Broadband Equity -- Education and Life Success PEG
Will Fuller 10/27/12

Policy points on schools as centers of the whole community

- **S**chools are supposed to teach and model equity.
  How does city policy influence and enhance this function?
- **Equity increasingly includes equitable access to Internet-based applications**
  (see excerpts from Broadband Strategic Plan on Pages 3-5)
- **Education is in essence a city service outsourced to school districts –**
  How does city policy reflect this interest?
- **Population served is broadened to non-students, especially families of color, bringing new needs.**
  How will the city support these new needs?
- **Is there a need for a school zone, not conditional use, to serve equity and avoid problems like the recent PPS K-8 zoning debate which arose from attempts to address underserved populations?**

The lessening importance of place

When we think of a city we naturally think of a place. Within defined city limits a city government provides government services and regulations to people living within those limits. We also tend to think of a school as a place. It's a set of buildings and grounds inside a school district, teachers and others provide education services, defined by regulations, to students, who are from defined place, an attendance area.

Most of the time, city policies about schools are properly defined within this place-based model. But not all of the time. In an increasingly-interconnected world, the interests of a city go beyond the zone, even beyond the city limits.

As we think about changes to policy, therefore, we need to recognize the growing part of city and school services that occur outside the usual place, especially those based on internet connectivity. For example, distance learning, provided over the World-Wide Web, is a growing part of education. Police services depend increasingly on databases that stretch far beyond the city limits. When we are planning for twenty-five years into the future, think of twenty-five years ago; imagine how twenty-five years from now will look.

For schools as a center of community, we need to recognize that "center" is both place-based – e.g. in my neighborhood – and non-place-based – e.g. a center of my needs and interests. Likewise, "community" can be both a physical neighborhood and a non-physical community of people with common service needs who may be physically outside city limits but linked to city services because some part of their lives are linked to enterprises inside the city; e.g. branch offices communicating with a company headquartered in the city.

Dimensions of change

Changes to policies related to schools involve at least **three dimensions**: physical location, geographical service limits and population served. Each dimension has traditional place-based elements and newer non-place-based elements.

Physical location of services:
> Physical buildings and grounds in a fixed location. - zoning, transportation, utilities, sustainability.
> **Non-place services** e.g. online courses, which may not be **compatible with city policies**.
>> Where service providers are located in the school building or city limits.
>> Where service providers are geographically diverse, but administered from the city limits.

Geographical limits to service
> Traditionally, services are within attendance or district boundaries.
> **New services are not geographically restricted**, e.g. distance learning. **How are these regulated and supported**?

Population served:
> Traditionally, services are to children (students).
> **Newer services are to families**, **especially low-income and families of color**. e.g. parent academies, community forums, adult-based interest group meetings. These involve **needs such as** cross-cultural training, multilingual signage, parking, extended hours, noise and other nuisance and safety regulations beyond the usual student-centered aspects. City funding of these additional services, intergovernmental agreements and coordination of services are all areas to consider.

CONNECTING TO OUR FUTURE: PORTLAND'S BROADBAND STRATEGIC PLAN 2011-2020
http://www.portlandonline.com/shared/cfm/image.cfm?id=354243
Selected passages on access equity, especially relating to schools and students.

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Don Stastny, an architect from StastnyBrun Architects in Portland was very concerned about equity issues. "Broadband, if not ubiquitous will create further divides between the haves and have-nots. Broadband access is a matter of social equity and social policy, indivisible from modeling neighborhoods. We have to consider the impact on individual citizens."
Don Stastny's concerns were echoed throughout the workshop sessions and in every workgroup in the Portland process. According to the Aspen Report, "New sorts of government leadership are needed to address social inequality, education and training, and improvements in governments services… There is a keen imperative, in short, for serious institutional innovation." The biggest dangers are greater inequalities of wealth and potentially destructive social polarization. These trends make it imperative that government, education and social institutions learn how to respond to the emerging networked environment.

