

# Meeting Summary SCPC

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## School Community Partnership Council – District Council General Meeting

**Date:** 2/25/2013

**Location:** Tucson High Magnet School Cafeteria, 400 N. 2<sup>nd</sup> Ave.

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**Call to Order:** Kathy Sutherland, 6:10pm

**Pledge of Allegiance:** Kathy Sutherland

**Attendance:** Kathy Sutherland (Moderator), Michelle Simon (Secretary), Gary Fowler (Co-Moderator), Leo Masursky (Board Liaison) and appointed SCPC members and district representatives (see attendance record).

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**General Welcome** – Kathy Sutherland discussed slight changes to the agenda. Changes should reflect:

- IV State of the District
- V Focus Topics
- VI Questions & Answers
- VII Adjournment

### 1. Dr. Pedicone-State of the District

**Notes:** The presentation began with a review of the topics from the State of the District addresses in 2/2011 and 2/2012. Dr. Pedicone indicated that an overview of the analysis, issues, and focus points from the past would set the stage for the current update. Topics would include:

- Perceptions (Vision statement & values)
- System (Processes & integration)
- Culture (Opportunities & challenges)
- Solutions (Current processes and resolutions)

*Overview of Past Issues:*

**Perceptions:** TUSD has a lack of common vision. TUSD has a poor reputation in the community because of the school strike, desegregation order, discontinuance of Mexican-American studies, and budget problems. TUSD is viewed as a disconnected district.

**System:** The district's inattention to system processes has caused a paralysis. The lack of integration and technology has led to many mistakes. District employees understood their own importance, but failed to comprehend how they affected the system as a whole. This created stress and tension for the system. The lack of consistency and overall ineffectiveness was blamed on the district's size and complexity. TUSD was more of a constellation of silos; school sites were separate and independent from the district office. The lack of checks and balances caused the district revenue and credibility. TUSD was placed under court order to correct budgetary issues that resulted in the implementation of new procurement procedures. The district has met all of the requirements of the consent judgment and has implemented better financial practices through the hard work of the CFO. The future looks much better.

**Culture:** The TUSD culture needed to change. The development of a culture of togetherness required higher expectations and a shared purpose. Gathering community information was very difficult because of the issues with Mexican-American studies. The district worked to create a culture of accountability and interdependency. A new mission statement was created to support the new focus, "Delivering excellence in education everyday. Grow, Reach, Succeed." Every employee affected the system, which in turn, affected processes and student achievement. TUSD evaluated the causes of the poor culture and made decisions for sustainable change. The

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mission, vision, and values for the district can be found at <http://www.tusd1.org/contents/govboard/SectA/A.html>.

*Overview of Current Issues and Solutions:*

## **Evaluation:**

*System Processes:*

TUSD uses the Lawson ERP for system processes. The use of this software program has been discontinued at this time. Bad processes have created a problem that no software program can fix. The district is committed to changing these processes. Currently, there are approximately 120 different processes, with 40 as the top priority. Once the processes have been updated and improved, the district will evaluate the ERP.

*Common Assessment Model:*

The testing before AIMS has differed between school sites. Benchmark tests have been used as a way to assess the need for interventions. The effectiveness of these tests is being assessed. The district is also assessing the effects of the budget and technology on the effectiveness of interventions prior to AIMS.

*School Improvement:*

Rincon and Palo Verde High Schools were turnaround schools that have shown great improvements. Standardized curriculum and instruction have been implemented. The program is research based common core instruction. The teachers have been given professional development on the essential elements of instruction. Common core training is ongoing and integrated through all departments.

Full day kindergarten is fully supported by TUSD. The district is committed to keeping this program intact. Research has shown the relationship between full day kindergarten and long-term school success. This service is important to the future of our district.

*Communication Plan:*

TUSD has developed a targeted marketing strategy that will be implemented in the very near future. Previously, school sites would make decisions that were meant to be good, but caused issues in the long run (no office manager). The district has implemented standards for each site. The implementation of standards and effective strategies has led to a decrease of 41% in the number of D schools and an increase of 30% in B schools. The superintendent has listed the goals for improved student achievement at <http://www.tusd1.org/contents/distinfo/goals/index.asp>.

*Interventions:*

Drop-out prevention and intervention has changed the way they categorize drop-outs. In order for effective strategies to be implemented, students have to be identified early in the process. The evaluation includes looking at the number of credits to pass from one grade to the next (9-10 or 10-11).

