Acknowledgments

The Executive Board and Members of Three Rivers Chapter XIV wish to acknowledge and express gratitude for the financial contributions donated by the Grable Foundation, Phi Delta Kappa International, and District VI which helped to make this project a reality.

Appreciation is extended to Mr. Jack Jennings for his leadership and service as Facilitator.

Extra support in the planning and implementation of this project merits special thanks to Rita Bean, Judith De Angelis, and Chris Miller of the University of Pittsburgh, the Mon Valley Education Consortium (MVEC), the Allegheny Intermediate Unit (AIU), Pittsburgh City Schools, the Pittsburgh Federation of Teachers (PFT), the Parent Teachers Association (PTA), and the Pennsylvania State Education Association (PSEA). We were also fortunate to have the support of Janice Wampler and the staff at PDK International who generously provided guidance and pertinent materials for our forum.

We are deeply indebted for the consultation and direction provided by the following past forum leaders who so willingly shared their expertise: Lillian Lowery (George Mason University); Margaret Mangini (Arizona State University); Doreen Ross (University of Florida); and Sandy Zelno (Mon Valley Education Consortium).

Certainly, we were privileged to have those individuals who served so faithfully on the Steering Committee, as well as those who assisted as Facilitators, Recorders, Tally Team and Go-Team members. In addition, we must extend our profound thanks to the participants representing the health care field, students, foundations, school boards, government, business and industry, parents, civic and community organizations, private, public, charter, home and university educators, administrators, the legal community, minorities, religious leaders, service clubs, unions, and the media. Without these groups of individuals this Public School Forum would not have been possible.

Acknowledgment is given to Mr. Al Lowe who candidly reported on the Forum as well as Mr. Allen Backler and his staff who created a video recording of the event.

Finally, recognition is given to the writer of this report, Ada F. Petrun, and to Dr. Nancy Costanzo who compiled the material herein. Special recognition must also be given to Ms. Dee Hoffman, Mr. Van Hughes, and Dr. Kenneth Metz who collaborated with them in the development of this document.
Steering Committee Report

The Forum entitled - A Public Forum: Public Schools in the 21st Century was sponsored by Three Rivers, Chapter 14 PDK in collaboration with the University of Pittsburgh, School of Education. The forum was conducted on Thursday, May 6, 1999 at the Pittsburgh Federation of Teachers Building from 4:00 - 8:30 p.m. The two Project Directors were Ada F. Petrun and Dr. Kenneth Metz. This report was forwarded to PDK International as the Final Report for the District VI Grant.

The purpose of this Forum was to gather a representative group of community members to address the following questions:

1. What are the purposes of public schools?
2. How effective are public schools in achieving those purposes?
3. What changes are necessary in public schools to attain excellence in achieving those purposes?

The intent of the Forum was to encourage participants to examine and discuss these questions thoughtfully in small group settings in an effort to reach agreement as to the problems existing and the proposed action needed to correct each problem.

The Forum was designed so that learning and decision-making would occur in a specified sequence. An important component was to have many different viewpoints represented by bringing in people from all walks of life. There were 118 participants who represented a variety of experiences and perspectives within the community. The following groups were represented: private school, public school, charter school, home school, and university educators and administrators; Teacher Associations (PFT/PSEA); Educational Foundations/Consortiums; members of the business and legal communities; social service and health providers; parents; community activists; minority participants; religious leaders; students; service clubs; government officials (city, county, state); school board; PTA (local, state, national) and the media (radio, newspaper, TV). (See Appendix I). There was an effort made to keep the public school educator participants to one-fourth of the invitees.

Dee Hoffman, President of Three Rivers Chapter 14, opened the Forum by welcoming everyone in attendance (see Appendix II for the Schedule of Activities). She stressed the challenge of involving our citizens in the worthy cause of improving public education. She felt that implementing a plan for a public Forum was one effective method to gain meaningful public support in the quest for advocacy of and excellence in public education.
Mr. John F. (Jack) Jennings, Director of the Center on Education Policy in Washington, DC, served as the moderator. He was responsible for time management; monitored and supervised all activities; and worked with Forum participants in an effort to achieve consensus on the questions considered. He challenged the group to come up with suggested changes for public education that (1) cost money and (2) do not cost money.

A tally team consisting of six staff members from the Mon Valley Education Consortium tallied results from the Gallup Poll as well as from Section 1: The Purposes of Public Schools, Section 2: Effectiveness of Public Schools, and Section 3: Changes Needed in Public Schools. Overhead transparencies were prepared from each of these aforementioned topics and given to the moderator who projected them on the screen at the appropriate time for participant viewing.

Participants received relevant information as well as a Gallup Poll to be completed and submitted to the tally team when they arrived at the Forum. As they checked in at the registration table, nametags with designated table numbers and packets of materials to be utilized for the evening were presented to them. Appendix III reflects the local results of the Gallup Poll and compares local responses to national results.

Participants were assigned by the Forum Directors to small groups. There were six participants, a facilitator and recorder at each table to achieve a balance of educators and non-educators.