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Dr. Miles Ellenby of OHSU Pediatric Medicine notes that digital literacy and digital skills should be taught to young children as early as possible. Such education programs could focus on teaching independent problem solving and inquiry while also teaching about privacy and safety on-line. Nick Jwayad, Chief Information Officer of Portland Public Schools noted that K-12's key outcome in this conversation is ensuring access for ALL kids and families. A single example of the schools' dependency on the Internet from home is the PPS "EdBox"; a suit of online teacher tools that includes a grade book, curriculum planner, data dashboard, collaboration portal and professional development planner. The EdBox is designed to connect teachers to students, teachers to parents and teachers to teachers in a new and meaningful way via the Internet. The EdBox is just one example of many dependencies schools have on the Internet to improve student outcomes, close the achievement gap and deliver better learning opportunities for all the students we serve.

Dr. Sharon Blanton, Chief Information Officer of Portland State University noted that distance learning, or network centered learning is the future of higher education, providing students with the ability to integrate learning with work and lifestyle, without requiring commuting. As networking and computer power grow, the virtual classroom, including engagement with other students will begin to be an experience much closer to being in the same room at the same time. Workforce training and education is moving toward an on-line virtual experience as well. In fact, Dr. Blanton, Nick Jwayad and others in the Education and Health focus group note that like firms and corporations, educational institutions must adapt to the networked world, offering education when people can use it, rather than at a specific time and place, and making sure it is culturally relevant to the communities served. The group suggested that we need the "digital education equivalent of drivers ed" for all students.

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Goal 2: Eliminate broadband capacity, equity, access and affordability gaps so Portland achieves near universal adoption of broadband services for all residents, small businesses and community-based organizations.

Until recently, not having affordable broadband was an inconvenience. Now, broadband is a prerequisite to economic opportunity for individuals, small businesses and communities. Those without broadband and the skills to use broadband-enabled technologies are becoming more isolated from the modern American economy. Broadband provides students and families access to global and local educational resources, immigrant and minority communities access to cultural connections, and small businesses the ability to achieve operational scale more quickly.

NEIGHBORHOOD ACCESS

The vision for neighborhood broadband access centers includes state of the art mobile and fixed broadband services, with training and affordable access close enough to residents and small business that they don't have to commute to it. These can be extended within existing centers, such as neighborhood libraries, community centers, shopping centers, parks or schools. Providing access to advanced services and training at the neighborhood level will help reduce pollution and energy consumption caused by travel.

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Goal 2 Action Recommendations

By 2017:

Work with PPS to achieve online student portfolios/academic planners, 1:1 Netbooks for remote access to PPS tools/services and online credit recovery/general credit options for High School students.

By 2020:

Work with the County, Higher Education and Portland's public schools to build telework centers and resources within community centers, K-12 schools or community college campuses that align with "healthy connected neighborhoods."

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Goal 3: Develop highly technology-skilled and employable residents, students, small businesses and workforce.

Key Strategies:

- Create Broadband Centers of Excellence:
  Create innovative alliances, partnerships and incentives to develop advanced services and applications locally.
- Promote Technical Literacy and Skills:
  Leverage existing and support new investment in lifelong technology education and training
- Modernize and Adopt Telecommuting and remote work strategies and policies

The first key strategy will demonstrate Portland's ability to innovate and accelerate technology developments to accomplish desirable social outcomes. This strategy focuses on ways to propel innovation into Portland's structures, institutions and educational and social fabric.

Broadband and Internet access are essential for student achievement and workforce development. ... Computer and Internet access alone do not produce greater student achievement. Access needs to be combined with appropriate online learning content, systems and teacher training and support. Some school districts are finding that online systems can help decrease high dropout rates. In addition to dropout prevention, online systems provide flexibility to students who cannot be in school for health, child-care, work or other reasons.

However, the Network has changed the way workers and students need to be educated and mentored. Sitting in a classroom, learning from dusty textbooks, and taking standardized tests will not support the economic

future of students and workers. They must be trained in a new way, by institutions built on a foundation of global collaborative instruction and research, and flexible, on-demand instruction, tutoring and mentoring. Portland must work with every educational provider in the region to impress modernization and flexibility into their structures, student services and governance models.

The second key strategy establishes regional partnerships aimed at making sure that Portlanders are well trained and well educated at the earliest possible age to thrive in a digital economy. We need to focus on literacy, content and mentoring, not just technology to create a population that is ready for the new economy.

Goal 3 Action Recommendations:
By 2017
Support K-12 and ongoing digital literacy programs in libraries, schools and other institutions.
By 2020
Work with Portland's education institutions to extend and enhance distance learning platforms.