

**Community Input Session
Ockley Green – March 1, 2016**

INTRODUCTIONS

Mr. Jon Isaacs welcomed the audience and noted that this evening's meeting was cohosted by Portland Public Schools and the Jefferson Cluster Middle School Vision Group. He acknowledged DBRAC members and PPS School Board member Pam Knowles for being in attendance, and introduced PPS Superintendent Carole Smith.

Superintendent Smith provided the audience an overview of the DBRAC process, noting that she was hosting two learning sessions to receive input related to specific details of the DBRAC recommendation she received last month to help her put together her recommendation towards the School Board. She expressed optimism for the opportunity for North Portland to open a second middle school, but noted the urgency of making sure that the district was capable of undertaking the plans correctly and effectively.

She noted that she was listening closely to the audience to understand how best PPS can address the concerns of the North Portland community. She acknowledged the urgency expressed by groups like the Jefferson Cluster Middle School Visioning team to open a second middle school and asked for feedback from the audience to help her figure out how the district could best meet their needs in the DBRAC process.

MIDDLE SCHOOL VISIONING GROUP PRESENTATION

Superintendent Smith introduced Gabrielle Mercedes Bolivar, a parent leader who helped convene the meeting. Ms. Bolivar expressed the interest of the North Portland Middle School Visioning Group to open Ockley Green as a middle school as early as next fall to address the glaring disparities faced by North Portland's middle-level students missing out on extracurriculars, state funding, and core programming because they were attending underperforming K-8s. She detailed the work of North Portland parents who explicitly requested to uncouple Ockley Green's reconfiguration from the DBRAC process so that Ockley Green could open this next fall. She continued that their plan relieves acute overcrowding at Beach Elementary, would maintain the Jefferson/Roosevelt boundary, and provide better programming for students currently at Beach, Chief Joseph and Woodlawn. They concluded by stating that "inaction is failure" and that they requested to see PPS find the capacity to address this problem immediately.

The Jefferson Cluster Middle School Vision Group then brought students to testify:

JASPER, 7th Grade, Ockley Green. Jasper expressed frustration with the overcrowding at his school, and stated his preference that Ockley Green become a middle school because it'd be a better environment for students preparing to attend Jefferson High School.

FRANCIS, 7th grader, Beach. Francis testified that she believed her school was overcrowded, and lamented the lack of electives like band or theater. She stated that she thought going to

Ockley Green as a middle school would be a great opportunity to meet new students and prepare for high school.

SOPHIA, 3rd Grade, Chief Joseph. Sophia stated that she wanted to attend Ockley Green Middle School, and didn't want to have to take the bus to farther locations like Harriet Tubman or King.

ALEXIA, 6th grade. Ockley Green. Expressing support for dancing programs, Alexia stated that she was previously enrolled in Da Vinci and wished that Ockley Green was large enough to support a similar after school dance program. She stated that she believed the middle school conversion would allow Ockley Green to have a fully fledged dancing program, and expressed support for the new Middle School proposal.

AMELIA, 3rd Grade, Beach. Amelia spoke about the overcrowding at Beach school, noting that her lucn had to be held at 10:30 and that the education suffered because of the crowding.

With student testimony concluded, Mr. Jon Isaacs provided the audience the opportunity to break into small groups and discuss the opportunities, challenges, and details related to the potential option of opening Ockley Green as a Middle School in the fall of 2016.

COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

After the twenty-minute discussion period, Mr. Isaacs provided opportunity to parents, teachers and community leaders to share the results from their small group discussion. Testimony received did not include written or spoken record of names and schools of testimony, but received community input covered the following topics, presented in the order they were delivered:

- One teacher from the cluster expressed concern that there wasn't enough time to make sure that Ockley Green would be set up for success by opening in the fall in the 2016. She noted that without a principal for the community to rally around, it's difficult to imagine Ockley Green's curriculum and community being ready in such short notice to teach middle level programming within half a year. She stated that she wanted to see the children in this cluster succeed and acknowledged that change was urgently needed, and that she wanted to see Ockley Green be fully prepared to take these students.
- A parent asked PPS to consider the opinions of local teachers from Beach and other schools, noting that they would trust teacher's optimism or skepticism about the capacity to launch a new middle school by this fall.
- Acknowledgement that due to the ongoing dual campus arrangement, many students in this cluster have already been significantly moved around, and a discussion among parents about how this artifact of previous facility changes should be considered when studying Scenarios involving the opening of a new Middle School.
- Desire to learn more about how the district would make plans to be certain that Ockley's curriculum will be as strong as any other Middle School in PPS, with strong programming including compacted mathematics. While the parent expressed support for

the urgency of making a change, the parent also stated a desire to see the school district plan accordingly for these changes.

