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Human Services

EDUCATION

Chairman: Paul Tisdale

Purpose

The purpose of the Education committee is to develop innovative educational programs and improvements to enhance the City of Biloxi's learning environment, provide workforce education programs to support our economic and workforce development, and to provide our citizens with every educational opportunity to reach their full potential.

Recommendations

Community Education and Workforce Programs

Providing leisure education and workforce training is a hallmark of a thriving, learning community.

These recommendations would enrich and expand current programs and make such classes and training more accessible to the citizens of Biloxi.

Funding for these improvements could be borne by the participants, industry sponsors, Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College Workforce Development monies and/or grants:

109. *Provide instruction on knowledge and skills for the workforce that is available after regular work hours for the City's residents.*

All who have meditated on the art of governing mankind have been convinced that the fate of empires depends on the education of youth.

ARISTOTLE

110. *Provide instruction on leisure activities and hobbies available after regular work hours for the City's residents.*
111. *Participate in the educational offerings of the Mississippi Renaissance Garden and Horticultural Center.*
112. *Clearly define "technology training" so the public understands the nature of the training and survey employers and the community to determine the type of instruction or classes to be offered. **Enhance the continuing education opportunities already offered by Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College.***
113. *Training will occur at Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College (MGCCC), Biloxi Public Schools (BPS), or where a computer lab is located. **Training will be delivered, in some cases, to individuals as online courses.***

Pre-School Education

Research indicates that early childhood education addresses learning at a prime time in a child's development. However, many three- and four-year-old Biloxi residents receive no pre-school training.



They enter school considerably behind other students who have had pre-school training. These children often become those most in need of remedial and tutorial programs. The following recommendations, the cost of which could be covered by an increase in schools taxes, grants such as the 21st Century Grant, and a portion of federal Title I school funds, are intended to address the needs of these pre-school students:

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114. *Encourage private pre-school education providers to use the Mississippi Department of Education's Pre-Kindergarten curriculum.*
115. *Offer pre-school instruction for 3 and 4 year olds at local schools as space permits.*
116. *Determine if the local school district can absorb costs to offer pre-school classes. (State funds are not available for pre-kindergarten classes.)*
117. *Determine the feasibility of reconfiguring of school grades to accommodate classes in elementary schools, i.e. serving grades 9-12 at Biloxi High School, grades 7-8 at Biloxi Junior High School, and serving grade 6 at Michel.*
118. *Consider a pre-K pilot program at the elementary school having the greatest percentage of free and reduced lunch students.*
119. *Assist Harrison County Head Start's efforts to locate housing in the Biloxi area to reopen its programs in Biloxi.*

After-School Remedial and Care Programs

Many families in the City of Biloxi depend upon after-school programs to assist their children with learning and to provide child care while the families are at work. The YMCA and the Boys and Girls Clubs of the Gulf Coast currently offer programs in the schools. The following recommendations intend to enhance and/or add to the current offerings for after-school programs. The cost of these programs could be met by charging parents on a sliding scale, based on need. Costs may also be met by applying for grants, such as the 21st Century Grant, or by private employers assuming some costs for their employee's children. These programs may also be a permitted expenditure of federal Title I school funds.

120. *Develop a planned program of remedial or extended instruction for students in after-school programs.*

121. *Include rudimentary nutrition instruction appropriate for students served.*
122. *Teach skills using methods that complement school instruction and utilize alternative strategies for instructional delivery.*
123. *Providers could include Boys & Girls Club in Biloxi or similar entities.*
(The Boys and Girls Club currently offers after-school programs in some Biloxi schools.)
124. *Approach local industries to offer assistance in establishing educational child care for their employees.*



General Education Diploma (GED)

Program

GED programs are extremely important to many students and adult citizens. These programs can provide employment and/or continued educational opportunities not available without a GED certificate. The cost of enhancing already available offerings could be covered by fees charged to participants, CDBG grants (Community Development Block Grants), or by employers assuming the cost for their employees to participate in GED classes.

125. *Acknowledge quality GED programs already in place at MGCCC or already in place for enrolled students who meet eligibility requirements at Biloxi High School.*

126. Continue having all GED students receive a college counseling session prior to taking GED exams. **As a part of the counseling session, add to this a tour of the college including detailed “how-to” information on such topics as registering, applying for financial aide, etc.**
127. Research the need for additional locations in the evening for the convenience of prospective students.

Child Care

The availability and quality of child care are essential to families in the workforce. Hurricane Katrina damaged or destroyed most private child care providers in Biloxi, and most have still not reopened. The following recommendations are intended to encourage the development of traditional and non-traditional child care programs. The costs of these child care programs can be borne by the parents, perhaps with assistance from employers, or employers may offer these services directly to employees by contract with licensed child care providers.



128. Identify industries in Biloxi whose employees work 24-hour shifts and need child care for their children, i.e, the gaming industry, Keesler Air Force Base, etc.
129. Offer industries educational assistance to set up day care programs at their work places.
130. Explore the possibility of combining the efforts of industries and educational entities to develop a citywide 24-hour child care program.
131. Encourage all child care programs to use the Mississippi Department of Education’s pre-kindergarten curriculum.
132. Investigate partnerships with local industries to provide shuttle services between child care sites and local schools when parents/guardians are working non-traditional hours.

Gaming Coursework at Institutions of Higher Learning

As a gaming community, gaming instruction at the community college level is extremely important to our current and future workforce. These recommendations are intended to initiate that gaming-related instruction. The costs of these classes would be borne by students; there would be no additional costs if current lobbying efforts continue.

133. Lobby state legislature for statutory approval.

134. Gain approval/support from State Board for Community and Junior Colleges and from the Board of Trustees of the state Institutions of Higher Learning (IHL).

Education Committee Action Plan:

The Education Committee recommends the following timeline for completing the recommendations of this report:

Stage One

Timeline: Fall 2006

- > Seek funding for after school remedial programs;
- > Develop an appropriate nutrition education program for after school programs;
- > Determine teaching strategies to be used in after school programs;
- > Create a task force including education, business and industry representatives to work toward the development of 24-hour child care settings;
- > Assist Harrison County Head Start in locating appropriate housing for its programs;
- > Seek funding for GED programs;
- > Enhance current GED opportunities;
- > Develop a task force to initiate actions necessary to add gaming classes to local community colleges;

Stage Two

Timeline: Fall 2007

- > Seek funding for community education programs;
- > Work with the Mississippi Renaissance Garden and Horticultural Center to develop educational programs for school children and community education classes;
- > Seek ways to more clearly define “technology training” for the public;
- > Establish community education classes in available computer labs;
- > Establish more on-line courses for individuals;
- > Increase evening instructional opportunities for leisure and hobby classes in the evenings.

Stage Three

Timeline: Fall 2008

- > Seek funding for public pre-school education;
- > Develop a task force of educators to implement a pilot pre-kindergarten program at BPS

