



School/City Liaison Committee



Minutes

**School/City Liaison Committee Meeting
Wednesday, February 23, 2005**

**8:30 AM to 10:00 AM
Palo Alto Unified School District
District Office Conference Room A
25 Churchill Avenue
Palo Alto**

In Attendance:

City of Palo Alto

Dena Mossar, City Council Member
Yoriko Kishimoto, City Council Member
Emily Harrison, Asst. City Manager
Paula Simpson, City Library Director

Palo Alto Unified School District

Gail Price, Board of Education, Committee Chairperson
Mandy Lowell, Board of Education
Kathy Durkin, Transportation
Jerry Matranga, Business Services
Marie Scigliano, Director of Educational Technology

Attachments:

Powerpoint handout
City Library Annual Report handout

Meeting convened at 8:35 a.m.

1. Oral Communications

None

2. Approval of Minutes – January 26, 2005

Ms. Price moved to approve, all voted in favor.

3. Discussion of Sharing City/School Library Resources

Ms. Price introduced Paula Simpson, City Director of Libraries, and Marie Scigliano, Director of Educational Technology at PAUSD, adding that Ms. Scigliano had given a great presentation at the Board of Education meeting the previous evening. She then stated that Ms. Lowell would be coming to this meeting at about 9 a.m.

Ms. Scigliano and Ms. Simpson then gave a slide presentation (attached).

Ms. Scigliano said that in 2001, the District assembled a Library Development Plan, which involved input from parents, teachers, students, and administrative staff. At that time, the State of California was giving the District \$28 per student for library materials. At the same time, work on renovating libraries was being done via the District's Building for Excellence program. There were 17 libraries in the District, 13 library media teachers, and just over 10,000 students. The number one focus of the materials in the school libraries was to support curricular activities happening in the schools. Since 2003, the funding situation had changed drastically. Now the District was getting \$0.73 per student for books from the State, which would be ending this year. The District also had a \$6.5 million budget reduction, enrollment was going up, and costs were increasing.

Ms. Simpson presented the City Library's current mission statement, then proposed a new one. She said she and Ms. Scigliano had been talking about joint work since she first began work at the City's libraries. The City was facing a structural budget imbalance for the upcoming fiscal year and had been dealing with this for the past couple of years (fiscal report handout attached). In comparison, however, Palo Alto libraries were currently getting \$75 to \$80 per capita, which compared very favorably with other libraries in the area. Unfortunately, there was only enough funding for two and a half libraries, while there were actually five libraries in Palo Alto. This fact might be preventing the City from doing everything the community would like it to do in regard to library services. Ms. Simpson said she had been surprised when she came to work in Palo Alto that there was not more work done in collaboration with the schools (both public and private). For the past year, the City had been watching for a chance to restructure an existing position and a new position called School Liaison Librarian had now been created. This year, as a first effort to reach out to teens who lived and went to school near the Main Library, a Homework Assistance Program was started. It was hoped that next year, the program could be expanded to include Mitchell Park as well. Thanks to the Friends of the Library and Philanthropic Ventures, this year's book discussion groups would be organized at all three middle schools. The City Library had always done class visits, but they were limited. They also offered teacher resource collections for specific teaching programs. For many years, the summer reading program had been offered to encourage kids to keep reading. It had been found that kids could slide almost a grade level if they did not keep reading during the summer. The Friends of the Library had helped support this project as well.

Ms. Scigliano said two sets of textbooks were provided to the City Library for middle school core subjects. At the beginning of the year, City librarians did an afternoon in-service for school library media staff at the beginning of the year at Jordan Middle School, which was very helpful. Friends of the Library book sales were a huge help to the District's libraries as well.