FACILITATORS, comprised of PDK members, led the small groups in discussions, tried to involve each participant in the discussion, and helped the group reach consensus on each question.

RECORDERS, comprised of graduate students from the University of Pittsburgh as well as other PDK Members, listened to discussions and maintained notes. Log sheets were collected from each table and responses were tallied for the report. A Forum reporter was paid to sum up the highlights and major consensus results that were received from the tally team. Then several members of the steering committee compiled a final report using this data and other information generated from discussion by the group.

Through the efforts of the steering committee who attended regularly scheduled meetings over the period of approximately one year, all of the details of the Forum were meticulously developed and set forth in an action plan. Potential attendees were identified and letters of invitation were mailed from Pitt (350 potential participants); committees were formed for food; donations; finance (treasurer); personnel; registration; logistics; media contacts; and selection of a reporter. A Go-Team was set up to take care of any needed amenities at the Forum. Members of the Steering Committee included leaders from PFT, PSEA, Mon Valley Education Consortium; University of Pittsburgh School of Education; Allegheny Intermediate Unit, Pittsburgh City Schools, and Chapter 14 PDK.

Thanks to the Executive Director of PFT, Mr. John Tarka, we were able to use the
Pittsburgh Federation of Teachers Building for most of our meetings. Dr. Kenneth Metz, Dean of Education, University of Pittsburgh provided not only materials but also help from his staff (Rita Bean, Judith DeAngelis and Chris Miller). The Grable Foundation contributed generous funding to provide dinner for the participants and to cover other miscellaneous expenses. The $1,000 grant from District VI helped Chapter 14 defray expenses, such as, instructional and office supplies, phone calls, postage, and printing.

Last, but not least, PDK International served as a valuable mentor in developing this Public school Forum. Janice Wampler from International made sure we were sent manuals, booklets, and other pertinent forms to be included in packets for the participants, i.e., The Gallup Poll, Purposes of Public Education, Effectiveness of Public Schools, and Changes Needed in Public Schools. Three videographers were sent to record all the details and happenings of the Forum. In addition to all this, we were given $500 for any other needed expenditures.

Three Rivers Chapter 14 Phi Delta Kappa views this forum as the beginning step in examining the purposes, effectiveness and needed changes in public education. Raw data collected from participants on the purposes, effectiveness, and needed changes are presented in Appendices IV through VI. Each appendix is composed of the consensus statements from participant discussion, notes and quotes from participants and overhead summary notes from the moderator, Jack Jennings. A summary table of participant evaluations is presented in Appendix VII. Readers are encouraged to view raw data as those of us in Chapter 14 have done, draw conclusions, and if so inspired, act upon data of participant responses. A candid view of the event as observed by Mr. Al Lowe, a freelance reporter, follows.

Report by Mr. Al Lowe

“Hardly a week goes by without a newspaper report on the sorry condition of American Education. These negative reports have shaken support for public education,” so said Dee Hoffman, president of Three Rivers Chapter, Phi Delta Kappa, during her opening remarks of an educational forum on May 6, 1999. The public Forum titled, “Public Schools in the 21st Century,” was sponsored by Three Rivers, Phi Delta Kappa, in collaboration with the University of Pittsburgh School of Education. It was held in the Pittsburgh Federation of Teachers Building on South 19th Street in Pittsburgh, Pa. “Remember, it is important to listen to the thoughts of others, then move to a consensus.” Ms. Hoffman continued, “Thanks for taking an evening to do something worthwhile for your communities.” She then introduced John F. (“Jack”) Jennings, the moderator, for the night’s session. He is the Director of the Center on Education Policy in Washington, D. C.

“This is not an advocacy event," Mr. Jennings said. “Many people think that the public schools are not as good as they ought to be.” He explained that the various group discussions that night would focus on three questions:

1. What are the purposes of public school education?
2. How effective are they in achieving those purposes?
3. What changes are needed to achieve excellence in education?

He said there had been a great effort to bring together people of varying points of view. “There is a mix of people at each table. We need you to come to a conclusion based on what you have said.”

Background

All communities face the challenge of engaging the public in the schools. To overcome this apathy, it is critical to provide a mechanism through which the public may voice both their satisfaction and concerns with public education. Conducting a public forum is one effective way in which the public can be heard and provide meaningful support as an advocate of public education.

In 1998, Phi Delta Kappa International, the National PTA and the Center on Education Policy entered into a partnership to host a series of public forums. The intent was to encourage participants to examine educational purposes; effectiveness and changes needed to achieve excellence in the schools. Discussion to assist people to learn comes first. Next, participants try to reach tentative decisions with other people. After all this, individuals must make personal decisions.

After the Executive Board of Three Rivers Chapter 14 voted to hold a public forum, a steering committee was formed. PDK International has been very supportive of the efforts and provided a data-driven format for the forum, along with $500 to help defray the costs. There were generous grants of: $1,000 from District VI PDK and $2,500 from the Grable Foundation. The steering committee worked for over a year on the project and invited 20% educators and 80% noneducators (union leaders, political leaders, students, parents, PTA, the religious sector, health care workers, industry leaders, foundation representatives, service clubs, etc.). PDK members feel that public engagement is a time consuming but exciting exercise in democracy.

