Superintendent’s Public Engagement Committee
Meeting Minutes
January 18, 2012 • 8:30 a.m.–10:00 a.m.
Hattie Mae White Educational Support Center
Terry B. Grier, Ed.D., Superintendent of Schools

**The purpose of the Superintendent’s Public Engagement Committee (PEC) is to support public-engagement outreach for the district’s efforts in providing high-quality education, communicate critically important information, and gain valuable input from key community members.**

**IN ATTENDANCE**
Terry Grier  Frances Robinson-Hunt  Michele Pola
Beth Brown  Judy Long  Laura Richardson
Martin Cominsky  Christina Masick  Earl Jimmison
Melinda Garrett  Elena Coates  Jason Spencer
Laura Grobowsky  Mary Nesbitt  Helen Olin
Dale Davidson  Fernando Cisneros  Leslie Smith

**North Forest ISD**
North Forest had a hearing last week but there has not been a ruling as of yet. North Forest may initiate a lawsuit under the Voting Rights Act that would further delay the process. HISD has concerns of merging districts mid-year and at this point there are a lot of unknowns. Until all legal avenues have been exhausted, HISD cannot take any actions.

**Budget**
Melinda Garrett presented budget information to the group including details on where the dollars are budgeted, general fund projects and one-time needs. Last year, substantial cuts were made within central office eliminating 700 positions. Currently, the district is reviewing all department budgets. An explanation of the central service budget was provided detailing that these budgets directly support critical services provided to schools such as police officers, custodians, itinerate nurses and museum teachers, as examples. The group asked how HISD compares to other districts. Melinda offered that HISD Central Service spending is the second lowest in the state offering the Schools First Report as a reference located on the HISD budget website.

Currently, the projected budget deficit is $45-25 million with additional details to be shared at the upcoming board workshop. Discussion included topics such as the status of the lawsuit against the state, the ability to utilize fund balance, district efforts in areas where the census indicates growth and the actual funds expended by schools. The group asked clarifying questions about the Superintendent’s compensation plan as well a conducting best-practice sharing across the district. Dr. Grier commented that information sharing is under way via visits to other school, writing program sharing, and “WOW” videos. Dr. Pola committed to sharing a recent article on Superintendent Compensation. Dr. Grier commented that the district faces challenges recruiting because HISD pays employees less than other districts.

**Alternative Certification Program (ACP)**
A concern was raised with the upcoming closure of the University of Houston-Downtown and its impact to HISD. Dr. Pola responded that the impact to the district is minimal as other options exist such as HISD’s ACP program.
Follow-up

The group requested the number of registered voters within the North Forest ISD area. The group also asked for information on the number of new hires in Central Services as well as the actual spending on a school-by-school basis.

On behalf of the Anti-Defamation League, Martin Cominsky distributed the No Place for Hate Brochure to the group noting many, but not all, HISD schools participate in the Community of Respect initiative. He asked the group to share the information with their networks.

The next meeting of the Superintendent’s Public Engagement Committee is tentatively scheduled for Wednesday, April 18, 2012 8:30 a.m.

Chief of Staff Michele Pola serves as the liaison to the committee.
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