

# Milwaukee Public Schools

# **Community Task Force**

# **Report**

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December 12, 2019



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## LETTER FROM THE TASK FORCE

For generations, the Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS) system has been the educational home to millions of Milwaukee children and their families. Generations of MPS graduates have found success in nearly every field imaginable. Graduates of the Milwaukee Public Schools can be found in the highest levels of business, government, education and the helping professions and have found success in the arts, athletics, and nearly everything in between.



The district, the largest in the state by a significant margin, also has challenges that in large part stem from the effects and concentration of poverty that many of its students face. These challenges manifest themselves in the lack of basic needs being met, including in the form of food insecurity, homelessness, lack of healthcare, and other needs.

At the same time that the needs of students continue to increase, so too does the bar for what students should know and be able to do at the time of their graduation. To be sure, MPS graduates must be able to compete with their peers from both across town and from across the globe, as technology and globalization increase and evolve.

The school district has significant and urgent financial challenges. Like every school district in Wisconsin, MPS is restricted by a state-imposed revenue limit (or revenue cap) that restricts the amount of money the district can spend. While this revenue limit is adjusted every two years as part of the state's biennial budget process, the increases have not kept pace with inflation. Moreover, school districts with declining enrollments, including MPS, face falling revenue limits that are based on a formula that lowers the district's revenue limits on an annual basis faster than the district's ability to realize cost savings by serving fewer students.

The task force discussed the example that most other school districts in the area and the state, which have sought and received revenue limit increases through the passage of a referendum as allowed by state law, the Milwaukee Public Schools system has never passed a referendum. In fact, the only referendum pursued by the district—in December 1993 to address facilities—did

not pass. The task force encourages the board to explore referendum options, as well as other options to address the district's financial needs.

The financial impact of this can be seen in comparisons of the MPS revenue limit numbers compared to that of its neighbors, many of which have passed referenda over the years. If the Milwaukee Public Schools' per-pupil revenue limit number was the same as many of its neighbors, the district would have hundreds of millions of dollars of increased revenue to spend on students.

While the numbers can be most easily summarized on a spreadsheet, the impact of cuts can be seen in classrooms across the district. Efforts are made by district staff to stem the effects of such financial cuts as students are provided far fewer educational opportunities than their peers in other districts. Moreover, much more is expected of MPS teachers and staff than of those in similar positions in other districts. This has resulted in the well-established migration of outstanding Milwaukee Public School educators to other Wisconsin school districts.

The MPS Community Task Force was formed in November 2019, with a charge from the board to consider the district's financial needs and make recommendations to the board.

As members of the task force, we moved quickly and covered the breadth of the district's financial needs, but stayed at a high level to accomplish our task within the given timeframe.

This report details our work. It provides background information about the school board's activities that led to the creation of the task force, which we felt were important for context. It details our meetings, provides a window into our deliberations, and includes our recommendations. This report also includes, for the sake of transparency, a number of addenda items that allow community members to understand our work at a high level.

In keeping with the charge provided to us by the board, our recommendations are broad. But we trust they will also prove helpful to the school board as it considers solutions for the district's long-term financial health.

With that, we wish to thank the school board for the opportunity to serve on this task force.

Sincerely,

Milwaukee Public Schools Community Task Force

## EQUITY VISION STATEMENT

By changing funding inequities, we will eliminate the disparities in educational opportunities and outcomes that exist among our students today and our students will be prepared for successful and prosperous lives in a multi-cultural global society

## TASK FORCE MISSION STATEMENT

The Milwaukee Public Schools Community Task Force believes that ALL students deserve the best. The best teachers. The best school leadership. The best schools.

Over the past few months, we have come together to talk about what it means to have true equity in our schools—what our wishes are for all the young people educated at MPS. We have identified eight priorities we believe will increase equity and excellence in our schools and promote positive educational, social, and emotional outcomes for our community’s children.

## EIGHT PRIORITIES

**High-quality early childhood education:** Research has long shown that the best educational investment we can make is in high-quality early childhood education. Although our district does a good job of providing early learning opportunities to Milwaukee children, our students need more. This includes providing full-day, four-year-old kindergarten; offering additional pre-four-year-old-kindergarten programs; improving teacher/student ratios; and providing wage increases so that we can better recruit and retain outstanding early learning teaching professionals.

**Facilities maintenance and safety improvements:** Although the district has done a good job of maintaining its facilities over the years, decreases in funding due to declining enrollment have created challenges. When faced with the decision of maintaining proven educational programs and services for MPS students or putting money into facilities, the board and administrations have always put children first. Currently, the district’s budget dedicated to facility maintenance is well below national standards and is not sustainable long term. As a result, the district has now deferred a total of \$185 million in maintenance projects.

