Family & Community Engagement Committee Report

Spring 2013

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Natalie Olsen (Fox Meadow Elementary) – Co-Chairperson

Madeleine Villalobos (Bartlett Elementary) – Co-Chairperson

Laurel Bault (Washington Elementary)

Paula Becker (Elgin High School)

Tami Crumlett (Heritage Elementary)

Douglas Edgar (Larkin High School)

Richard L. Geary (Huff Elementary)

Kristie Guiney (South Elgin High School)

Sandy Kenning (Eastview Middle School)

Sandy Martin (Centennial Elementary)

Erika Nelson (Prarieview Elementary)

DISTRICT LIAISON

Pat Mogge – Director of Community Relations

Approved by CAC Executive Committee – April 25, 2013

Approved by CAC General Council – May 9, 2013

Presented to the Board of Education – June 3, 2013

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

COMMITTEE MISSION & INITIATIVES FOR 2012-2013

The CAC Parent & Community Engagement Committee is dedicated to strengthening family and community participation in the improvement of student achievement at the school and district levels. Our goals for the current year:

- *Review the implementation and assessment of family and community engagement initiatives*
- *Recommend ways to improve customer service – how U-46 serves its learning community.*
- *Develop ideas for equipping and empowering parents as leaders.*
- *Continue to build a resource bank of engagement ideas from other school districts, national experts on engagement (case studies, research) and successful programs at U-46 schools.*

We began the year with a brainstorming session on what we think the ideal school looks like and what the ideal school district looks like. That discussion helped us hone-in on the work we wanted to concentrate on for the year.

ASSESSMENT OF ENGAGEMENT IN U-46 – WHERE ARE WE?

As we began our fifth year of work, the committee continued to stress the importance of getting a big-picture look at where we are at with engagement initiatives in the district. We know based on verbal feedback from principals, staff and parents that there are a lot of great things going on throughout the district. But we often struggle to say exactly what that looks like and at which schools.

There is information embedded in school improvement plans. Some schools even have specific family and community engagement plans – and even family engagement committees. We have interviewed principals who have shared what they are doing. Destination 2015 results continue to rise. There are bits and pieces of data, but they are not pulled into one overarching assessment that gives us an idea of how we are doing *overall.*

The committee feels strongly that to get an accurate picture of engagement success, you need to look at many different points of data. It is the ongoing work of the committee to pull these pieces together; our hope is to create a document that provides a snapshot of engagement at each school, with all the data points reflected, as well as overview of district-directed initiatives.

Destination 2015

Destination 2015 sets the benchmark for positive remarks regarding engagement ("strongly agrees" and "agrees" combined) at 95% in year 2015. On the fall 2012 Family & Community Engagement Survey, positive results dipped slightly to 82% from 84% in the fall of 2011; the numbers of responses rose significantly from approximately 5,800 in 2011 to more than 10,000 in 2012. Survey questions relate directly to the U-46 Six Components of Engagement, which the district uses to define successful engagement – it is the standard of engagement. Not only does the survey measure engagement success based on U-46's own engagement values, it also provides valuable insight into which components/areas schools need to focus more attention. It also shows us which schools might be able to serve as best practice models and which schools might benefit from additional resources and assistance.

The committee feels strongly that this specific survey needs to continue to be conducted so that we can get a snapshot of how <u>our</u> schools are doing in the specific engagement areas that U-46 has deemed as critical. Additionally, since this has been the primary way the district has assessed growth in engagement for the past three years – and has become our standard for benchmarking success – it's crucial that it continue to be an assessment tool for accurate comparison from year to year.

Principal Assessment

Since principals are specifically directed by Board Policy to be the leading force behind engagement implementation at their schools, the committee continued to look into how this is being assessed. In the fall, the committee reviewed the new administrator review rubric and overall liked the depth of the process and felt it aligned with the district's engagement initiatives. Much of the engagement assessment is embedded in the standards and indicators rather than being a separate indicator. The committee will continue to monitor the assessment process.

Planned Work for Academic Year 2013-2014
- *Continue to monitor Destination 2015 survey results to identify best practices and schools that might benefit from committee assistance.*
- *Review School Improvement Plans (SIPs) to identify engagement strategies that are being developed and implemented.*
- *Develop additional resources for Components #4 and #5.*
- *Determine how many schools (%) have implemented school-specific engagement plans and review samples of these plans.*
- *Research what ongoing resources are needed to support schools.*

SERVICE EXCELLENCE – HOW U-46 SERVES ITS LEARNING COMMUNITY

District U-46 constantly strives to close the "gaps"– such as in academic achievement –that naturally occur in a school district. The Family and Community Engagement Committee supports the District in this endeavor by focusing on closing the gap in engagement. For the past five years, the committee has helped to define and shape what it thinks engagement should look like in our district. In our day-to-day lives as parents and volunteers, however, we often experience a disconnection (the gap) between the engagement values and goals we strive for and the actual activity – or, sometimes, the behavior and attitude – we encounter.

We have schools that are doing a brilliant job of engaging with their students and families. We have principals who are intentional about reaching out to parents and including them as decision-makers. We have teachers and front office staff who do an amazing job helping parents who are struggling with their child or with a larger issue. We have district staff who work through problems positively, who are great listeners. And then there are those who don't – which often creates barriers to the very things we are collectively trying to create: student success, engaged families and communities, an inspiring work and learning environment.

