

Administrative Offices

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October 28, 2013

11-07-13A10:41 RCVD

Mr. Brent McKim
President, Jefferson County Teachers Association
1941 BishOp Lane, Suite 300
Louisville, Kentucky 40218

Dear Brent:

I am writing to invite you to participate in an exciting new initiative of Jefferson County Public Schools (JCPS), the School of Innovation Design Competition. As part of our designation by the Kentucky Department of Education as a District of Innovation, JCPS is going to conduct a community-wide design competition to identify and develop innovative ideas for the creation of a new School of Innovation. The goal is to move swiftly and coherently from concept to implementation, with teams of community-based innovators collaborating with the district to bring their new vision of teaching and learning to life. The process will begin as an open-ended, anything-goes idea generator, then translate the best, most powerful, ideas into actionable plans, and ultimately, into a real school serving real kids in the fall of 2015.

We would love to have your participation as a member of the School of Innovation Design Review Panel. The Design Review Panel will be responsible for reviewing submissions from the initial open competition to determine finalists, from which a winning proposal will be selected by the JCPS Board of Education. The panel will be provided with criteria against which to judge submissions. Panelists represent a diverse cross-section of education professionals, community and business leaders, parents, and students.

I have enclosed a brief overview of the initiative, which includes a timeline. The work of the School of Innovation Design Review Panel will be focused primarily during the first two weeks of February, 2014, and will include reviewing and scoring applications, attendance at an Open Competition Presentation event on February 5, 2014, and a meeting with other panelists to select finalists by February 14, 2014.

While we desire your input and ideas, if JCTA decides to submit a proposal of its own, you would not be able to serve of the Design Review Panel. Several other potential panelists face a similar decision regarding how to participate. Either as a panelist or an applicant, we look forward to engaging in this work with you.

In addition, you are invited to attend a public kick-off media event, on Tuesday, November 12, 2013 from 10 a.m. to 11 a.m. at the Nucleus Innovation Park downtown facility at 201 East Jefferson Street.

Please contact Jonathan Lowe, Director of Student Assignment, at jonathan.lowe@jefferson.kyschools.us or (502) 807-6149 regarding your availability to serve on the School of Innovation Design Review Panel.

I hope that your schedule will permit you to participate in this exciting endeavor. We believe that it will engage and energize the entire city and move us forward to reach our goal of becoming the best large urban school district in the nation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Donna M. Hargens".

Donna M. Hargens, Ed.D.
Superintendent

DMH:RJR:DHD:jgl

School of Innovation Design Competition

Introduction

Jefferson County Public Schools (JCPS) will conduct a community-wide design competition to identify and develop the innovative ideas for the creation of one or several Schools of Innovation. The process will move swiftly and coherently from concept to implementation, with community-based innovators collaborating with the district to bring their new vision of teaching and learning to life. The process will begin as an open-ended, anything-goes idea generator, then translate the best, most powerful, ideas into concrete actionable plans, and ultimately, into a real school or schools serving real kids in the Fall of 2015.

The goal of the competition is to engage and energize the entire city through a dialogue and investigation of the profound social and communal challenge of creating the very best opportunities for educational success for our children. That active community engagement will bring forward the best new (or perhaps older, yet forgotten) thinking about teaching and learning. It will break down the traditional policy development and decision-making structures, allowing the entire community to look with fresh eyes at a very old problem.

Design Competition Overview

The design competition will have two phases. The first is an open call for interested teams to submit applications and make a brief presentation in a public forum before a School of Innovation Design Review Panel. Panelists will select finalists, who will then present their initial proposal to the JCPS Board of Education.

In the second phase, finalists will have an extended period of time to expand upon their proposal, receiving technical assistance from JCPS staff, to move from a “Big Idea” to a final proposal, to address preparation of a baseline budget, operational requirements, curriculum alignment, and other issues. JCPS staff will foster linkages between external experts, design teams, and JCPS specialists. Final proposals will be presented to the JCPS Board of Education, which will select a proposal for implementation.