*Unitary Status Plan:*

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The plan has been developed in collaboration with the plaintiffs and the courts. Community input helped with the process. The budget was developed in tandem with the current unitary status plan. This process has created a better level of transparency.

## *Technology:*

TUSD has not had eRate money for almost 10 years. Last year, the IT department received eRate money and used it to increase bandwidth in schools and replace 7,300 of the district's oldest computers.

## *School Closures and Customer Service:*

### **School Closures:**

TUSD continues to improve, but must be re-evaluated to include issues with school closures. TUSD has a bond from 2004 for \$235 million dollars for school construction and upgrades. This will be used to make improvements to better our schools and make upgrades to receiving schools. TUSD continues to search for options for the schools that were closed in 2009. Thus far, 4 of the buildings have been disposed of with 5 buildings remaining. The schools to be closed this year will be managed differently. All buildings will be shuttered and secured. All alarms will be in working order and the installation of cameras may be a possibility. The district is looking into the possibility of on-site security. All equipment and valuable materials will be removed from the buildings. The district is working with the city and county to explore the possibility of some type of joint use for the buildings.

The district is taking a project management approach to the school closures. This is a research-based approach that has worked effectively in other school districts across the nation. The TUSD website has detailed information regarding school closures at this link <http://tusd1.org/contents/distinfo/consolidation/index.asp>. This plan will help in the successful transition of teachers and students in the coming school year.

### **Customer Service:**

Student achievement is our priority. The State of Arizona has proposed to give extra money to A & B graded schools. Schools grade C or below will not receive this funding. This means that the schools that need the money the most will not receive it. This money has strings attached. The state will look at "growth" points to determine each school's eligibility for funding. How the state allocates funds directly impacts our ability to provide great customer service.

Changes to the district have required changes to the management of site budgets. Schools will have less discretion and more quality standards with regard to their budgets. Budget, instruction, and curriculum must be evaluated for the appropriate focus. Curriculum must be culturally competent with an increased focus on the common core.

TUSD has created a singular focus for all goals. There is no separation. The goals for 2012-2013 can be found at this link <http://tusd1.org/contents/distinfo/goals/index.asp>. We are not perfect, but we are committed to improving every day.

## *Questions from SCPC members to Dr. Pedicone:*

1. How do we address underperforming schools and the inability to keep them staffed?

**Answer:** We must evaluate the system and look at the penalties that are mandated by the state. We must also provide incentives and support for these teachers. Federal money must be sustained to support this process. We need to be consistent and create a stable environment.

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The district is trying to be creative in how it deals with these schools. We have a lot of hope and we are doing the best we can.

2. As a student, what can I do? I go to a DD graded school where many of the kids don't seem to care.

**Answer:** Encourage your friends to do well in school. Support school initiatives. Be assertive, care about your school, and try hard. Speak up and tell us what your school needs.

3. In this situation, why do the principals and teachers have to "suffer" for the poor performance of students who don't care?

**Answer:** I really can't answer this question. We need to implement a proper system to make changes from the state level down. There is no easy answer. Proficiency was never the charge. The focus was on equality and equity only. Eventually, ownership for proficiency became that of the schools. Parents and students need to take ownership of this.

4. We use standardized assessments and across the country other states are opting out of this type of testing. Will Arizona move this direction?

**Answer:** Probably not. Ancillary testing may be removed, but standardized testing will remain. Dr. Menconi added that quarterly benchmark testing tries to put everyone at the same pace and that is not really a great solution. Teachers and students need to discuss the testing to better prepare them for the process of standardized testing and what is happening so as to improve performance.

5. How do we handle computer-based testing without technology in our schools?

**Answer:** Dr. Menconi identified that paper and computer testing will be available. The state recognizes the problem with computer testing. Only 13% of schools statewide are ready for computer testing. Spring tests will be paper or computer based. The changes in assessments and curriculum will result in lower academic achievement at first. Assessments are of concern, but this is the real world and what we must deal with.

6. What type of situation will TUSD face with the "lay off" of subject matter experts, highly qualified teachers and librarians? These are valuable resources that provide resources, relevance of materials, and help to teachers and students.

