aims to align funds with efforts that achieve the greatest results.
- What does Cincinnati do especially well with the high school piece for graduation and students being ready to graduate post secondary? Response: I am not able to answer, as I have not investigated that aspect of the program. Minnesota Strive has not yet built

its networks or put any work in process. There are examples of many successful efforts out there that can be looked at however.

- If you accelerate achievement for all children, how does that close the gap? Response: When you take a macro look at the world and education, U.S. kids are falling behind academically. This was a big debate point for the Board and in discussions with the community. Most preferred being smart about the academic achievement gap but taking a macro or global view over time.
- The gap, in St. Paul, is about race not poverty. If you accelerate everybody, how does that close the gap? Response: We are not there yet. The reason there are 30 people on the Board and all the time has been spent on this is to get serious about accelerating progress on education and closing the achievement gap. The Superintendent did raise this issue to call out efforts SPPS is making to address this. You do however have to accelerate learning particularly for students of color if all are going to make progress and close the achievement gap. While the school districts are part of this effort, this is greater than just the districts; this will engage others with similar but different challenges outside the school district. The Mission reflects the consensus of the group. This is what is needed now to call out immediate challenges.
- As this moves forward, how will collaborative fatigue be avoided and the dilution of energy and effort. Much effort has been put into the "Race to the Top and Promise Neighborhood. How do you get beyond being just one more thing out there? Who will hold all participants to the vision/mission, to the defined direction despite what other "new" things might come up? Response: The premise is that Strive, in its reach within the Twin Cities, would have some ability to influence and/or corral lots of different initiatives and help align them. Strive and Promise Neighborhoods (PN) are very much tried together with PN there to provide the innovation and change and with Strive to scale those efforts out to other neighborhoods. If something new comes up it will need to be looked at and consideration given on how to participate. Long-term, with the structural deficits, there will not be a lot of new money. The future will be about intelligently assessing what works and aligning efforts and resources to get there. We need to find better ways to apply funds; we need to change the status quo.
- How soon will the Executive Director be in a position to talk about communication plans and how to connect with the various networks? Response: There will probably be something at the launch and then more intensive work post holiday. Also, a lot of the discussion and communication crafting will be coming from the networks themselves. As the other like collaboratives come to the table to shape the broader Strive initiative they will look at how this affects them, how they need to shift and how change will happen. That is where many of the "real" conversations will begin.
- With the Business focused partners on the Board, one piece seems to be missing - financial literacy. Will banks be partners or have a voice? Response: These entities would probably be more heavily engaged at the network level in various areas. United Way has built financial literacy aspects in to a large number of its efforts in various areas and this should be true in the Strive initiative as well.
- Will one of the major impacts be to aggressively align measures, benchmarks, data gathering and sharing mechanisms among the non-profits? Yes. The community will also want more; there will be a lot of pressure to broker it better. Promise Neighborhood, if they are successful in St. Paul and Minneapolis, they will be the most on-the-ground agents to getting the brokering relationships tested.
- St. Paul usually comes in second when problems in the Twin Cities are discussed and decisions are made where to put money. How will Strive keep that from happening? Response: This has been and is raised through the advocacy of the Superintendent, the Mayor of St. Paul and other Board members. There is the awareness of this.

Thanks were extended for the information provided and the Board expressed its interest in additional information over time.

B. Standing Item: Policy Update – No update available.

C. Standing Item: Referendum Update

The Strategic Initiatives Administrator provided a brief update on status of 2012 referendum. She indicated the legal notice would be mailed to all property tax payers and households with registered voters (114,000 in total) on October 9. Potential impacts if the referendum should fail will be included on the mailer; these include:

- Larger class sizes
- Cuts to pre-kindergarten full-day kindergarten and Early Childhood Education (ECFE) programs
- Cuts to high school math and science teaching positions
- Cuts to in-school reading and math support for elementary schools
- Elimination of 364 teaching positions

She then presented the informational video that has been developed for the referendum. This will be posted on the SPPS website, links provided in the Bridge and the Communications Department is making copies available to all schools for use in their communities. A shortened version is being prepared in Spanish and Hmong. The link will be provided to Board members so they can share it. It will also be looped on Channel 16.

D. Work Session

1. **Board Listening Sessions**

Board members reviewed locations of previous Listening Sessions and made recommendations for the location of the 2012-13 sessions along with preferred dates. The format will continue as previously structured. The Board secretary was instructed to confirm sites, dates and put the information up on the Board website.

2. **Other Dates for Board Events**

- The date for the Superintendent's evaluation was set as December 11 from 4:00-6:30 p.m. This will be a closed meeting. The packet will be to Board members around 11/21 and must be returned to the Board Chair no later than 12/4. A copy of contract is to be included in the packet
- A Board Governance Retreat was scheduled for Saturday, January 19 (9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.) – various off-site locations were suggested
- Various dates were suggested for dinner with the Minneapolis School Board.

3. **Other Request Items**

- To be added to COB agenda for October 30 – District communication plans on the referendum (both if it should pass and if it should fail).
- To be added to COB agenda for December 4 – Discussion on whether to hold a primary in 2013.
- Plans for the Vento Dinner on October 14.
- At a future COB (sooner rather than later) – Review of various committees reporting to the Board and to Administration. The Executive Committee will review and schedule.

4. **Board Check-In** - This was postponed to the next meeting.

III. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION:	Mr. Brodrick moved the meeting adjourn. Ms. Doran seconded the motion.
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Motion passed.

The meeting adjourned at 7:07 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Marilyn Polsfuss
Assistant Clerk/Secretary to the Board