MEMO

To: Dr. Mark Bedell, Superintendent
To: KCPS Board of Directors
From: South Middle School Steering Committee
Date: 
Re: South Middle School Recommendations

Purpose of Steering Committee  [NOTE: FROM MEETING #1]

The KCPS Master Plan, approved in February 2016, called for the creation of a steering committee to investigate the potential of opening a 3rd middle school that would serve the community south of Brush Creek. In January 2017, the steering committee, which includes representatives from KCPS, charter and private schools, as well as community organizations, began convening. The committee is tasked with the important work of “conducting an assessment and providing a recommendation to the Superintendent and School Board about the opportunities and challenges in creating a third middle school south of Brush Creek.” See Appendices for a list of the steering committee members, meeting notes and meeting presentations.

Goals-Priorities (What are we trying to achieve?)  [NOTE: FROM MEETINGS #2&3]

In order to assess the opportunities/challenges of creating a third middle school that serves students who live South of Brush Creek (SOBC); the steering committee was asked to identify why are we having a discussion about creating a third middle school? “What are we trying to achieve?”

The committee members have identified the importance of providing opportunities for all that their goal is to have a-middle school students based on three four overarching principles: Academic Excellence, Social/Emotional Health, Equity and Diversity. In respect to the possible creation of a middle school south of Brush Creek, these principles need to be public and intentional, and built into the fabric of the school from the start (i.e., diversity is much easier to achieve if this is a goal from Day 1).

Academic Excellence: To provide a rigorous, relevant, and responsive curriculum where students meet and exceed national standards and achieve 21st century skills.

Social/Emotional Health: To provide a nurturing and caring environment for social and emotional development and well-being.

Equity: All students receive the resources they need to be successful (inclusive programs and services available for different types of students and learning styles)

Diversity: a) A student body diversity that is reflective of the school-aged demographics of the area SOBC (racial/economic)
b) **Staff** diversity reflective of the demographics of the area SOBC and a wide range of life and teaching experience that is reflective of students and teachers have training that can support a diverse student population.

While the committee has been asked to focus on middle school programming to serve student who live SOBC, the aforementioned goals should be applied to all schools within KCPS. Unfortunately, the committee does not believe that a KCPS middle school program (aside from Lincoln) is achieving these principles, and the committee’s recommendations will focus on how to achieve this for middle school students who live SOBC.

**Key Findings/Data Trends (Where are we?)**  
[NOTE: FROM MEETINGS #1-3]

The following outlines major findings/key data trends that were discussed/identified by the steering committee. These are organized as 1) key findings; 2) demographic trends; 3) enrollment & student demographic trends; 4) south middle school survey feedback; 5) Does the committee want to include any additional categories?

**KEY FINDINGS**

- **Concerns that the existing middle school/high school programs (KCPS + charter) are not robust enough to compete with the suburbs**
  - Loss of enrollment at secondary grades (see enrollment trends)
  - Declining school-aged population within district boundaries (see demographic trends)
  - Number of school sites serving middle school grades impacts offerings (6 KCPS and 16 charter schools)

- **Many KCPS schools have perception and awareness issues that need to be addressed in order to retain more families**
  - Difficult to navigate PK-12 system, i.e., families don’t know a) what programs are available b) what options exist for K - 12
  - Perceptions of neighborhood schools, especially at secondary level, are low (see south middle school survey feedback)
  - Central Middle School is not viewed as a viable option for many SOBC parents (location is too far, the neighborhood is not perceived as safe, and the perception is that the school’s academic performance is not where it should be)

**[INSERT]**

**DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS**

- **School-aged population loss has been 5 X larger than overall population loss**
  - The South of Brush Creek (SOBC) school-aged population decline from 2000 – 2015 was almost five times more than the overall SOBC population decline (-20.7% school-aged children & -4.0% overall population)
**ENROLLMENT & STUDENT DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS**

- **Significant black population loss since 2000**
  Black population has steadily declined since 1980, but largest loss was between 2000-2015 (-24.5% districtwide & -21.1% SOBC), especially for black children under age 18 (-41.6% districtwide & -38.2% SOBC)

- **White population increasing since 2010**
  After decades of population loss, white population has begun to increase districtwide (+3.6%) and SOBC (+11.9%), especially for white children under age 18 (+19.2%)

- **Public school enrollment has decreased since charters were authorized, but has stabilized since 2010**
  Public school enrollment (KCPS + charters) decreased 27% between 1999 and 2017

- **Lower birth rates and declining population under age 5 are impacting Kindergarten enrollment**
  Overall Kindergarten enrollment (KCPS + charters) has decreased 3% since SY2015 even though more Kindergarten seats have been created at new/expanding charter schools

- **Major enrollment shifts from KCPS schools to charter schools during transition from elementary school to middle school**
  KCPS enrollment decreased an average of 11% from 6th to 7th grade over last 2 years, whereas charter school enrollment increased an average of 7.8% from 6th to 7th grade over last 2 years

- **Public school (KCPS + charters) enrollment declines from 9th – 12th grades are significant and warrant additional examination**
  Public school enrollment (KCPS + charters) declined an average of -26% between 9th and 10th grade over last two years (SY15 – SY17)
  Charter school enrollment declined an average of -15% per year between 10th and 11th grade and 11th and 12th grade over last two years (SY15-SY17)

- **Cohort survival at some high performing schools is very low and warrants additional examination**

- **Most schools SOBC lack racial diversity**
  Only 3 schools SOBC have white enrollment > 10% in SY2016
  Only 22% of SOBC charter schools had Hispanic enrollment >5% vs 50% of SOBC KCPS schools in SY2016

- **KCPS serves a significantly higher % of IEP students than charter schools**
  Districtwide: 13.5% IEP for KCPS vs 7.6% IEP for charters; SOBC: 16.6% IEP for KCPS vs 7.3% IEP for charters (SY2016)

- **Lack of information re: where charter school students live creates challenges???”
SOUTH MIDDLE SCHOOL SURVEY FEEDBACK

- Respondents were evenly split between middle school grade configuration options (6-8th grades vs 7-8th grades)

- Most respondents preferred smaller middle schools
  20% preferred middle schools with less than 250 students & 42% preferred middle schools between 251 – 450 students (KCPS middle school standard is 450 – 800 students)

- Respondents gave their child's school high ratings
  90% of respondents gave their child’s school an “A” or “B” rating (highest ratings came from charter and signature elementary school parents)

- KCPS neighborhood schools have major perception challenges
  73% of parents who send their children to a neighborhood elementary school gave it a rating of “A” or “B”
  47% of signature elementary schools gave their neighborhood elementary school a rating of “A” or “B”
  9% of charter school parents gave their neighborhood elementary school a rating of “A” or “B”
  74% of respondents gave their neighborhood middle and high schools a rating of “D” or “F” or “I don’t know”

Recommendations

Based on the aforementioned information, the steering committee presents the following recommendations to the Superintendent and School Board:

[INSERT]

APPENDIX A: South Middle School Steering Committee Members

[INSERT]

APPENDIX B: Meeting Notes
APPENDIX C: PPT Slides/ Handouts