Purposes of Education

“Public schools provide excellent learning experiences for every youngster. People aren’t bad when you get to know them,” one of the participants, Niles Norman, a Rotary representative, said during his table’s discussion regarding purposes of education. Indeed, during overall discussion, the groups determined that one of the key purposes of education was: Equity for all so that all schools can provide a high quality education for every student.

This demands the promotion of diversity, respect and tolerance of gender, race and culture by teachers and students. Also important was preparing students for responsible, productive citizenship and imbuing them with values common to one democratic society. They should be encouraged to be lifelong learners. One question argued during a discussion group was “Where do we stop accepting responsibility for parents?” A facilitator looked at the roster of purposes his group came up with and asked then: “What would you
take off the plate?” But, finally, the groups decided it was crucial to ensure student academic success by providing: basic education, vocational training or preparation for college, and preparation to compete in a global economy. Schools must deal with social issues that impact learning and place emphasis on socialization skills.

Conclusion

The participants have identified four basic purposes:

1) To prepare children to be good citizens
2) To prepare children for life
3) To educate all children
4) To teach children basic skills

In other parts of the country where similar forums have been held, participants have reached agreement on the same purposes.

Effectiveness of Public Schools

First the facilitators asked each participant at the table to gauge the effectiveness of the school district where he or she lived. The response from Bethel Park School Director Dick Rose was that his district was “extremely effective: with most students, including special education students.” But he noted that there were students who were in school “because Mom and Dad made them come.” Mr. Rose said, “We don’t push hard enough for those kids.” The facilitators then concentrated on soliciting responses from participants regarding how schools could demonstrate their effectiveness. According to the groups’ consensus, schools are effective if: they improve achievement, have successful graduates, become safe havens and have teachers connect with students. It was mentioned during several group discussions that schools are effective if: they provide skills for employment and staff development, reduce class size, and encourage community involvement.

An effective school has good government and quality leaders, high community expectations, an adequate tax base, and an accountability to all.

Conclusions

The local response to the Gallup Poll suggests that the participants in the Pittsburgh forum were generally more satisfied with the effectiveness of public education than the national average. Local respondents were asked to grade their local schools.

In the forum 69% would give it an A or B. On the national level only 46% would give it that high a grade.

Change Needed in Public Schools
During one group’s discussion of changes needed in public schools, the members were surprised at the number of ways a student suggested as to how time could be used more effectively.

Moderator Jack Jennings challenged the groups to come up with suggested changes for public education that 1) cost money and 2) have no monetary cost.

Under the “cost money scenario” one group proposed what they described as an “alarm system” that would identify troubled children and assist them. “Something needs to be done now, so we do not experience what Columbine has just gone through,” the recorder wrote.

Popular, if costly, changes proposed by several groups included reducing class size and upgrading staff development. However, one group thought better staff would not cost more money if the best possible teacher was hired for every available job.

One controversial proposal was to provide year round schooling.

Among the ideas for cost-free improvement were: redesigning the school day for better use of time; fostering a nurturing and caring environment; mentoring by retired or active community members; and “just being nicer and more sensitive.”

Conclusion

The reason for distinguishing between recommendations that cost money and those that do not is to show that many popular ideas had financial implications and to examine how many things could be accomplished without financial resources.

Adjournment

Moderator Jack Jennings thanked the participants and asked them to continue the discussion in their own communities.

President Dee Hoffman concluded, “The energy in this room was exhilarating!”

Reflections

When members of the Executive Board of Three Rivers Chapter 14 PDK decided to sponsor a public school forum, they did not begin to realize the extensive time commitment and exhausting work that would be involved in such a project. Great effort was put forth by the Steering Committee in the planning and development of this forum. It was fortunate that we had the cooperation of school districts, universities, teacher associations, the business sector, and various community agencies. The support of PDK International, the excellent leadership of our moderator, Jack Jennings, the generous grants from the Grable Foundation and District VI all contributed toward the success of this endeavor. Despite all
the hard work, members of the Steering Committee, other volunteers, and participants came away feeling it was all worthwhile.

We learned many important facts and lessons from this forum. First, we learned that individuals really do want to meet with fellow citizens of diverse backgrounds and different points of view to discuss important issues such as the future of public schools. Since society provides few opportunities for group interaction of this sort, it gave us a good feeling that we could offer this kind of experience. It was wonderful to witness the overwhelming satisfaction gained by the participants as they conversed with each other and reached consensus on how to make schools better. They agreed that holding forums like this one in communities across the nation would bring about better public schools.

Many participants stressed the fact that expectations for students are getting higher, both from the parents and business community. Our world has become more competitive. We have to deal with the reality that we are competing in a world market, and the education system has to get better. The majority of participants felt that mediocrity was not acceptable and change needed to occur. There was a feeling of frustration as to how to bring about changes needed and how the results of the forum would be used. All of those present agreed that follow-up was needed if suggestions were to be realized.