**Attracting and retaining certified educators:** While some of the best and most experienced educators in the state of Wisconsin serve students in the Milwaukee Public Schools, it is also true that many outstanding teachers began their careers in MPS before



being recruited to positions outside Milwaukee. The fact is that, increasingly, MPS cannot compete for outstanding educators in the new market that was created by Act 10. Moreover, as fewer and fewer young people pursue education as a career field, MPS finds itself competing with better-paying suburban schools for a dwindling number of candidates. As a result, many teaching positions in our schools—schools that serve a high percentage of students in poverty and those who have the most to gain from outstanding educators—are filled by non-certified teachers. To be sure, stabilizing the workforce—in this case, our teachers and educational assistants—means we stabilize the classroom for our students.

**Professional support staff:** After family members, teachers and other professional staff in schools are among the most important adults with whom our children engage. However, just as it is difficult for MPS to recruit and retain professional educators, it is also true that hiring and keeping outstanding psychologists, therapists, social workers, nurses, counselors, and safety staff is also extremely challenging. The needs of our students require experienced professionals. We find that we cannot hire or retain staff at the level necessary to meet our students' needs.

**Meeting educational standards for programming in library services, art, music, and physical education:** The state of Wisconsin requires specific levels of programming related to library sciences, art, music, and physical education. Although MPS meets these basic requirements, it does so in a way that most would rightly feel is unacceptable. While students in most school districts receive music instruction from a trained, experienced, and certified music instructor, too many MPS children receive basic instruction from their classroom teacher, who has neither the training nor the experience to provide students with proper instruction in that area. The same is true for art, physical education, and library services. Despite our best efforts, our students are not fully receiving what they deserve in these areas.

**Expanding access to advanced educational programming opportunities:** As our graduates leave our schools for the next stage of their lives, they do so in an environment that is more competitive than ever before. With that in mind, we must continue to raise the bar for what our students know and are able to do by the time they receive their well-deserved diplomas. In most Wisconsin school districts, robust world language programs, Advanced Placement (AP) classes, and International Baccalaureate (IB) coursework—along with bilingual, immersion, and Montessori programs—are becoming increasingly common. While MPS has outstanding examples of all these programs, they are only offered to a small minority of our students. We must expand access for advanced educational programs to all students.

**Comprehensive career and technical education:** Providing students with well-articulated career pathways at an early age is critical to their future success. While MPS has schools that are national leaders in this area, we must do more to ensure that every student has access to high-quality career and technical education pathways. Getting this right has clear, positive implications for our students that simultaneously offer the promise of clear economic benefits for our region and our state.

**Class sizes:** Although the research is mixed on the most beneficial student-to-faculty ratio, ask any student or teacher and they will tell you that small class sizes matter. This is why class sizes are so small in suburban districts. While we have done our best to keep class sizes small, the district's revenue limit situation has resulted in higher-than-desired class sizes. We believe this has led to reduced student achievement and lower levels of staff retainment. We must do better in this area.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Board of School Directors of the Milwaukee Public Schools have undertaken an effort to engage the entire community in finding sustainable solutions for the district's financial challenges.

In Wisconsin, the amount of money a school district can receive through local property taxes and state aid is tied to a revenue limit formula, also known as a revenue cap. The Milwaukee Public Schools has a low revenue limit. For example, in this academic year, the district's per-pupil revenue limit is \$1,768.44 per student per year less than the limit in the School District of Brown Deer and \$5,293.27 less than the limit in neighboring Nicolet Union School District. If the Milwaukee Public Schools had the same revenue limit as the School District of Brown Deer, MPS would have at least \$133,000,000 more revenue this year; it would have at least \$400,000,000 more for this year if it had Nicolet's per pupil funding.

This low limit is made worse by the fact that the revenue formula does not account for students who are English learners or who are economically disadvantaged. These two groups of students comprise a large segment of the Milwaukee Public Schools student population. The low revenue limit levels have resulted in significant needs for our students, including those related to:

- providing more high-quality early childhood education;
- conducting facilities maintenance and safety improvements;
- attracting and retaining certified educators;
- employing professional support staff;
- meeting educational standards for programming in library, art, music, and physical education;

- expanding access to advanced educational programming opportunities;
- providing comprehensive career and technical education; and
- having proper class sizes.

In Wisconsin, school boards can vote to place an operational referendum question on the local ballot that, if passed by a majority of residents, allows the board to exceed its revenue limit at the level identified in the ballot question.

