Transformation Task Force
Final Report and Recommendations

School District U-46/Elgin Teachers Association

October 7, 2013 – Draft of Final Report

HISTORY AND BACKGROUND

The work of the Transformation Task Force was born through the contract (2011-2014 Elgin Agreement) reached between the Elgin Teachers Association and the U-46 Board of Education in June 2012. A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) from that agreement states:

"The Task Force (TTF) will make its recommendations to the Board of Education and the Elgin Teachers Association regarding student contact time by no later than December 15, 2012. Within 30 calendar days from the receipt of the recommendations of the Task Force with respect to the transformation of the student day for the 2013/2014 school term, the Board and the Association shall approve or disapprove the recommendations and immediately inform the other in writing of the action taken and, if disapproved, a summary of the reasons for disapproval.

If the recommendations are approved, implementation shall begin promptly according to the schedule recommended by the Task Force.

If the recommendations of the Task Force are not approved by both the Board and the Association, the Task Force shall promptly reconvene to consider modification of its recommendations in light of the reasons given for disapproval. Any modified recommendations shall be submitted to the Board and the Association for approval or disapproval.

If the Task Force's recommendations are not approved by both the Board and the Association by no later than February 22, 2013 either or both of the following may occur:

a) the Board or the Association may terminate the contract effective August 17, 2013. Notice of termination must be given in writing by no later than March 1, 2013. Negotiations for a successor agreement shall then begin no later than April 1, 2013.
b) the Board may implement the following with respect to student contact time beginning with the 2013-2014 school term, subject only to modifications agreed to in the negotiations over the successor agreement:

Middle School: 250 minutes per day, supervision shall not exceed one class period per day. The district will endeavor to place the additional minutes immediately before the start of, or during, the student day."

<u>TIMELINE</u>

June 2012 - the Full TTF met at Kimball Middle School to learn about the Transformation Task Force, consensus decision making, and to begin subcommittee work based on the values, beliefs and critical questions created by the TTF Steering Committee. The subcommittees formed include Early Childhood/Elementary, Middle, High, and Non-Traditional.

August 2012 – TTF conducts a survey of teachers and administrators at all levels to gather feedback about the structure of the current school day, curriculum and course offerings, student contact time, meeting staff and student needs.

September 2012 – TTF meets at Kimball Middle School to hear updates, receive feedback and discuss the work done to that date. The TTF Steering Committee presents interim report to the Representative Assembly of the Elgin Teachers Association and to the U-46 Board of Education.

November 2012 - the Full TTF met at Kimball Middle School to learn the possible recommendations from each subcommittee, process and discuss the impact of the possible recommendations, and clarify questions or concerns regarding possible recommendations. TTF Steering Committee presented the September Interim Report to the Citizens' Advisory Council (CAC) and received feedback from the members in attendance at the meeting.

December 2012 – TTF presents second interim report and recommendations to the U-46 Board of Education that the work of the task force be extended for an additional year. Elgin Teachers Association Representative Assembly votes to approve the recommendations.

February/March 2013 – TTF holds a three day retreat facilitated by the Consortium for Educational Change. The purpose of the retreat was to examine the work done by all subcommittees and develop a plan to move forward.

May 2013 - Survey of parents and community members who serve on U-46 advisory councils, including the Citizens' Advisory Council, African American Advisory Council, Bilingual Parent Advisory Council, and the presidents of U-46 Parent-Teacher Organizations.

September 2013 – Subcommittees finalize their vision and examples of how we can move towards that vision.

October 2013 – TTF Steering begins soliciting feedback from parents, teachers, students and community members on the work completed thus far and the draft recommendations to the Board and ETA.

November 2013 – Revise draft based on feedback and prepare final report for the Board of Education and ETA.

December 2013 – Final report submitted to U-46 Board of Education and ETA.

<u>VALUES AND BELIEFS</u>

The values and beliefs that are the foundation of the work are as follows:

We, the ETA and District representatives of the Transformation Task Force, believe through our collaborative effort we can design the optimal school day for students, teachers, and the school community.

- Our students will have a school structure which is designed to provide a learning environment that meets the needs of all students to achieve, grow, and develop.
- Our staff will have a working environment that supports effective teaching and learning.
- We will assure our school community is an essential partner in our work.