We were impressed with people’s understanding that schools should not only teach the basics, but also play a role in developing citizenship in the broad sense. Children need to be taught how to get along better with people in the home and community, find and keep a job, manage conflict, be a good parent, handle budgetary matters, and recognize the real meaning of life. News media and politicians need to be aware and understand this as well as the average citizen. In fact, it was proposed that ongoing discussions need to be developed between educators and policy makers in an effort to avert misconceptions about schools by various facets of the public.

One major accomplishment was that some went away better informed and with a clearer view of the public schools. This should lead to greater support for public education. How well the public schools educate children will largely determine the future of our society. It is time for state and local leaders to respond to the call for improvement in public schools.

The majority of participants felt the forum left them better informed about the state of public schools. Ninety-six percent of respondents indicated that the forum would be a good thing to do in communities across the nation. Eighty-seven percent of respondents felt that forums such as this could lead to improvement in public schools and 95% of respondents would recommend the forum to others. When asked for suggestions for strengthening future forums, comments generally focused on expanding the base of participants to include more students, board members, businesses, community organizations, and religious leaders. While this was the intent and goal of the Steering Committee to have the ratio of educators to community members be 20:80, it was difficult to generate the interest and commitment of non-educators. Those planning future forums would be advised to devote great effort to attain this balance. Other suggestions focused on allowing more time
to address solutions to the many problems identified within or faced by our public schools. The members of Three Rivers Chapter 14 recognize this and hope that others will now take the information gathered from this forum and proceed forward toward identifying and implementing solutions.

As indicated above, there was an overwhelming desire to have more community forums. It was further proposed that future ones include a diversified range of participants, be regionalized, focus on more specific topics, and have more discussion on how to implement changes. Some specific topics set forth were equity in funding education, establishing school-community partnerships, and identifying staff development strategies of no cost. Participants were emphatic that action should result from this forum. They believed that activities such as this should be held throughout the nation. It was thought that we should act now, publicize, and present the results to legislators in order to capitalize on the networking that has taken place.

The forum adjourned on a positive note. Realizing that people really do want the public schools to succeed, we feel very hopeful about the future of public education. It is our vision that the hard work involved will not have been in vain if the activity created and the achievements attained through this forum continue. For this to be a true success, it must be carried forth by other individuals, school districts, foundations, school boards, and civic organizations. Local media coverage related to this event is included in Appendix VIII. This report will be sent to all participants. Pertinent details regarding this project will appear in the PDK newsletter that is mailed to our 625 members. Allen Backler and his staff from PDK International have produced and sent us a video depicting the highlights of this event. In addition, we will seek to publicize this forum in any other way possible.

Should anyone reading this report be interested in fostering improved changes in the public schools, you should contact the directors, Ada Petrun or Dr. Kenneth Metz, at the University of Pittsburgh (412-648-1773). We extend our heartfelt thanks to each and every one who contributed time and effort for this Public School Forum!

Schedule of Activities
Three Rivers, Phi Delta Kappa
in collaboration with
The University of Pittsburgh - School of Education
presents

A Public Forum
PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Thursday, May 6, 1999
4:00 pm - 8:30 pm
Pittsburgh Federation of Teachers Building
10 South 19th Street - Pittsburgh, PA

Moderator:
Jack Jennings
Center on Education Policy

Schedule of Activities

4:00 pm Registration
4:30 pm Welcome and Introductions
Dee Hoffman, President
Three Rivers Chapter, Phi Delta Kappa

Moderator: Jack Jennings, Director
Center on Education Policy

4:45 pm SESSION 1 - PURPOSES OF EDUCATION
5:30 pm Dinner
6:00 pm SESSION 2 - EFFECTIVENESS OF PUBLIC SCHOOLS
6:45 pm SESSION 3 - CHANGES NEEDED IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS
7:30 pm REACHING CONSENSUS/SUMMARY OF FORUM
8:00 pm EVALUATION AND DISCUSSION OF FOLLOW-UP EFFORTS
8:20 pm Closing Remarks and Acknowledgments
8:30 pm Adjournment

We would like to acknowledge the generous support of the Grable Foundation, and to extend special thanks to Rita Bean, Judith DeAngelis, and Chris Miller of the University of Pittsburgh, the Mon Valley Education Consortium, the Allegheny Intermediate Unit, Pittsburgh City Schools, the Pittsburgh Federation of Teachers, the Parent Teachers Association, and the Pennsylvania State Education Association. We are grateful for the grant from District VI PDK. Also, we are truly indebted to Janice Wampler and the staff at PDK International for their guidance, materials furnished, and financial assistance.
Gallup Poll Results

Students are often given the grades A, B, C, D and Fail to denote the quality of their work. Suppose the public schools themselves, in your community, were graded in the same way. What grade would you give the public schools in your community?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>National</th>
<th>Forum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A or B</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D or Below</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Students are often given the grades A, B, C, D and Fail to denote the quality of their work. Suppose the public schools themselves, in your community, were graded in the same way. What grade would you give the national schools in your community?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>National</th>
<th>Forum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A or B</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D or Below</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How strongly committed do you think each of the following people is to improving education in the public schools in your community? National (1996 data)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Person</th>
<th>National</th>
<th>Forum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Governor</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The State Legislature</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Superintendent</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local School Board</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Public School Teachers</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A proposal has been made that would allow parents to send their school-age children to any public, private, or church-related school they choose. For those parents choosing non-public schools, the government would pay all or part of the tuition. Would you favor or oppose this proposal in your state?