In considering solutions to present to the school board, task force members found agreement that the operational needs outlined by the administration require urgent attention. Moreover, members agreed that Milwaukee students deserve what students in other districts are receiving and that the school board should pursue a referendum to address these needs.

However, members were quick to note that any referendum must take into consideration the ability of homeowners to pay and that the board should ensure a pre-referendum engagement effort to determine the willingness and ability for the community to pay for a solution.

We believe that increased funding to support these and other strategies is not only necessary—it is a moral imperative. It is a mandate.

We believe that one revenue source is a citywide referendum.

We believe that the Directors on the School Board have the expertise and commitment to move from recommendations to action to impact.

Therefore, the Task Force encourages and empowers the Milwaukee Public Schools Board of Directors to:

- Build increased community awareness of the assets and needs of MPS.
- Establish metrics and timelines for the aforementioned eight priorities.
- Develop and articulate an aspirational, equitable budget.
- Frame and execute a referendum.

## INTRODUCTION

The Milwaukee Public Schools system faces numerous challenges. The district provides quality and federally mandated special education and English language learner supports in a city where more than 82.9 percent of students live under the federal definition of poverty. At the same time, the district is locked in a low, state-imposed revenue limit that severely restricts its ability to meet the needs of its students. This is made worse by the fact that the state's revenue limit formula punishes districts with declining enrollments by lowering revenue limits, doing so in a way that often results in severe cuts to programs and services. This is because the cost savings for the reduced number of students does not keep pace with revenue limit reductions.

As a result, the amount that the Milwaukee Public Schools can spend—the revenue limit formula, which some have argued is a determination of what children are worth—is far less in the Milwaukee Public Schools than in neighboring districts.

The school board directors developed a robust community engagement plan to engage the community in a discussion about the district's needs and find the most appropriate solution(s).

The effort began in June 2019 with the passage of a school board resolution, followed by a survey and a series of community engagement sessions that were held throughout the city.

In the survey and during the sessions, the details of which are provided later in this report, efforts were made to understand the expectations of parents and community members for what their schools should provide students.



Based on this information, the board then enlisted the assistance of a task force. The board assembled a group of 32 community members to review the needs of the district and create solutions that would be formally presented to the board. The task force, which represents the rich diversity of the district community, was assembled and presented with a formal charge, which outlined its duties and scope set by the board. This charge provided helpful parameters regarding the work of the task force and ensured there were no wasted efforts. The task force was asked

to present a formal report to the board consisting of a series of recommendations at the conclusion of the process. This document is that report.

The task force was structured to operate separately from the board and the district. School board members were able to attend the task force meetings, but they were encouraged not to participate. Similarly, district staff members were asked to present information and to be an available resource to the task force, but they did not offer unsolicited opinions. Staff were available to explain the needs of the district, validate solutions proposed by the task force to ensure they were actionable, and assist in deliberating on various solutions. A representative from the Donovan Group assisted in ensuring the agreed-upon process was maintained, drafted a report for the task force, and staffed the task force, as needed.

The task force worked within the parameters of the process and held four meetings. A draft report was presented to the task force before the group's fourth meeting. During the final meeting, task force members reviewed a draft report and suggested changes to it.

The task force meetings were open to the public. In addition, the local news media reported updates and information about the meetings was posted on the district's website.

## FINANCIAL NEEDS

In Wisconsin, the amount of money a school district can receive through local property taxes and state aid is tied to a revenue limit formula, also known as a revenue cap. Simply put, since 1993, when revenue limits were put into place, districts with higher revenue limits have been able to receive and spend more money while those with lower limits have been restricted to spending less.

The state legislature has considered making adjustments to the revenue limit formula to take into consideration the additional per-pupil costs for students who are English Language Learners and those who are economically disadvantaged. These two groups of students comprise a large segment of the student population, and the current revenue formula does not account for such costs.

While the revenue limit formula does not account for some of the specific, high-cost needs of students, it is closely tied to student enrollment. Those school districts that have declining student enrollments, such as MPS, face significant reductions in their revenue limits.

Of the 421 Wisconsin school districts, there are 421 different per-pupil revenue limits. More bluntly, under Wisconsin law, the "value" of a student is different from district to district. The Milwaukee Public Schools' revenue limit is far below that of neighboring districts.

In this academic year, for example, the Milwaukee Public Schools' per-pupil revenue limit is \$10,296.73. By comparison, the neighboring School District of Brown Deer has a revenue limit of 12,065.17, which is \$1,768.44 more per student, per year.

