



Testimony for School District of Philadelphia Board of Education

Laura Johnson, Sunrise of Philadelphia

December 14, 2022

Hello, my name is Laura Johnson. I serve as Deputy Executive Director of Sunrise of Philadelphia and a member of the Greater Philadelphia Extracurricular Collaborative (GPEC). The mission of Sunrise of Philadelphia is to support youth who face adversity to discover their strengths, experience success, and prepare for their future. Since Sunrise's founding in 1999, Sunrise has offered quality out-of-school time programming in partnership with neighborhood public schools across Philadelphia. The Sunrise approach unites caring staff, families, schools, and communities to help young people stay on track to high school graduation and connect to post-secondary opportunities.

Today, I am here as a member of the Greater Philadelphia Extracurricular Collaborative (GPEC) and I want to encourage Dr. Watlington and the School Board to establish an Office of Extracurricular Partnerships, which will allow the District to better meet Guardrail 2 to improve student outcomes. This office would serve as the primary point of contact for all out-of-school time (OST) providers working in Philadelphia schools across funding streams; would report to the superintendent; and would create a common table for District and City officials, principals, and OST providers to coordinate.

Today I would like to discuss the numerous benefits that afterschool programs bring to students as individuals, the district as a system and how this above mentioned office would help to meet Dr. Watlington's goal to become the fastest improving district in the country. In June 2021 a PA Joint State Government Commission released a Return on Investment (ROI) of Afterschool Programs in Pennsylvania (report attached). The ROI overall shows that students who participate in afterschool and OST programs perform better in school and have improved educational outcomes when compared to youth who do not participate. A compendium of studies of PST program by the Afterschool Alliance showed academic outcomes including (Pg. 46):

- Improved school attendance and engagement in learning
- improved test scores and grades
- students at the greatest risk showed the greatest gains
- frequency and duration of afterschool participation increases benefits

I have also attached a presentation from Dr. Terry Peterson highlighted the opportunities available to school districts to improve and expand access to afterschool and OST programs by leveraging the ARP ESSER funding that has been designated for afterschool programs. The district is currently directly funding afterschool programs through this funding, including Sunrise of Philadelphia. In order to ensure these programs are functioning at their highest level, leverage other programming funded by the state and city, and help ensure sustainability of these opportunities for youth, the Office of Extracurricular Partnerships should be opened with urgency and in partnership with programs providing this work.

Thank you,

Laura Johnson
Deputy Executive Director
Sunrise of Philadelphia
GPEC Leadership Team Member

Ashley Redfearn [REDACTED]

A LETTER TO THE PHILADELPHIA SCHOOL DISTRICT AND SCHOOL BOARD

12-14-2022

Dear Philadelphia School District and Board Members,

As you may know, Pennsylvania Value-Added Assessment System (PVAAS) data was recently released. We are writing this letter to provide an update and share that Memphis Street Academy (MSA) continues to not only meet but exceed the expectations for growth among its students.

In fact, growth scores illustrate that MSA is exceeding the standard for growth in Math and Science, and meeting the standard for growth in English Language Arts. Takeaways include:

- MSA's PVAAS 3-Year Composite Score Average in grades 6, 7, 8 underscore that the teacher's group of students exceeded the growth standard.
- In comparison to the state of Pennsylvania, MSA is above at 52.2% versus the state, at 12.1%.

We will continue to provide details so you can stay abreast of Memphis Street Academy's milestone achievements as well as the efforts that go into ensuring our students continue receiving the best educational experience and support possible.

Thank you,

Ashley Redfearn, CEO, American Paradigm Schools

Steven Bilski, CEO, Memphis Street Academy

Testimony, Board of Education, 12/15/22
Dr. Cheri Micheau, Former ESOL Teacher, OMCP Manager and Post-secondary
Teacher Educator

There are several English Learner issues that continue to be ignored by the School District of Philadelphia, despite frequent testimony from my colleagues and me. Following is a list of concerns, all of which have been introduced multiple times, but have never been seriously addressed by the Board:

- A. **Newcomer programs:** I understand that there is no plan to place newcomer programs in one or more middle and high schools next fall. Another year could go by without any meaningful effort to address a population that is not succeeding. There has been a need for many years for effectively planned and implemented newcomer programs—indeed, a newcomer/international high school and middle school—and there seems to be little will to move forward. Why? A number of new high school programs have been initiated in these past ten years; more and more dual language programs are being added; entire new high schools have been opened....and yet, newcomers continue to receive only very substandard services. Many excuses have been offered, including a concern that a newcomer program is “segregationist,” but in the SDP’s focus on equity, newcomers deserve a program that effectively meets their needs—that is equity, and this is legally required by law and legal decisions on English Learner education. As noted many times, the current newcomer program suffers from a lack of autonomy in rostering, unfortunate staffing decisions, apparent lack of support by administrators for developing an innovative program, and a lack of appropriate curriculum to move newcomers forward.
- B. **Graduation:** It is concerning that absolute newcomers can graduate from high school within their first year in the U.S. despite very limited English; newcomer students with extremely limited English can arrive in February or March and still graduate because of the overly generous awarding of credits from their home countries—an attempt to beef up graduation numbers at ELs’ expense. For those who want to go on to college, this lack of time to learn English and inadequate language and content instruction will result in their having to pay tuition for remedial classes.
- C. **BCAs:** There is a lack of sufficient BCA support in many schools because of staffing challenges caused, at least in part, by very low salary for a position that is so essential in a school with English Learners. Surprisingly, there is no consideration of BCAs’ educational background in the salary structure; a BCA applicant with a Master’s degree would be paid the same as a high school graduate. Also, there is no consideration of how new a school is to ELs and their

families in assigning BCAs; a school that is suddenly and unexpectedly flooded with newcomers should receive significant BCA support in their first years working with this population, even if the total number is lower than the “required minimum number” for a school to receive a BCA. In other words, the assignment of BCAs should be done by considering context, as well as pure numbers.

- D. **PD:** We have spoken about the lack of meaningful professional development that addresses the needs of English Learners beyond QTEL training, and the lack of strong support—and even a strong push—for teachers to attend QTEL. This includes the lack of second language-specific PD for ESOL teachers and also lack of PD that introduces ELs’ needs (in areas such as curriculum or assessment or a specific content area) in more than a single Power Point slide. In my opinion, the “one Power Point slide” approach to addressing English Learners’ needs is symbolic of how the District sees, and undervalues, ELs and their families: Mention them, but never really meaningfully and deeply respond to their needs.
- E. **Policy 138:** Policy 138 for English Learners and dual language students makes a lot of promises for English Learners, but there is no apparent attempt to hold the SDP accountable for actually implementing that policy. Why does the Board not require various offices to report on how they are implementing their policies, to highlight their successes and to outline plans for addressing failures?
- F. **Guidelines:** It is imperative that principals be informed, and frequently reminded, of certain procedures and guidelines related to English Learners and their families; and principals’ supervisors need to hold them accountable for following these guidelines. For example: 1. It is legally required that a fully trained and qualified interpreter be present at any IEP meeting; it is not sufficient to use a random teacher, parent, community member, or other school staff member for this purpose. If a BCA is unavailable, the best option is using Language Line, since those interpreters are highly qualified and (we hope) objective. 2. English Learners should be clustered into as few elementary classrooms per grade as possible, so that ESOL teachers are better able to coordinate with their classroom teachers and to push in and/or pull out to reinforce what is actually happening in the classroom. If an ESOL teacher is faced with supporting many, many different classrooms, it becomes impossible to provide targeted and effective second language support. 3. ESOL teachers should never be pulled from ESOL instruction to serve as interpreters; this is especially problematic, since students are thus being deprived of their legally mandated ESOL time. ESOL teachers may be deployed as substitutes, but only in the rotation in which all teachers are called upon to sub; ESOL instruction is legally mandated, after all, and should not be a “throw-away” class. 4. Where feasible, all communication with families should be carried out in the families’

preferred languages. While the translation office cannot always help with daily communication and not every school has a BCA for every language, there are multiple resources that can be employed for communicating with families, such as Language Line and Google Translate—the latter not perfect, but better than an all-English approach.

From: Horace Clouden

December 13, 2022

Subject: Action Item 28 - stop this monthly practice of paying for things that should not be considered.

To: Board of Education

Action Item - 28.

Title: Change Orders at Various Locations (\$552,110) - Added 12.2.2022

Board of Education Meeting Date: 12/15/2022

Action under consideration

The Administration recommends the Board of Education authorize The School District of Philadelphia, through the Superintendent or his designee, to execute and perform amendments of contracts for change order modifications to on-going construction projects at various locations, as follows:

With:

Allstates Mechanical, Ltd.

BSI Construction, LLC

Ernest Bock & Sons, Inc.

Five Star, Inc.

Geppert Brothers, Inc.

Hyde Electric Corporation

Madden Electric Associates, Inc

Murphy Quigley Company, Inc.

Robert Michaels and Associates, Inc.

Smith Construction, Inc.