Ms. Simpson said the Children's Library would be closed in the Fall for a major renovation and expansion project. Until Children's Library reopened, a small programming space at the Main Library would be created. Some collections and services might be removed from the Children's Library in the future, such as the teen collection. This would probably remain at the Main Library. Staffing and materials were expected to be augmented at Mitchell Park Library as well. A major library card campaign was underway to help all students in the District get library cards. It may begin next Fall and continue at least every other year if not annually. The notion of loaning materials from Children's Library to schools, classrooms, and school libraries was also being considered. Some cooperation was already happening in regard to the sharing of databases. The Friends of the Library helped get a grant from Cable Coop to help pay for some of the online subscriptions. Ms. Simpson added that there were wonderful resources online and kids needed to be educated about this. These were full text, full image databases that could enhance homework. There was an advantage to the City and District subscribing jointly to these services because there was a price break. The Library Advisory Commission had been discussing distributed services. The City wanted to include the District in this idea of "shared technology". The definition of "distributed library services" had recently been discussed by the Library Advisory Commission, since the issue was referred to them by the council. The Commission would also like to include PAUSD in this conversation, which might include sharing Book Mobile services among the City, schools, and neighborhoods. Another idea involved a visiting author program.

Ms. Price said she was very excited about the presentation and the opportunity to showcase all the good things that were happening adding that there were many opportunities ahead for collaboration. She said the District was very grateful for the Library Liaison program. Everyone could benefit from the professional development opportunities and the shared databases. The District was a direct beneficiary of the contributions from the Friends of the Library. She then asked if the middle school textbooks were at both Mitchell Park and the Main Library.

Ms. Simpson said they were.

Ms. Price said she looked forward to other creative collaborative projects, adding that finding funding sources partial to joint projects would be great.

Ms. Kishimoto said she too was excited about the presentation. She then asked if LAC had heard this presentation.

Ms. Simpson said they had been hearing about the Liaison Committee on a monthly basis, adding that giving this presentation for them was a good idea.

Ms. Kishimoto said this could be part of the distributed services discussion. She then asked about lending the City Library's collection to elementary schools and if the kids would have the option to check out books.

Ms. Simpson said the conversations had not gone this far yet.

Ms. Kishimoto suggested kids be able to use the website to order books, then pick them up at school libraries.

Ms. Simpson said it could go even further because the City and the District were using the same computer checkout system vendor: Dynex Horizon.

Ms. Kishimoto asked if the City and District were thinking of having a system where kids could order books to be picked up at the school libraries.

Ms. Scigliano said they were, and that they were also discussing loaning sets of books on specific topics to classrooms for special projects. Needs and availability were currently being assessed.

Ms. Kishimoto said allowing kids to pick up books at the neighborhood school libraries would be a major step. She added that another step worth exploration would be to allow non-public school kids to pick up books at the public school libraries.

Ms. Simpson said this would require getting other people involved in the discussion because there were big security concerns on the part of the District.

Ms. Kishimoto asked how many librarians there were for the 17 school sites.

Ms. Scigliano said the five secondary school libraries had full time library media teachers. The twelve elementary libraries, which were not open five days a week, had nine shared librarians.

Ms. Mossar noted that the majority of Palo Altans used the Library as a resource to pick up reading materials, rather than staying there to read. Integrating schools with the community by availing school libraries to the public would be a worthy discussion. For smaller public libraries with school libraries nearby, she asked if partnerships might be created. Regarding textbooks, she asked if the school PTAs could be encouraged to purchase two extra sets of more than just middle school core texts for the public libraries. This could encourage students to think of the Public Library as a friendly resource. She added that she was pleased to see all the work that had been done and that there were a lot of possibilities.

Ms. Lowell said she believed some joint benefits could be achieved. She added that often the libraries did have more than two sets of books for middle school kids because the numbers of students in each class fluctuated from year to year. She then asked how many kids made use of the Main Library homework center on Wednesdays.

Ms. Simpson said this had started in September and that the lowest attendance had been four or five and the highest was ten. They had been learning from teachers and kids how to better promote this next year, should it be continued. She added that space and competing uses were a problem at the Main Library. There was no separate room, so modular panels were being used, and a few adults were complaining about the noise.