Our intention is not to dwell upon what is not working. (Although, we do not want to ignore it either as we believe that identifying where we are going off course is crucial to figuring out how to get back on track. What we want to focus on is what we are doing well and then duplicate it. We want to make the *great* and the *excellent* the standard for how we do all that we do in U-46.

The question is: How do we make the brilliant, the intentional, the amazing, the positive – the standard? **How do we become <u>excellent</u> at engaging?** That's an excellent question.

Let's take it a step further. If engagement is a core value in the district and we want to see it embedded in everything we do, then *we need to embed excellence in everything we do*. What we need is to cultivate a district-wide culture of excellence – a standard that permeates our daily interactions and work. A standard of behavior that helps us achieve the goals and values we already have in place.

Excellence should be a given, right? We don't hire people expecting them to give us anything but their best. Correct! However, one person's definition and practice of excellence can vary greatly from another person's if there is no standard by which to measure our excellence. Also, what exactly does excellence *look like* in practice? Or rather – *what do we expect it to look like in practice*? How do we know if we are acting, communicating, interacting and working in an excellent way? How do we know if our behavior is designed to help us achieve the goals and values we already have in place?

We have standards for learning, standards for achievement, standards for engagement, standards for teaching, standards for fiscal responsibility. But how do we do this with *excellence*? What are the *standards of behavior* that ensure we achieve our goals? What about standards for working and behaving in an excellent manner?

As a district, we already have aligned our mission, values and goals. Adding aligned behaviors to the mix doesn't replace what we are already doing – it enhances it! It is what makes the goals, values and process *personal.* "What you are doing is creating a foundation of best practices – a culture of excellence. A great culture outperforms strategy every time. A great culture combined with a great strategy is unbeatable." – Quint Studer, "Results That Last"

Bottomline: You must first have an established culture of *service excellence* before you can successfully develop and implement ideas and programs designed to improve your organization and your outcomes (student achievement).

Community Case Study

In 2006, Sherman Hospital partnered with the Studer Group to develop a plan for sustained excellence within its organization. Its mission was "to make a positive difference through outstanding healthcare and service – every life, every moment, every day." Their vision was clear – to become one of the best community hospitals in the nation. Their motto: Building Excellence Together. In the six years since implementing its Service Excellence program, Sherman Hospital went from a patient satisfaction level of 48% to 94% and an employee satisfaction level of 49% to 85%; its staff turnover dropped from 19.9% to 12.5%. But that did not happen because they set a goal for it to happen. It happened because the top level of leadership committed to the concept, developed an intentional plan for doing everything they do with excellence, modeled the expected behaviors, taught others to do the same, and implemented an accountability framework. (See Appendix C for an overview of the hospital's Service Excellence program.)

Their mission, vision and values are all underscored with the belief that a culture of service excellence is the foundation of success. Their standards of behavior, which they deliberately incorporate into their daily work lives, are Communication, Ownership, Professionalism and Customer Service (Appendix D). All hospital employees make a commitment to these expected behaviors. For example, under Ownership, a sampling of commitments includes:
- I will choose to have a positive attitude each day (#1)
- I will always offer help (#4)
- I will act as a resource to solve problems (#8)
- I will strive to exceed the customer's expectations (#12)

According to Joan Knute, Sherman's Director of Service Excellence, the key to Sherman's success in its program has been strong leadership. The hospital committed to leadership based on best practices – they lead and manage intentionally. They expect their employees to work intentionally. They have a shared WHY – and each person knows how their own job connects to the WHY. What is the WHY? It is the common core or central focus a company or entity has for what it does AND how employees within the organization impact the core or focus. Hence, a person's "Why" is "Why you do what you do at work every day?"

Keys Components of Service Excellence Success

According to Quint Studer, author of "Hardwiring Excellence" and "Results That Last," the key to developing and sustaining excellence within an organization is leadership – "leadership that is consistently excellent from leader to leader, department to department, division to division. Standardize the right leadership practices and you will find that organizational performance improves across the board...and *stays* improved" ("Results That Last," pg. xi).

Standardizing leadership is critical, maintains Studer, because it stabilizes an organization. When all leaders are trained in a common core of leadership skills and practices – it becomes hardwired into the overall way an organization does business. Success is no longer dependent on individuals because no matter who leaves, the leadership standards and practices remain. "Ironically, many organizations balk at standardizing their leadership practices. They standardize all sorts of other (less critical) items," notes Studer. "And yet the most important aspect of any organization – leadership – is allowed to be inconsistent."

Successful, systemic leadership is based on evidence – best practices that are proven to result in the best outcomes possible. "What you are doing is creating consistency based on the foundation of best practices. You are creating a culture of excellence." It starts at the top and trickles down.

There are three components to evidence-based leadership:

ALIGNED GOALS > ALIGNED BEHAVIORS > ALIGNED PROCESSES

Aligned Goals. Leaders must be told what they should be doing and what their priorities are; they must be thoroughly trained as leaders to be successful. We cannot assume that all people in positions of leadership know how to lead or that all are leading in a consistent way.

Aligned Behavior. There are certain behaviors an organization must implement at all leadership levels to ensure that every employee gets a consistent experience. These aligned behaviors trickle down to employees who then create a consistent experience for the end users (students, parents). Aligning behaviors forces an organization to deal with performance gaps (because they can be identified).

