

Kenai Conversation

Issue:

Kenai has fewer students that are spread out among more educational options.

Background:

District-wide enrollment declines have been about 2% per year. In Kenai area neighborhood schools, the enrollment decline has also been impacted by changes in Nikiski area schools and the opening of private and charter schools. Transferring teachers who have been teaching in buildings for several years as well as transferring teachers after school begins because projections were not met have occurred more frequently in Kenai than in any other area of the peninsula. Significant public comment has been made about the reasons and subsequent actions of KPBSD administration to address issues of transferring teachers and housing of charter schools. Directed by the Board of Education, and in line with the community based model for addressing issues, Superintendent Peterson is charged with conducting conversations with Kenai residents about the future of education in their community. It is assumed that collaborative conversations with those most affected will result in recommendations based on the needs of the Kenai students and a recognition of the wishes of the community.

Process:

1. Gather data about Kenai demographics and community trends.
2. Frame the conversations by addressing questions:
 - Are there too many transitions between our traditional schools?
 - How can each school be considered as the "best show in town" so that parents have quality options for educating their students in the public system?
 - How do we develop an educational system where every student can reach his/her highest personal potential?
 - Is there such a thing as a neighborhood/traditional school in the working parent society of today?
 - Should/how can the school role be expanded as the learning hub of the community?
3. Share a "situation paper/process" and refine prior to meeting with community
 - with Kenai principals
 - with leadership team
 - with Board of Education

4. Finalize process for community conversations and communicate
 - a. meet first with site councils/parents at school sites to share statistics and data
 - b. Meet with Real Estate agents
 - c. Presentation to:
 - Chamber Board
 - Kenai City Council
 - Child Study Team
 - Pastor group
 - d. Communicate with site councils, parent groups to finalize information on providing feedback
5. Schedule and conduct public meeting
 - a. take testimony
 - b. provide opportunities for written feedback

Outcomes:

Short term:

In spring 2007, the School Board will be looking for a recommendation from the District Administration regarding housing of Charter School student growth for Kaleidoscope School. At this time, it appears that space is available at Mountain View Elementary. The concerns about Kaleidoscope being housed on two campuses and about sharing facilities should be addressed.

The option of combining the neighborhood schools of Mountain View and Sears into one building and allowing Kaleidoscope School to have responsibility for the costs associated with Sears Elementary facility should also be explored. The questions of "do they fit" and "what will the District do if/when the numbers are too big for the one school" need to be addressed.

Long term:

Unknown, but a conversation will hopefully result in additional ways to create a vibrant learning community. Kenai has many strengths such as unparalleled community support and behavioral norms/expectations for children. It is a more "traditional" community than most on the Peninsula. Students have outstanding opportunities for involvement in sports, music, and service learning. Partnerships with outside entities flourish and leadership opportunities and mentorships abound. The expectation is that the strengths can be the foundation for designing and embracing a future educational system that addresses the needs of the students and wishes of the community.

Public Input:

- Letters from site council/APCs
 - Written after site discussion
 - Weighed heavily
 - Must be on school letterhead
 - Received by superintendent by November 3
- Written Comments/letters from individuals and groups
 - Via email to superintendent and Board at dpeterson@kpbsd.k12.ak.us
 - Via fax at 262-9132
 - Via US mail to 148 N. Binkley, Soldotna, Alaska 99669
 - Received by superintendent by November 3
- Oral comment
 - Public meeting November 7, at 7 p.m. at KCHS
 - To give information beyond written statements
 - 3-minute time limit
 - At any school Board meeting during Public Presentations.