Ms. Lowell said that in the Mitchell park area, the students were confined to a very small space and had the least access to service, so if the library at Fairmeadow or JLS could be open after hours, this might be a good resource.

Ms. Simpson said libraries used to be used as reading rooms and the facilities were great for this. Now some people wanted to come read or think quietly, some wanted to work as groups, and some wanted to drink coffee. If all these groups could not be accommodated, not everyone's needs would be met and conflict would be created among users.

Ms. Lowell asked if after-school use of school libraries had been discussed. She said that during school, children could be easily distracted from their studies if strangers were to enter the libraries. She also asked if young families could use school libraries after school when school libraries were not normally open. She said that in the past some PTA had funded half an hour or an hour after school for this reason. If this were to occur, the question then would be whether the school libraries had a large enough collection to supply the school's students as well.

Ms. Scigliano added that the middle schools had after-school homework programs in the public libraries three days a week.

Ms. Lowell said kids had to sign in and sign out, and that the time they spent could earn awards.

Ms. Mossar thanked Ms. Lowell for bringing this up. She wondered if the schools and City could work together on a joint program that would make the libraries more accessible to kids after school.

Ms. Simpson said it was wonderful to bring kids to the Public Library and get them accustomed to being there. This would help them feel welcome and more familiar with the other resources there. She did not want this type of activity to be limited because the space was not ideal. New ways needed to be found to bring this age

group, which had been neglected by the City's libraries for many years, into the fold.

Ms. Mossar asked if, given the available resources, a less than perfect solution ought to be considered.

Ms. Lowell said she understood there was a desire in the community to provide a resource for kids and that the best places for the convenience of the kids were middle school libraries. It was found that more kids would use the library center on their own school sites than elsewhere.

Ms. Mossar recommended the City send some of its staff to middle school libraries on Wednesdays, so the school libraries could be open when they would not normally be open, since kids appeared to prefer visiting their school libraries.

Ms. Lowell asked if City staff would be interested in holding children's reading hours in elementary libraries. These places were more comfortable for smaller kids.

Ms. Simpson said story times were being planned at Main Library, because it would be hosting some services while the Children's Library was closed for renovations. The position of School Liaison Librarian would be working with the schools to find ways to work together, since there would be some extra staff time while Children's Library was closed.

Ms. Lowell said if it didn't work out at Main, the school libraries would probably be available.

Ms. Price commented that the important thing to remember was that all these ideas were meant to be complementary to existing programs and that it must be kept in mind that funds were limited. At the high school level, there were not only library centers, but also academic centers. In terms of advertising and marketing library opportunities, e-newsletters at District, school, and PTA levels could be utilized. She then asked if both the City and the District were looking at best practices from other areas.

Ms. Simpson and Ms. Scigliano said they were.

Ms. Price asked if pre-kindergarten and early childhood efforts and communicating with parents and communities would better prepare kids and families as they come into the District. Making the effort to ease this transition by getting information on available services out to the community would be key. Neighborhoods in the Ventura community, for example, needed more opportunities. The Ventura Community Center, which was neither an operating school, nor a library, offered all sorts of resources to the community. Availability of textbooks at this site could be very beneficial.

Ms. Simpson said the Library Advisory Commission's discussions about distributed services were covering this point repeatedly.

Ms. Kishimoto noted there appeared to be a lot of interest in having a neighborhood hub in each key neighborhood. The goal could begin with utilizing volunteers one afternoon each week. She realized there were some legal issues to be worked out. Another idea was to have a vending machine for books on hold, so people could benefit from libraries even after hours. School facilities needed to be more of a resource for the community, which would then make everyone more interested in financially supporting the schools. She then asked if textbooks could be gotten onto the web as e-books, then added that there might be copyright issues.

Ms. Simpson said the online books were mostly part of a package for public libraries that consisted mainly of bestsellers. She was not sure textbook publishers would be interested in this sort of service.

Ms. Lowell said some of the textbooks, if owned, allowed for online access of homework, but not the actual books.

