



February 24, 2022

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## Board Engages Community in Developing a Citywide Plan for Education

St. Louis, MO -- Despite declines in population over the past several decades, there has been no coordinated effort to re-evaluate or realign the education infrastructure of St. Louis – until now.

The Board of Education of the City of St. Louis has created an ad hoc committee for developing a **Citywide Plan for Education**. Support for the committee continues to grow as **Board Member and Committee Chair Antionette “Toni” Cousins** meets with key community, education and business leaders to reinforce the need to plan together.

Cousins said, “We embrace our constitutional responsibility as elected officials of the Board of Education to protect the educational experiences of all public school students in the City of St. Louis. We take our responsibility seriously. Realigning our City’s educational infrastructure is a huge, if not groundbreaking, undertaking and we cannot do it alone. We are actively engaging the greater St. Louis community in a discussion about how we can work together on behalf of all school-age children in St. Louis.”

The Committee got off to a fast start with precedent setting resolutions of support passed by the St. Louis Board of Aldermen in October 2021 and the Missouri School Board’s Association (MSBA) in January 2022. Both groups publicly announced support of the Board’s moratorium resolution (February 2021) which called for a “pause” in the opening of new schools in St. Louis until the development of a Citywide Plan for Education. The intent was to reimagine education by creating true, 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools. However, that is just the start.

The effort, Cousins said, has continued to build momentum through live-streamed committee events and one-on-one meetings. “As we have said all along, planning for our educational future is an inclusive and transparent community engagement process. Over the next 18 months, the Citywide Plan will continue to engage the community in making this work a moral imperative with short-and long-term goals.”

**Board President Dr. Joyce Roberts** said, “Our Board is focused on the future. We cannot afford to be held back by history, politics or practices. This Plan is an opportunity to reexamine and revitalize St. Louis’ current infrastructure and work together to ensure successful academic outcomes for all students in St. Louis.”

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***Board of Education Proceeds with Plans to Develop a Citywide Education Plan – Add One***

The creation of the Board’s Citywide Plan committee followed 18 months of public meetings on school consolidation after which, the Board of Education voted to close seven schools and reformat another. “No board member ever wants to cast a vote to close a school, but it was deemed to be critically important to take steps to right-size our District and its resources to better serve our students.” Cousins added, “And yet, all around us, schools continue to open -- and close.”

“It’s time we work together, to ensure that our educational system is rebuilt and reenergized for the future. We need and want to work with educators in schools of all formats, but we must first acknowledge that change is needed and that now is the time to engage in meaningful conversations on how we can deliver education fairly and equitably to students across our City,” she added.

Cousins said the pandemic was another factor in the timing of this initiative. “We have seen what can happen when we come together as a community. Since March 2020, SLPS has worked hand-in-hand with all schools in St. Louis to help feed children and serve families. We must sustain that momentum as we work to reimagine education in St. Louis. This is just the beginning.”

If you are interested in learning more about the Citywide Plan for Education, please contact, **Board Secretary Shameika Williams at 314-345-2410 or, [shameika.williams@slps.org](mailto:shameika.williams@slps.org).**

NOTE: Due to inclement weather, the Citywide Plan for Education meeting scheduled for Wednesday, February 23, was cancelled. However, meeting information and handouts are available online at [www.slps.org/citywide](http://www.slps.org/citywide).