



Legislation Text

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TO: Mayor and Commissioners
FROM: Michael Coleman, Director of Community Improvement
THROUGH: Mark R. Lauzier, City Manager
DATE: September 11, 2018

EDUCATION MASTER PLAN - "STRIVING FOR EXCELLENCE"

Recommended Action:

Request City Commission support the recommendations outlined in the Education Master Plan Report and determine how the Report should be transmitted to the School District for further conversation.

Background:

The City of Delray Beach has cultivated a strong working relationship with the School District of Palm Beach County over the past three (3) decades. Our community has come together on many occasions to strategically plan with the School District on ways to overcome educational challenges. In each instance, the plans have led to new educational opportunities for our youth resulting in better academic outcomes. Listed below are the most notable highlights:

1990: Creation of the *Sharing for Excellence in Schools* plan to address the issue of families not choosing to live in Delray Beach due to the condition of its schools. This plan helped to build three (3) new elementary schools to address overcrowding issues, renovating older schools that were slated to be closed to avoid blighting conditions in neighborhoods and implementing choice programs to attract families. This plan was implemented in eight (8) years with over a \$10-million-dollar investment by the City. It also established the Education Advisory Board to oversee the plan.

1998: The City, along with its community partners, heavily lobbied the School Board to build Village Academy (a neighborhood school) located in the Southwest neighborhood to help combat the alarmingly high rate of academic failure among the community's youth. This school was built as a small continuum school, servicing students aged Kindergarten through 12th grade with a small ratio of teacher to children (1:15) to ensure children would be prepared for college.

2002: Relocation of Atlantic High School to avoid the renovation of the older site where flooding could not be overcome. The relocation of the high school resulted in a new State-of-the-Art high school, the construction of the Seacrest Soccer Complex, development of workforce housing units (Bexley Park) and the construction of Plumosa School of the Arts.

2012: Creation of a *Community Solutions Action Plan (CSAP)* to address the issue of only 30% of our third graders reading on grade level for those students attending a Title 1 school. The School Board supported the CSAP by entering into the first-ever Student Data Sharing Agreement with a

municipality, providing free reading resources, and supported a new summer camp program at Pine Grove Elementary School. This plan was implemented over five (5) years and was data-driven. The measured outcomes showed the City helped to improve 3rd grade reading scores, reduced chronic absenteeism rates and stemmed the summer reading slide that led the City to winning the 2017 All-America City Award.

In the fall of 2017, the Education Board identified our public schools were struggling with declining enrollment. The data showed there were approximately 2,000 empty seats when our neighbors to the north and south had schools at or above capacity. Data also revealed that school grades over several years were flat with only one (1) “A” school out of nine (9) of our public schools. The Education Board saw an opportunity with the one cent sales tax to look at how our schools may benefit with different school configurations and programming. They also felt it was time to create a new strategic plan to look at our educational system on a holistic basis versus a school-by-school basis.

The Education Board formed a steering committee comprised of five (5) Education Board members and five (5) community members to look at alternative ways to increase academic outcomes, increase career and job readiness, and increase the diversity of school programming with vertical learning opportunities. A series of meetings were held to discuss data, to learn about programs that might be a good fit for our schools, look at outcomes being recommended by The Set Transformation Plan, and to come up with thoughtful recommendations for the City Commission to consider. This process included input from the public, School District personal and local principals that culminated in the creation of Phase 1: Exploratory Educational Master Plan *“Striving for Excellence in Schools”* (“Plan”).

The Plan was presented to the City Commission at its meeting of January 16, 2018. The City Commission agreed that the Plan had merit and directed Mayor Glickstein to speak to high-level School Board personnel to see if they would support the City moving forward with a more formalized proposal and they agreed. The City then hired an Educational Consultant, Greenway Strategy Group, to further analyze the data, vet the recommendations outlined in Phase 1 of the Plan, help the Education Board come to consensus, and start to formulate a strategic plan to move forward.

The findings from the consultant’s research and Education Board recommendations will be presented by the consultant to the City Commission at the September 11th workshop meeting. The Education Board will be seeking policy direction on how to proceed.

City Attorney Review:

N/A

Funding Source/Financial Impact:

FY 19/20 - \$40,000 Consultant Fee for Phase 2 of the Education Master Plan

Timing of Request:

N/A