Aligned Processes. Leadership processes should be consistent throughout an organization; consistency allows people to work more effectively and improve in their skills.
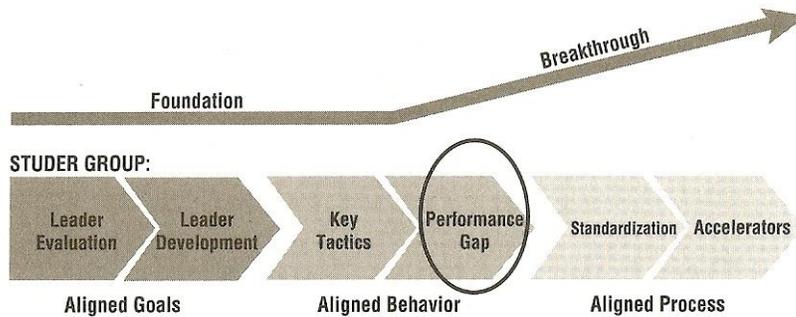
Graph taken from "Results That Last"

What Needs to Happen: How Do We Build a Culture of Excellence?

"Results That Lasts" outlines five core actions that an organization needs to take to create a culture of excellence:

BUILD THE FOUNDATION (passion and purpose): Employees want to have a purpose and do meaningful work that makes a difference. Organizations whose leaders help their employees connect the dots between their own work and the organization's purpose will outperform those that don't. This is essential to building a solid foundation. Leaders need to help their employees connect their specific job duties to the organization's WHY (strategic purpose and goals).

Let's explore what motivates the individual for a moment. So *why* do U-46 employees come to work every day – aside from receiving a regular paycheck? What about a board member or volunteer? W*hy* do they invest/donate their time and talents when money does not exchange hands? What about the bus driver, lunch supervisor, accounting clerk or custodian? What is their *why*? *Why* is everyone here? *Why* should they strive for excellence? The answer is simple: to achieve *Academic Success for All – U-46 will inspire individuals to convert their dreams into realities.* That is our collective WHY. The collective purpose we are striving to achieve is to help every child obtain academic excellence and build a solid educational foundation.

To build a solid foundation, an organization must do the following:
1. Commit to Excellence
2. Measure important things
3. Build a culture around service
4. Create and develop leaders
5. Focus on employee satisfaction
6. Build individual accountability
7. Align behaviors with goals and values
8. Communicate at all levels
9. Recognize and reward success

REDUCE LEADERSHIP VARIANCE: Organizations that standardize leadership best practices create a map showing the way to high performance – a best practices map that all the leaders should share and that should, in turn, trickle down to employees.

MEASUREMENT: Measurement and transparency help drive accountability. All levels of the organization must work together toward the same goals. What gets measured gets improved.

ALIGN BEHAVIORS WITH GOALS AND VALUES: Establish an objective system to hold leaders (at every level) accountable for the behaviors and goals that directly achieve long lasting and sustainable results. Set goals under each of the 5 Pillars of Excellence: Service, Quality, People, Finance and Growth.

CREATE AND DEVELOP LEADERS: Equip leaders with the skills they need to be successful (according to the established goals and values above). Leadership training is a must.

Next Steps

For the past five years, the committee has discussed various ways to improve "Customer Service": How the district interacts and works with its various stakeholders (staff, parents, students, community members). That is, after all, what Family & Community Engagement is all about – engaging with one another in a positive way so that *together* we can help our students achieve academic success. Welcome, communicate, support, advocate, share, and collaborate.

But "Customer Service" is really just a noun – not a descriptor of what we want our interactions and behaviors to look like. Customer service, after all, can be *good* or *bad*. Customer Service isn't a goal; but Service Excellence – *doing what we do with excellence* – is. And we believe it's time to make excellence an integral part of the vision, mission and goals of U-46.

Can you imagine what we could accomplish as a district if a spirit of excellence was threaded through all of our activity? If we had standards for behavior that directly related to achieving our goals and standards for success? We can!

Planned Work for Academic Year 2013-2014

The committee will continue to research ways to help facilitate effective problem-solving: tips for effective communication, training opportunities, additional resources.

Subcommittee Members: Erika Nelson, Kristie Guiney, Natalie Olsen

EQUIPPING PARENTS AS LEADERS

In October 2012, the committee partnered with a non-profit organization from Chicago called Community Organizing and Family Issues (COFI) directed by Ellen Schumer, for a special presentation called "Building Leaders in Your Community." The goal was to demonstrate how empowering and equipping stakeholders could help strengthen the relationships between families, the school district and the community served by the district. We heard first-hand testimonials from several Chicago parents who have benefited from the COFI program, which first worked to build them up as parent leaders and then coached them to utilize community organizing to make a difference in their schools, districts and state.

Event attendees were also given exercises to help them develop future leaders in their sphere of influence. Approximately 40 members of the U-46 community – including administrators, a board member, clergy, non-profit agencies, CAC representatives, PTO presidents and parent leaders – attended the event.