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>National</th>
<th>Forum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Favor</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oppose</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In order to improve public education in America, some people think the focus should be on reforming the existing public system. Others believe the focus should be on finding an alternative to the existing public school system. Which approach do you think is preferable-reforming the existing public school system, or finding an alternative to the existing public school system?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>National</th>
<th>Forum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Favor reform</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Find an alternative</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Recently, there has been a movement toward home schools: that is, situations in which parents keep their children at home to teach the children themselves. Do you think this movement is a good thing, or a bad thing, for the nation?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>National</th>
<th>Forum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bad</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In your opinion, is it a desirable goal to have persons from the different races and ethnic groups that
make up the U.S. population represented in the student body of a public school, or not?  
National Forum  
Yes 83% 89%  

Would you favor or oppose a requirement for high school graduation that all students in the local public schools perform some kind of community service?  
National Forum  
Favor 66% 81%  

What effect do you feel having a part-time outside school job has on the academic achievement of students in public schools in this community? Generally speaking, do you feel having a part-time job improves their academic achievement, hurts their academic achievement, or do you feel it does not affect their academic achievement one way or the other?  
National Forum  
Improves 29% 24%  
Hurts 32% 43%  
Doesn’t affect 35% 25%  

In your opinion, is there too much emphasis on achievement testing in public schools in this community, not enough emphasis on testing, or about the right amount?  
National Forum  
Too much 20% 44%  
Not enough 28% 15%  
About right 48% 39%  

People in some communities say the local public schools are infringing on the rights of parents to direct their children’s education. In your opinion, are the public schools in your community infringing on the rights of local parents to direct their children’s education or not?  
National Forum  
Yes 24% 13%  
No 71% 83%  

If you were asked, would you be willing to work as an unpaid volunteer in any of the public schools in this community, or not?  
National Forum  
Yes 69% 73%  

During the school year, on average, about how many hours a week do you help your oldest child with his or her homework?  
National Forum  
None 13% 15%  
Less than one hour 5% 15%  
One to less than two hours 12% 7%  
Less than three hours 12% 3%  
Less than four hours 9% 0%  
Less than five hours 8% 0%  
Less than six hours 14% 3%  
Six hours or more 25% 5%  
Undesignated 2% 50%  

Do you think the school curriculum in your community needs to be changed to meet today’s needs, or do
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>National</th>
<th>Forum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>you think it already meets today’s needs?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Needs to be changed</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Already meets needs</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’d like your opinion about extracurricular activities, such as school band, sports, dramatics, and the school newspaper. How important are these to a young person’s education-very important, fairly important, not too important, or not at all important?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very important</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairly important</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not too important</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What do you think are the biggest problems with which the public schools of your community must deal?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of discipline/more control</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of financial support</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of drugs/dope</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fighting/violence/gangs</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overcrowded schools</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standards/quality of education</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pupil’s lack of interest</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty getting good teachers</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government/mandates/politics</td>
<td></td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental involvement</td>
<td></td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social issues</td>
<td></td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of respect</td>
<td></td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People have different ideas as to which constitute the so-called basic subjects in school. Would you name the school subjects that you consider to be the basics?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History/U. S. Government</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Studies</td>
<td></td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer/Technology</td>
<td></td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign Language</td>
<td></td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Education</td>
<td></td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Purposes of Public Education

Discussion Group Consensus

Teach basics—reading, writing, and math. Learn how to think Educate the public free Transfer of culture Cultivate gifts and talents of students Other ideas: Build sense of community, access teaching which society feels is important, preparing for success, skill acquisition, perpetuate sense of hope, balance individualism with sense of values, equalize opportunities, foster mobility, address conflict resolution

Public schools offer the opportunity to all children Democracy requires education of all people. Preparing for life, vocation, responsible world citizenship

Provide children with self esteem, self worth and self-respect for appreciation of all! Extend the concept of “it takes a community to raise a child”. Has a responsibility to academically educate students and prepare them socially for a diverse workforce in meeting the current and future labor needs. Note: Issue of “spiritual hold” work ethics-lack of caring/disloyalty and security were discussed

To provide basic skills and make citizens life-long learners To improve society (everyone) by ensuring adequacy of educational opportunities To instill the vision that education provides opportunity for life success To build a sense of community through developing mutual respect

To prepare and educate all children to be contributing members of a global society To teach all children basic communication skills-math, reading, social studies To promote democratic principles To provide equity and resources and opportunities for all students To deal with societal issues and pressures that impact upon a child’s learning

Produce adults who can read and write and take care of themselves Produce responsible problem solving citizens Meet the needs of all students Educate about diversity-gender, race, religion Be an alarm system for parents providing support for families/communities