Proposed Competition Phase Timeline

November 12, 2013	Kick-off event
December 10, 2013	Letter of intent to apply due
January 31, 2014	Applications due
February 5, 2014	Phase I Open Competition Presentation Event
February 5 – 14, 2014	Design Review Panel meets and determines finalists
February 14, 2014	Finalists announced
Late February, 2014	Presentation by finalists to the JCPS Board of Education
February – June, 2014	Finalist proposals revised, with collaboration and technical assistance from JCPS staff
June, 2014	JCPS Board announces Design Competition Winner(s)

Proposed Design Competition Parameters

- Proposals may be submitted by teams of individuals of any size, with no limitation on the composition of a team. Team members may include, but are not limited to: parents; public and nonpublic school students; business leaders; college or university faculty; public and nonpublic school teachers, administrators, and staff; members of community organizations; and independent education researchers.
- JCPS Cabinet members, members of the JCPS School of Innovation Working Group, and members of the School of Innovation Design Review Panel may not be a team member.
- Proposals are welcome and encouraged from within Louisville Metro, the Commonwealth of Kentucky, the United States, and from other countries.
- A School of Innovation shall be a public school within Jefferson County Public Schools.
- A School of Innovation proposal may include requests for waivers of existing statutes, regulations, and board policies. JCPS shall request guidance from the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) regarding such waivers for finalists, based on the criteria and procedures set forth in statute KRS 156.108 and administrative regulation 701 KAR 5:140.
- A School of Innovation shall adhere to all federal and state statutes and regulations, and all JCPS Board policies, except those explicitly waived by the Kentucky Board of Education.
- A School of Innovation may have any grade configuration. It may be a preschool, elementary, middle, or high school, or have an alternative grade configuration.
- A School of Innovation may be single-sex or coeducational. Proposals that include single-sex education must provide for two schools, or two programs within a single school, that provide substantially equivalent opportunities for both boys and girls, in accordance with federal requirements.
- A School of Innovation shall be subject to the provisions of the collective bargaining agreement between JCPS and the Jefferson County Teachers Association (JCTA). A proposal may include components that differ from the existing agreement. If that were to occur, the final form would be determined through a negotiation between JCPS and JCTA.
- A significant proportion of students served by a School of Innovation must be within the “non-duplicated gap group” which is established in 702 KAR 5:200 as follows:

A single gap group called the non-duplicated gap group shall be created. This group shall consist of an aggregate, non-duplicated count of students in the following demographic categories:

1. African American;

2. Hispanic;
 3. American Indian or Native American;
 4. Limited English proficiency;
 5. Students in poverty based on qualification for free or reduced price lunch; and
 6. Students with disabilities that have an Individualized Education Program (IEP).
- The JCPS Board of Education may select one or more, or none, of the proposals for implementation for the 2015-2016 school year.

Design Competition Standards

The School of Innovation Design Competition will be judged by the Design Review team on the following components:

- Needs assessment/rationale
- Innovative design
- Research-based evidence of efficacy supporting the proposal
- Student services plan, establishing the students to be served and how they will be served
- Accountability plan, describing how the proposal will improve student outcomes and how those outcomes will be measured
- Resources, describing the human, fiscal, and facility resources required

Note: These align closely with the components used by KDE in determining Districts of Innovation.

Why is JCPS sponsoring a Design Competition?

School bureaucracies have real benefits. They create huge operational efficiencies through standardization of process and economies of scale. They can establish and enforce uniform academic standards, expectations, and resources across the district, improving equity of opportunity. Yet, the very attributes of big bureaucracies that promote those benefits – stability and standardization - significantly reduce their ability to make transformative change.

Unless a school district is intentional about creating organizational space to allow for new thinking and new action, the stability and standardization of its bureaucracy creates inertia. Employees, even well-intentioned ones who are working hard to do their best, are rewarded for “following the rules” even if those rules are ineffective in producing optimal outcomes. Risk-takers are sometimes sidelined, or punished for raising issues and problems, or proposing unorthodox solutions. Moreover, the challenge of dramatically improving student achievement in low-performing schools is complex, and multi-faceted, and solutions need to be tailored toward that goal.

There are two critical elements needed to break down bureaucratic reluctance to innovation in a school district: internal leadership and external input. District leaders need to be bold in challenging the status quo, and create a culture of excellence that allows employees to feel free to question existing policy and practice. They need to be willing to consider new ideas, and take strong leadership in implementing the best ideas, wherever their origin. JCPS’ new leadership embraces that mind-set, positioning the district to embrace new ideas and approaches.

Meaningful external input is also of critical importance. Great ideas frequently come from the cross-pollination of concept and practice from different disciplines or professions. Solutions from one area of human endeavor can be cross-hybridized to solve problems in another. Communication and collaboration and active engagement in a process of discovery and creation with external actors can open opportunities for innovation and excellence. The School of Innovation Design Competition will use external thinking to identify new ways to meet educational challenges.