Purpose: To pay additional amounts necessitated by change orders for ongoing construction projects

Start Date: 12/16/22

End Date: Through project completion

Compensation not to exceed: \$552,110

Separate Compensation by Vendor and Location:

Ernest Bock & Sons, Inc. - General Contract - Building Addition and Classroom Modification at Allen, Ethan Elementary School; \$45,842

Murphy Quigley Company, Inc. - General Contract - New Cafeteria at Blankenburg, Rudolph Elementary School; \$25,523

Smith Construction, Inc. - General Contract - Door Replacement at Catharine, Joseph W. Elementary School; \$6,384

Murphy Quigley Company, Inc. - General Contract - Annex Demolition at Lea, Henry C. Elementary School; \$21,455

BSI Construction, LLC - General Contract - New Construction at Peirce, Thomas May Elementary School; \$1,075,951

Geppert Brothers, Inc. - General Contract - Demolition at Peirce, Thomas May Elementary School; (\$800,122)

Allstates Mechanical, Ltd. - Mechanical Contract - Major Renovation Phase 2 at Pratt, Anna B. Elementary School; \$12,955

Five Star, Inc. - Plumbing Contract - Major Renovation Phase 2 at Pratt, Anna B. Elementary School; \$57,638

Hyde Electric Corporation - Electrical Contract - Major Renovation Phase 2 at Pratt, Anna B. Elementary School; \$18,626

Allstates Mechanical, Ltd. - Mechanical Contract - Major Renovation and Addition at Richmond Elementary School; \$8,528

Ernest Bock & Sons, Inc. - General Contract - Major Renovation and Addition at Richmond Elementary School; \$73,682

Robert Michaels and Associates, Inc. - General Contract - Classroom Modernization at Vare - Washington Elementary School; \$5,648

Description:

This action item is to approve modifications to active construction contracts for new construction, major renovations, and life cycle replacement projects approved in the Capital Budget. The change order process addresses modifications to contracts for work that is added, deleted, or otherwise modified from the original project design and scope of work. Change orders occur due to design errors, design omissions, unforeseen conditions, and requests from the District to ensure completeness of the project. The Office of Capital Programs reviews, negotiates, and approves change orders subject to Board approval so that construction work is not interrupted due to change orders.

The total number of construction contracts relative to the change orders is 11, with a value of \$57,788,570. For the month of November, the change order total is \$552,110, which is .97% of the total value of the aforementioned 11 construction contracts. Our current change order rate on all open construction contracts is 2.84%, of which 1.03% are design errors and omissions, 1.03% are unforeseen conditions and 0.78% are owner's requests.

Guardrail 1: Welcoming and Supportive Schools - Every school will be a safe, welcoming, and healthy place where our students, staff and community want to be and learn each day.

Funding Source: FY 23 Capital Budget

Related resolutions(s)/approval(s):

August 20, 2020; No. 12

April 22, 2021; No. 18

January 30, 2020; No. 24

November 19, 2020; No.7

September 23,2021; No. 13

January 28, 2021; No. 11

April 22, 2021; No. 16

Office Originating Request: Operations - Capital Programs

To the Board: The Board needs to ask the Superintendent to ask the Office of Capital Programs to compile a list of companies where there is a history of abusing the District. Why are we paying for design errors and what is the process for owner's request? Why is this not included in the original design (owner's request)? This monthly practice needs to stop.

Respectfully,

Horace Clouden

West Philadelphia Parent and Community Advisory Council Representative

From Horace Clouden

December 13, 2022

Subject: Action Item 29 To Say No to another pilot program with access to the minds of the children and their environments. Stop saying yes because it's a MOU (free to the District).

Action Item - 29.

Title: Memorandum of Understanding with Kooth USA, LLC (\$1,800,000) - Added 12.7.2022

Board of Education Meeting Date: 12/15/2022

Action under consideration

The Administration recommends that the Board of Education authorize The School District of Philadelphia, through the Superintendent or his designee, to execute and perform a Memorandum of Understanding, as follows:

With:

Kooth USA, LLC

Purpose:

To assist with supporting students' mental health needs by reducing barriers and increasing student access to social, emotional, and mental health services and supports

Start date: 1/1/2023

End date: 6/30/2025

Value of Services not to exceed:\$1,800,000

Location:

All Middle Schools; All High Schools;

Fitzpatrick, A. L. School

Anderson, Add B. School

Locke, Alain School

Greenfield, Albert M. School

Adaire, Alexander School

Stearne, Allen M. School

Hamilton, Andrew School

Morrison, Andrew J. School

Day, Anna B. School
Lingelbach, Anna L. School
Harrington, Avery D. School
Bache-Martin School
Comegys, Benjamin B. School
Franklin, Benjamin K8 School
Bridesburg School
Henry, Charles W. School
Arthur, Chester A. School
Cook-Wissahickon School
Fell, D. Newlin School
McDaniel, Delaplaine School
Allen, Dr. Ethel School
Rhodes, E. Washington Elementary School
Gideon, Edward School
Heston, Edward School
Steel, Edward T. School
Stanton, Edwin M. School
Kirkbride, Eliza B. School
Allen, Ethan School
Bregy, F. Amedee School
Jackson Coppin, Fanny School
Fittler Academics Plus School
Hopkinson, Francis School
Edmonds, Franklin S. School
McCall, General George A. School
Meade, General George G. School
Kearny, General Philip School
Childs, George W. School
Nebinger, George W. School
Sharswood, George W. School
Spruance, Gilbert School
Disston, Hamilton School
Brown, Henry A. School
Lea, Henry C. School
Houston, Henry H. School
Munoz-Marin, Honorable Luis School
Dobson, James School
Blaine, James G. School
Ludlow, James R. School
Rhoads, James School
Cooke, Jay School
Jenks Academy for Arts and Sciences
Barry, John Elementary School