To create/develop responsible contributing members of society To promote cultural diversity, tolerance, and respect (socialization) To enable students to achieve academic success to their highest ability To reinforce societal value To provide equal education for all

To provide an excellent, appropriate education for all students To prepare students to be contributors to society instead of liabilities To provide model by educators of respect, civility, wholesome lives To eliminate differences among people To prepare students to interact with diverse groups of people for socialization To serve the public as a melting
pot to feed democracy

Education for greater good of society Literacy/basic skills
Citizenship/socialization/common values Vocational training World
leadership/competition in global economy Equal education opportunities

Quotes and Notes on Purposes

Quotes on Purposes

Educate and prepare as best we can our children for their future endeavors. Teach them
to value and appreciate their opportunity to learn and encourage them to dream.

To civilize our children and to help them to become the best that they can be.

The purpose of public education needs to change as society changes. The purpose of
public education is out of step with the societal context.

Public education is the foundation of a democratic society. It allows the society to develop
citizens recognizing individual talents while they learn about the society and its values.

Meeting the needs of children in a changing society.

That students learn what their gifts and talents are and to expose them to enough
careers
to learn what they enjoy.

Public schools must serve as an alarm system due to nature of children who attend.

Public schools serve as a safe haven from abuse, hunger, and drugs.

School must be a place where children can learn how to make good decisions for
themselves.

School nurses are needed in a better ratio.

The purpose of public education is to:
prepare life long learners.
develop basic skills and critical thinking.
provide social skills training.
develop students’ ability to cope in a changing society.
act as parents.
create a safe and nurturing environment.
transmit basic cultural values.
provide moral teaching.
teach citizenship.
reinforce the Golden Rule.

**Notes on Purposes**

Welcomes and serves all children, helping them to be responsible and to reach their full potential for the rest of their lives through cognitive and affective development.
Provide education to those less fortunate people
Provide knowledge and skills
Cultural diversity/sense of community
Interaction/cross cultural
Prepared for life as a productive citizen
Provide sense of transition to higher education/career
Increased opportunity for education-level the playing field
Real world!
Educated electorate in a democratic society
Reflects educational needs as a society
Create opportunity for all
Promote basics achieve standards early
Recoup lost students
Appreciate diversity; bring out excellence
Bring about a level of accomplishment and a feeling of worth

**Summary Notes of Jack Jennings Regarding Purposes of Public Education**

Prepare students for responsible, productive citizenship; imbue them with values common to our democratic society; encourage them to be life long learners.

Equity for all so that all schools can provide a high quality education for every student; create opportunities for all

Ensure student academic success by providing:
  a) Basic education
  b) Vocational training/preparation for college
  c) Preparation to compete in a global economy
  d) Promotion of diversity, respect and tolerance of gender, race and culture by teachers and students

Discussion and dealing with social issues that impact learning

Placement emphasis on socialization
Effectiveness of Public Schools

Discussion Group Consensus

Schools are effective if they: Provide skills for employment. Provide staff development. Reduce class size. Encourage community involvement. Have continuous improvement and achievement

Effective, but room for improvement. Inconsistencies in serving all populations equitably. Literacy and basic skills are effective. Not very effective in promoting citizenship and common values Not very good connecting with school to work preparation

Don’t honestly know Effective because a lot of changes have happened Effective in some ways but not all Effective but not meeting all needs Adequate-just average

Schools are fair Schools fall sort because of misguided leadership. No accountability from the top politics Inadequate discipline measures Little respect for one another

Educate the most capable, accelerated students well -Students that learn in spite of us (educators). Less effective in teaching the average student or below average-overlooked by teachers. The school board is a reflection of the community, thus if the community values excellence in education, then you will have good schools.

Teachers connect with students (someone cares). Education is discovery or action oriented (application). Tailor education to meet the needs of students.

Effectiveness is highly dependent on leadership. Effectiveness varies from school to school. In general, we are doing a better job; however, we are not meeting the needs of all students.

Parent involvement/choice Graduates are successful! Caliber of teacher-takes the extra step!

Public schools are more effective with younger children. Effectiveness of schools is related to ability to control discipline. Effectiveness of public school is related to effectiveness of standards, curriculum, and evaluation. These must be aligned and interrelated. Good leaders create effective schools. Effectiveness is related to ability to read.

Quotes and Notes on Effectiveness

This information is comprised of unedited responses from discussion group participants. Some comments relate to observations of current practices in specific school districts as set forth by participant’s responses.

Quotes on Effectiveness
Effective schools are caring schools.

Effective schools are developed and led by good principals.

Effective schools have leadership, parent involvement and children eager to learn.

The effectiveness of school is dependent upon the mutual involvement of parent, teacher, and student.

Curriculum must be well planned; teachers must effectively deliver information; student achievement must be measured against high standards. The organizational and operational planning must also be effective.

Public schools are effective if all fourth graders could read at that level.

Schools are effective educating high average and above average and very effective at teaching academically gifted and special needs.

If community expectations are high, schools excel.

