

**FINNEYTOWN LOCAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
Special Meeting, April 10, 2024
Brent Elementary Conference Room
8791 Brent Drive
Cincinnati, OH 45231
6:00pm**

The Finneytown Board of Education met in special session on Wednesday, April 10, 2024, in the Brent Elementary Conference Room, 8791 Brent Drive, Cincinnati, OH 45231. Ms. Lee, Ms. McMullen, Mr. Plaut and Mr. Rea were present. The President called the meeting to order at 6:02pm.

34-24 Ms. McMullen moved, seconded by Mr. Plaut, that the Board approved the minutes from the regular meeting of March 18, 2024. The President declared the motion passed.

Discussion – Strategic Planning

Mr. Tom Burton and Ms. Mari Phillips of We Empower, led the following discussion:

- Finneytown Local School District strategic plan community input was significantly larger than that obtained by most other districts.
- There was a high degree of alignment and congruence in the themes shared among a wide range of students, community, staff and the Board of Education.
- The positive perception and value uniformly placed on the district's diversity by all groups surveyed is one of the things that jumped out the most.
- A first draft of the strategic plan was reviewed, complete with mission, vision, core beliefs, three (3) focus areas and three (3) underlying detailed strategies.
- Elements of the strategic plan were analyzed, unpacked, and debated for content, clarity, depth of meaning, specificity and overlooked items.
- Mr. Burton remarked that the Finneytown vision – To foster a community of learning and belonging – was as unique as he has ever seen.
- While attempting to avoid wordsmithing, some selection of choice words was discussed, such as empower vs. inspire, with the former prevailing in that case for its greater breadth, belonging vs. ownership, unlearning vs. rethinking, etc.
- The board decided that the core beliefs could be better presented in narrative form, as a letter to the community, than as a bullet point list.
- At the focus and strategy level, the plan is uber measurable, replete with a bevy of goals, measurements, and progress monitoring protocols, that build on one another and hold the district accountable.
- Board members asked for more information on how the measurements hold people accountable.
- Board members expressed their desire for greater emphasis and integration within the strategic plan on academic achievement (particularly math and literacy) and outside of the classroom (cocurricular and extracurricular) engagement. Middle school extracurricular sports were pointed out as current weaknesses.
- Board members asked how the strategic plan is being designed to bridge the gap between goals being met in the form of well-planned district initiatives that fail to make a real difference for students and families (breakdowns in awareness, communication, perceived need or value, non-attendance).

- Board members asked how the strategic plan will get new people and populations more highly engaged and involved in our schools and support organizations. We like to talk about “belonging” but how many consistently feel it?
- It was explained that the strategic plan is a living, breathing document, that should be refined to be effective. The district already has baseline data for many of the measures. This will be more quickly allow trends to be recognized.
- Board members suggested a possible disconnect between the strategic plan, as ultra technical, and the (non-educator) public. Mr. Burton countered that it must be if it is to work, when carried out by professional administration and staff. It will be the job of the Board and administration to explain the strategic plan understandably in layman terms.
- The Board wanted to know how the strategic plan supports individualized student learning, not wanting any students to fall through the cracks.
- Mr. Burton and Ms. Phillips promised to review the Board’s comments and feedback and present a second draft for further review next week.

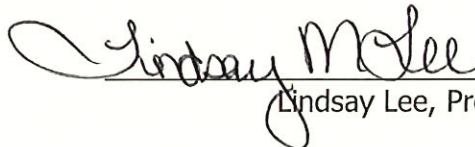
Discussion – Beyond Differences

Mr. Scott Myer and Ms. Kelly Lynch, co-chairs for the Beyond Differences Finneytown Committee, participated in the following discussion with the Board:

- The Board created the Beyond Differences Finneytown Committee last year to learn what they didn’t know about the district’s diverse populations.
- The committee’s first major project was a comprehensive community survey.
- Many insightful comments and perspectives were obtained from the survey and presented to the Board of Education last November.
- Major themes emerging from the survey included:
 - Disciplinary issues in schools are a major concern.
 - The staff’s minority composition is not representative of the student population. Why have efforts to recruit and retain minorities been unsuccessful?
 - Effective ways to invite, connect with, and involve new people and minority populations in our existing school support organizations.
 - Racial and minority groups had a significantly higher positive perception of the district than all other respondent categories. The committee found this very encouraging.
 - World Culture Night is by far the marquee event, most appreciated by those surveyed.
- Following collection, analysis and report on the results of the community survey, the committee hasn’t been quite sure what direction to take.
- Monthly meetings are held once a month. There are 8-10 non-school related participants attending these meetings.
- There is a broader group of up to 50 individuals that, while not able to participate in monthly meetings, are interested in participating in less frequent, special activities or events.
- The current focus of the committee has been brainstorming to define its mission, find its niche in relationship to the school district’s work, and identify activities and/or programming that will benefit the diverse makeup of the Finneytown community.

- The Board shared the following activities and/or programming as avenues for a growing partnership with the Beyond Differences Committee:
 - All efforts to supporting the school in its efforts to build community engagement.
 - The possible planning of bi-monthly events, hosted on topics of interest and need.
 - Opening communication channels; help with publicity; getting new people involved.
- Other ideas for building community engagement included:
 - Providing more low risk engagement activities that are designed to be: casual, relaxed, anonymous, highly social, low pressure, interesting, fun and from which a person can come or leave freely.
 - Social media engagement opportunities are often perceived as lower risk engagement to participants.
 - More one-time event volunteer opportunities, in place of long-term commitments, roles or positions within organizations.
- The co-chairs expressed their appreciation for the discussion and felt greater clarity in their role moving forward.

35-24 There being no further business, Mr. Rea moved, seconded by Mr. Plaut, that the meeting be adjourned. The president declared the meeting adjourned at 7:58pm.



Lindsay Lee, President

ATTEST:



David L. Oliverio, Treasurer