Subsequently, the subgroup set out to meet with several principals who attended the "Building Leaders in Your Community" event to get feedback. In November, the subgroup met with Denise Lockwald, principal at Sunnydale Elementary School, and Juanita Jimenez, administrative intern. Mrs. Lockwald was hoping that the COFI event would help identify resources to develop parent leaders. In February, the subgroup met with Peggy Ondera, principal at Garfield Elementary School, and an Early Childhood Development staff member. Mrs. Ondera said that it was powerful having the COFI parents at the workshop. She welcomed the opportunity to network with other district stakeholders. Additionally, Mrs. Ondera identified a way to enhance the next session by integrating a two-way communication workshop. She also expressed a need for more inclusion of ethnic Hispanic and African American leaders to engage more parents to get involved at her school. She said she recognizes that the high mobility rate in her school adversely impacts parents who want to get involved but cannot since they are changing their residence several times within a school year.

Laurel Bault met with Karla Guzman to discuss the training/resources available through COFI that could be used to build more parent leaders at our schools. Karla will attend a second training session with COFI in the fall of 2013 and will then report back to the committee about whether the training resources are a good fit for School District U-46. Some of the questions include: is it cost-beneficial; can we customize the training to match our needs; and what is the return on investment?

Planned Work for Academic Year 2013-2014

For the next school year, the subgroup would like to continue assessing the cost-benefit of COFI as well as a variety of other train-the-trainer models that can be customized for school district U-46. The subgroup is currently serving on the Parent Training Cohort Workgroup led by Pat Mogge, Director of School and Community Relations, and Karla Guzman, Parent/Community Outreach, to

identify a variety of training models that U-46 can offer, so that more parents can be trained to actively engage in local schools and the school district as a whole.

The subgroup's goal for next year is to meet parents where they are at, while providing valuable skills that empower them to take on leadership roles in their schools and enhance the community in general. We want parents to take on initiatives that expand learning for students and improve partnerships with teachers. The result will be stronger bonds between the parents and teachers and more collaboration of CAC reps, committees and the larger community. Additionally, we'd like to see the Hispanic Parent Leadership Institute, the African-American Parent Leadership Institute, Advisory Councils and community partners coalesce around projects in order to utilize resources effectively. Our intent is to see a dramatic increase in meaningful relationships between all stakeholders and advocates and a transformation in the quality of children's elementary and secondary education that is sustainable over the long-term.

Subcommittee Members: Laurel Bault, Madeleine Villalobos

RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

The committee's ongoing goal is to develop resources that schools are specifically looking for and to create access to the full-scope of the district's work on engagement for internal users (those in U-46) and external users (other districts). The committee continues to collect successful engagement initiatives and ideas from schools throughout the district; these anecdotes are collected into the "Family Engagement Promising Practices" document (Appendix B), which is available on the U-46 website under Parent Resources > Parent Web Site > Family & Engagement Resources (http://www.u-46.org/parents/FamilyEngagementResources.htm).

This list of Promising Practices can be used by principals, parent leaders and schools outside the district to help generate ideas on how to engage families. Ideas were garnered from submissions by the U-46 Community Relations, interviews with principals, committee recommendations and a review of engagement ideas in SIPs. This document was updated this school year; the plan is to update the document quarterly and redistribute to school principals and parent leaders to share ideas on successful engagement practices.

Principal Interviews

For the 2012-13 academic year, the resource subgroup interviewed a cross-section of district schools regarding their Family and Community Engagement initiatives. Factors used to select the 10 schools included Title 1 status (yes or no), geographic location (west of the Fox River, central Elgin and east of Elgin) and age of student body (2 high schools, 2 middle schools and 6 elementary

schools). Questions were developed (see Appendix E) to guide the conversations, but interviewees were also encouraged to speak to what they felt was uniquely great about their school. Incidents of exceptional engagement activities were gleaned from the interviews and were added to the "Family Engagement Promising Practices" document (Appendix B). A number of trends were observed.

At schools where the communities are comprised of a higher number of families of poverty or limited socioeconomic status, there are barriers to engagement that are unique. Some are cultural and some are practical. Language, social and cultural mores about the role of the "school," high mobility rates, extremely limited resources, and pressures on the family for survival are all factors to consider when developing a successful engagement plan. Through collaboration with other community organizations, Title One funds and the dedication of school staff, the schools that were interviewed were able to develop robust engagement plans. Empowered family engagement needs to be initiated and fostered by the school; it is less likely to that an individual parent or guardian will reach out to the school first. The existence of the Hispanic Parent Leadership Institute and the African American Parent Leadership Institute are district programs that help mitigate these barriers. The committee recommends the continued support of these programs and further outreach into the communities to bolster the support of these families for the consequential increase in educational success for these students.

While engagement of parent volunteers and the strength of parent/teacher organizations seemed to be highest in the elementary school level, booster clubs for specific interests (i.e., sports, performance arts, etc.) were the norm for high schools. The middle schools' use of the parents as resources was significantly different or limited. Possible reasons might include the limited time (two years) that the students were involved at that those schools or the emotional growth of the students and their natural progression to realign their focus to peers rather than family. Regardless of the underlying cause, the effect was clear as schools relied on staff to provide most of the programs and benefits for the students. Arguably as children are at the most risk with regard to their own changes, the engagement practices are more limited and parents are less involved with the schools. The committee would like to see more focused development of engagement plans at the middle school level.

Interviewing principals from other schools for their input should continue into 2013-14. The questions used to direct the conversations should be reconsidered prior to the interviews. Perhaps administration could be interviewed for their experiences and roles in providing or expanding Family and Community Engagement within District U-46.

