



## **EDUCATION TASK FORCE Meeting April 24, 2008**

The Education Task Force met at Northwest Technical Institute at 11:30 a.m. Members present were: George Burch, Kathryn Burkhead, Greg Collier, Betty Phillips, Gerri Fulton, Sandy Nickerson, Diana Johnson, Rick Schaeffer, Mary Bridgeforth, Randy Hutchinson, Darrell Watts, Marsha Jones, Pete Joenks, Donna Wood, Aaron Harris, Paul Hively, Susan Buchanan, Linda Knapp, Jeff Myers, Jeff Williams and Robyn Breshears. Staff member Angie Cooper from the Chamber of Commerce was also in attendance.

George Burch graciously hosted the meeting by providing lunch for all in attendance.

The meeting began with a discussion led by Darrell Watts, Principal Central Junior High School, and Mary Bridgeforth, Multi-Cultural/Diversity Administrator, from Springdale Public Schools. The group as a whole recognizes the challenges the school district faces with "No Child Left Behind" (NCLB) requirements and the large influx of non-English speaking students. Mr. Watts shared with the group that NCLB has both Federal and State guidelines that must be followed. Arkansas has the most aggressive standards for NCLB. Sub-populations within our school district, such as non-English speaking and children with disabilities, are graded on the same level as students who have been speaking English their entire lives. The standards are stiff and very difficult to meet when a community has the demographics that we have. Springdale schools embrace the concept of NCLB and work extremely hard each day to try and meet the requirements.

Statistics that were mentioned included differences in the district from 1990 to today. In 1990, 1% of the population was Hispanic. Today, 40% are Hispanic and 53% of the students are English language learners (ELL). Today, the schools work with 37 different languages. There is a large difference between conversational language and academic language. Studies show that it takes 3 years for an ELL student to become proficient in the language. However, the NCLB law requires that a student be tested at the same level an English-speaking child within one year from entering the USA. Math is tested the very first year. Thus the schools can fall into a "needs improvement" category very quickly with these requirements.

The Springdale School system has suffered some negative publicity due to the grading requirements of NCLB. This, in turn, has caused the community's perception of the quality of education for every child, regardless of their background, socio-economic status or language skills to suffer negatively. Statistically, the majority of Springdale students are succeeding, if not exceeding, national averages.

After much discussion and information sharing from school personnel, many in the group felt that the general public was not aware of the challenges the schools face nor were they aware of the positive impact Springdale schools have made and continue to make.

As a group, we decided that it would be good to develop a mission statement to keep us on track with the main goal of meeting the objectives that came from City Future II. Jeff Williams led a discussion to obtain comments that could be considered for the mission statement. From that, the following was drafted and will be presented to the group at our next meeting:

Mission: To work with the Chamber of Commerce and Springdale Schools to promote the positive aspects of the Springdale School System. Our efforts will be aimed at ways to attract and retain great people and businesses in Springdale by highlighting the tradition of excellence and the bright future of our schools. We will help foster an increase in community support and associated pride. We will focus on our unique educational opportunities that provide individual children an inclusive, balanced education, which will prepare them for the world like no other school system in the state.

Underlying the above would be A) Embrace Multiculturalism; B) E/W Socio-Economic Balance; and C) Perception of Excellence.

The group broke up into the 3 sub-groups to discuss: a) embracing multi-cultural differences; b) east-west socio-economic balance in the city; and 3) perception vs. reality. See notes from (b) and (c) below.

#### B – Socio-economic between East/West sections of the City.

The worst thing we could do would be to sugar coat any issues, but there are many great positive things going on that are not getting out.

- 1) Susan Buchanan and Pete Joenks to get 90/90/90 information from successful schools and then compare/contrast Springdale's efforts thus far and status (positives and negatives). The 90/90/90 is for schools 90% poverty, 90% language minority and 90% proficient or advanced.
- 2) Sandy Nickerson to track down real demographic information for the city and individual schools. (Chamber and School Administration should have data.)
- 3) Jeff Williams to research school performances with eye to individual and group continuing progress as benchmark (as opposed to current benchmark scoring which is flawed).

Other ideas included sponsoring a Realtor Day at a Springdale School on the east side to show reality. Several people mentioned code enforcement and beautification efforts as vitally important in fostering pride in the city and in the schools. Appearance of the schools themselves as well as surrounding neighborhoods often creates perceptions that may or may not be true (the schools are neat and clean, but some of our neighborhoods are not, which leads to bad perceptions.)

Need to create grass roots neighborhood based School Pride groups. Each neighborhood needs to be passionately behind its school.

