

Decision Item #19: REDUCE FUNDING FOR THE PARENT COMMUNITY RELATIONS UNIT

Background: The unit, as presently constituted, was established in mid-2001; the 2001-2002 school year is its first year; predecessor organizations included the Human Relations Department, Minority Student Achievement Division, and the Equity, Diversity and Advocacy Department.

The unit's objective is to respond to individual student and family needs requiring the following types of help:

- Hear parent concerns
- Help parents navigate through the system, especially where language, racial, or cultural barriers exist
- Serve as cultural translators
- Facilitate problem solving
- Follow up to ensure problem is resolved
- Help schools understand the nature of the problem and develop a plan of action to help students and families
- Help schools become more culturally sensitive and welcoming in both environment and curriculum
- Help parents in connecting with community resources
- Broker services to minority youth
- Communicate the real needs to the Board and Administration of families that traditionally do not come forward to voice their concerns

The District's enrollment composition (2000-2001 school year) have led to the unit's functions

- 18% African American
- 10% Asian and Asian American
- 7% Hispanic ancestry
- 7% enrolled in English as a Second Language (ESL) (51% of new students speak Spanish)
- 64% European American

Expenditures: \$422,500 (\$396,600 for salaries and fringe benefits and \$25,900 for supplies and services, including up to \$20,000 for community groups for outreach and support)

Revenues: None.

FTE: The unit has 6 full-time positions: 5 professional and 1 administrative support. The team consists of the Special Assistant to the Superintendent for Parent/Community Relations, 1 Parent/Community Relations Coordinator, 3 Parent/Community Response team members, and 1 secretary. One team member is fluent in Spanish and one is fluent in Hmong.

The Assistant Superintendents for Elementary Education and Secondary Education, Title IX Coordinator, Native American Student Advisor, Talented and Gifted Coordinator, and other staff assist the Parent Community Relations staff on a case by case basis when needed.

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Anticipated Savings: Option A: Eliminate one position: \$39,000 - \$91,500

Option B: Eliminate two professional positions: \$130,900

Option C: Abandon the function entirely: \$422,500

As the staff increases its ability to handle more cases and becomes more productive, the District can examine the feasibility of reducing the staff size in years 2 through 5 of its managed abandonment efforts, assuming State revenue caps remain in place.

Student Impact: Based on the availability of partial year data, 118 students assisted, it is expected that an estimated 265 students and their families will be served during the 2001-2002 school year.

Year to date, the breakdown of cases has been as follows

• African American	36%
• White	25%
• No data indicating	16%
• SE Asian & Hmong	8%
• Native American	8%
• Hispanic	7%
Total	100%

During the first four months of the school year (August – January, for which data are available), the unit handled 118 cases. At the end of January, 86 cases (73%) were closed (resolved) and 32 cases remained active (24 of which were active for more than one month). The team provided services to parents, families and school staff in 36 of the District's 45 schools.

Each of the five professional positions handled an average of 5.4 cases per month during the period analyzed at an average cost per case of approximately \$1,500 to \$1,600 (direct costs only, indirect costs are excluded from this estimate). The average number of cases handled per month per professional staff member ranged from a high of 9 to a low of 2.7, the latter being the Hmong-speaking professional. Each case averaged nine (9) hours to resolve.

In aggregate, it is estimated that the professional staff spends 62% of its time handling and resolving cases (ranges from 80% to 40%); 62% of 5 positions means that 3.1 full time equivalents perform the service. The remaining 38% of time is spent working with community groups, staff development, supporting district/community committees, and collaborating with professional resources, etc.

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Effectiveness: Strengths of the unit include:

- its ability to respond quickly, within 24 hours, to problems and issues to bridge any cultural barriers to ensure that minority and multi-cultural students and families' concerns and needs are addressed and resolved so that learning occurs,
- ability to resolve problems before they lead to legal claims,
- foreign language skills of the staff to assist in an effective way, and
- skills of the staff to deal with a full range of racial, ethnic and cultural issues facing students, their families, and school faculty and staff.

Weaknesses: a light caseload vis-à-vis the number of staff assigned to the function:

- A caseload per staff member that appears to be low (5.4 cases per month per team member average). The caseload is likely the result of three factors: a) the newness (August 2001) of the function and the fact that its existence is not well-known, b) a lower need for service than estimated, and c) the average time to resolve a case is nine (9) hours.
- An organization structure that appears top-heavy; 2 of the 5 professional positions are senior level.

Student Impact: Due to program reduction: should be minimal under Option A, although this option could eliminate the unit professional with the highest productivity – with 8.3 cases per month. This impact is likely to be more pronounced if Option C is adopted and the service is abandoned. Under Option A, reducing the staff by one professional position may lead to an average caseload of 7.1 or higher cases per staff member per month as the remaining staff grows in experience. In addition, the average cost per case handled should drop from the current \$1,500 - \$1,600 to an estimated \$1,200. Abandoning the function completely will put pressure on Assistant Superintendents, principals, assistant principals, social workers, guidance counselors to handle these cases. Or, problems and issues that arise may remain unresolved. Adopting Option B would eliminate a position and the teacher position, which has handled an average of 2.7 cases per month (lowest productivity), due to the relatively small number of Southeast Asian/Hmong student cases coming to the staff for resolution. Under Option B the District would need to use another Hmong speaking staff member or teacher to respond to students speaking that language.

Strategic Priorities: This function is pursuant to the Student Support and Home and Community Partnership priorities.

Board Priorities: This function conforms to the Board's priority of having all students, regardless of racial, ethnic, socioeconomic or linguistic subgroup attend school at a 94% attendance rate at each grade level.