Planned Work for Academic Year 2013-2014

- *Study educational resources (PTO Today, Beyond the Bake Sale, other districts, etc.) regarding engagement with a focus on the intermediate level. Investigate what meaningful engagement might look like at the middle school level by interviewing administration, teaching staff and students at a U-46 middle school. Develop suggestions for identifying appropriate engagement opportunities and encouraging participation at the middle and high school levels.*
- *Continue principal interviews.*
- *Continue to expand the U-46 Engagement Best Practices document.*
- *Develop a video of Engagement Best Practices using the Beacon Academy.*
- *Develop resources from local and national educational organizations to expand our resource bank and to build partnerships for improving engagement.*

Subcommittee Member: Paula Becker, Sandy Martin, Tami Crumlett

OTHER WORK

"Guidelines for Addressing Concerns, Questions and Suggestions": The committee recommended to district administration several avenues promoting this document, including: district website, school websites, Parent Universities (sessions/review), conferences, back-to-school nights, curriculum nights, handbooks, bulletin boards at schools, front offices and a larger-print bullets displayed on front counters at schools, local organizations/libraries.

School Safety: The committee also discussed safety measures in schools and screening adult workers and volunteers. The district is reviewing procedures and they hope to have this done by spring 2013. Committee suggestions included more education of students on safety measures (who some members noted often let adults into the building); consistency across the district; ensuring that the procedures do not create a barrier to family involvement.

Board Policy 8 Review: The committee reviewed and discussed several recommended changes/additions to Board Policy 8 on Community Relations. A full listing of comments/recommendations can be found in Appendix F.

Board Policy 5.345 Review: The committee was asked to look at new policy on volunteer screening. The committee spent one meeting discussing questions and concerns – of most concern is the impact that requiring regular volunteers to undergo fingerprinting and background checks may have on volunteer rates in schools. Following the meeting, the committee compiled their

recommendations/questions, which were forwarded to Legal. Sandy Martin and Natalie Olsen met with Luis Rodriguez and Pat Mogge to discuss the committee's comments and the district's position on the policy. The committee recommends that its comments/questions be addressed in the written procedures that will be drafted following policy adoption; that principals be part of the procedure-drafting process since they will be overseeing this process at their schools; that a communications plan be established in advance for relaying this information to the public; that measures be taken by the district to make the process of background checks and fingerprinting as streamlined as possible for volunteers. A full listing of comments/recommendations can be found in Appendix G.

PTO Facebook. The committee felt it was important for non-district run FB pages to include statements clarifying that these pages are not administrated by the school district and specific questions for district administration should be directed to staff or the U-46 FB page. The committee has drafted sample language for these statements, which can be used on school Facebook pages as well. This language will be forwarded to the administrator of the U-46 PTO Facebook page (which is not administered by the district).

Thank you for joining the _____ Facebook page. Our goal is to use this page as a positive forum for families and stakeholders to share ideas and information. Your comments, posts and thoughts are welcome; however, this space should not be used for complaints or addressing specific concerns or people. These issues should be brought directly to the specific teacher or school principal. This page will be monitored _____ times a day and inappropriate comments will be deleted. Page administration retains the right to restrict access to this page if posting guidelines are not respected. This page is administered by _____ and is not monitored by the school district. Questions specific to the school district should be posted to the U-46 Facebook page or to the appropriate administrator.

PTO Resources. The committee would like to see a dedicated link/page on the U-46 website where parent group leaders can access important information/documents. This page can just be a listing of resources, but should be easy to find from the homepage. Documents to be included: Tax forms/501c3 information, guidelines document, sample bylaws, Robert's Rules, Open Meetings Act information, Board Policy links, sample confidentiality agreements (Centennial Elementary), contact list, etc.

School Site Rental Fees: The committee expressed concern that the district's current site rental fees can be an obstacle to family and community engagement. (A full copy of the facility rental handbook can be found online at http://www.u-46.org/cnt/docs/FacilityRntlHndbk1-6-11.pdf). The committee understands the need for guidelines and that there are costs involved in keeping

buildings open; however, the committee feels that charging our own parent groups (PTO/PTAs, PTCs, boosters, etc.) to host events intended to engage a school's learning community seems to be at odds with the district's values regarding engagement. Destination 2015 includes Family and Community Engagement goals, but the current Facility Rental policy conflicts with those goals and can inhibit the use of U-46 buildings as community resources.

The committee polled neighboring school districts as well as peer districts relative to size to see where U-46 stands with charging fees to parent groups. It was discovered that not one school district charges their parent groups for events during the times when custodial staff are on site. Out of the 10 districts that border U-46, only three charge parent groups for custodial services and that is only if the event is held on a weekend; furthermore, charges are limited to covering the custodial costs. Out of the three largest school districts in the state (Chicago Public Schools, U-46 and Rockford School District 205), U-46 is the only one charging its own parent groups for facilities rental.

The following chart provides an overview of the data collected:

Facilities Rental Overview for School Districts Surrounding U-46

School District	Charge PTO?	Charge third party?
Schaumburg Community School District 54	No	yes
St Charles Comm. Unit School District #303	No - custodial weekends only	yes
Central Community School District 301	No	yes
Community Unit School District 300	No - custodian if necessary	yes
Community Unit School District 220	No - only custodian for Sat $27/Sun $36	custodial fees
Keeneyville School District 20	No	no
Community Consolidated School District 93	No	maybe
Benjamin School District 25	No	maybe
Community High School District 94	No	Park Dist. free
West Chicago Elementary SD 33	No	yes

These rate schedules are available from the committee upon request.