## C – Perception vs. Reality

The group picked up from our last meeting and discussed coming up with 3 broad, positive statements that could be 1) easily remembered; 2) positive reinforcement of the schools; 3) globally thinking and 4) used throughout Springdale in business and education.

Diana Johnson offered these 3 key areas: Quality education, educational choices (variety of fields of study, college or technical skills, etc.), Diversity and safety. Diana agreed to gather ideas from the group via e-mail and put together a plan for developing 3 key statements to publicize in any group within the city.

Various suggestions were mentioned for media outlets: e-newsletter, community partnerships, You Tube videos, Realtors, visitor packet at the Chamber, paid advertising such as billboards. Between NTI, NWACC and Springdale Schools there may be a possibility to cost share in this expense. The annual Chamber meeting may be another good outlet as it has so many businesses assembled in one room at one time.

Rick Schaeffer will e-mail Robyn the statistics information that was presented to Springdale Rotary as reference material to possibly use in our media campaign.

## Wrap up with whole committee

The committee came back together to wrap up discussion and plan the next meeting. George Burch offered to let us meet at NTI for the remaining meetings to be held. As a group, we agreed the location and time were best for the majority.

We also agreed that it was unnecessary to continue meeting in sub-groups. We found that the underlying issue in all of our discussions stems from perception vs. reality. We will not be breaking into sub-groups from this point forward.

Our next meeting will be held June 5, 2008 at 11:30.

Meeting adjourned at 1:40 p.m.

- Groups to target for in-school tours on an annual basis:
  - Relocation managers – Tyson, JB Hunt, University of Arkansas, Hospital, Chamber members, manufacturing companies
  - Real estate agents or association
  - Springdale Chamber Leadership classes
  - Civic organizations
  
- Develop school information packet to be available at the Chamber, on the Chamber website or a link to the Springdale schools website with contact information to tour a school.
  - Consider UofA marketing intern to put this project together
  
- Determine steps already being taken to improve the perception of excellence in our schools:
  - Multi-culturalism is the world we live in today. Aren't you glad your kids are experiencing it now before they enter the real world?
  - PIE – Partners in Education
  - SHS facelift
  
- Turn challenges every school faces into opportunities for the future of our city.
  - NCLB
  - Poverty
  - ESL
  - East/West division in the city
  
- Is the School Board considering a study to review the district zoning?
  
- Need to get information back from Rick Schaeffer on the “promotional messages” piece.
  
- Jeff Williams to try and collect city/school demographics from Marsha Jones.
  - Evaluate socio-economic balance. Are perception and reality the same?

Have draft report to Jeff Williams, Jeff Myers and Angie Cooper by 8/5/08.

Finalize draft report to send to committee members by 9/1/08.

Meeting on 9/11/08 to gather feedback for final report.

Meeting in November to see final product.

Present to Chamber Board of Directors in January meeting.



## **EDUCATION TASK FORCE Meeting June 5, 2008**

The Education Task Force met at Northwest Technical Institute at 11:30 a.m. Members present were: George Burch, Betty Phillips, Gerri Fulton, Rick Schaeffer, Randy Hutchinson, Darrell Watts, Marsha Jones, Pete Joenks, Susan Buchanan, Linda Knapp, Don Love, Kent Williamson, Sara Ford, Jeff Myers, and Robyn Breshears. Staff member Angie Cooper from the Chamber of Commerce was also in attendance. Two students, Jennifer Garcia and Hector Bello from Springdale High School, were also present.

George Burch graciously hosted the meeting by providing lunch for all in attendance.

Robyn Breshears opened the meeting with a recap from the previous meeting and presented the minutes for approval. There were no changes, corrections or additions to the minutes. Robyn provided planning and structure of the committee's work going forward. She and the two vice chairs, Jeff Williams and Jeff Myers, had met to discuss the progress of the committee and the results of discussions so far. We felt the nuts and bolts of the task force's 3 key areas all revolve around tackling perception vs. reality regarding the strength and health of the school system. Therefore, it was our recommendation to discontinue the breakout of the 3 sub-groups and work together as one committee. The members agreed to this approach.

Pete Joenks introduced 2 guest students from Springdale High School, Jennifer Garcia and Hector Bello. Jennifer was in the Springdale school system from Kindergarten to graduation in 2008. She received over \$200,000 in scholarships. She talked about her drive to succeed and her ability to overcome biases that she was automatically supposed to perform below average because she was Hispanic. Her story was inspiring. Hector is a junior and talked about moving into the Springdale school system from Anaheim, California 2 years ago. Hector made the decision to focus on his school work and become involved in school activities. Hector said the main thing that got him involved was a teacher who saw his potential and reached out to him. Both students are admirably shining stars of the school system.

