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

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 or 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?