Most rental policies explicitly state that "Rental charges will be waived if the event is for the direct benefit of the school district or school related group." Anecdotally, every school district that was called and every one of the employees asked to confirm their policy indicated that "We would never charge our PTC for an event. They do so much for us" or "The [parent groups] do such a great job fundraising for our school. We would not charge them."

We feel strongly that the board and district administration should be sensitive to the economic status of the community that they serve. Many of our schools serve communities that struggle

financially and PTOs are often unable to raise funds to cover these rental fees, making programing for the benefit of these families difficult.

For example, if a school wanted to host a Cultural Event for its school families, this could be the possible rental fee scenario: Friday evening event (students and families) with an estimated attendance of 500 people; 2-1/2-hr event with 1/2 hour set-up and 1/2 hour cleanup = 4 hours (2 blocks); food will be available for purchase:

Gym ($80) +

Commons ($60) +

<u>Surcharge for additional people over 100</u> ($5 x 4 time blocks x 4 extra groups of 100 people) = $80

Subtotal: $220

<u>x Group I Multiplier (PTOs) = .60</u>

New subtotal: $132 +

Custodian Costs ($48.95 x 4 hrs.) = $195.80 +

Food Service Tech ($38.92 x 3 hrs.) = $77.84 +

<u>Table rental = $20 =</u>

Grand Total: $425.64

This policy – and subsequent fees – can restrict the ability of our groups to host events for our children and families, many who are arguably the most in need.

For this reason, we are asking the Board of Education and district administration to revisit the site rental fee structure as it relates to being used by our own district parent groups. If we are going to be a district that wholly supports and promotes family and community engagement within our schools, then we need to show that support by offering these same schools relief from the financial burden that hosting engagement events can incur.

Additionally, the committee recommends that the current Facilities Rental Policy be simplified. We recognize the time and hard work that went into the creation of this fee schedule. However, a 14-page document outlining how to determine the fee that would be charged for a rental can be difficult to decipher. The "estimate" calculation sheet (used to compute the example above) is four pages alone. The school districts that we interviewed operate with a simplified fee schedule, often times one page.

We also recommend that a percentage of the fees obtained for facilities rental should be returned to the buildings that were utilized. Current Policy does not allow any of the funds collected to be utilized by the facility that was actually rented. Returning even just 10% of the fees back to the school's budget is recommended.

Current policy does not take into consideration reciprocity with other community organizations – such as libraries and park districts – that allow U-46 to utilize their facilities free of charge. School districts polled indicated that they do not charge these entities for use of a school district facility. Collaboration with the community needs to be two-way.

We ask the board to reconsider its views on the resources that we have. Imagine our schools as a hub for the community, a place that offers training for families, activities for students, and a resource for the community rather than a building that requires a business transaction in order to remain open after school ends.

Citizen's Advisory Council Name Review: It has been brought the committee's attention (more than once) that the word "citizens" in Citizens' Advisory Council may discourage parents who are not U.S. citizens from participating in council activities. The assumption could be made that they must be U.S. citizens serve on the committee. A suggestion of changing "citizens" to "community" was made, which would have to be brought to discussion at the Executive Committee level.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **The committee recommends that U-46 Family & Community Engagement Survey continued to be administered on a yearly basis so that an accurate comparison of engagement benchmarks can be made**. Although the state is now requiring schools to administer the the 5Essentials Survey, we believe it is crucial to maintain our own evaluation tool, which provides data based the district's specific engagement standards.

2. **The committee recommends that Administration include members of the FACE Committee (parents/community representatives) as well as school principals when it creates procedures related to Board Policy 5.345 on Volunteer screening**.

3. **The committee recommends that Administration develop and implement a Service Excellence program designed to standardize leadership and positive behaviors**. It is our strong belief that being intentional about creating a culture of excellence in U-46 will not only improve engagement, it will be the catalyst for realizing the mission, goals and values to which U-46 is already committed. The committee would like to partner with the district in the development of a district-wide service excellence program.

4. **The committee recommends that Administration add a "Family & Community Engagement" resource tab to the district website's home page.** Since Family Engagement is a key component of the District Improvement Plan and a benchmark in Destination 2015, it's crucial that the public be given full access to the district's engagement initiatives and resources.

5. **The committee recommends that the Board of Education and district administration revisit the site rental fee structure as it relates to fees charged to our own school parent groups.** We recommend that rental fees be waived for these groups and custodial services be charged only if a custodian is not already on duty. The committee also recommends that a portion of rental fee proceeds (excluding fees related to staff) be returned to the schools.

6. **The committee recommends that the Executive Committee consider changing the name of the council from Citizens' Advisory Council to Community Advisory Council to better reflect the population we represent.**

Six Components of Family and Community Engagement

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1. Welcoming Families to Schools

Create a welcoming school environment for all families so they develop a sense of belonging and feel valued and appreciated, leading to active participation in children's education.

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2. Communicating Effectively

Develop effective, meaningful two-way communication between families and school staff in order to share information about what students are learning.