This difference is already significant at the individual student level and far greater at the district level. If MPS had the same revenue limit as the School District of Brown Deer, MPS would have \$133,000,000 more revenue this year.

The numbers are even more stark for neighboring Nicolet Union School District. Nicolet's revenue limit is a full \$5,293.27 more than the Milwaukee Public Schools', a difference that equals \$400,000,000 more for this year if Milwaukee had Nicolet's revenue limit.

It is important to note that MPS is providing highly needed services to a greater number of students than all other districts in the state, including its neighbors listed above.

While the district's financial challenges can be outlined in broad terms by reviewing its revenue limit situation, especially in relation to other districts in the area, the impact of those numbers are best understood by considering the needs of our students.

During the first meeting of the task force, which is detailed later in this report, the co-chairs requested that school district staff provide a series of categories that can be used to better communicate and understand the needs of the district and its students. Following that discussion, the "EIGHT PRIORITIES OF NEEDS" were created, as outlined above.

## PROCESS

In an effort to address the series of financial challenges facing the Milwaukee Public Schools, its Board of School Directors engaged in a process to inform its district community about its needs and work with the community to find a solution that meets the needs of students and ensures the long-term financial stability of the district.

The evaluative process started in June 2019 when the school board passed a resolution calling for the administration to develop a plan to engage the community in "creating a robust outline of a vision of what it would take to ensure that all students get the public schools that they deserve." The call also indicated that after the input was ". . . received and synthesized, a financial analysis [would] be done to accurately cost out the components of this vision."

Based on this effort, in August 2019, the Milwaukee Public Schools launched a community-wide survey and invited members of the entire district community to participate. The survey was designed to reach as many community members as possible in an effort to learn what they wanted for their district. The survey was translated into Arabic, Burmese, Hmong, Karen, Rohingya,

Somali, and Spanish. At the time of this writing, more than 24,000 people have taken the survey, which remains open.

Respondents were asked to consider various items and indicate the level to which those items are "essential to a quality K-12 education." By overwhelming margins, all the items listed were determined to be essential.

Of particular note, when asked to indicate the level of agreement with survey statements,

- 75.8% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that "Small class size is essential to a quality K-12 education;"
- 85.6% agreed or strongly agreed that "Certified teachers and support staff are essential to a quality K-12 education;"
- 84.8% agreed or strongly agreed that "Supportive services, such as school counselors, psychologists, social workers, and nurses, are essential to a quality K-12 education;"
- 86.0% agreed or strongly agreed that librarians, art teachers, music teachers, and physical education teachers are essential to a quality K-12 education;
- 65.2% agreed or strongly agreed that "Three-year-old kindergarten opportunities are essential to a quality K-12 education;"
- 77.16% agreed or strongly agreed that "World language, bilingual, and language immersion programming options are essential to a quality K-12 education;"
- 74.0% agreed or strongly agreed that "Program-specific offerings such as Montessori, International Baccalaureate (IB), and Advanced Placement (AP) are essential to a quality K-12 education;"
- 83.5% agreed or strongly agreed that comprehensive career and technical education (including instruction related to fields like health care, business, digital technology, building trades, engineering, and culinary arts) and STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) programs are essential to a quality K-12 education; and 81.0% agreed or strongly agreed that continuing education for staff is essential to a quality K-12 education.

Following the surveys, the district hosted a series of feedback/listening sessions designed to engage the entire community and seek further input to help guide the district in creating a learning community that achieves a unified vision. Sessions were held:

- Thursday, September 19, 2019 at the Wisconsin Conservatory of Lifelong Learning
- Saturday, September 21, 2019 at Reagan High School
- Monday, September 23, 2019 at North Division High School
- Wednesday, September 25, 2019 at Vincent High School

After brief presentations of the survey findings, attendees formed small groups to discuss the findings and offer additional input. Hundreds of Milwaukee residents attended the four listening sessions to express their opinions.

In each of the four sessions, efforts were made to provide community members with facts about the district's enrollment trends and projections; answer questions from community members about those trends and projections; and solicit feedback to assist the board in finding solutions to the problems.

As a planned follow-up to the survey, all community members were then invited by the district to participate in any of the four task-force sessions held at Bradley Tech High School.

Several themes emerged from session participants' responses to the questions posed. The major themes were related to:

- Meeting the diverse needs of children in the district, raising expectations for students, and moving on these items now;
- Reducing class sizes and increasing student offerings;
- Ensuring equity across the district and between students in the Milwaukee Public Schools and those in neighboring districts for programs, services, and other offerings;
- Meeting students' and staff members' needs; and
- Recruiting and retaining quality staff.