We value maximizing all students' learning which will include

- reducing the achievement gap
- providing enrichment opportunities
- high quality educational experiences
- meeting all students' interests
- meeting all students' strengths
- differentiating learning experiences to meet all student needs
- meeting the diversity of the student population
- Rigorous and relevant curriculum that is aligned to content standards (such as common core, Illinois state standards, national standards, etc.)

We value a differentiated structure of the professional teaching day to include

- efficient use of teacher time
- professional voice in all areas of practice
- a shared and, fair/manageable workload
- opportunity for teacher-led professional collaboration as stated in the MOU of the 2011 Elgin Agreement
- discretionary/ duty free time
- management of instructional preparation time
- adequate resources to support teachers in their work
- balanced instruction and assessment
- meaningful contact time with students
- practice that reflects the Framework for Teaching

We value the multi-faceted aspects of the school community to include

- acknowledgement of the work being done
- fiscal responsibility
- flexible solutions
- compliance with state and federal regulations
- safety of students and staff
- opportunity for family contact time
- commitment to parents and community

INTRODUCTION

For sixteen months the members of the Transformation Task Force have spent numerous hours working towards "a complete design of the student day that will maximize student learning, provide differentiated structures, and promote teacher collaboration. The plan may also include recommendations related to the school calendar. The plan will include full and effective implementation steps including any budgetary implications. The committee will gather input from all impacted groups through focused discussion or surveys." The Transformation Task Force recognizes the recommendations made as a result of this work may not be appropriate to group together as one all-encompassing recommendation. The Transformation Task Force requests each recommendation is made to the respective decision making body (the Board of Education, the Elgin Teachers Association, the District Administration). We note that pursuant to the Memorandum of Understanding reached between the Elgin Teachers Association and the U-46 Board of Education, the only recommendation required to be made to the Board is in regards to student contact time.

As the Transformation Task Force began its work it quickly discovered the complexity of our school system and the need to determine a comprehensive vision to work towards, rather than providing individual recommendations. The members of the Transformation Task Force agreed creating a vision was the best opportunity for transformation rather than restructuring what currently exists.

The Transformation Task Force Steering Committee determined the vision of the optimal school day is the "what" of the work. The "what" serve as the basis for the recommendations. The Steering Committee realizes it is difficult to envision the "what" without examples of what could be implemented. These examples serve as possibilities of "how" the vision might look in our schools. Due to the complexity of our system and the different decision making bodies we propose the "whats" as a comprehensive vision for the optimal school day and the "hows" as possibilities to implement to transform the school day to reach the vision.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE VISION (THE "WHAT")

Through the development of the vision of the optimal school day for the students of School District U-46, the Transformation Task Force Steering Committee categorized the vision into the following areas.

We desire a school system that provides for:

• Cognitivity

• Core Comprehensive Curriculum

• Communication

• Citizenship and Social Responsibility

• Time Management

Within these categories there are commonalities within the vision that span all grade levels, pre-kindergarten through high school. It is understood that each piece of the vision would be implemented appropriately for students based on their grade level or developmental level. With implementation of this vision, learning will be scaffolded and students will experience an aligned and connected school experience which will allow them to develop from young children to young adults. The common themes are as follows:

Cognitivity - the process of thinking, knowing, perceiving, or remembering

Students will:

- Develop higher order thinking skills enabling students to challenge themselves and their peers, explore subject matter deeply, evaluate reliability of information, and recognize biases
- Have opportunities to learn through constructive experiences
- Have structures that provide for inquiry based learning
- Make intentional, meaningful connections from prior knowledge to current learning experience
- Develop literacy (reading, writing, speaking, listening) skills as part of all content areas and genres
- Learn to self-assess skills and progress towards learning goals creating accountability for their own learning
- Gain a knowledge base that enables a global understanding of the world in a variety of fields
- Have an active role in achieving learning goals
- Have learning experiences that are designed to provide challenging and relevant opportunities

- Have a realization and awareness of self as part of the learning community
- Experience an integration of curriculum, like music to help explain math concepts.
- Have access to a variety of course offerings allowing exploration of student interest
- Gain skills and knowledge aligned throughout content areas for college and career readiness
- Discover the relevancy of school learning experiences to the student's future
- Have pride, ownership, and sense of connectedness to the school and community

Curriculum - content, course offerings

Students will:

- Know that all content areas are recognized as important
- Make cross-curricular connections within their daily experience
- Have daily experiences for core curriculum learning that meet individual student needs
- Access appropriate and available resources (people/technology/materials) during core learning experiences
- Experience learning of content that is facilitated by both teacher and students, holding one another accountable for academic success
- Experience integration of literacy development into all content areas
- Have access to a variety of exploratory/elective courses
- Have alignment and continuity of curriculum throughout grade levels
- Learn relevant curriculum aligned to learning standards
- Have transition opportunities so they are exposed to the next level of curriculum, creating a sense of purpose and knowledge of expectations and support available to promote success
- Serve others (service learning) within the school community to create a sense of connectedness
- Have access to alternate course possibilities that meet state and district graduation requirements
- Have parents/guardians who have access to support in understanding the learning outcomes for courses/subjects, and how they can assist at home.

Communication - exchange of information between individuals

Students will:

- Focus on the importance of literacy skills (reading, writing, speaking, listening)
- Use relevant and up-to-date technology
- Have opportunities to connect with students in other schools, regions, countries
- Develop skills to express knowledge through the arts

- Utilize literacy skills to learn from one another
- Have the ability to assess and explain own learning and knowledge, as well as needs to continue progress towards learning goals to peers, parents, teachers
- Experience a team culture that promotes an environment for effective communication amongst students and staff
- Receive instruction that is relevant to social, emotional, and academic progress

Citizenship and Social Responsibility - accountability to membership in a community

Students will:

- Hold themselves and peers accountable for behavior and meeting behavioral and learning expectations
- Understand and apply behavior norms and expectations for varied situations/contexts
- Be aware of differences in economic systems and the effects on the global economy
- Learn to resolve conflict through learning experiences that require problem solving
- Participate in events that are connected to active citizens in the community
- Have empathy for others
- Have opportunities to be visionaries and leaders while engaging in simulations of multiple roles
- Respect and appreciate a diverse school community
- Utilization of family and community resources to engage students in learning in native languages
- Identify and accept themselves and others through cultural, racial, gender, economic, family structures, and community lenses
- Contribute to purposeful and meaningful relationships
- Have structures to support, and safety to develop, citizenship and social skills within course offerings and social situations
- Awareness of possible career paths through connections and experiences in the community
- Have access to mentors, and the ability to mentor others, through organized community service opportunities.
- Have the ability to explore opportunities available after high school through community, corporate, and university partnerships
- Have parents and guardians who have access to parent advisory models which provide opportunities for all parents/guardians to participate in creating a connection of groups within the school system

Time Management

Students will:

- Have the ability to identify and evaluate resources efficiently to enable use of meaningful and purposeful resources
- Receive scaffolded learning to promote the continuous development of knowledge
- Be engaged in learning through independent and group experiences
- Plan ahead to map out a pace to complete long-term projects
- Be responsible for the delegation of group responsibilities
- Develop skills to determine priority of tasks
- Have flexibility in time to accomplish tasks
- Understand that time management impacts outcomes
- Have blocks of time to focus on core curriculum
- Have flexibility in scheduling to allow for opportunities to practice and develop time management skills, especially as students develop into young adults who have personal priorities that may impact school experiences

POSSIBLE "HOWS"

The teachers in our schools make the greatest impact on students' ability to learn while at school. We envision a school system that values effective teacher collaboration and relevant opportunities to grow professionally.

The desire for the school system to provide protected time for teacher collaboration is reflected in the possible "hows" listed below.

The Transformation Task Force Steering Committee recognizes the complexity of the vision, the "what" as stated in this report. We acknowledge *transformation* is a process and the transformation of the school day cannot be accomplished without changes that may greatly impact all students, employee groups, families, and the school community. Therefore, we offer some examples that have been explored by the subcommittees of the Transformation Task Force.

