

Written Testimony

From: Horace Clouden

December 11, 2024

To the Board of Education: The Facilities Planning Process is missing the point.

You are missing the point/opportunity

Question: What do you think of the Facility Planning Process?

Answer: Let's use the presenter own words; Process, Product and Politics.

1. Process, so far this has been a Process of limited exposure. To have a number of meetings trying to meet the people where they are, I give the Process an unfavorable rating (low turnout for the parents of the 115,000 families). High turnout for staff with staff issues. Plus we don't get to hear what the children/students needs are.
2. Product, the Product was great it did identify in it "Desired Measures" what is needed in the District. But it misses the point in the survey. If all they gather from the meetings, so far, are the issues that the District should be well aware of. From its workorder system, School Board meetings and meetings with its staff, to construct a survey of priorities, is an impossible task, we've been there before. Now to learn there is a problem in teaching curriculum of any type because of lack of space or community control over space (Athletic spaces and auditoriums). How do we expect the student to be on grade level in any subject? IEP's are suspect.
3. Politics, now with local newspapers suppling data that 10% of the Black students (2023-2024 Data) are proficient in English, Language, Arts and Math. A District where 50% (50,000) of the students are Black, not to mention the Charter School system. Also, where 50% of the students are Black total account for 50% of the monies that is generated. What is the politics when you only value certain ones?

We must question the timing of this and the timeline for the final product. To have heard the issues one must conclude that you can pick any school and there are problems. Problems that are Facility, Academic and support base in nature.

For Facilities, you have to come up with a more effective ways of managing and contracting out the work. If you need to hire more staff than do it, but take a hard look at your requirements. In contracting out the work, there has to be a better process for completion and accountability. Stop with the Change Orders the District should know by now how to start avoiding them.

For Academics, over and underutilization, it's not about ADA compliance, Air Quality or spaces to conduct Special Needs services. It's class sizes, when does the onsite person (the Principal) say; "there is no more room but we have another school in the same area (that's for your elementary age students). When does the District take a hard look at its Site Selection Process and stop just sending students where they don't want to be i.e. Comprehensive High Schools or CTE programs (a decline in NOCTI test scores). Start duplicating attractive instructions in other parts of the city (underutilize spaces).

You must examine who is standing in front of the children/student. Everybody isn't cut out to be a teacher (despite the teacher shortage). When do you release the ones who don't fit the criteria? Is that what is causing the poor performance levels across the District (10% proficiency) along with burnout of their peers as a result. To hear in the Planning tour that there are groups that meet with the

Superintendent (teachers, principals and students) on a monthly basis. Why still only 10% in learning across the city? Student attendance is better than 10% and it is up, per the data.

We have to stop blaming the victim. Who is doing the assessments and who is providing the services, too many students with IEP's. When you hear the excuses, you have to say really and that applies to the other 90%. Yes, there are children/students with Mental, English Learning and Special Needs issues but the District has to do a better job of getting them the services they need. What is the percentage of children with those needs/issues? We still have the 10% proficiency issue. The inclusion of students is affecting the regular ed student which the District is putting in arms way.

As for the topic of money, underfunded by 1.2 Billion Dollars an amount that suggest no hope. To suggest the time line of achieving those dollars is ridicules. Meanwhile you must do a better job with what you receive (just take time to reflect back on what you have done). Here are some suggestions to find monies now:

School: Multiply the number of children enrolled at a school times the Per Pupil money received subtract the school budget from the Per Pupil monies received for the excess amount. Where does the excess money go? Explain why there is no monies for resources?

Pre-K: Is the motive to generate more income by increasing the Pre-K seats? How do you test a Pre-K? What we don't need are more children by the third grade not to be on grade level. Also, there is a concern about occupying the same space in a K-8.

Busing: Take into account monies spent on transporting students to out of catchment areas to a location where they can't take part in the extra services and curriculums because of travel times. Not to mention the student putting in extra personal time to travel (10-to-12-hour days). Monies can be diverted to resources instead of transportation. Remember only 10% is proficient across the city. No need to transport to another underperforming school. Make better use of the 180,000 seats as you redesign the District and hold the catchment areas to a higher standard of proficiency.

Trailers or Modular Space: While increasing the capacity of the school by installing trailers, is increasing the wear and tear on the main building i.e. food service, bathrooms, more hydrations stations needed, lack of space for individual services and the electrical grid for the entire site. How does this help the average age of the building (just say no, there's room in an underutilize school)?

