



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

Judy Nasser

Terrell Sanders

Dennis Stanfield

January, 2009

Overview

In January of 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. The committee membership consists of Manuela Weeber (chair), Joyce Fair, Judy Nasser, Terrell Sanders and Dennis Stanfield. The Committee has met at least once a month over the past year and continues to work 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 2008-09 year report from the current standing Community Oversight Committee.

Community Oversight Committee Report

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1. Academic Areas

Scope & Sequence Curriculum Design

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 serious about involving the parents, guardians and community in the student's learning process.

Scope & Sequence

The major curriculum focus is on Scope and Sequence (See Appendix-1 for examples) and involves the collaboration of academicians, parents, guardians and community members. The goal of this effort is to form a partnership with parents, students and school staff by providing a curriculum guide that can assure all who are involved in the CMSD student's education are aware of the scope of the curriculum and the sequence in which it will be taught, thereby providing the highest level of subject specific instruction and support to the appropriate grade level.

Parent Feedback

The District held a full day Curriculum Design for Parents, Teachers and Students Workshop that had the following goals: (Note: This workshop was a prelude to the District's Scope & Sequence Curriculum Design)

- To create parent friendly materials that assist families in understanding what their children should learn
- To create pacing charts for each grade and subject that assist school staff members in deciding what content to teach and when it should be taught.
- To create student friendly learning charts to help students understand what they are expected to learn and when
- Participants included The CEO, the Chief of Staff, the Chief Academic Officer and Executive Team, Teachers Union Leaders, Academic Administrators, Deputies of Schools, Assistant Superintendents, Principals, Community Leaders and Parents and Guardians.

The parent participation was broad with representation on each of the 48 task forces, one for each grade from PreK thru 10th for each of the four core subject areas.. Their feedback was overwhelmingly positive. They felt that they were valued members of the team and observed their ideas, suggestions and comments incorporated into the final Scope and Sequence Design.

Current Status (2008-2009)

- SchoolNet has been implemented and is available for Administrators, staff, Teachers, Parents and students.
- All Academic Administrators, Principals and Teachers have received training in both Scope and Sequence and SchoolNet.
- Saturday workshops are made available to all who would like to improve their utilization of these educational tools.
- Professional Development Quarterly CEO Seminars have occurred throughout the school year to further assist continued improvement of professional.
- Learning Together, a program in which 6-8th graders tutor 3rd graders, has been implemented
- The Twilight Program, for students needing flexible scheduling and additional assistance to move to the next grade levels
- Scope and Sequence guide is completed and in full implementation in all schools and all Pre-kindergarten thru grade 10 classrooms.

Future Outlook (2009-2010)

The District will build 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:

- 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.
 - The STEM. Academy and the Industrial Design Academy opened in Fall of 2008.

Committee Recommendations

- The Committee feels the Scope and Sequence Design collaboration is a worthwhile endeavor and recommends it be an on-going project in order to update content annually.
- The Community Oversight Committee is pleased with the current academic focus of the District and encourages the District to continue emphasis of the Scope and Sequence
- Recognizing that professional development is occurring, the Committee recommends its continuation with the focus on 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 .
- We recommend a continued focus on the curriculum and school management of the Middle School Grades (6-8).
- Communicating with students and recognizing their different learning styles should continue to be District priorities .

2. Finance Areas Special Revenue Funds

The Community Oversight Committee met with the Chief Financial Officer, the Deputy Chief of State, Federal, Foundation & Special Education Programming, and the Director of Finance responsible for grants to review the District's financial successes, issues, concerns and future plans. A thorough report was presented, questions were raised and answered in a clear, concise and easy to understand manner. The Committee is pleased with the efforts and ways in which the finance department is monitoring and managing the Title funds for the District and is confident that the District is maintaining its fiscal solvency. (A Five Year Financial Forecast created by the Finance Division has been updated for 2008-09 and is included in the appendices). The highlights of the committee review of the Finance Division's management for 2008-09 follows:

Current Status (2008-2009)

- An update to the District's five year financial forecast was presented to the Board of Education in October 2008.
- The most recent audit conducted by the Auditor of State was excellent. No deficiencies, non-compliance issues, findings or questioned costs were reported. The District received an unqualified opinion.
- CMSD ended the 2007-2008 school year with an actual unreserved balance of \$71.3 million.