Then, based on the results of the survey and sessions, the district announced on November 5, 2019, the members of a community-led task force to be co-chaired by Peter Feigin and Kimberly Walker. The 32-member task force was charged with independently examining the district's needs and developing possible solutions to those needs. The names and affiliations of the members of the task force are listed in Appendix A. Working under a formal charge from the board, the task force made a formal recommendation at the conclusion of its process, which was December 10, 2019.

This is the final report of the task force.

Board members were encouraged to attend task force meetings as part of the listening audience. District staff served the task force as information resources and a representative from the Donovan Group assisted the task force in following a process and writing the final report. Public notices were posted for all task force meetings.

## COMMUNITY TASK FORCE MEETINGS—IN BRIEF

As noted, the Community Task Force held four formal meetings. All meetings were held at Bradley Tech High School. Below is a review of the meetings to date. All meeting agendas are included in Appendix B. All task force meetings were open to the public.

**Meeting 1—November 6, 2019:** This meeting included introductions, a review of the charge from the board, norms for how the task force would do its work, a review of roles, and a review of task force deliverables. Task force members received binders with the names of all participants, norms for engagement, and roles. A general, high-level review of the needs was presented to the group and district staff members answered questions.

As part of this first meeting, the co-chairs (in response to task force members' dialogue) asked that for the second meeting, the district be prepared to speak to categories of needs in the district in a way to organize the district's significant needs.

**Meeting 2—November 11, 2019:** During this meeting, members took a deep dive into the needs of the district. In response to the request for the district's financial needs to be discussed, the district presented the task force eight categories:

- Offering high-quality early childhood education;
- Attracting/retaining certified educators;
- Having appropriate class sizes;
- Employing professional support staff;
- Providing comprehensive career and technical education;
- Conducting facilities maintenance and creating safety improvements;
- Meeting educational standards in library sciences, art, music, and physical education; and
- Expanding access to advanced educational programming opportunities.

After presentations from district staff, task force members had the opportunity to ask questions and to discuss the various needs regarding the district.

At the conclusion of the second meeting, the co-chairs asked the district to create a set of solutions to the district's needs, including a "gold standard" aligned with best practices designed to ensure students' needs are met.

**Meeting 3—November 18, 2019:** In responding to the request by the co-chairs in the second meeting for a set of solutions, the district provided two solutions. Option A was aligned with current and emerging best practices and included similar items to those offered in neighboring districts. A second set of options, Option B, was created as a less robust solution that met the needs of students, but at a lower level than that of Option A.

In presenting information to the task force, district staff explained that while the district has significant facilities-related needs, the priority must remain on the education of children in the district's classrooms. Therefore, the following A and B options that were presented focused on operational needs rather than long-term, facilities-related needs.

## **Early Childhood 3K to 3rd Grade**

### Option A

- 1 teacher per 15 students (566 additional teachers)
- Full-day K3/K4 Head Start
- Teachers with a license in early childhood education
- National Association for the Education of Young Children early childhood guidelines
- Related professional development costs

### Option B

- 1 teacher per 20–22 students (185 additional teachers)
- Teachers with coursework in early childhood education
- Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards (WMELS)
- Related professional development costs

## **Class Size**

### Option A

- K3–3rd: 1 teacher per 15 students
- 4th–8th: 1 teacher per 20 students
- 9th–12th: 1 teacher per 23 students
- 958 additional staff members

### Option B

- K3–3rd: 1 teacher per 20 students
- 4th–8th: 1 teacher per 23 students
- 9th–12th: 1 teacher per 25 students
- 325 additional staff members

## **Library Sciences, Art, Music, and Physical Education**

### Option A

- One full-time certified library media specialist per school; 104 additional staff members
- Art: 1 staff up to 400; 2 staff up to 700; 3 up to 1,000; 142 additional staff members
- Music: K-5th, 75 minutes per week; band/orchestra/choir; 166 staff members
- 1 physical education teacher for every 390 K-5th grade students

### Option B

- Half-time staff for K-8th; Full-time high school staff: 49 additional staff members
- Art: 1 staff member for up to 500 students; 2 staff members for up to 1,000 students; 108 additional staff members
- K-5th: 60 minutes per week; band/orchestra/choir; 151 staff members
- 1 physical education teacher for every 600 K-5th students

## **Support Staff**

### Option A

- Move to a support ratio of 1 to 250
- Counselors – 156 additional staff
- Psychologists – 121 additional staff
- Social Workers – 135 additional staff
- Nurse per school – 80 additional staff