Jr. high schools: By bringing back Junior High School helps the District sooner than later achieve its "Desired Outcomes". We can't continue to go down the same road. Not enough high-quality teachers, with attendance issues, new curriculums every two years and strategies for learning, failing yearly reports with only 1-5% points in academic achievements on failure. With the number one matrix having "Insufficient Data for Score", (student achievement/performance) for every school. Being sidetrack with facility issues which are part of day-to-day maintenance but it shouldn't deprive the students of equity in usage. The question that should be given to your Leadership Team and Learning Network Leaders is; **should we bring back Junior High Schools?** Can we expect the Project Team or the Advisory Group to understand the magnitude of this suggestion while hearing basic operating issues.

Here is written testimony that was submitted back on June of 2022,

Facilities Planning Process

Move to the front of the line

“Bring Back Junior High Schools”

Suggested time line if approved

1. Review material submitted **NOW**
2. Evaluate Junior High School Locations and choose NOW
3. Start transferring instructional materials NOW
4. Renovate where needed NOW
5. Advertise the New School configurations NOW
6. Start admission process for locations NOW
7. School Starts end of **August**

Your present students do not have a year or two to waste. What is the Facility Master Plan? It comes down to two choices, keep the school or sale the school. Let's not get caught up on 21st Century Learning Space. Space being the main word and it's responsible for 10% of the learning. What you have is a District that has deficiencies is all your Goals and Guardrails. The SPREE report shows you all the deficiencies and where. While the Facilities Planning Process is obtaining community input, you can be implementing an **Action Plan Now (Community Action Plan)**. In the Budget it was stated that there is enough money to have 1 teacher (regular Ed.) per 18 students. Then you can add the Special Ed. Teacher and Teacher Assistant/classroom aid. Not to mention your Demonstration teachers in only two schools, which supports your Guardrail 4. With the projection of failing student achievement, for the next three years. A change has to take place now. With the incoming superintendent not being knowledgeable with the landscape. We suggest a new classroom count of 18 students from K-12 and building configurations of k-6, 7th,8th and 9th and 10th,11th and 12th where doable. You have the space now, the District just has to level out the students and the teachers. Compete for the students of Philadelphia to want to go to a public school. One to Eighteen is a good start and I think the student, families and the teachers would all agree. This supports your goal of every child/student receiving an equitable and equity education. End of written testimony.

You see things haven't change much. Stop going in circles. Give the students a better chance at the 4 E's:

Education, Employment, Enlistment and Entrepreneurship

Thank you,

Horace Clouden

From: Horace Clouden

December 11, 2024

To the Board of Education: Stop kicking the can down the road.

We need an education and morale boost NOW

Stop kicking the can down the road.

List of needs:

1. Bring back Junior High School (7th, 8th and 9th)
2. Reduce the number of K-8
3. Establish three new CTE/Trade high schools (current locations are not enough)
 - a. Repurpose Bartram High School
 - b. Repurpose South Philly High School
 - c. Repurpose King, Martin Luther High School
4. Bring back driver's education
5. Open up the pools and do a better job managing and maintaining your athletic spaces
6. Enforce the Catchment policy and provide the resources to the neighborhood schools
 - a. Reduce overcrowding and underutilizing
 - b. Site selection can be address with duplicating successful program in other areas of the school District
 - c. Stream line your Middle-Grade locations while increasing equity (91 to 25).

I understand that you didn't have the time to truly study the operations of the School District. While on a retreat to understand one another.

With each passing year a new group of individuals are released into society, some with the skills to succeed and some not. The rest are just moving up in grade (with little results different year). You heard it before but from City Council on Monday, you need to do a better job in everything. Get everyone off your back and bring back Junior High Schools it would be a game changer for the District and force everyone to a new beginning.

The key to all of this is movement but not just any movement. Change the landscape for the schools below the river which are located in an academic desert. Repurpose the K-8 back to their original usage K-6 and repurpose your High schools back to their original design 10th, 11th and 12th. Then put your Junior High Schools back on-line which there were design for. All of this can be accomplished before the next school year (2025-2026). With the proper instruction of the Districts' 19,000 employees.

Back when the closers were introduced and the reassignment of schools only took the summer. Speed up your process to find yourselves the children need you now(the talented ten).

The above list are immediate changes that are needed to improve the quality of life for the majority of the District students. Don't just look at the list as one liner, they are highly involving strategies that take a lot of team work to accomplish successfully and would affect 80% of the student population (Pre-K – 12).

Don't continue to get side track with:

1. Grossly underfunded School District (all union contracts are met)
2. Average building is 72 years old (people come from other countries with far less and do better).
3. Conversations of Mental Health, Sanctuary City, Air Quality and Special Needs with no true effort to resolve.
4. A Community Plan with overwhelming complaints of facilities and curriculums (the answer is to tighten up on staff).
5. Monies spent on curriculums (millions of dollars)

Don't keep telling us you have 180,000 seats and 118,000 students. For those of us who like to go thru the Data show us what represents the 180,000 seats. The District should be more concerned on how many of those seats are quality seats. **How do you achieve quality seats with movement? The answer is to bring back Junior High Schools.**

Here we go again but 13 years later. We still can't get caught up with individual and group agendas. Where do you start? The list above will have the most impact for the school community without interfering with those that have success within the School District.

