

Changing School Options transition team begins work

Written by

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MINNEAPOLIS – Minneapolis Public Schools Superintendent William D. Green announced September 23 the establishment of an implementation steering committee and cross-functional working team charged with assisting families during transitions that will result from Changing School Options, a comprehensive plan to create financial sustainability for the Minneapolis Public Schools that was approved by the Board of Education on September 22.

The cross-functional working team has already begun to develop a transition plan to implement throughout the 2009-2010 school year and on through the 2010-2011 school year. A similar team helped students and families make the transitions needed in connection with the North Side Initiative in the 2007-2008 school year.

Delivering superior customer service will be the primary driving force behind the transition team's work, which will include helping families understand the numerous excellent options available to them, evaluate their choices and make informed and thoughtful decisions about what school will be best for their student; seeking school and community input; building community support for each student; and welcoming students to their new school communities.

Jackie Turner, Executive Director of Family Engagement, will serve as Chair of the Cross Functional Working team. Craig Vana, Executive Director of Emergency Management, will lead internal administrative and operations support on the team. Courtney Cushing Kiernat, an active Minneapolis parent volunteer who served as Campaign Chair of the Strong Schools Strong City Referendum and led the effort that passed the referendum with 71 percent approval in the November 2008 election, was selected as project manager. As Board Chair of WomenWinning-Minnesota Women's Campaign Fund and Board Chair of Kenwood School's Site Council, among many other leadership and professional roles, Courtney Cushing Kiernat has established a successful track record in implementing and completing major community-wide programs.

Under Jackie Turner's leadership, the Changing School Options Cross-Functional Working Team has begun the process of working with schools to develop and enhance the materials that will be available to parents in November to help them choose the school option that is best for their student in plenty of time for the School Choice deadline of January 31. School staff, parents, students and community members will all be invited to help decide what kind of support will be most meaningful for that school and its students.

As a first step in retaining current students and attracting new students to the Minneapolis Public Schools, each school will be given a marketing toolkit and training in how to capture the essence of the school's programs, community involvement and unique characteristics.

The Cross-Functional Working Team is developing a detailed work plan designed to reduce disruption and loss of students and to develop optimum support plans for every student, family and school community most affected by the changes. The plan will include specifics in areas such as outreach to principals and individual meetings with school community leadership; leaders in the Latino, Hmong and Somali communities; and legislators and city council members in the most affected areas.

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For more information on options for individual students, parents are encouraged to call (612) 668-1840.