

# EVANSTON ROUNDTABLE

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Wednesday, February 12, 2014

## **ETHS Approves Evanston Cradle to Career Initiative**

**By Mary Helt Gavin**

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By unanimous voice vote on Jan. 28, the District 202 School Board signed on to the Evanston Cradle to Career Initiative (ECCI).

"I hope you approve this," Superintendent Eric Witherspoon told the Board before the vote. "One of the challenges of getting something like this going in the community is that you have to get some folks to sign on so that other folks will know who signed on so other folks will sign on. Obviously, our School Boards are hugely important in an initiative like this.

"With your approval, if we sign on, it would help other groups like the [Evanston] Community Foundation and Youth Organizations Umbrella. There are some others that have already signed on – you would not be the first. We bring it to you now [as a] chance for others to see how the membership is starting," he added.

Board President Gretchen Livingston asked for clarification about who had already signed on and whether each organization signed on with essentially the same document.

Dr. Witherspoon said "School District 65, as you know, has certainly articulated an interest in this. We're a little further behind with the City." Each organization will sign essentially the same document, he said.

He added that language in the document indicates that a financial contribution will be required of all organizations that sign on, pro-rated on the size of each budget. "What was indicated to our School Board as well as to District 65 was that, being the biggest entities – as well as the City – we would proportionally make a bigger contribution because of the size of our budget," he said.

Ms. Livingston said her understanding is that "this would be true across the board, including Evanston Community Foundation, which has been described [in a draft document] as willing to take on the fiscal agent role, but the draft document refers to a fee that they may charge. I trust somehow in the wash they're going to make a financial contribution. ... We're all in the same position. We're not making money on what we do. We're serving an important purpose, so we're all going to be in this together."

Board member Jonathan Baum said, "I would also like to point out that the Initiative will likely succeed in obtaining grant funding, and our contribution will likely be matched if not exceeded by grant money."

"That is exactly right," said Dr. Witherspoon. He added, "We're not optimistic that we would be able to receive that level of grant funding at first, but as [organizations sign on] and [ECCI gets] a good track record, it is easier to get government money."

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