

Date: January 1, 2019

To: Portland Public Schools Board of Directors

From: Sean Egusa, Sara DeLuca, Amy Starr Thomas
Oya No Kai, Inc., Co-Presidents 2018-19

RE: Public Policy 6.50.010-P: Field Trips, Foreign Travel, and Other Off-Campus Activities

Oya No Kai (ONK), the primary advocacy organization of the Japanese Dual Language Immersion Program (JDLI) has come to learn that PPS has concerns regarding some of the foreign cultural exchange trips of PPS students and their impact on some PPS functions, and is therefore reviewing Public Policy 6.50.010-P: Field Trips, Foreign Travel, and Other Off-Campus Activities.

The recommended changes to this policy before the Board, if adopted, will have significant and immediate impact on numerous and long-standing foreign exchange relationships, some of which are over 25 years strong. That said, ONK appreciates and shares some of the Board's concerns, such as:

- Exchange fundraising in school hallways overwhelming families
- Teachers distracted from core curriculum to prep and advise non-school based trips
- Risk to the District when teachers are using classroom-gathered student knowledge to advise on non-PPS activities
- Parent community confusion about the difference between PPS vs non-PPS-sponsored activities

However, ONK also believes that many important factors about these exchanges have not been considered in the proposed policy changes, and that the District has not met its obligation to make the public aware that such a policy revision is under consideration, received adequate stakeholder input, nor provided sufficient time for public comment.

Notice of this policy change was given December 11th via PPS District 1st Reading, Public Comment for Policy 6.50.010-P. The deadline for public comment is January 2, 2019. The window of public input provided by the district is during the busiest season of the year for families and over the PPS winter break, when students are out of school, families are away on holiday, and parent activists are unavailable.

Although this document was available on the PPS website and through "two public committee meetings", ONK and other DLI leadership were never informed that policies directly impacting cultural exchanges were under review or that public meetings were being held to review them. *The fact that one of the options that Board members have in response to this proposal is to "reject the policy and require further revision with stakeholder engagement," implies that PPS advisors recognize that there has been inadequate stakeholder engagement thus far.*

ONK respectfully requests that the PPS Board of Directors delay any vote on the proposed changes to Policy 6.50.010-P until all stakeholders are notified of the proposed changes and are given reasonable time and access to provide input.

ONK questions and concerns include, but are not limited to:

Process

- Insufficient stakeholder input - are representatives of the programs impacted sufficiently engaged?
- Inadequate notification of potential policy changes that significantly impact long-standing cultural exchange practices. Posting notices on the PPS website regarding policy changes and “public committee meetings” without proactively informing stakeholders is inadequate outreach.
- Limited and inappropriate timeline for stakeholder feedback (not over holiday break)

Methodology and Background Research

- What trips are impacted? (DLI trips and other non-DLI overseas trips? PPS and non-PPS trips?)
- How are they being identified? What is the criteria? The number of foreign trips related to PPS DLI programs has increased as more and more educators have come to embrace the value of the application of education outside the classroom.
- What are the unintended consequences to standing programs that have extensive history and breadth?
- Reciprocal exchanges – how might policy changes impact long standing incoming exchanges that occur during the school year?

Equity Implications

- Equity and fundraising – DLI support organizations cannot provide scholarships for exchange programs if they are not permitted to raise money for this purpose. It is ONK’s goal to ensure any child who wants to participate in a foreign exchange is not restricted from doing so due to finances. In 2018, ONK provided over \$25,000 in scholarships to support participation in foreign exchanges.
- Equity and access – not being able to utilize school communication tools to reach families or meet at schools in preparation for exchanges, results in bias against families who are unable to get to non-school-based meetings, who may not have access to technology, etc.
- DLI programs and their representatives cannot help PPS meet its equity goals if they cannot reach all intended audiences. Access to diverse PPS communities via school-based technology and facilities to promote exchange opportunities is an equalizer for those who have physical logistical challenges, and is imperative for DLI and other focus option schools.