

NOTES
Orange County Schools
Visioning and Community Engagement Initiative
Stakeholder Group Meeting
November 19, 2014

Vision Statement and Document Creation:

Gwen Jordan and Vaughn Compton welcomed and thanked all the stakeholders for their hard work and reminded everyone that we are almost finished. The draft vision document that was handed out was created using the input from the many responses to the five framing questions and the stakeholders' analyses and discussion of the same. The purpose of today's meeting was to review and vet the draft and make suggestion for changes and improvements such that it reflects all that we've heard and will inspire the community to action on behalf of the Orange County Schools, its students and its community.

Vision Document Review and Analysis:

Through individual review, small group discussion and a SWOT analysis of the draft vision document and process, the following strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats were identified.

Strengths

Diverse Group Involved in Vision

- Statement allows input from diverse viewpoints
- A big diverse group came up with the vision
- 400 People had a chance to answer questions
- Includes various stakeholders; business, civic leaders, students, parents
- 44 community stakeholders were willing to participate in vision creation
- The community had a chance to be involved
- Incorporated comments
- Community buy-in to shared vision
- Vision statement "Collective Community"
- Business Community IS involved
- An updated vision from representatives of community

Content and Design

- Schools as "centers of community"
- Commitment to creating a shared vision for OCS
- No surprises; nothing controversial
- Layout of front page is clean and easy to read
- Notation of foundation of family throughout doc
- Provides framework to identify specific pathways to improve education

Values

- The “We Believe” statements really captures our opinions for our families, schools and children
- 2 Words We Believe...
- Really focuses on the equality issue!
- Values/Beliefs stated clearly
- Beginning a new discussion of values
- Focus of document is about strong educational support for students of Orange County Schools
- Good emphasis on encouraging students to take ownership

Look at History

- Looked back at our history to see where we had been
- Learning from our history in a positive way
- Good foundation in history

Weaknesses

Define

- Lack of specifics as to “sound basic” education
- “Community” in vision statement
- Page 3; 1st paragraph and paragraph 8; “sound basic education” –This could be interpreted as a “no frills” approach; this is not what we want.
- Page 3 Paragraph 1; “What is sound basic?”

Need to Add

- In vision statement add: “to become well educated” ...responsible, etc.
- Vision statement doesn’t address the job and career ready idea enough? Just a question
- Missing→ Add history 1983 to present
- Page 3, paragraph 4; Should our statements about the community involvement recognize the excellent interest and involvement here already? “Build on the schools as centers of the community.”
- Page 4; Mrs. Freeland’s statement needs to be inclusive; needs to speak to all business leaders

Teachers

- Teachers in classroom know what works. Use their knowledge
- The vision statement needs to include teachers and administrators; not just supported by community
- Call to action: How about encouragement of teachers and how?

Questions (Issues Log? Or Strategic Plan?)

- Take politics out of the classroom
- Vision statement sounds like many others
- Missing holding politicians and district accountable for education and performance
- Ability to communicate importance of vision at all levels of OCS
- Does not sufficiently address the need for creative thinking in the curriculum
- What about teacher performance and turnover?

Health

- Call to Action: Health Environment not mentioned
- Call to Action: Health Leaders not mentioned
- Page 3 of Call to Action: Create safe and nurturing – healthy environment

Family

- Does not clearly address the problems of changing family structures
- Mobility of families and children; poverty
- Page 3: Family is not foundation; it is contact? and schools need to be prepared to work within all changing family including single parents or working parents

Equality

- Understanding concept of “equality”
- Not inclusive
- Latino representative missing (yes, we’ve had 1 but not very balanced w/adult representative)

Weak Message

- Statement seems very thin – no real “meat” in the vision
- Vision is abstract
- Visions not cohesive
- Need to balance aspirational with staking a stance
- Does not give concise take home message

Evaluation - Measure

- Who is accountable
- Vision needs something on accountability
- No timetable for action plan; 3-5 year follow-up
- How does BOE implement vision and will they?
- Hard to see how generalization will be manifested in specific policies
- Concerns that the Board of Education and County Commissioners will fully grasp the OCS mission and act accordingly...or...ignore the process and results of these meetings to arrive at a strongly guided path to educational success for children!
- How will we measure if vision is working

Editing

- Too fluffy
- Somewhat general in wording
- Needs some editing
- Page 3: structure and flow
- Page 3, paragraph 3 too wordy
- Reword some of the vision statements on page 3
- Too many repeated lines/words
- Adequately compensated wording/placement
- Rewrite page 3, paragraph 4 [awkward wording]
- Don’t like the word ‘adequately’ on page 3, paragraph 3 – maybe fairly?

- Page 3 last paragraph “and questions always.” Rewrite?
- Page 2: Use more words like “inspire” members of community
- Limiting with wording of “school” environment (pg.3)
- Several places that have multiple meanings
- Statement – ‘regardless of circumstance’
- Teachers are or should be respected...not “when” page 3
- ‘Adequately’ ?? compensated page 3 paragraph 3
- Page 3, paragraph 9 – other than student attitude, “I will try...” “I can succeed..” – we need to address what and how students are asked to do in the school. This is a two-way street.
- Page 3, paragraph 3 – we had a lot of support for using various teaching strategies, “whatever it takes” to reach each child (From the “How question # 4) Is this implied, the “qualified teacher” part?
- Page 3, paragraph 3 – “fairly or effectively” compensate teachers; do not use word “adequately” in a vision statement
- Page 3; “Call to Action” include encourage school Board to be accountable with measurements of success
- Page 3; Not liking “ask for help.”