These "hows" are possible pieces of the transformation process:

Early Childhood:

- Outdoor time integrated with science activities and options
- Push in student support services during student work time
- Release time for collaboration ½ day each month to focus on AM students/class, ½ day each month to focus on PM students/class
- Staffing to accommodate small group instruction
- Provide Art/Music/PE instruction for all early childhood students

- Provide sufficient technology tools for staff that assist in data collection
- Meals served outside of instructional time by food service staff
- Arrival and dismissal of students supervised by support staff to provide time midday to collaborate with staff and/or prepare for student instruction
- Arrival of students before instructional time, and dismissal of students after instructional time
- Bus students to and from school to provide preschool opportunity to all students

Elementary:

- Specialized Instructors such as, Certified Librarians and Technology Teachers in each school supporting literacy development and communication skills by extending classroom instruction
- Teachers work in teams to provide support for a consistent group of students to better meet individual student needs
- Provide Art/Music/PE/Technology instruction each week for all students
- Daily time for individualized instruction for every student (What I Need, or "WIN" time)
- Accessible technology for all students
- Time to intentionally plan curriculum integration
- Weekly planning time (160 minutes) of which 90 minutes is for horizontal collaboration time
- Horizontal collaboration time (90 minutes)
- Weekly early release days throughout the year for collaboration time with school staff provided for through banking time or replacing school improvement days
- Flexibility to teach content in isolation or not
- Intentional integration of curriculum
- Opportunities for parents to learn strategies to assist their child in the transition into elementary school

Middle School:

- Transition plan for students entering middle school (SEE HIGH SCHOOL EXAMPLE)
- Expand middle schools to serve grades 6th through 8th.
- Start school day earlier in order to increase the student day
- Class periods range between 43 and 45 minutes
- Students have 6 core curriculum courses – Reading, English, math, science, social studies, physical education (with blocking where possible of Reading and English) which include a literacy block plus two electives and lunch with the electives being:
    - Speech /Debate and Project Lead the Way (one semester each)

- ○ Quarterly rotation (art, family & consumer science, computers, and general/cultural music)
  - ○ Chorus
  - ○ Band
  - ○ Orchestra
  - ○ AVID
  - ○ World Language
  - ○ Intervention
- Interdisciplinary teams where a group of teachers all work with the same group of students
- Interdisciplinary teams would have opportunities to collaborate, as would department teams
- Hourly employees hired to supervise students in areas including SAS, hallways, libraries, and cafeterias which frees teachers time to collaborate
- Student-led parent conferences
- Additional support staff, including a full-time dean in each building and a social worker or guidance counselor based on a student enrollment and programmatic needs of the school
- Students would be released from school early once per month to allow teachers time for professional development
- Opportunities for parents to learn strategies to assist their child in the transition from elementary to middle school

High School

- Shorten lunch period to 30 minutes to provide additional time for instruction
- Flexible scheduling allows for late arrival or early release for students and adjusted period length
- Later start time for the school day
- Students are grouped by cohorts to meet their academic interests and needs
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- Transition program for students entering high school which includes:
  - ○ Students from earlier grades visiting high schools
  - ○ 9th grade freshmen teams that are formed before the end of 8th grade
  - ○ Guided study, earlier start of the year
  - ○ Curriculum designed to support the transition from middle school to high school
  - ○ Support staff for the freshmen teams
  - ○ Opportunities for parents to learn strategies to assist their child in the transition from middle to high school

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  - Early interventions for students who are falling behind (beyond interventions in the classroom)
  - Alter the use of high school space to accommodate a better transition for freshmen
  - Mentoring (whether upperclassman, peer, or adult)
  - Students are exposed to possible future career paths (using community partners)
- Transition program for students graduating from high school:
  - College visits
  - Hire social work interns from universities to work with high school seniors and to perform pre-admission testing, and to emphasize the National Career Readiness Certificate, and military options.
- Students have access to appropriate technology to support curriculum and options for e-learning.
- Students have the opportunity to use their own digital devices
- Juniors and seniors are required to engage in service learning by volunteering as tutors, LINK crew members, or performing community service
- Create smaller learning communities through looping, blocking, and teaming
- All students have the ability to access mentors or role models
- Parents have an active role in their child's education, especially during the transition from 8th to 9th grade, and mentoring by the parents of current seniors.
- Provide an academic opportunity calendar where intercessions between quarters, the summer, and online learning are used for remediation, and/or enrichment with students.
- Progressive study halls (more freedom as students progress and are successful academically and/or by eligibility)
- Remove one School Improvement Plan day (SIP) from the calendar and replace it with a day for high school teachers to enter student grades
- Provide teachers the opportunity to teach online courses using current instructional minutes (within our outside of the current school day) and which have built-in accountability for students and student access to the technology.

Recommendations: