

County Strategic Planning March 24, 2009

Present: Jan Seitz, Earl Poleski, Adam Brown, Patty Kaufman, Doug Schedeler, John Graves, Irene LeCrone, Linda Brian

- We are moving forward with our next steps:
 - Talked about holding a summit to decide key issues for “1 acre”.
 - Irene has a list of people who may be interested in becoming involved.
 - Need buy-in from community and support of Commission.
 - Put together a concept paper so that everyone is on the same page and working together
- What is the County looking for?
 - We know that a well-educated workforce makes for a community where economic development and cultural opportunities can occur. How do we convince the population of this and then put education in front of them so that they can grasp it?
 - We need to have unity between education groups.
 - There is no single organization in the County whose interest is furthering the education of **all** students.
 - There are numerous entities trying to provide the means for an educated community: Preschools, Elementary Schools, After-school Programs, Girl Scouts, etc.
 - We need to tie the groups together and get a buy-in. Find out where their energy forces are.
 - Most directives come from Washington and Lansing.
 - The attitude of “I didn’t go to college and I did okay” cannot continue to go on. In the past you could make a good living in manufacturing or working for the prison.
 - Now that these jobs are going away this is no longer the case.
 - The non-degree jobs simply aren’t as readily available as the once were, and the jobs of the future will require that kids stay in school, graduate and go to college.
 - Lots of students are going to be first generation college students.
 - How do we address this issue? How do we say that education beyond high school is important without slighting the success or value of life for people in the community who didn’t make the choice or didn’t have the opportunity to go to college?
 - Maybe use current economic climate along with statistics.
 - For example, the Corrections budget for Michigan is 1.8 billion and needs to be reduced to 1.4 billion. There will be job losses in this area. There also won’t be more \$28/hr auto manufacturing jobs coming around any time soon. What are people supposed to do?
 - Identify the education level of people in Jackson County who have been laid off in order to show how vulnerable they are without an education compared to those with degrees.
 - This method may not work in other parts of the state where the economic landscape is different.
 - Anybody would agree that you give yourself a better chance by having more education, skills, etc. than by having less.
 - Parents need to be able to separate themselves from the success that they enjoyed under past economic conditions and understand that in today’s world a high school diploma is not enough.
- Where are we going?
 - United Way is still hoping to combine forces.
 - There is frustration among education groups caused by competing ideas which is causing a lack of focus.

- What do we contribute to conflicting groups? Shouldn't everyone be in agreement that education in Jackson County needs to improve?
 - Many groups are in agreement that education needs to improve, however there will eventually be money on the table.
 - When money is involved groups tend to come to the table with the best interest of their program in mind, not necessarily the big picture of what is best for the Community.
 - So far nobody has been willing to let go of their agenda for the greater good.
 - The more scarce money becomes, the more this becomes an issue.
 - Even without money we can still have a good plan in place for when funds do become available. Change happens with or without money.
- Dan's Acre
 - The Superintendents have decided that math is the way to go and hope to use grants, State resources and institutions of Higher Education to move the dial and change the attitude that only certain kids can be good at math.
 - A similar initiative began a few years ago with literacy.
 - The Community has embraced this through increased awareness of early literacy issues.
 - Parents are reading to their kids more thanks to programs such as Dolly Parton's Imagination Library.
 - This fall will be the first time that kindergarten scores will be able to be linked with those who have participated in the Imagination Library.
 - Will be able to narrow down how effective efforts of preschool and Imagination Library have been.
 - Since early literacy is improving in Jackson County, perhaps now would be a good time to start pushing math.
 - Increase awareness of the importance of math.
 - Statistics show a disconnect between high school math and where Baker College needs students to be for college algebra.
 - Jackson Legacy has collected data from 92 Baker College students who have accepted Legacy scholarships.
 - Of the ones who are having trouble persisting from quarter to quarter, math is the area where they struggle the most.
 - Math is the biggest reason why students withdraw or drop out.
 - Both JCC and Baker have put a lot of interventions into place to help students be successful.
 - How can we work together to improve?
 - Open dialogue between high school and college educators to see what works and what doesn't when it comes to teaching math.
 - Identify other barriers. Math is not the only barrier to an educated workforce.
 - Other groups, such as United Way, can help to identify other areas.
 - Keep the "big picture" in mind.
 - What are the barriers?
 - Parents are unable to help their kids with math. Sixth, Seventh and Eighth grade math is where parents' ability to help and support their kids begins to drop.
 - When parents get frustrated because they lack the skills to help it makes it harder for them to be advocates for their kids to go on and do well in college.
 - A new pilot project in Washington hosts a one week (40 hour) day camp in which 50 kids, each with one of their parents, is taught comprehensive math skills.

- There is a high success rate for students who attend this day camp.
- Summary
 - Jackson County is not a bad place because of our history of prisons and manufacturing. We have lots of great people and families. Where do we want it to be?
 - Math may not have been critical to Jackson County in the past; however it *is* critical today and will continue to be in the future.
 - In order to bring the right kinds of jobs to the area (technology, robotics, etc.) and to move our economy forward we need to help everybody understand math.
- Next Steps:
 - Gain community involvement through mentoring, tutoring and other related volunteer activities.
 - Need ambassadors and volunteers. Cost does not need to be a barrier.
 - Convince parents to be advocates for their kids in math.
 - Identify a support system for kids beyond their parents.
 - Will check to see what types of programs are already in existence in other areas. There is no need to recreate the wheel.
 - Help people to understand where the jobs are—what fields they're in so that a connection can be made to why we're pushing the math issue.
 - Adopt a set of goals.
 - The Commission can help take the message to the non-education community (i.e.: Township Supervisors, etc.) to get the word out.
 - This is not just an education tool; it's an economic development tool as well.
 - Use other methods of getting the word out.
 - Radio, TV, JTV – Bart Hawley Show, Jackson Citizen Patriot, church pulpits, yard signs, etc.
 - If we are clear about what message we want to send then we can come up with multiple ways to send it.
 - Report back to Commission

The next meeting has is scheduled for Thursday, April 23, 2009 at 3:00 p.m. at the MSU Extension office. We will be highlighting the math summit, “Back on Track” for algebra, and deciding whether or not to as the Community Solutions Team to help.

*Respectfully submitted,
Scott Bailey*