

**July 27, 2022**

## **Citywide Plan for Education Workgroup Kick-Off Encourages Out-of-the-Box Thinking in Educating St. Louis' Children**

Dragging a large box across the stage, a trio of tap-dancing actors from Central Visual and Performing arts (CVPA) high school brought to life a night at the legendary Cotton Club. Mid routine, one actor suddenly stopped and asked, "Hey guys, we've been on top of the box, we've been *under* the box...can we try something different?"

It was a perfect kick off to the July 27 meeting of the Citywide Plan for Education. The Board of Education of the City of St. Louis's efforts to form a community collaborative was born from the challenges of serving 45,000 school age children within an antiquated and segmented education system. Such a plan has never been done before so the first step was to create a blueprint.

That's where Dr. Laverne Morrow Carter, president and founder of Research, Evaluation and Social Solutions, Inc. (REESI), brings to the group. She is now into the second month of facilitating a small group session with the more than 50 individuals representing five different work groups; School Experience; Health, Wellness and Safety; Infrastructure; Community; and Education Workforce.

Dr. Carter, who prides herself on harnessing the power of people in working toward a common goal, is picking up where Board President and CWPE Chair Antoinette "Toni" Cousins left off. Prior to bringing on the team of facilitators, Cousins and her planning team spent months raising funds and engaging a diverse, cross section of stakeholders in creating a plan to better serve the children of St. Louis.



*CVPA tap dancers and actors kicked off the CWPE Meeting on July 27.*



*Board VP and CWPE Chair Antionette "Toni" Cousins addressed the Full Committee at their kick-off meeting on July 27 at Harris Stowe's Impact Education Center.*

Cousins was joined by Board President Matt Davis, Board Director Alisha Sonnier and Superintendent Dr. Kelvin Adams in encouraging champions (co-chairs) and

"People have said it (CWPE) can't be done – that St. Louis won't do this. But, we are from the "show me" state so let's show them what we can do when we come together for the children."

Antionette "Toni" Cousins

members of the five targeted work groups, charged with creating a blueprint for transforming education in St. Louis.

Cousins said, "The pandemic taught us we can't get through the tough times alone. It is the same for this process. We cannot operate in silos; we need representation from each and every part of the community. We need public, private, and arch diocese educators at the table. We need businesses, the Mayor's office and SLDC – it will take all of us working together to produce a blueprint in order for this to be successful."

Cousins assured the team that the processes will include community feedback as well, "Trust that the greater community will be part of this process through planning community forums. When you have everyone involved in educating the children -- it is a beautiful thing." She added, "Trust the process. Even if you don't quite understand it all right now, trust that it will all come together in time."

The Board of Education's Citywide Plan for Education is sponsored by the [SLPS Foundation](#) and [Parsons Blewett Memorial Fund](#). The St. Louis Board of Aldermen passed a resolution in support of the process (October 2021) and, the Board's ambitious efforts to re-engineer the educational system in St. Louis have been applauded by the State Board of Education (April 2022) and the [Missouri School Boards' Association](#) whose members passed a resolution in support of the process in January 2022.



*Board Member Alisha Sonnier, Board VP Toni Cousins and Board President Matt Davis discuss Citywide Plan.*



*Left: Dr. Kelvin Adams, SLPS Superintendent and Right: Dr. Laverne Morrow Carter, CWPE Facilitator*



Joshua Childs, Assistant Professor, University of Texas at Austin, College of Education will be a resource to the CWPE team.