Future Outlook (2009-2010)

- The District's financial position remains solid through the 08-09 school year.
- The District's financial status beyond June 2009 is uncertain. The current State Budget Bill expires June 30, 2009. State funding levels effective July 2009 are unknown at this time.
- The Finance Division will continue to monitor State Budget deliberations in order to better plan the District Financial Forecast and budget management.

Committee Recommendation

The Committee is recommending that more information be provided regarding grant funding. It is recommended that the community receive information on what grants have been awarded, what grants have been renewed, and what grants are designed as on-going supports to the District.

- The Committee would like to additional information on school-based grants and donations from outside sources due to specific school proposals for funding. Where have the funds been targeted and how successful are the results of the funded project?
- The Committee will seek information on the portion of grant funds that are focused on academic projects and curricular development projects.
- The committee recommends that the successful grant-seeking schools advertise their academic achievement and success of their efforts as examples of avenues other schools can follow to provide additional support to specific school programs for the students and teachers.

3. Buildings and Operations Areas Capital Improvement

The Community Oversight Committee's review of the Buildings and Operations Division once again includes plans regarding school facilities renovation, removal and rebuilding.

A thorough and transparent report on **Capital Improvements** and the Master Facilities Plan 2008 was presented by Deputy Chief of Operations at several community forums throughout the city. This plan is the result of internal, external and community reviews and revisions to the 2007 Plan were 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.

Current Status (2008-2009)

- 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.
- During the 2008-09 School Year Community Forums were conducted to gather input regarding revisions made necessary by declining enrollments
- 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)

- The final **New Facilities** plan was rolled-out to CMSD Parents in February 2008.
- The District will continue to follow the plan with increased input from the community via Community Forums.

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

- The attached **Facilities Plan** details and timelines of the 5 year plan for new and renovation of all buildings. . (Please see Appendices 5, 6, & 7 for details regarding the process, current status and implementation of the Facilities Master Plan.)

4. School Management School Uniforms & Dress Code

Current Status (2008-2009)

Since fall of 2007 all students enrolled in the Cleveland Metropolitan School District have been required to wear a school uniforms or follow the Board approved Dress Code. High School students must adhere to a dress code that reflects proper attire for the learning environment. Elementary school students (kindergarten thru 8th grade) wear student uniforms consisting of specific solid colors and clothing styles as determined by the District and the School Uniform/Dress Code Committee.

Cleveland Metropolitan School District believes that appropriate school attire is an important factor in attaining student achievement, because it can create a safer environment by helping to identify students belonging to our district. It is believed that the student uniform also creates a more disciplined environment by minimizing negative competition based on clothing styles. Uniformed clothing can become an equalizer, allowing our students to focus on the academic priorities that lead to success.

- The Student Uniform / Dress Code Policy has been in effect for one full school year
- Students are following the policy and school administrators are enforcing the Dress Code.
- Students' in-school behavior has improved based on safety & security reports.
- Parents have applied for and received school uniform vouchers where appropriate.

Future Outlook (2008-2009)

- The Dress code initiated at the High School Level is being examined and the District is currently considering extending the Student Uniform requirement to the High Schools as well.
- The District is continuing to explore external funding sources to assist parents in purchasing student uniforms.

Committee Recommendations

The Committee was impressed with the initial efforts of the Student Uniform Dress Code initiative and had recommended the implementation be continued.

Some specific recommendations are as follows:

- The Committee recommended that a student uniform exchange be made available to parents so that gently worn uniforms may be recycled and should be included in community events such as The Parent Round-Up
- The Committee supports the District's efforts to implement a Student Uniform Policy for high school students as well.
- The Committee expresses concern for how the dress code and school uniform policy can continue to be enforced if funding becomes unavailable for qualifying families.
- Suggestions made to ease the financial burden for uniform purchases include:
 - A Rebate System (policy)
 - In-House Store
 - Implementation of a tracking system to monitor students out of dress code.
 - Implementation of a tracking system to monitor qualifying parents who did not receive funding

5. Communications Division External Affairs Initiatives

Current Status (2008-2009)

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.

This Division has undergone organizational changes within the past year and the new administration has responded extremely well to the community's desire to receive more information in a timely manner. Some of the current initiatives for the 2008-2009 school year are direct results of the Committee's previous recommendation and are seen in Appendices 9-11.

Committee Recommendations

The Committee is very pleased with the direction and accomplishments of the Communications Division and recommends that the Division continue on its current path and pace.

*Appendices available upon request.