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3. Supporting Student Learning

Collaborate with families to strengthen their knowledge and skills so they can support student learning and development at home and at school.

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4. Increasing Opportunities & Advocating for All Students

Educate families on how the school system works and empower them to become advocates for all children, to ensure equal access to learning opportunities that contribute to student success.

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5. Sharing Decision-making with Stakeholders

Engage families as equal partners and share the responsibility of influencing decisions on policy and programs that will affect all children.

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6. Collaborating with the Community

Work with local businesses, community organizations, agencies and institutions of higher learning to connect students, families and staff to expanded learning opportunities and resources.

U-46 Family & Community Engagement components are based on research/publications including *Joyce Epstein's Six Types of Involvement* and the *National PTA Standards.*

APPENDIX B = Family Engagement Promising Practices document

APPENDIX C = Sherman Hospital Service Excellence PowerPoint presentation

APPENDIX D = Sherman Hospital Standards of Behavior

F.A.C.E Promising Practices Interview Questions

1. Are you a Title I school?

2. How much do you receive in Title funds each year, and how do you usually use those funds?

3. How many active parent volunteers do you think you have in your school? 0-5, 6-10, 11-15, 16-20, 20+

4. Do you have a screening process for volunteers? Do you do background checks? Do you have guidelines for what volunteers can and can't do in your building?

5. How would you define Family and Community Engagement, and how important do you think it is?

6. Do you think that your teachers and parents see it as important?

7. Can you share about one event that you think your school does really well?

8. What would you like to see your school do differently to improve Family and Community Engagement?

9. What kinds of things does your school do to make your families feel welcome and valued throughout the school year?

10. How do you communicate with the families at your school? Do you believe it is more of a one-way or two-way communication?

11. Do you have ways that you work with families to give them tools to help support their child's learning at home?

12. How does your school let families know what is expected of them and how the school system works?

13. How do you involve parents in decision-making around your school?

14. What relationships do you have in your community that connect students, families and staff to expanded learning opportunities and resources?

15. Have you found that the district's facility rental policy has had an impact on family and community engagement at your school? Have you seen a decrease in PTO activity or have you had any groups leave your school or choose another location because of the cost of using your building?

Family & Community Engagement Committee
Board Policy Review Section 8 – February 2013 <u>Revised</u>

Replace all instances of "citizens" with "community members" or "the community."

1. **8.010: Family and Community Engagement**
   a. Development of School-level Family Engagement Initiatives:
      o This needs to include language specific to the U-46 Six Components of Engagement. Each school's engagement plan should contain initiatives specific to meeting/developing these six core areas of engagement. These components were not yet developed when this code was written; it should be updated to reflect this.
      o Establish a timeline for when an engagement plan is to be reviewed. Yearly would be our recommendation.
      o This should be part of the principal's evaluation.
      o #3: Is it enough to say "help children achieve the State's academic standards"?
         1. Is this really the crux of what we want to accomplish OR do we want to ALSO address a student's *individual academic success*? We believe so!
         2. What about the child who is already performing above the state standards? Are we done with them (rhetorical)? This should be changed to reflect a goal of ensuring academic success for all students.

2. **8.011: Public Information Program**
   a. Change "Communications Office" to "Community Relations."
   b. Change "parents" to "families."
   c. What do you mean by "internal and external publics"? Maybe a rewording to better clarify these stakeholders. (Paragraph 1)
   d. "…maintain channels of communication" (last paragraph) should be changed to reflect "two-way communication" as stated in the U-46 Six Components of Engagement. For example: *Develop effective, meaningful two-way communication between families and school staff in order to share information about what students are learning.*
   e. We also believe the language needs to address the importance of seeking input from the community, families and staff early in decision-making processes; it is important to clearly communicate change upfront.

3. **8.012: School/Community Relations Goals**
   a. In general, this entire section should reflect the language of the U-46 Six Components of Engagement.
   b. A goal of Community Relations efforts should be to support, develop and model successful Family & Community Engagement throughout the district.

c. A goal should be to actively engage the community in Shared Decision-Making (component #5): *Engage families as equal partners and share the responsibility of influencing decisions on policy and programs that will affect all children.*

d. Specific to (e): Should reflect the language of the U-46 Six Components of Engagement: Communicating Effectively = effective, *two-way* communication. Much of this language reflects one-way communication: "disseminate". How will you foster two-way communication?

e. Specific to (e): add "in a timely manner."

f. Specific to (f.): This is somewhat ambiguous or needs to be put into family-friendly language: "community will become aware of and efficiently utilize various means of communication with the district." What does this mean exactly?

g. Specific to (h.): strike "and attendance area." "In local schools" says it all.

h. Specific to (d.) "to encourage staff to become involved in community activities." What about Collaborating with the Community (component #6), which speaks to a two-way exchange or work effort vs. one way. In fact, (d.), (h.) and (i.) could be combined into one point = collaboration (reciprocal).

i. Specific to **(j.):** What exactly does this mean? What is the purpose? Is this related to two-way communication? Shared decision-making?

A suggestion is to start with the 6 components and add some of the language in this existing board policy. The components are meant for district engagement as well.

4. **8.018: Broadcast/Cable Coverage:** "Chief Communications Officer" to "Director of Community Relations."

5. **8.050: Visitors to the Schools** = Changes regarding safety. There should be a reference here to the new Board Policy on volunteers 5.345 and vice versa.

6. **8.080.** Last sentence "that involve incorporating <u>message</u> into or placing messages," the underlined should be "messages" – plural.

7. **8.090:** Parent Organizations (etc.): Mention of the Parent Group Guidelines

8. **8.095:** This needs to include language from the 6 Components on Shared Decision-Making: A goal should be to actively engage the community in Shared Decision-Making (component # 5).

FACE Committee Comments on Proposed BOE Policy 5.345

- The first word is "citizens" – The issue here is one of sensitivity; this can be mistaken as a parent needing to be a U.S. citizen, which many of our parents are not. We have recommended in BOE Policy Section 8 for the word "citizens" to be changed to "community members." We feel this should apply here as well.

- "Citizens who volunteer their time and talents to the *improvement and enrichment of the schools* are valuable assets" – As volunteers, we are here to improve and enrich the children and their educational experience.

- **Sections II & III** – We still do not feel that this language adequately explains who these requirements apply to or don't apply to. It has been had clarified to us that the policy does not apply to parents coming in to help for one-time events, such as a fun fair or bingo night. This is still not clear in this specific language. Furthermore, it *does still seem* to apply to parents who come into the building on a regular basis, for example, to do math facts for 45 minutes every Wednesday or the parent who helps in the library or computer lab every week.

  The language is not clear enough to decipher the difference. We are most certain that the ambiguity will result in a variety of interpretations and ongoing questions, which will make this policy difficult to communicate and difficult to enforce. The number of interpretations could equal the number of schools – or leaders/administrations within a school.

- **Section II** – Several members of CAC Exec expressed concern that one-day field trip chaperons are excluded from the screening requirements, especially since these chaperons may be in a position to take students to the bathroom.

- **Section IV** – It appears that there are three or four forms required. Do we have access to these as well? What is on the volunteer release form? Why are these applications not available on the U-46 website? Requiring prospective volunteers to visit the district offices to get these forms adds another obstacle to the process. People should be able to download them from the website so they can be filled out ahead of time <u>or</u> get them at their schools. What forms of I.D. will be required?

- **Section IV** – The last sentence of that section says that volunteers must abide by all district policies and administrative procedures. Volunteers should be given specific information on how to find this information on the U-46 website. At the very least, a specific link should be given. They should not have to search through layers of drop-down menus on the website (most won't anyway). Perhaps creating a guideline document for volunteers would be a more effective way of communicating your expectations. A volunteer is not going to read through pages and pages of Board Policy to find out what applies to them.

- **Section V** – Paragraphs 1 and 2: Can these be combined? We recommend the deletion of the sentence "If the volunteer is seeking to volunteer at a school" – that is what a volunteer does.

  What is the process for fingerprinting?

  Also, when would a volunteer provide "security related duties"? The word "IF" makes it seem like this is a unique condition that would require fingerprinting. HOWEVER, the first paragraph of this section already indicates that <u>all</u> volunteers are required to get fingerprinted for background checks. Which is it? Or are we reading it incorrectly?

- **Section VI** – The first paragraph does not relate to "District Responsibilities" but rather fits better under section IV.

  Second paragraph – "The prospective supervisor..." is that the principal or would it be the teacher if the volunteer will be working inside a classroom? Is "supervisor" an appropriate term – volunteers are not employees. We are to assume based on this language that the teacher and/or principal are going to interview/screen everyone?

  What are the guidelines issued by the Office of Human Resources? Are we correctly assuming (based on the language) that the volunteer approval process requires <u>two district employees</u> to review and approve the volunteer according to guidelines? How long will this take? Does District have the human resources to do this level of screening in a timely manner – especially when there is a rush at the beginning of the school year?

  Our concern is that (1) volunteers won't bother and (2) schools may have to wait to get district approval before a parent can help out in computer lab.

- Why is this cross referencing 8.095 Community Involvement in Decision Making? We do not see the connection.

- How does 105 ILCS 5/10-21.9;5/21B-80 and 55 ILCS 5/3-9005 apply in the instance of Volunteers. Here is the research done by one of our committee members:

  First and foremost, 105ILCS 5/10-21.9 speaks to applicant for employment and that these background checks are a "condition of employment." 105 ILSC 5/21B-80 refers to the revocation of a license - volunteers are not licensed. (License refers to "licensed employment") This code would not apply either. And finally 55 ICS 5/3-9005 identifies the powers and duties of the State's attorney. The only connection is in subsection (a) (13) whereby the State's attorney must notify the Superintendent of Education upon the felony conviction of a person who holds a certificate or license pursuant to Article 21 or 21B. So the volunteer policy points to a set of conditions that do not apply to volunteers.

Ultimately, we are most concerned with how this will impact volunteer rates at our schools and in our classrooms. This could be a huge obstacle in getting parents into our schools – which for some many schools, is already an issue.

We are also very concerned that the ones who use volunteers and will be required to enforce these guidelines – building principals and teachers – have not been brought to the table in this discussion. That would be shared decision-making, and it is one of the pillars of engagement.

Furthermore, we recommend dedicated time and attention be put into determining how to best communicate this policy to all the stakeholders it impacts. This is an opportunity to ask the often unasked question – "How will people respond?"

Submitted to Pat Mogge via email on March 4, 2013