Dr. Pino said the right to publish online had to be part of the original textbook ownership agreements.

Ms. Kishimoto said she imagined the District purchased a large number of textbooks and might be able to negotiate a certain number of passwords from the publishers as well. It would be great to hold the Friends' book sales at school sites too. She then brought up space allocation for web access and reference work and asked if all high school kids were trained on web resources.

Ms. Scigliano said they were trained on the resources they used at school by their teachers and the City librarians as well.

Ms. Kishimoto said she had seen the evolution of the use of space as well as resources and that this needed to progress.

Ms. Lowell agreed that there was a desire for joint use of facilities. She then suggested having a report be brought back to this group on after-school library use. She also asked if school libraries could be used by the City during the summer when the District's Summer School is not in session, since this would involve the least conflict. She then stated that Dr. Pino would know better than she would if this would be a problem for the Summer Literacy programs.

Dr. Pino said this was something that could be considered and that much of the construction work in the District was done during the summer, so not all sites would be available. Also, four elementary schools were usually used for summer programs.

Ms. Lowell asked if this type of study would be feasible.

Ms. Mossar said this was a good idea and suggested focusing on small parts of this idea, rather than looking at integrating all City and school libraries.

Ms. Simpson added that by approaching the first project as a pilot program, there would be no pressure of an ongoing commitment.

Ms. Mossar said she was interested in having book pick ups available for adults at school sites.

Ms. Price asked if the audience had comments.

Mr. Bob Moss, of Friends of the Library, said that both schools and libraries should be connected to the internet and each other, by iNet, which should have been completed by Comcast by now. Once this happened, they should be able to communicate with each other and the City libraries should be able distribute items such as encyclopedias and periodicals to schools. He believed it needed to be determined how the libraries could provide services and resources to the schools. Secondly, the Library had a multi-year grant to get on-line subscriptions, and he suggested the District make suggestions about possible subscriptions. Maybe the grant money could be used for that, because the Friends of the Library would be interested in helping with funding for joint work like this. Mr. Moss also recommended contacting Google and Yahoo regarding the creation of databases for the schools to access. Thirdly, he suggested that someone should talk to Stanford librarians about getting donations of cast off books for secondary school libraries. Stanford may even have more resources than they realized that might benefit the District. They may also be able to get subscriptions to on-line journals because they are already providing them.

Ms. Shelby Valentine, of Friends of the Library, thanked Ms Scigliano and Ms. Simpson for all the effort they had put into this project. The general population was positively influenced by this work. She added that there was a lot of good will and the accessibility had been great. It was satisfying to see the eagerness to accomplish something.

Ms. Price noted that the tone of this year's Committee was very positive.

Ms. Kishimoto asked what troubles had come up in using the homework center at Mitchell Park Library for a homework center. She then asked why the Community Center was not used more for the homework center.

Ms. Simpson said Library staff and Community Services Department staff would be discussing the use of both facilities as one. The first meeting would be next week.

Ms. Harrison said Community Services was very enthusiastic about discussing sharing services.

Ms. Valentine said the real issue was the use of computers and that there were none on the Recreation Department side of the building.

Ms. Simpson said for the after school program at Mitchell Park, the staff saw a need more for someone to listen to and talk with the kids, and keep the noise level down. The tutor paid for by the Friends was doing this more than working as a tutor, and it was later agreed this needed to be reevaluated.

Ms. Kishimoto asked for the status of iNet.

Ms. Scigliano said there was a meeting at the City last week. The iNet equipment had arrived and was about to be installed. It should be fired up and tested during the Summer, if not before. She hoped that for the Fall, the iNet would be at least partially operational. Some of the lines were going to the libraries, fire buildings, City Hall, etc. Also, some of the money donated by Cable Coop had been spent. This would be a good opportunity.

Ms. Kishimoto said this opened a whole new world of possibilities, such as online tutoring.

