

SAMPLE Exercise on Current Conditions, Trends and Assumptions about the Future

Group #1 – Demographics

Current Conditions:

- Increasing kindergarten classes (bubble in primary grades)
- Growth – sustained growth
- Increasing socio-economic diversity
- Wealthiest community in state
- Not racially diverse
- Good job market – extreme low unemployment
- Well-educated community (43% have Bachelor's degrees)
- Low crime rate
- Tight-knit community – “you're in or you're out”

Trends

- Birth rate is going up, but fewer people are having children (more births because we have more population)
- Student/family transiency increasing
- Increasing racial and socio-economic social diversity
- More families moving in with “urban” backgrounds
- Question: Are public perceptions of public schools at risk of changing because of changing demographics?
- Not as many Montana born local natives
- Rising incomes
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Assumptions about the Future

- Substantial, continued growth. Will slow, but won't stop.
- Crime rate will increase
- Need for more social services will increase
- Will need to build more schools
- More difficult to identify community “wants.” Harder to please community/develop community consensus
- Need to address diverse student population will increase
- Smaller percentage of population have children in school
- More and more creative opportunities will arise
- Public schools will play a key role in community's economic vitality and all of the above assumptions.

Barriers

- As students and families bring more needs, it is more difficult to support because of limited resources
- As our population gets older and fewer people have children, it will be more difficult to convince people to support education.
- Ability to recruit teachers (as our older teachers retire) may be limited
- Racism
- Bonding capacity and school funding formula

Mega Issue Questions:

- (1) How do we maintain voter support in light of demographic trends?
- (2) What are our strategies to ensure there are no achievement gaps?
- (3) What do we need to do to continue to grow the district (facilities, staffing, etc.)?

Group #2 – Business/Economic Climate

Current Conditions:

- Growth in high tech and bio tech
- Southwestern Medical Center
- Increase in Construction
- School (University and local schools)
- Increase in retirement community
- Environment attractive to non-profits and service jobs

Trends:

Weaknesses

- Lack of available workforce
- Lack of affordable housing
- Lack of affordable and quality daycare
- Affordable healthcare
- Populations with greater needs and lack of support
- Inadequate state and federal funding
- Lack of mental health care and funds.

Strengths

- Increasing tax base
- Quality of life
- Well-educated community

Assumptions about the Future:

- Building boom will abate
- Population will put increased demands on social services, schools, hospitals, etc.

- Middle class will be squeezed out
- Property values will drop
- Greater diversity in economic base, plus or minus
- Too expensive to stay
- Regional economic area
- Will government funding increase increase/retain the same for communities

Mega Issue Questions:

- (1) How are we going to deal with the cyclical growth and decline of student population?
- (2) What level of tax base growth or decline should we plan for in the next 20 years?
- (3) How can we maintain the level of staff excellence in the face of increased retirements and decline of qualified applicants?

Group #3 – Legislation/Regulation

Current Conditions

- Ambivalence re: level of funding from the state
- Conservative state funding
- Low funding
- Legislature has developed a definition of quality education but hasn't completed the process of funding that definition
- Feds – unfunded mandates
 - IDEA
 - NCLB
 - Indecision re: reauthorization of ESEA (NCLB)
- Local lack of flexibility in funding allocation
- Inability to develop comprehensive tax policy reform affecting education funding adequacy.

Trends

- Continued ambivalence re: level of funding from the state
- Increased under-funded federal mandates
- Increased local lack of flexibility in funding allocation
- Continued inability to develop comprehensive tax policy reform affecting education funding adequacy
- Increased federal regulations on highly qualified teachers
- Increased federal regulations on AMO's to meet AYP.

Assumptions about the Future

- Funding getting tighter. We will need to work with what we have, we'll need to be more creative and will need to prioritize.
- We will have to work for increased funding.
- Ongoing political seesaw in legislature and possible seesaw in revenues.

Mega Issue Questions:

- (1) How are we going to create ownership of the political bodies for their local schools so they invest in public education?
- (2) How do we develop grass roots community support for adequate funding for schools?

Group #4 – Technology /Science

Current Conditions

- Highly skilled and educated workforce
- High amount of University grant opportunities in research in both technology and science
- Large technology/science business sector
- Competition for employees
- Community support for technology levy
- Limited availability of bandwidth
- Science Non-Profit provides expanding outdoor laboratory and draw for employee recreation
- Science Business doing Alpine Climate Change studies
- Archival of records opportunities and efficiency
- Entrepreneurial opportunities
- Inconsistent use and adoption of technology

Trends

- Expansion of community resources resulting in competition for employees
- Challenge to stay current with the state of art
- Growing need for technology/science education with resulting decline in stature for U.S. in global environment
- New communication technology moving rapidly / new language being created
- Monitoring appropriate uses of technology and accountability
- Democratization of information via the Web ad Technology
- Hacker resistance – 24 hour
- Managing and challenges to information Security
- Information overload
- Behavior changes and time – getting rid of Spam
- Affecting ‘new generations’ social skills
- Lack of personal connections
- Voice-activated systems increase performance
- Increased sedentary population – obesity

Assumptions about the Future

- Continued rapid change
- Challenges will get worse before it gets better
- Continued challenges keeping up with technology evolution combined with growing opportunities from more sophisticated technology and discoveries
- Increase progress in medicine and others.

Mega Issue Questions:

- (1) How do we respond proactively to technology / science evolution?
- (2) How do we prioritize it relative to other needs?

Group #5 – Politics/Social Values

Current Conditions

- Reliance on social services partners, volunteers and private organizations to assist in education of students
- Disconnect between local legislators and us
- Polar opposite local legislators
- Student population becoming more diverse (ethnically and economically)
- New or more expectations on the District

Trends

- Increased reliance on social services partners, volunteers and private organizations to assist in education of students
- Continued disconnect between local legislators and us
- Continued polar opposite local legislators
- Increase in student population becoming more diverse (ethnically and economically)
- Increase in new and additional expectations on the District

Assumptions about the Future

- More resources are needed to take care of growing trends
- We will have to change to be more effective with local legislators
- Greater involvement of community in education will lead to local legislators with shared values to support education.

Mega Issue Questions:

- (1) How are we going to deal with the increase reliance on services outside of the school's control?