

ADVISORY TASK FORCE ENLISTS COMMUNITY

Across the nation, public education has faced severe challenges due to shrinking revenue and escalating expenses. Southfield Public Schools has not been exempt from these issues, but continues to hold fast to our commitment to provide an excellent academic experience for each student in our district. To ensure this tradition continues, Southfield Public Schools convened a Citizens Advisory Task Force during the first quarter of the year to address program quality, fiscal stability and building configurations. Historically, the district has convened a task force at strategic moments to safeguard academic quality and financial solvency. The Task Force was comprised of parents, residents, elected officials, business owners and community members.

The findings and recommendations of the Task Force were initially presented at the March 10 Southfield Public Schools Board Meeting and then shared at a dozen community and staff meetings in March and April, led by Superintendent Dr. Lynda Wood and the administration. The meetings gave the community an opportunity to ask questions, gain insight and share feedback. The following is a summary of the Task Force's recommendations.

Finances

- Finance long-term assets with long-term sources of funding.
- Refinance the 2003 Bond Issue. Plan new bond issue (that would not increase current millage rate) to reduce capital expenses from the General Fund.
- Close/sell building(s) only when it makes good financial sense. Use funds from sale for capital projects. (Because bond funds were used at Schoenhals, state law requires proceeds only be used for capital projects.)

- Create combined hybrid classrooms, live monitoring and on-line instruction.
- Finance vocational studies via outside resources, such as partnerships and alliances with trade and technical schools.

Program Initiatives

- Investigate creation of new programs to grow enrollment and use surplus (existing) space. The addition of grades 13 and 14 (community college). Partner with local colleges and businesses to add skilled trades programs such as welding, electrical, plumbing, HVAC and technical.
- Enhance the math and science curriculum.
- Perform a cost/benefit analysis on magnet programs to determine if they are meeting original goals.
- Reinstate Parenting University or parenting workshops.
- Investigate retaining extracurricular activities and programs by combining/consolidating programs and schools.

Building Configurations

- Do not close any current facilities as cost savings is minimal and may result in decreased enrollment due to eroding state school aid.
- Create tuition-based Pre-K program at Eisenhower School
- Sell Schoenhals School for new housing, re-purpose Leonard School, and partner with city or other entities for programming
- Level out the enrollments at Levey and Brace-Lederle by moving grades 6-8 from Brace-Lederle School to Levey, and turn Brace-Lederle into a K-5 school.
- Expand UHSA to create University Prep Program K-12 (or K-14), and relocate to Southfield-Lathrup High School.
- Consolidate Southfield and Southfield-Lathrup High Schools at the Southfield High School facility.

These recommendations are being reviewed by Southfield Public Schools' administration and the Board of Education. The recommendations have not been approved. Please visit our website at southfield.k12.mi.us, Facebook and Twitter for regular communications updates regarding the Task Force's recommendations.



Dr. Lynda Wood addresses the community.