Start the conversation with the Districts' (Leadership Team):

Deputy Superintendent of Academic Services
Deputy Superintendent of Operation Services
Chief of Research
Chief of Finance
Associate Superintendent of Elementary I
Chief of Equity
Associate Superintendent of Secondary
Chief of Information
Chief of Curr. & Instruction
Chief of Professional Learning
Chief of Talent
Chief of Student Support Services
Associate Superintendent of Elementary II
Chief of Special Education & Diverse Learners
Chief of Operations
Chief of Safety

Stop kicking the can down the road. You claim to be a group of the "10 most talented individual". Step up look at the suggestions stop with a wait and see approach. You're falling way short on your Mission Statement (every student). The Superintendent is falling way short of leadership. The history of this school district is that Junior High Schools work for this city and the model of K-8 was an experiment that does not work for 90% of the students it serves. You're getting the same results with Student Achievement. It's time to change the landscape where needed.

Thank you,

Horace Clouden

First Name	Last Name	Testimony	Attachment
Keith	Crippen	Better after school program	
Tristan	Jessamy	Having a library at my school gave me access to a large catalog of books that were available to me from 5th to 10th grade. This library has allowed me to collect information for upcoming test and find lots of books that peeked my interest. Every student in Pennsylvania should have an opportunity to experience this at their own schools!	
Jia-ming	Gong	Libraries are crucial pillars to school communities. The books provide an accessible knowledge base for students, making reading accessible to all. Students can explore interests, read for pleasure, and complete school assignments. The library also has many services such as chromebook rentals, printers, and office supplies like staplers and tape. Teachers can also use printers and scanners, and can rely on the library if they assign research projects. The library is also useful as a study room and gathering space for clubs and school activities, and can host events such as poetry soirees, the Scholastic book fair, and more. Additionally, the library provides volunteer opportunities for students to work as assistants. Finally, libraries in schools make learning about how to use library resources accessible to students, such as learning how shelving works, learning about how to use catalogs and databases, and how to find research sources. A library creates a thriving learning community and should be in schools!	
Elana	Solomon	I work at Masterman and my students are blessed and lucky to have our full-time librarian, Bernadette Kearney, available for instruction. The entire 9th grade, 150 students, are writing 8-10 page biography research thesis papers. We visit the library on Mondays and she has been teaching them how to find sources, the differences between primary and secondary, how to use the school databases, how to take notes, how to cite and quote and how to write a bibliography. She got everyone a library card and she actively works to help them find sources for their topics. She is an expert and students are learning the value of the library that I know will help them in the future. For the past week, my classes have been here daily working on their outlines. She is now helping students with their thesis statements for their outlines due next week. Her assistance and expertise is invaluable to all of the students at our school.	
Zephyra	DeVine	Masterman's school library has been an important resource for me during my time here. Learning to use the school library and its online databases has equipped me with strong resources and skills for research, and a confidence in my ability to find information that I did not have before. In addition, having the opportunity to volunteer in the school library has helped me to appreciate the value of books and given me an attitude of respect toward them that will stay with me once I graduate.	
Rayya	El Zein	I'm appalled at the at best negligence and at worst conspiracy of this Board to keep the most needed resources from the students and schools who need it most. The continued injustice against Miss Ridgeway is appalling as is the concession to billionaires regarding the arena as is the need, repeatedly attested to to this body, to improve air quality in Philly's schools. Shame on this Board. Elected bodies for the governance of our schools now.	
Corinne	Brady	Good Evening Dr. Watlington and School Board Members, On behalf of the Kelly School Library Volunteers Program and personally as a founding and core member of PARSL, I am writing to express my appreciation to Dr. Watlington and his colleagues at 440 for their efforts and for their support to restore libraries and librarians to all the district public schools. In particular for the hiring of a Director of Library Services who is vital to guide and be an administrative liaison for the now in place school and volunteer libraries. Now after the district's achievement with PARSL's help of obtaining the over \$149, 000 IMLS Urban School Planning Grant, means the restoration goal is much nearer. Thank you all again so very much for your support, Corinne Brady Program Coordinator, John B. Kelly School Library Volunteers PARSL Core Committee	
Mariacristina	Calcagno	My school library has been my favorite place in the building for years. I spend nearly all my lunch periods there, and know that I can always rely on my certified librarian to help me find any school materials that I might need; even back in fifth and sixth grade, she taught us research-related skills like where to find sources and how to write a bibliography. My school experience has benefitted greatly from the school library and librarian presence.	