### Option B

- Move to a support ratio of 1 to 350
- Counselors – 82 additional staff
- Psychologists – 47 additional staff
- Social Workers – 61 additional staff
- Nurse per school – 80 additional staff

## **Career and Technical Education (CTE)**

### Option A

- Grades 6–8: Licensed CTE teacher(s) (based on enrollment) to provide at least 12 weeks of CTE instruction for all students in all three grades
- Enrollment of more than 1,200 = three or more pathways with 2–3 teachers per pathway
- Staff = 75 Career and Technical; 29 Computer Science

### Option B

- Grades 6–8: Licensed CTE teacher(s) (based on enrollment) to provide at least 12 weeks of CTE instruction for all students in all three grades
- Maintain existing career and technical educator pathways at high schools with programs and add one pathway with 2 teachers to high schools that do not have career and technical educator
- Staff = 25 Career and Tech; 29 Computer Science

### **Advanced Education**

#### Option A

- Full-time teachers for gifted and talented students in multiple grades
- Full-time world language teacher
- Monthly opportunities to engage with experts in students' area(s) of gifted and talented abilities, on or off site, or through the use of technology, including Telepresence

#### Option B

- Teachers for gifted and talented students in multiple grades
- World language
- Opportunities to engage with experts in students' area(s) of gifted and talented abilities, on or off site, or through the use of technology, including Telepresence

### **Facility Needs**

#### Option A

- Combination of new construction and significant renovations
- Building envelope, HVAC, plumbing, ceilings, lighting, floors, painting, electrical systems, safety/fire alarms

#### Option B

- Moderate renovations including ceilings, lighting, floors, and painting

As with most other school districts, the Milwaukee Public Schools' costs to address all of its needs at one time, including facility needs, are extremely high. Moreover, the costs for the A and B versions, considering the difference between the district's current revenue limit situation, are also very high. The costs are \$2,029,385,478 and \$615,022,115 for options A and B, respectively. These numbers are a reflection of the "gold standard" needs of our students which we requested from the district in our second meeting.

These figures reflect the needs of our students that they deserve to have filled. To be clear, these figures are not the levels at which we recommend the board go to referendum. As noted earlier in the report, any referendum effort must balance the needs of our students with our community's ability to pay.

**Meeting 4–December 10, 2019:** During the final meeting, members reviewed a draft of this report. Taskforce members offered suggestions and agreed that the co-chairs should make final changes to the document based on the discussion that took place.

## DIALOGUE

During their time together, the task force members engaged in thoughtful dialogue that covered a range of ideas and options. Although this gave way to the proposed recommendation included later in this report, the members believed that a summary review of the dialogue should be included to illustrate how the recommendations were formed.

The following are some of the ideas discussed during the task force meetings:

**The district has urgent needs that require attention now.** There was agreement among task force members that the operational needs outlined by the administration require the urgent attention of the school board. Task force members acknowledged the district's needs and encouraged the school board to keep those needs top of mind. Members agreed that the more urgent operational issues must be addressed first.

**Milwaukee students deserve what students in other districts are receiving.** When discussing the two sets of options, task force members agreed that students in Milwaukee Public Schools deserve the same types of high-quality programs and services and the same level of staffing as students in other districts.

**The school board should pursue a referendum to address its needs.** In Wisconsin, school boards can vote to place an operational referendum question on the local ballot that, if passed by the majority of residents, allows the board to exceed its revenue limit at a level identified in the ballot question.

**However, the referendum must take into consideration the ability for homeowners to pay.** Task force members were very quick to note that the school board must ensure that it takes into consideration the ability of Milwaukee residents to pay for a referendum. They struggled with the issue of balancing the needs of the school district with the needs of taxpayers.

**Finally, the district must create a strong narrative and strong fact-based justification for a specific amount of funding.** While members agree that needs exist, and further agree that needs are critical and should be addressed with a sense of urgency, questions were raised regarding the school district's accountability. While many accountability measures are in place for the Milwaukee Public Schools in various forms at the different levels of government, in seeking additional revenue, the school board has an opportunity and obligation to further engage the community about how the additional money will be used and its progress toward achieving its goals. What this accountability is and how this accountability will be put into place goes well beyond the charge of the task force.

