

**Bloomfield Hills Schools  
Community Partnership  
Lighthouse Curriculum Subcommittee  
Meeting Summary for November 29, 2011  
Submitted by Charlie Fleetham, Facilitator**

**Participants:** Howard Baron, Joan Berndt, Ed Bretzlaff, Jacqueline El-Sayed, Chris Fellin, Liz Fellows, Rob Glass, Terry Hall, Brandon Kaufman, Frank Laurinec, Laurie McCarty, Tressa Mucci, Wendy Passer, John Roach, Eric Winkelman

**Desired Outcomes:** At the start of the meeting, the participants confirmed the primary objective of the meeting which was to listen to the results of the school district trips and develop a go-forward plan to complete the analysis and communicate the results to the community.

**Introduction to Trip Report:** Sixteen people, a cross section of the District, visited school districts in SE Michigan and Chicago Land. Rob Glass said that the objectives of the school district trips (see 102511 meeting summary for more background) were as follows:

- Assess how other districts had managed to implement a single high school on multiple campuses.
- Use these assessments to shape “Plan B” (school bond defeated) – with ideas regarding efficiency and academic excellence.
- Identify additional creative ideas that might help the District with “Plan A” (school bond approved).

**Trip Report:** The report (see attached presentation) was delivered by Liz Fellows, Tressa Mucci, and John Roach. The discussion was lively and wide ranging and it was difficult to capture all of the important comments. Please view the below highlights as an incomplete recording of the discussion.

- **Takeaways:**
  1. The strongest buildings featured collaboration, strong leadership, lavish communication, conscious identity building, and alignment between the leaders of the different high school buildings.
  2. It is more difficult to administer two buildings.
  3. Whatever we do, we need to offer more support to ninth graders with their transition into high school. We should start testing all 8<sup>th</sup> graders.
  4. We need to provide more information about Plan B to our parents – the lessons learned on these trips needs to be integrated into our communication process. We need to give the parents confidence in our ability to deliver a great experience, whether it’s a Plan A or Plan B outcome.
  5. It was a good idea to put our students on the team. They helped shape our observations and interacted extensively with the students from the schools we visited.
  6. Scheduling was a critical success factor at the schools we visited and will be one for us: do we offset, stagger or keep current schedules and alter traffic patterns?

- **Preliminary Statements on Preferences (because all visits are not yet completed):**

1. If Plan A (all grades at renovated Andover), transition during the construction period with 10-12 grades at Lahser and a 9<sup>th</sup> grade at Hickory Grove. This preference is based on proximity, as a key learning from the trip was that the closer the “split” facilities the easier the management task and the better it is for the students (less travel because the teachers do the traveling/easier to build relationships between sites).
2. If Plan B, do permanent split with a 9<sup>th</sup> grade and a 10-12 grade configuration at Lahser/Andover (site not specified).
3. A 9/10 and 11/12 configuration was not preferred.

- **Next Steps:**

1. John, Liz and Tressa will write a trip report with a narrative that defines the visitation objectives, the trip team, the sites visited, a summary of findings and recommendation. This report will also include an appendix with a one to two pager on each site visit. The target audience for the report is the community at large.
2. John, Liz, and Tressa will submit a first draft to the visitation team within two to three weeks and then to the Curriculum Subcommittee by the end of the year.
3. The goal is to have a document to post on the website and to translate into the Connections newsletter by mid-January.

- **Report Highlights**

1. The districts visited were driven to split their high schools by either growth or finances. They would have all preferred a single location high school.
2. The visitation team did not have time to investigate the 21<sup>st</sup> century learning experience, as put forth by FNI. Additionally, none of the visited districts had considered a FNI type model, though some of the staff complained that their “cells and bells” facilities were not conducive to collaborative/project learning.
3. The Chicago Land high schools were very large, ranging from 2800 to 4000 plus enrollments. The visitation team liked the “critical mass” that came with these large enrollments - facilitating broader curriculum, more student activities, etc. Also, the team liked the teacher mentoring programs – at one school, teachers were responsible for the 9<sup>th</sup> grade through 12<sup>th</sup> grade walk for up to 25 students and acted as quasi-counselors.
4. None of the Chicago Land schools had IB programs (though of course they had plenty of AP offerings).
5. The Chicago Land high schools were independent districts in their own right, with independent school boards and administration. They had several K-8 districts (also independent) feeding their districts, creating challenges synchronizing students with differing achievement levels. This drove them to strengthen their 9<sup>th</sup> grade assessment programs in order to identify kids who needed remedial work.

6. Nequa Valley (Chicago Land) had a very strong culture and strong messaging that was evident as soon as the team entered the building. This finding was confirmed in conversations with students. Nequa Valley received \$18K per student.
7. New Trier (Chicago Land) had a 4,000 enrollment, received \$23K per student and graduated students with a composite 27.1 ACT score. The visitation team was very impressed with New Trier: strong achievement oriented culture, motivated students, integrated leadership, comprehensive curriculum, student focused staff, layered athletics, etc.
8. Funding in Chicago Land was via property taxes (Michigan's pre-proposal A method).
9. The Chicago Land schools used co-curricular programs to connect multiple sites. Additionally, these schools had one booster organization. Just one! This helped tie the parents together across multiple sites.
10. The visitation team didn't respond positively to the Dakota school (Macomb County). It seemed sterile/dark and the culture didn't appear to be integrated between the two sites. On the other hand, the team had a positive impression of the Clarkston operation – integrated culture and strong identity.

**Conclusion:** The committee congratulated the visitation team on a job well done. The other item on the agenda, discussion on proximity reports, will be covered at the next meeting (to be scheduled).