Schools that are a community center are effective.

Special emphasis schools are very effective.

Leadership of the individual schools is very important.

Measures of Effectiveness:
Ability to be able to approach school administrators and see something happen
Retention rate is good
Attendance rates are good

There are no tools for measuring effectiveness in regard to citizenship.

In the past schools focused on facts, now with project/problem technology, children have done well.

Schools are not meeting the needs of all, but are overall effective.

Class sizes are too large.

Public schools are not totally effective, because they are dealing with all kinds of kids. There is a way to go.

Achievement of threshold standards would define effectiveness.
There are all levels of individual accomplishments.

Schools are effective in different ways—But it must be transportable.

Fundamental starts must lead to long term personal satisfaction.

Aim toward leveling the playing field to maximize potential.

Measured learning set against high standards must be the deciding factor.

Students should have more say.

Whether the schools are effective or not depends upon the student.

Teachers do not listen to students.

Students should go to teachers.

Students have responsibility. Education is there if you want it.

I am afraid that the public schools are getting worse in terms of their fundamental capacity to teach and be effective. They are losing excellent faculty. New teachers are not able or willing to fight the battle.

Refer to the report by Thomas Murrin, Dean of the School of Business at Duquesne, on assessment of the Pittsburgh Public School. He is right on target. Unfortunately, it is not being adopted.

Our district is extremely effective to self-motivated and exceptional. The middle is not achieving.

Our district has senior exit interviews.

Acknowledge and celebrate students.

“Average” students are not being served as well as they need to be—can be refocused.

Nepotism is a deterrent. It prevents focus on education.

The core group of teachers seemed to be concerned. Others are not.

The community would rate schools as a “D”. They expect students to be able to graduate and work in their businesses. Unfortunately, students are not aware of business
expectations, take days off, don’t call off, long breaks, etc., but, on the other hand, businesses should not expect the schools to do everything.

Schools expect students to assume responsibilities but still be treated as children by schools. Seniors should be on a different time schedule of classes. Consequences, such as detention or one day out of school suspension, prove ineffective because students “want” to be suspended.

“They ain’t gittin’ it across to ALL students.”

Not all children are welcomed.

Values are not instilled.

Children are not academically challenged.

School safety continues to be an issue.

The communication gap needs to be bridged between teachers and parents.

More pro-active parent involvement is needed.

Social assimilation is a problem.

Schools are often not culturally diverse.
Summary Notes of Jack Jennings Regarding Effectiveness

Schools are effective if they:

- provide skills for employment
- provide staff development
- reduce class size
- encourage community involvement
- show improved achievement
- provide safe havens
- have teachers connect with students
- have successful graduates
- serve all students from low achieving to average and gifted
- have quality leaders and good governance
- have high community expectations
- have adequate tax base and resources
- have accountability (student, teacher, community, ALL)
Changes Needed in Public Education

Discussion Group Consensus

Effective leadership Alarm system training* Smaller class size Better discipline More parent involvement More support staff Technology * Alarm system-realizing trouble children (anger, drug abuse, abuse, neglect etc.) and doing something effective about it. Something needs to be done NOW so we do not experience what Columbine has just gone through.

Class size and school size need to be reduced. Care for the students emotional well-being Parents need to become more involved. Emphasis needs to be placed on staff development and leadership training. There must be equity in funding.

Restructure the system to refocus more on the student. Develop partnerships with the community and businesses.

Reduce class size. Community service and involvement (mentoring, business, service learning) Accountability (parents, teachers, administrator, student) Overall change of culture Communicate excellence.

More efficient use of time On task-academic study Redesign the school day (block schedules) Unrestricted access to the technological resources required to prepare all students to be contributing members of society

Tailor education to meet the individual needs of students to focus on performance not just acquisition of basic knowledge and skills (decrease student/teacher ratio, decrease class size, increase time on core subjects, increase length of school day or year). Teachers connect with students.

Lower the class size Invest major resources for educators-professional development Invest major resources in primary age grade students Lower classroom size Summer reading programs After school activities Setting high standards Foster a nurturing and caring environment with all stakeholders Encourage student achievement More parental involvement
Effective leadership Meaningful- more parental involvement School size Early childhood /school readiness Improving teacher quality

Providing alternative ways to educate students Year round schooling Accessing remedial programs More programming for conflict resolution, anger control Partnerships/collaboration with different community groups by Improving communication Increasing expectations Increasing accountability

Quotes on Changes

Leadership must shift from an autocratic to a participative management style. Strategic planning must be real and not a form filled out for the start. Potential of teachers must be encouraged. Each student must be encouraged as an individual with individual potential. The Board, Superintendent, administrators, and unions must learn to work together as a team and do so effectively.

The changes that are necessary to attain need the whole community to become involved in the schools and everyone to believe they have a vested interest.

To attain excellence, we need smaller classes and better resources.

Smaller schools and classrooms are necessary for pubic schools to attain the purpose of education.

Placing a 30-foot thermometer (like a United Way campaign) in front of an elementary school to show the community increases in number of 4th graders who could read would be effective.