- Concerns expressed by parents about the lost ten days of instructional time every year due to the differences in timing of instructional time between K-8 and 6-8 configured schools. A parent noted the importance of giving students an opportunity to matriculate to high school, stating that a larger cohort allows middle level students to experience electives, meaningful time to develop socially, have a middle school dance.
- A parent of a student at Beach who is also a Teacher at Lincoln stated he'd like to see the transition as soon as possible, and stated he aspired that students in the Jefferson cluster would be granted the same opportunities as the students on the Westside that he taught.
- Concern that the district did not plan to have more Spanish language translators at the event this evening.
- A teacher at Woodlawn Elementary expressed frustration that 2300 students that had passed through the Jefferson cluster had not been afforded an opportunity for a full middle level program, and he expressed support for a Middle School at Ockley Green. He expressed confidence that PPS could find a suitable principal, and that he thought the teacher energy for the current middle school students would be suitable to help carry the students and the community through the transition.
- A parent of a student at King Elementary stated support for his vision of programming with advanced math, art, music, and that he thought the new Middle School would be great to achieve these objectives. He stated that he hoped K-8 teachers could matriculate to the new Middle School.
- A Chief Joseph/Ockley Green parent noted the unique situation that the K-8 program currently is on a dual campus, and she stated that the younger students are looking forward to the opportunity to stay in an elementary school.
- Support for PPS allocating enough resources for staff and administrative time to assure that the newly formed Ockley Green facility would have enough time to get on board.
- A teacher expressed a preference that the changes be made soon, noting that music program they currently taught was difficult to run successfully because the auditorium was being jointly used with recess, picture day, and other events
- "How can we be reassured that Ockley Green will be more like Beaumont and not like George?" A parent asked for PPS to specifically address their plans to provide the necessary funding to help George's academic performance.
- A Beach Elementary parent expressed concern about transportation, noting the difficulties faced by the elimination of the Pre-K and the Head Start programs. For parents with students at multiple schools, it made it difficult to get their kids to the differing facilities. She also expressed a desire to see Jefferson's teachers engaged with Ockley Green's future curriculum.
- A parent with two students at CJOG said he heard a "split opinion" with some excited about the Middle School while others skeptical the district would be able to make the transition effectively. He encouraged PPS to provide more details, especially if the district chose to wait a year to open the new Middle School

- An eighth grade student spoke that he felt students were underrepresented in the process, and that the district should find out what existing students believe would be the right plan.
- A parent for Ockley Green stated that she felt urgency for the Ockley Green and Beach students while students at Vernon and King didn't have the same set of advocates, and noted that it made her feel uncomfortable. She continued by asking if the district make it a point to specifically address the rationale behind their decision, as well as what necessary information the district needs to make the decision will be collected if they wait a few extra weeks to decide.
- One parent expressed concern that the PPS was putting their resources into the changes at the Westside schools, and that the parents needed to feed on the momentum created by the parent activists who had pushed for the Middle School. He suggested continuing the Ockley Green restorative justice program with enough resources so the program wasn't grant-reliant. He expressed concern about losing the current teachers from Beach, and encouraged the district to begin hiring now to have a better chance at hiring better teachers and preparing them to succeed.
- A mother of students at Beach expressed a concern about the overcrowding at the facility and that changing the configuration will make it easier to avoid feeling "cramped." She asked the district to avoid pushing the overcrowding problem to another facility, and to consider keeping the fifth graders at Chief Joseph in the interim year to keep the consistency.
- A parent from Chief Joseph asked the district to "frontload the needs of her kids," and that the consensus from her group was that the district had failed this cluster for an entire generation. She asked PPS to consider the legacy of failing students, and encouraged the district to adopt the community's urgency in addressing their problems.
- A Jefferson Cluster parent and parent of CJOG asked the district to remember that parents would be closely watching their progress, and she noted that many communities currently underrepresented in this process need to be considered as well. She concluded that the district needed to get a principal online immediately for the program to be a success.
- An Irvington parent expressed his group had mixed opinions, noting some appreciated the K-8 structure but others were excited for the Middle School. He noted that the community was watching knowing "what wasn't happening," and that he encouraged any future transition provide better elective programming, and that the transition happens thoughtfully. He stated the need for before/after school care necessary for working families, the need to get Immersion programming, more counselors, and the improvement of student/teacher rapport.
- A CJOG parent noted that many parents were unhappy with how the previous PPS changes hurt their community, and that it was urgent to rectify the situation and move quickly with the Middle School program. He encouraged the Board Members to vote in support of the new Middle School and decouple it from the rest of the DBRAC process.

- A Beaumont/Jefferson parent said that he appreciated the Middle School format for his daughter, and thought it was important to have that atmosphere for her continued growth. He supported the quick movement towards a second Middle School.
- A parent asked the district to consider that parents in the Ockley Green community weren't getting the same amount of information and attention for things happening in their neighborhood. She asked why teachers at King weren't informed of the potential changes, and that the district needed to be more engaged to ensure that communication exists beyond just internet announcements, especially with my families lacking internet connections. She noted that many black families in particular, weren't getting the information they needed as the DBRAC community was making their decisions.

Superintendent Carole Smith thanked the audience for their commentary, noting that she was hearing near-universal call for a Middle School among the community that was not true when they did the process back in 2013. She expressed her appreciation for the parents expressing their urgency, and that she would take this urgency back to the School Board Members to determine the next steps in the process.