Opportunities

Action

- Input from interviews can inspire action beyond vision
- Gain feedback and contribute to process
- “Teachers” ought to be mentioned somehow in ‘vision’
- Empower not betterment
- Encourage creating creative thinkers
- Page 3: Call to Action, paragraph 3: Public Education should be replaced with “Our Schools and Students.”
- Page 3: Call to Action paragraph 2: What is a Sound Basic Education

Strong School Board

- Excellently informative for School Board
- Be more focused on making changes than keeping your elected seat.
- “To work together” to solve problems and create opportunities... how?
- Can be used for new principals and other administrators to give a pulse of the community
- Great process for superintendent search

Recognize Changing Definition of Family

- Define “family” in today’s world; must be reeducated page 3, paragraph 2
- “Foundation of family” how to achieve involvement?

Change STEM to STEAM – Arts, design, etc.

- Insert something about creating thinkers

More Pay for Teachers

- Teachers: how to engender respect? support? compensation?

- Pay teachers to derive the best from them = incentive

Incorporate a Statement about the Value of Rural NC Culture

- Need to capture OC essence in vision statement
- Needs to recognize the value of rural NC culture – the importance of work

Community

- OCS can use this vision to truly work together with community
- Community members from different walks of life, with diverse thinking based on life style give their input to accommodate educational process to all children of Orange County
- Share with the community once approved – have partners link to document from their websites
- Community building and maintenance
- How to make OCS center for equality? Currently not seen/felt by community members
- Including faith communities as centers of communities
- “Centers of Community” and “Centers of Equality” – How?
- Share at open houses, PTO meetings, etc, when new school year starts
- BOE should call upon community to help create the goals of this vision
- “Betterment” of community – how? define?
- Developing community environment with Health Department (for safer, healthier environs)
- Communicating vision at all levels could fundamentally transform the school system

Opportunity to Edit

- Envision statement: remove “regardless of circumstance” and flesh out “diversity” in another way.
- Page 3, paragraph 4: What is a “Center of Equality”?
- Make a more robust document
- Page 3; Calls to Action Paragraph 1: “potential” used too much
- Call to action: How will we accomplish this? Very generalized
- Page 3, last paragraph: too many words
- “Betterment” define how to betterment of children
- Prepare rather than betterment

Threats

Community

- Diversity piece missing
- Lack of community support over time, voices that clash rather than come together to arrive at workable solutions
- Buy-in from community – will they agree or discount -- just more rhetoric
- Feeling less confident in process today than when we began
- Overcoming inertia to keep the vision alive

Board Leadership

- Not sure the board will respond and make any real changes

- Don't think vision statement gives enough information so action can be taken by superintendent and board
- Discordance over specific policies; lack of structure for further community support
- Will school board be agile enough to respond to social, political, and economic changes
- Can school board be agile enough to respond to changing social, economic and political changes

Funding

- Continued reduced funding could sabotage vision – be realistic!
- Lack of financial support and resolve
- “Sound basic education” could be taken by a certain group as a reason to cut back – lower taxes!

General Vision

- May be too limiting

Parents

- All parents may not be available to their children
- Page 3: Parents may not be around to help

Implications for Vision Document and Next Steps

- Be more descriptive; forceful for example change “adequate” perhaps to “fairly”
- See edits under “Weaknesses” certain phrases bother some such as “Regardless of Circumstances” and “Betterment” is dated
- See revised draft vision statement created by Danita and George
- Flesh out more “We Believe...”
- Use bullet points in vision document? Bullet points of what we value...“We value hard work...”
- Build ‘character’ around the vision statement; leadership, supported by, give it more dimension
- “We expect...” 1-2 statements added to vision document
- Cover statement --. Aspirational
- More details; We Expect
- Go to BOE with expectations for them
- Share draft to BOE for comment at November 24 meeting? Stakeholder concerns in doing so...yes (with hesitation) if revised using these suggestions, edits, changes and sent to all stakeholders prior to sending to BOE

Next Steps:

- Revise draft based on SWOT and this discussion – Scottie and Framers Subcommittee
- Email revised draft to all stakeholders for their comments, concerns to be sent to Scottie Seawell at fseawell@leadingandgoverning.com prior to November 24 BOE meeting
- Share revised draft with BOE in digital form by Sunday, November 23 and then at November 24 to get BOE comments re: vision document and engagement process
- BOE Comments shared at December 3 Community Engagement Meeting to consider for further emphasis or revision and plan next steps/roll out of the community's vision.

Before the next meeting:

Timeline Moving Forward

BOE Meeting – November 24, 2014

Framers Group – Via email prior to November 23, 2014 to review revised draft vision document

Steering Committee Meeting – November 26, 2014

Tentative Agenda for December 3 Meeting

Review Revised Draft Vision Document – Reaching Consensus

Plan Roll-Out and Next Steps