

Board Seeks Feedback on Revised Mission Statement

Please read the background and proposed mission and core values statements below and provide us with your input by clicking on this link to the feedback form.

Opportunities for input on the Board's proposed Mission and Core Values include:

1. Feedback form - available until October 15, 2008 (click on link above)
2. Public Hearing at September 25, 2008 Board of Education Meeting (for details)
3. Public Hearing at October 23, 2008 Board of Education Meeting (for details)
4. Email the Board of Education

September 19, 2008

To Teachers, Administrators, Parents, and Community Members,

As you know, the Board of Education has been considering revising its Mission, Vision, and Core Values. We are again seeking feedback from faculty, parents and community members about our latest draft proposal.

What follows is a brief history of the process we have undertaken in revising the Mission and the reasons for the current version that we are presenting to the public for feedback. We define the Mission as the purpose of our organization, the Vision as a picture of where we desire to be in five years, and the Core Values as the underlying values that should guide the actions of all members of the Greenwich Public School community.

Background

In spring of 2007 the Board asked the administration to solicit feedback from the staff on the current Mission statement, which is contained in Board policy E-000:

“The Mission of the Greenwich Public Schools is educate all children to their highest level of academic potential and to teach them the skills and knowledge to become capable, creative, and responsible members of society.”

In the resulting discussions, many teachers and administrators expressed concern about the word “potential” in the Mission statement. They indicated that the measures used to determine students’ academic potential frequently underestimate the ability of children from lower socio-economic groups, resulting in low expectations for academic achievement from those children. These measures can also underestimate the potential of students from more economically privileged backgrounds. We have all heard of youngsters who are described as “over-achievers,” a phenomenon that can occur only if the tests used to measure those students’ abilities are not reflecting their actual potential for achievement.

At the same time, faculty were clear that they wanted to produce higher levels of achievement from all students, and to keep increasing the bar for everyone.

During a retreat with a consultant in June 2007, the Board spent part of a morning reviewing the feedback and discussing their own feelings about the Mission. They agreed that since by then

the GPS had a Success System that expressly stated where we wanted to be in five years, we would no longer need a separate Vision statement.

Because three new members were going to be elected to the Board in November, the then-current members of the Board agreed to defer further discussion of revisions until January 2008.

In January 2008 the present Board had a second retreat with the consultant and reworked the Mission statement into a new draft:

“The Mission of the Greenwich Public Schools is educate all students to increasingly higher levels of academic achievement and to teach them the skills and knowledge to become productive, responsible, ethical, creative, and compassionate members of society.”

In March/April 2008, we invited feedback on this version from students, faculty, staff, parents, and community members through forums and a questionnaire on the web site. We learned that while most respondents accepted the new Mission, a sizeable minority of parents opposed the elimination of the words “academic potential,” because they thought the Board was “watering down” its expectations for students.

In response to this feedback, the Policy Governance Committee then created yet another version that attempted to reconcile the two “camps”—those who find “potential” to be a problematic and often limiting concept, and those who believe it is essential in our Mission:

“The Mission of the Greenwich Public Schools is to educate all children to increasingly higher levels of academic achievement and to provide opportunities that enable them to reach and expand potential.

Our goal is to prepare all students to become productive, responsible, ethical, creative, and compassionate members of society.”

In June 2008 the Board considered this new version. Because there was not consensus among members that this version was ready to be presented to staff and community for reaction, Board members agreed to each craft his/her own preferred Mission statement over the summer and send them to the Chair of the Policy Governance Committee for a possible synthesis.

Based on those versions, the following synthesis was presented to the Board and public on August 28, 2008:

Proposed Mission:

It is the Mission of the Greenwich Public Schools

- to educate all students to the highest levels of academic achievement,
- to enable them to reach and expand their potential, and
- to prepare them to become productive, responsible, creative and compassionate members of society.

During that meeting the Board agreed to seek feedback on this latest draft revision. Please use

the questionnaire below to tell us if you are comfortable with this Mission statement, and—if not—what specific Mission you would prefer we adopt. We also welcome your feedback on the proposed Core Values.

Based on feedback received, the Board agreed to present the following revised list of Core Values:

Core Values:

“As educators, we value...

A Comprehensive education: we provide our students with a challenging, well-rounded education that includes the arts, humanities, mathematics, the sciences, technology, and health, and that fosters students’ social and emotional well-being.

High expectations: we hold ourselves and our students to high standards of performance and behavior.

Integrity: we are honest, ethical, and respectful of others, and we foster those traits in our students.

Accountability: we establish clear goals, measure progress, and take responsibility for results, and we teach our students to become responsible, self-motivated learners.

Collaboration: we partner with parents and our diverse community to support our students’ learning, and we teach our students to work cooperatively with others to accomplish goals.

Diversity: we appreciate, respect, and learn from diverse viewpoints, and we teach our students to do the same.

Life-long learning: we challenge ourselves to continue our own professional and personal development, and we strive to instill a love of learning in our students.”

Thank you for providing us with your feedback on the mission and core values described above.

Dr. Susan Ellis
Chair, Board of Education's Policy Governance Committee