The emotional needs of students must be met for any change-cost or not cost-for the school to be effective.

Early childhood education, starting at age 3 will cost a lot but may be well worth the investment.

It won’t cost a cent to increase homework and if the work is evaluated and counted the learning will increase.

The probability is high that failure will be the result of unpreparedness. Do you want to risk it?
Summary Notes of Jack Jennings Regarding Changes

No Cost
Leadership
Diversity of staff (experienced/inexperienced, race, gender)
Teacher and student mentoring/senior citizens
Open arms for parental involvement
Volunteering/mentoring
Quality board members-reduce micro management
Teacher accountability (merit pay-incentives)
Continuing education
Rising tide must not raise all ships-earned raises, value added

Cost
Mandated professional development
Class size, school size-smaller and more personal
Realistic undergraduate education for effective teaching in classroom
Trained/educated professionals (i.e. therapist/psychologist)
Parental training (how to work effectively with schools and how to work system for child benefits)
Smaller class size
Numerous problems-special education (discipline/staffing)
Distraction-resource redistribution

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### Forum Evaluation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Very Useful</th>
<th>Not Useful</th>
<th>No Response</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>PDK/Gallup Poll Questions</strong></td>
<td>18 (28%)</td>
<td>22 (34%)</td>
<td>14 (22%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Activities that dealt with Purposes</strong></td>
<td>30 (46%)</td>
<td>22 (34%)</td>
<td>11 (17%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Activities that dealt with Effectiveness</strong></td>
<td>21 (38%)</td>
<td>22 (40%)</td>
<td>9 (16%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Activities that dealt with Changes Needed</strong></td>
<td>39 (60%)</td>
<td>16 (25%)</td>
<td>7 (11%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Discussion at tables</strong></td>
<td>56 (86%)</td>
<td>6 (9%)</td>
<td>2 (3%)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Large group discussion</strong></td>
<td>34 (52%)</td>
<td>17 (26%)</td>
<td>8 (12%)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Overall evaluation of the Forum</strong></td>
<td>39 (59%)</td>
<td>18 (27%)</td>
<td>6 (9%)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Organization of the forum</strong></td>
<td>42 (64%)</td>
<td>14 (21%)</td>
<td>6 (9%)</td>
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<td><strong>Facilities</strong></td>
<td>52 (81%)</td>
<td>11 (17%)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Use of time</strong></td>
<td>42 (66%)</td>
<td>14 (22%)</td>
<td>6 (9%)</td>
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<td><strong>Objective</strong></td>
<td>56 (89%)</td>
<td>2 (3%)</td>
<td>5 (8%)</td>
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<td><strong>Effective</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Ineffective</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td><strong>No Response</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>The moderator was</strong></td>
<td>64 (98%)</td>
<td>1 (2%)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Yes</strong></td>
<td>58 (95%)</td>
<td>3 (5%)</td>
<td>No Response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>No</strong></td>
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</table>

**Has the forum resulted in a change of your attitude toward the public schools?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Better</th>
<th>Worse</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15 (23%)</td>
<td>49 (75%)</td>
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</table>

**If yes, which describes that change?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Better</th>
<th>Worse</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 (100%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** 17 of the evaluation forms did not have the following questions printed on the back side, therefore response rate was decreased.

**Has the forum left you better informed about the state of public schools?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>No Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>38 (79%)</td>
<td>10 (21%)</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

**Do you think that this kind of forum would be a good thing to do in communities across the nation?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>No Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>46 (96%)</td>
<td>2 (4%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Which of the following best describes your position after the forum?**

- The public schools are doing a good job as they are. 3 (6%)
- The public schools are better than generally pictured, but they have problems. 37 (77%)
- The public schools are failing and alternatives must be found. 7 (15%)
- No response 1 (2%)

**What suggestions do you have for strengthening future forums?**

Ratio of educators to community members should be as intended 20/80.

**Good exchange of ideas!**
Education is in need of repair-big time!

Focus on assessments that have proven effective.

A similar forum with a more diversified population.

Include more students and parents.

Have more student involvement at various ages.

Involve more board members.

Have a more diversified background of participants-more business and professional people-fewer educators or members of the educational establishment.

Have more business, religious, and community involvement.

Do more of them. Involve more of the public to develop a better understanding of public schools.

Word questions better for understanding.

Allow more space between groups so talking would be easier.

Spend more time in working on suggested solutions.

Think “outside of the box” for the future.

Get a variety of opinions involved at each table. Continue to mix people from rural and urban schools to show greater diversity of school situations.

Allow longer time for discussion and clarify how we are to answer.

Have large group discussion after each section while issues are fresh in your mind.

Ask more challenging questions. Focus on the purpose of education, not just public education. Should public education exist? In order to bring about change people need to at least consider starting over from square one. If they could build a perfect school, what would it be like? Americans are unwilling to do away with the ineffective institution of public education and let the free market fix the education market.

Have a smaller subject focus. There was too much to discuss because the subjects were so broad.

Have a student at each table so we get their point of view.
You can and should do much better at reporting. Get and learn power point and use a lap top!