**Answer:** The process will be as equitable as possible. There is no clear answer for the difficult decisions that must be made in the future. The personnel issue will be dealt with in a meeting on February 29 and a more comprehensive answer will be forthcoming following that meeting. Discretionary funding will be available to principals and they can use this money to fund librarians. It is hard to create a quality team when each year funding is cut.

7. Teachers hired from outside the district are paid almost 60% more than district teachers with the same tenure. District teachers receive no raises and this is a discouragement for them. Can we stop hiring from outside and fix the problem with the district?

**Answer:** We will do the best we can. There are no positive options for addressing a \$17 million deficit and the points made here are valid. None of this discussion is pleasant and we will do the best we can.

Kathy Sutherland thanked Dr. Pedicone for his address and expressed the gratitude of the SCPC. The CFO was unable to attend to address specific issues with the TUSD budget.

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## 2. TUSD Unitary Plan

**Notes:** Sam Brown, Director of Desegregation, provided the group with an overview of the Unitary Plan and the process involved. TUSD was sued by two minority families and the case was settled in 1978. As a condition of the settlement, TUSD had to provide a plan that addressed diversity and equity of access while under court supervision. The following is a breakdown of areas addressed by the initial Unitary Plan:

- Phases of bilingual education for minorities
- Magnet schools and AP courses
- Diversity in schools and equal access to quality education
- Poverty/cultural issues

In January, the Unitary Plan was approved by the court and partial implementation will begin over the next year. The plan will be fully implemented by the 2014-2015 school year. The implementation will be a project management approach much like that of the School Master Plan. This process provides structure and we will implement 100% of this plan.

The big points of the plan are accountability and transparency. The Unitary Plan budget is \$63 million and will be used in an integrated manner with other funds to provide appropriate services. Desegregation projects presented by schools must have family engagement as a component. The Unitary Plan and Title I will work together to provide services. This is a holistic approach.

Schools are required to report out. The Unitary Plan webpage will have portals for school use that include allocations, expense, and results reporting. Schools will apply for funds and provide justification. There is an approval process with the requirement of mid and end year reporting. Money expended will result in results by following the evaluation process.

Over the past year, the plan has helped to implement AP/PreAP/GATE programs, increased recruiting of students through the use of a video created by TUSD. 3,900 students have seen this video and people are being directed to the resources needed to make good decisions. District personnel are going out and talking to kids and parents.

Grant tracker software has been implemented and data collection will be used to continue the process of school improvement and equity in education. One of the goals is to expand the AVID program which helps kids who are in the "middle of the road" to perform better in schools. The study skills component of the program helps the kids prepare for more rigorous classes. AVID is identified as a research best practice.

The court approval process continues with the closure of schools and the construction projects needed for receiving schools. The school closures have been approved by the court, but the construction projects must still be presented for approval. Continual analysis of integration and its impact on programs is carefully deliberated. Court approval erodes district authority, but TUSD sees this not as a burden, but as an opportunity for improvement.

It is important to be transparent in this process. The OCR agreements in 1984 dealt with Native American students and the Unitary Plan deals with Hispanic and African American students. Race and ethnicity are highly charged topics and the district is working toward a comprehensive plan for the good of all students.

TUSD has an opportunity. What about Mexican American Studies? Culturally relevant instruction is a good thing. Under the Unitary Plan, we are evaluating the curriculum and monitoring for success. The staff wants to make it work. We are looking at what can be more efficient or help the most students. The difference in what existed and what will be implemented will be an improvement. We must be self-critical and look at the curriculum and support services to develop a comprehensive plan.

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One effective tool for desegregation is the magnet system. The Unitary Plan identifies the use of magnet schools as a means to reduce desegregation. In 2011, TUSD did a magnet review for improvement. Currently, pipelines are being set up to support this in the form of K-12 streams.

We are currently addressing the issue of having kids in portables. The desegregation plan calls for no students in portable buildings. The answer to this issue will be forthcoming.

Kathy Sutherland thanked Sam for his presentation and update of the Unitary Plan. She reminded attendees that a person does not have to be a member to attend the SCPC meetings. This group is a voice for the community and the information is reported to the TUSD board. Input is valued by SCPC. The next meeting SCPC will ask Board President Grijalva to address the group. Also, the TUSD CFO will discuss the budget and individuals from the original desegregation claim will talk with SCPC.

**Meeting Adjourned: 7:45pm (Kathy Sutherland)**

**Summary prepared by:** Michelle Simon, 3/5/2013

**Summary Approved:**