Some members indicated that the board should ensure a pre-referendum engagement effort and use polling to determine the willingness and ability for the community to pay for a solution. The group seemed to agree that the school board should pursue a referendum to address all of the needs as soon as possible, but not to create a levy that is untenable for homeowners.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

When creating its recommendations to the board, task force members focused on meeting the needs of current and future students while respecting the abilities of homeowners. The lenses through which these recommendations were made include the following parameters established by the board charge: (1) Provide long-term financial stability and sustainability; (2) Ensure the district's ability to achieve its vision; (3) Take into consideration the impact on local taxpayers; and (4) Maintain consistency with the school board's focus on continuous improvement and reflect the realization that the district must ensure its graduates are able to be successful in an increasingly complex economy and society.

The following are the task force's recommendations to the Milwaukee Board of School Directors:

- Build increased community awareness of the assets and needs of MPS.
- Establish metrics and timelines for the eight priorities.
- Develop and articulate an aspirational, equitable budget.
- Frame and execute a referendum.

# ADDENDUM A: Task Force Charge

October 2, 2019

## Board Charge to Community Task Force

On behalf of the Milwaukee Public School of Board of Directors, we want to thank you for your participation in the Community Task Force. The purpose of this document is to present a formal charge for the task force.

The Community Task Force shall consider the Milwaukee Public Schools' financial situation and work as a committee to develop a written report that details a solution or a set of solutions for the Board of Directors to consider within the context of the parameters detailed below.

The report shall be presented to the Board of Directors for review and possible action. The board must note that establishing this task force does not bind it to accept the task force's suggested solution(s).

### 1. Specific Duties

The Community Task Force shall present the board a solution (or set of solutions) that:

- Provides long-term financial stability and sustainability;
- Does not risk financial jeopardy to the district and represents a multi-year plan;
- Ensures the district's ability to achieve its vision;
- Takes into consideration the impact on local taxpayers;
- Does not propose materially altering the current structure/program offerings;
- Is consistent with the school board's focus on continuous improvement and reflects the realization that the district must ensure that its graduates are able to be successful in an increasingly complex economy and society;
- Accounts for state and federal laws;
- Protects the district's assets and ensures these are adequately maintained; and
- Ensures the district's ability to develop, attract, and recruit highly skilled teachers and staff.

### 2. Reporting Responsibilities

The chairs of the Community Task Force are specifically charged with the following duties:

- Running the meetings and keeping the process moving;
- Seeking consensus among task force members on all decisions; and
- Keeping the Board of Directors representative apprised of problems encountered by the task force in the course of its work.

### 3. Membership

The Community Task Force shall consist of 16-30 voting members. While Board of Director members desire the option of attending task force meetings, they will neither actively participate in the meetings nor vote on the findings. Because board members may attend meetings, all task force meetings will be posted as open meetings; this means the public may attend, but not participate in these meetings.

### 4. Staff Support

The district will provide support for the work of the task force. If you have any questions about this document, please call Jennifer Mims-Howell at 414-438-3648 or email her at [mimshjn@milwaukee.k12.wi.us](mailto:mimshjn@milwaukee.k12.wi.us).

Sincerely,

Milwaukee Public Schools Board of Directors

Larry Miller, President

## ADDENDUM B: Task Force Members

Nicole Angresano/United Way of Greater Milwaukee & Waukesha County

Nafessa Burdine/Manpower Group

Tina Chang/Syslogic Inc.

Patricia Contreras/Rockwell Automation

Dr. Robert 'Bert' Davis/America's Black Holocaust Museum

Mike Fabishak/Associated General Contractors

Peter Feigin/The Milwaukee Bucks

Pam Fendt/Milwaukee Area Labor Council

Steve Francaviglia/Aurora Health Care

Dr. Antonio Guajardo/Mexican Fiesta

Ken Hanson/Hanson Dodge Creative

Josephine Hill/North Division High School Alumna

Reggie Jackson/Nurturing Diversity Partners

John Kersey/Zilber Ltd.

Dr. Vicki Martin/Milwaukee Area Technical College

Reverend Marilyn Miller/Milwaukee Inner-city Congregations Allied for Hope (MICAH)

Dr. Mark Mone, Chancellor, UW-Milwaukee

Christine Neumann Ortiz/Voces de la Frontera

Jennifer O'Hear/Common Ground

Dr. Rogers Onick/Metropolitan Milwaukee Alliance of Black School Educators (MMABSE)

Nicolo Onorato/MPS Teacher

Fred Royal/NAACP

Mark Sabljak/Sabljak & Budisch

Rachel Schlueter/MPS Teacher

Dr. Alan Shoho/UW-Milwaukee

Cathy Stagmer/Komatsu Mining Corp. Group

Teri Sullivan/Arts@Large

Julia Taylor/Greater Milwaukee Committee (GMC)