Hartranft, John F. School
McCloskey, John F. School
Taggart, John H. School
John Hancock Demonstration School
Welsh, John School
Greenberg, Joseph School
Brown, Joseph H. School
De Burgos, Julia School
Juniata Park Academy
Kenderton Elementary School
Waring, Laura W. School
Cassidy, Lewis C. Academics Plus School
Farrell, Louis H. School
Washington, Martha School
Bethune, Mary M. School
Mayfair School
McMichael, Morton School
Northeast Community Propel Academy
Olney School
Overbrook Educational Center
Overbrook Elementary School
Dunbar, Paul L. School
Penrose School
Potter-Thomas School
Pollock, Robert B. School
Lamberton, Robert E. School
Morris, Robert School
Blankenburg, Rudolph School
Mitchell, S. Weir Elementary School
Penn Alexander School
Gompers, Samuel School
Pennypacker, Samuel School
Shawmont School
Southwark School
Spring Garden School
Decatur, Stephen School
Duckrey, Tanner G. School
Roosevelt Elementary School
Holme, Thomas School
Finletter, Thomas K. School
Mifflin, Thomas School
Marshall, Thurgood School
Vare-Washington School
Bryant, William C. School

Longstreth, William C. School
Kelley, William D. School
Dick, William School
Hunter, William H. School
Ziegler, William H. School
Meredith, William M. School
McKinley, William School

Renewal Options: Yes

Number of Options: 2

Duration of each option to extend: Years: 1 Months:

Description:

Kooth USA, LLC (Kooth) is an international leader in providing online youth mental health support for students in grades 6 through 12. In partnering with Kooth, School District of Philadelphia (District) students will gain access to an online mental health community that they will be able to utilize when they are in and out of school. This support is intended to enhance existing mental health services. The District has the opportunity to be one of the few pilot programs in Pennsylvania.

Students will have access to three types of support via the platform: (1) therapeutic content and activities that they can utilize as needed (for example, articles, daily journal, resources on specific mental health topics); (2) peer support via discussion boards, which is an anonymous space where students are able to share their thoughts and feelings with other students, which can be in the form of a question, poetry, or an essay; and to ensure each student's safety, Kooth representatives monitor the discussion boards and will follow District protocol if content is identified; and (3) students can access Pennsylvania-licensed counselors for professional support using the messaging service and live-chat features that are available on the online platform.

The service is valued at \$1.8 million dollars. We are receiving this service as an in-kind donation as part of the state's program.

As the mental health needs of youth grow, it is imperative that resources are provided that meet their needs, are accessible, and are youth-centered. To ensure that this service would support students' needs that are identified in the Board of Education's Guardrail, such as spaces with inclusive climates that provide students with access to robust social, emotional and mental health supports, a group of District students met with representatives from Kooth and learned about the service and posed questions to the Kooth representatives. Student involvement is important to Kooth and implementation will include a student advisory council to assist with implementation and provide ongoing feedback regarding service.

Kooth will provide the District insight and pulse reports which will provide additional information on the mental health landscape about our students. This includes information on topics such as sleep difficulties, suicidal thoughts, issues with relationships and school. By partnering with Kooth, we expect that (1) students will report an increased ability to access mental health support, (2) students who utilize Kooth will report a meaningful experience and would utilize again, and (3) platform utilization data will show increase in utilization over the school year.

To the Board: Just look at the number of schools listed, how can there be equal access of quality services? This is a pilot program. Can any of these children afford any mistakes? Let's look at the points in the action item. Point # 1: student supports – remember 70% of these students can't read on grade level. Point #2 peer space – where is the in-house creativity and is this duplicating any existing support? Point # 3 Counselors – is this duplicating the counseling services that the school district provides?

Here is another example of a company receiving monies (\$1.8 billion) **off the backs of our students**. This is a MOU to **have access to half of the student population** and for an end result of **trial and error and to produce platform utilization data**. Let them perform their pilot program somewhere else. Let the support be in the form of **person to person** not someone over the internet. Open up these schools one day a week for the community to get involve with the mental health of the children with **welcoming events**.

Respectfully,

Horace Clouden

West Philadelphia Parent and Community Advisory Council Representative