Ms. Scigliano agreed, adding that this would be a much faster network and that some of the District's T-1 lines could be turned off in the future, which would save the District money.

Ms. Price proposed an update in May in terms of status.

4. Future meetings and agenda items

Ms. Price said it was her understanding that socio-emotional health of students would be discussed at the March meeting of this Committee. This would cover services and initiatives both on the City's part and on the District's part. She added that the State of the District report had a great deal of information that highlighted some of the indicators and programs that existed in the community.

Ms. Harrison suggested she and Mr. Matranga discuss this in advance.

Ms. Price suggested involving other stakeholders, such as the YMCA, in this discussion. She said she had been involved in the Life Skills Taskforce for over a year and would contact them.

Ms. Harrison said another potential topic of discussion was the Gunn athletic fields.

Ms. Mossar said school commute would be presented again in April.

Ms. Harrison added that there would be a presentation on the School Commute Corridor Safety Study in April.

Ms. Mossar said the City Council had approved a fundraising effort with the community to help support the shuttle services, then suggested this Committee hear a brief report about this in April as well.

Ms. Harrison said staff wanted to look at a community donation program to continue to support the shuttle expenses because of the general fund deficit.

Ms. Mossar said one of the first things some people wanted to cut when money was tight is the shuttle, which would be a mistake.

Ms. Lowell said the District paid \$50,000 toward the shuttle and added that she believed fees could not be charged to parents or users.

Ms. Harrison said that because the shuttle was funded by grants, fees could not be charged, however donations could be received.

Ms. Lowell said it was very unusual for a District to provide transportation to secondary students, but not elementary students. She believed parents would probably have been willing to pay for their secondary kids to use the shuttle, if it were not for the grant restrictions.

Ms. Price said one of the issues was VTA and the duplication of opportunity for transit. She then asked if the District could still afford to contribute \$50,000 each year.

Ms. Harrison said it sounded as though there should be a pre-staff meeting on this before the April Committee meeting.

Ms. Kishimoto said she heard the VTA was starting a Community Bus Service, which was being piloted in Los Gatos.

Ms. Mossar said it had been suggested that some VTA routes be cancelled and replaced with community shuttles. She then asked what the District and City could do with VTA.

Ms. Harrison said she could explore this issue, then discuss it at the April Committee meeting.

Ms. Mossar said that as elected officials they had an important role to play in this and that it would be very helpful to hear an update from staff.

Ms. Harrison asked if they would prefer to do this in March, rather than April.

Ms. Price suggested discussing the shuttle in March and socio-emotional health of students in April.

Ms. Harrison said transit and school commute issues check-in would be in May.

Ms. Price said Gunn athletic fields should be discussed soon.

Ms. Harrison said this topic could be on the March agenda.

Ms. Kishimoto said suggested that when the library issue came back in May, a subsection should focus on the iNet.

Ms. Harrison said the March agenda would cover the school commute safety, quarterly traffic meeting, libraries, and iNet in May.

It was then suggested that the iNet be discussed in June, along with the libraries.

Ms. Lowell suggested Ms. Scigliano tell the group about the selection of PAUSD to be one of three districts as a technology showcase.

Ms. Scigliano said the National School Board Association would be showing members around PAUSD March 16-18 so they could learn from the District. There would also be breakout sessions in the afternoons at the District office. The first night, the groups would visit Apple Computer for an event focusing on what "Students of the Millennium" would be like. The next evening, after visiting more schools, the group would visit Google for a session on how Google would be working with education in the future. On the last day, the group would visit the Media Center for a panel discussion on "Technology and the Future". The panel would include professors from Stanford, community members, and CEOs from local high tech companies. This discussion was to be aired throughout the month. She also noted that it had been hoped that the iNet would be up by this time, so the group could video conference with students at a school site.

Ms. Price suggested making future Committee meetings start at 8:15 a.m.

It was agreed that the next meeting would be held on March 23, 2005, from 8:15 to 9:45 a.m.

Adjournment at 10:05 am.