Kathy Thornton Bias/Boys and Girls Clubs of Greater Milwaukee

Cendi Trujillo Tena/Leaders Igniting Transformation (LIT)

Kimberly Walker/Boys and Girls Clubs of Greater Milwaukee

Joanne Williams/Black Nouveau

## ADDENDUM C: Task Force Meeting Agendas

### **Community Task Force Meeting #1**

Wednesday, November 6, 2019 5:30 – 7:30 PM, Bradley Tech High School, 700 South 4th Street, Milwaukee

I) Welcome – Larry Miller, President, Milwaukee Board of School Directors (3 min)

II) Introduction of Co-chairs and the Task Force – Co-chairs (22 min)

III) Process to Date – Administration (10 min) Dr. Posley, Superintendent of Schools

IV) Process and Your Role as a Task Force Member – Joe Donovan (10 min)

V) Charge from the Board to the Task Force – Co-chairs (10 min)

VI) District Needs – Administration (15 min)

- Chris Thiel, Legislative Policy Manager, Milwaukee Public Schools
- Eduardo Galvan, Southwest Regional Superintendent, Milwaukee Public Schools

VII) Preview of Agenda Items for Meeting #2 – Co-chairs (10 min)

VIII) Questions and Answers/Task Force Discussion – Co-chairs (25-30 min)

### **Community Task Force Meeting #2**

Monday, November 11, 2019 5:30 – 7:30 PM, Bradley Tech High School, 700 South 4th Street, Milwaukee

I) Welcome – Co-Chairs (5 min)

II) Overview of the Needs – Dr. Keith Posley, Superintendent of Schools (5 min)

- III) High-Quality Early Childhood Education – Dr. Jeremiah Holiday, Interim Chief Academic Officer (5 min)
- IV) Attracting/Retaining Certified Educators – Evangeline Sceptur, Interim Chief Human Resource Officer (5 min)
- V) Class sizes – Martha Kreitzman, Chief Financial Officer (5 min)
- VI) Meeting educational standards for programming in the areas of library sciences, art, music, and physical education – Dr. Jeremiah Holiday, Interim Chief Academic Officer (5 min)
- VII) Professional Support Staff – Evangeline Sceptur, Interim Chief Human Resource Officer (5 min)
- VIII) Comprehensive Career and Technical Education – Dr. Jeremiah Holiday, Interim Chief Academic Officer (5 min)
- IX) Facility Maintenance and Safety Improvement – Travis Luzney, Director of Facilities and Maintenance Services and Dr. Katrice Cotton, Chief Administration Officer (5 min)
- X) Expanding access to advanced educational programming opportunities – Dr. Jeremiah Holiday, Interim Chief Academic Officer (5 min)
- XI) Preview of Agenda Items for Meeting #3 – Co-chairs (10 min)
- XII) Questions and Answers/Task Force Discussion – Co-chairs (50 min)
- XIII) Adjourn – Co-chairs

### **Community Task Force Meeting #3**

Wednesday, November 18, 2019 5:30 – 7:30 PM, Bradley Tech High School, 700 South 4th Street, Milwaukee

- I) Welcome, Review of Progress to Date, Discussion of Meeting Goals – Co-Chairs (10 min)
- II) Presentation of Solutions – Dr. Keith Posley, Superintendent of Schools (5 min) and Chris Thiel, Legislative Policy Manager (25 min) (total 30 min)
- III) Questions and Answers about Presented Solutions – Co-chairs (20 min)
- IV) Discussion – Co-chairs (30 min)

V) Consensus Finding: "What recommendations should be included in our report to the school board?" – Co-chairs (30 min)

VI) Adjourn – Co-chairs

#### **Community Task Force Meeting #4**

Tuesday, December 10, 2019 5:30 - 7:30 PM, Bradley Tech High School, 700 South 4th Street, Milwaukee

- I) Welcome and Review of Progress to Date – Co-Chairs (20 min)
- II) Fine Tuning/Acceptance of the Report – Co-chairs
- III) Adjourn – Co-Chairs

## ADDENDUM D: Task Force Rules for Engagement

Rules for engagement: Task force members are asked to engage in the task force meetings according to the following norms:

- Respect the authority of the chairs
- Participate fully
- Be present (limit use of devices)
- Ask for clarification when needed
- Engage in open and honest communication
- Function as an action-oriented, solution-finding body
- Remain open to new ideas
- Respect diverse discourse
- Own and support collective decisions

Observers are asked to remain silent during the meetings and not engage with task force members.