Pete Joenks presented information regarding 90/90/90 schools. These schools are 90% minority, 90% free or reduced lunch, and 90% success rate on standardized assessments. There are schools around the nation who have experienced these-type schools. Springdale does not currently have any schools that fall within this category; however, the administration has recognized the possibility of some schools in the district falling into the first 2 categories and wants to be prepared to meet the 90% final criteria.

Marsha Jones presented several statistical reports and relevant facts to comply with the "No Child Left Behind" act. There are many challenges the district faces to comply with the steep regulations. After much discussion, task force members determined that it would be best to select the data that we want to present to the community and business groups. If we don't use this method, the information becomes too voluminous and overwhelming for the business community and the citizens of Springdale to grasp. We also decided to target certain focus groups, such as realtors and large business recruiters, to tour school facilities and truly see the work being done inside the school buildings.

Robyn distributed a "promotional messages" outline (see attachment A) that was compiled by Diana Johnson from the Perception vs. Reality sub-group. Robyn asked the committee members to review the outline and to be prepared at our next meeting to thoroughly discuss the suggested message. Robyn also offered to distribute by e-mail a "Facts, Honors and Accomplishments" form (see attachment B) that was provided to the Springdale Rotary Club in May.

Finally, the committee feels that our work will be completed prior to December. We agreed to skip the July 17<sup>th</sup> meeting and regroup on our next regularly scheduled meeting which will be in September. Angie Cooper will send a reminder e-mail for that meeting.

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 1:00 p.m.



## **EDUCATION TASK FORCE Chair & Vice-Chair Meeting July 21, 2008**

The purpose of this meeting was to take the information gathered from the past Task Force Meetings and formulate an action plan with recommendations for the full Task Force meeting in September. The outline is as follows:

- Groups to target for in-school tours on an annual basis:
  - Relocation managers – Tyson, JB Hunt, University of Arkansas, Hospital, Chamber members, manufacturing companies
  - Real estate agents or association
  - Springdale Chamber Leadership classes
  - Civic organizations
- Develop school information packet to be available at the Chamber, on the Chamber website or a link to the Springdale schools website with contact information to tour a school.
  - Consider U of A marketing intern to put this project together
- Determine steps already being taken to improve the perception of excellence in our schools:
  - Multi-culturalism is the world we live in today. Aren't you glad your kids are experiencing it now before they enter the real world?
  - PIE – Partners in Education
  - SHS facelift - in progress
- Turn challenges every school faces into opportunities for the future of our city.
  - NCLB
  - Poverty
  - ESL
  - East/West division in the city
- Is the School Board considering a study to review the district zoning?
- Need to get information back from Rick Schaeffer on the "promotional messages" piece.
- Jeff Williams to try and collect city/school demographics from Marsha Jones.
  - Evaluate socio-economic balance. Are perception and reality the same?

Have draft report to Jeff Williams, Jeff Myers and Angie Cooper by 8/5/08.

Finalize draft report to send to committee members by 9/1/08.

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## CityFuture II Image Prioritized Initiatives

### #5 Ballpark Area Branding

Branding planning of area around ballpark with an emphasis needed on interchange located at Oaklawn Avenue

### #6 Streetscape Enhancement

- Whom: City/Chamber support/business community/Springdale Tomorrow
- How: Landscaping, signage, east meets west (local development), education public
- When: 12/31/07 (ordinances) ongoing

### #10 Conduct a Formal Image Survey

- Whom: Chamber of Commerce; A&P Commission; and the City
- How: RFP to professional companies to facilitate a survey of hotel guests as well as local and regional residents
- When: Survey completion 3/1/08

### #12 Public Relations Entity to Promote Sports/Events

- Whom: A&P Commission, Chamber of Commerce, City, NWA Naturals Staff
- How: Must generate additional funds. Hosting regional events, possible restaurant and/or additional occupancy tax
- WHEN: Now. Take to City Council in January 2008

### #13 Maintain the perception (reality) of educational excellence

- Public relations campaign
- Partnership with NTI
- Community partnerships
- Corporate scholarship fund

### #15 Increased Communication/Collaboration

Increase communication and collaboration between city government, citizens, investors and stakeholders

- Establish a professional, interactive city government web site
- Survey citizens, city departments and stakeholders to identify information needs
- Examples: forms, online permit program, registration, etc.