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Introduction

From August through December 2014, a diverse group of Orange County citizens, representatives of our business, agricultural, nonprofit, local governments, health care, social service, faith, education, student, parent, and geographic communities, were called together by the Board of Education to envision the future of Orange County Schools (OCS). Through an in-depth process of open dialogue, engaged learning, individual reflection and constructive discussion two outcomes were achieved: (1) relationships that transcend our differences were formed and renewed through our common desire to strengthen our county public school system and the educational outcomes our children receive and (2) our vision for public education in the Orange County Schools community was created as is documented here.

We envision a public school system that prepares all students to be creative, constructive thinkers who become healthy, productive and responsible members of our community and the world.

The vision that has been created by our community builds on the rich history that is documented in “*A History of Orange County Schools, 1732-1983*” (1983) by Irene Oliver Pender and updated in “*A Brief History of OCS Since 1983*” developed by Dr. Steve Halkiotis. The discussions through which the community was engaged were structured around the public values framework laid out in *Preserving the Public in Public Schools: Visions, Values, Conflicts, and Choices* (2012) by Phil Boyle and Del Burns. Both books were shared with all stakeholders prior to our first meeting and discussed during the initial meetings of the group to discern implications from both for our work in building support and creating a vision for public education in Orange County, NC.

The community engagement process through which this vision was created is one of two parts of an overall process to create the next Orange County Schools (OCS) five year strategic plan. The mission, goals and strategies of the OCS strategic plan are being created by a representative group of OCS principals, teachers and central office administrators who will work to align the community’s vision with the mission, goals and strategies created through the strategic planning process. The strategic planning process is occurring in preparation for the next OCS accreditation review scheduled to occur in March 2015. It is desired that by undertaking a process to engage both the external and internal OCS communities, a strategic plan with staying power and community support will guide the Board of Education and the Superintendent in their deliberations and decision-making for years to come.

From our time together, several themes emerged about what our community believes and envisions for public education. We hope that our visions and expectations stated here will inspire all members of our community, in all our diversity, to work in concert with our public schools on behalf of all our children and our community. These are:

Vision Statements

We believe.....

We believe in learning from our history and each other and striving together to empower all our children by providing them with a high quality education that benefits them as individuals and our community as a whole.

We believe that Orange County Schools should strive to be an educational system that is designed around children and the ways they learn.

We believe in Orange County's rich agriculture and manufacturing heritage and the values it inspires of hard work, self-reliance and craftsmanship passed down to each new generation through our continuously improving and increasingly inclusive system of public education.

We believe in the power of qualified teachers and all the employees who support teachers and learning, to make a real difference in the lives of our children and in our community. Therefore, we believe that teachers should be respected, supported and fairly compensated based on market rate factors.

We believe in the importance of engaging the interest and support of a child's family in achieving high quality educational outcomes.

We believe in our schools as centers for equality where all students are educated to their fullest and as centers of our community around which we come together in support of the education of all students.

We believe in the importance of our children, our community, our leaders and ourselves working together democratically to solve problems and create opportunities to enrich our collective future.

Calls to Action

We expect....

We expect the Board of Education and the Board of County Commissioners, our elected representatives, to use this vision to develop policies that create healthy, safe and nurturing environments; support all students in reaching their full potential; and result in the development of productive and responsible citizens as well as lifelong learners with critical thinking and problem solving skills who will lead us in the future.

We expect the Orange County Schools to be administered using high quality management practices and in accordance with all of its legal and fiduciary responsibilities. Included in this expectation is that OCS will monitor and annually report to the community on implementation of its strategic plan and the schools' performance in support of the community's vision for public education.

We expect our greater community, consisting of faith leaders, civic leaders and business leaders; members of higher education, early childhood education and health and social service agencies; students, families and mentors; educators, administrators and elected officials to work together in support of public education. The more we share, proclaim and support our vision across our community the greater the likelihood that our elected officials will successfully implement policies to help us achieve our vision.

We expect all families to be engaged in their children's educations and to believe with us that their children's and our community's future is dependent on their striving with their children to ensure they receive the highest quality education.

We expect our teachers and principals to be inviting and encouraging of students and their families, in all their diversity and differences, through the creation of a nurturing culture within schools and an expectation of success through partnership.

We expect our students to be engaged and to take ownership of their educations and develop an attitude of "I will try..." and "I will succeed..." and to succeed with the support of their teachers', families' and community's high expectations for their success.

Continuing our Community's Tradition of Supporting Education

Through our many conversations of the past four months, we have learned that our community currently and historically supports education in many important ways. We encourage all the members of our community and their organizations, businesses, associations and neighborhoods to continue to show support and seek creative and inclusive ways to grow that support to the benefit of our public schools, our students and the Greater Orange County community.

It has always been an assumption that the community supports the public schools in Orange County. It's sort of like something that you automatically do without thinking. Even as simple as supporting the many fundraisers that the little ones are tasked to do each year. The community embraced the idea of improving school playgrounds and went to work to make it happen in some of our schools. The supportive efforts by the community include providing teacher appreciation days for the teachers and serving as proctors during standardized testing days. Various community civic groups provide scholarships to deserving students. Businesses provide ads to yearbooks for each high school to help offset printing costs for the school yearbooks. In addition, some restaurants give a percentage of customer receipts, on certain days, to support the schools. The Schley Grange donates personal dictionaries to every third grader. The Exchange Club presents a Student of the Month award to a deserving Orange County student, and from that pool of students, a Student of the Year is selected. The Hillsborough Kiwanis Club has a monthly Terrific Kids program in every elementary school in the district to honor good character and hard work. Faith communities are very supportive during the school year providing items that schools specify that would be of great help, from coats to school supplies. Orange Congregations in Missions (OCIM), a local nonprofit, provides volunteer work opportunities for students. In addition, OCIM assists the students, via school social workers, with food, clothes and other emergency assistance during the school year.

-- Reverend Sharon S. Freeland, Orange Congregations in Missions

Cyndi Baldwin

Student, Cedar Ridge High School

Sheriff Charles Blackwood

Orange County Sheriff, Chapel Hill

Judge Jay Bryan

Orange and Chatham County NC Court System, Hillsborough

Charlene Campbell

Parent, Hillsborough

Gayane Chambless

Health/Medical/Mental Health, Durham

Keith Coleman

News of Orange County, Hillsborough

Chandler Compton

Student, Orange High School

Vaughn Compton **

Agriculture, Efland Civic Exchange, Cedar Grove

Tracy Craven

County Government, Hillsborough

Linda Foxworth

Early Childhood Education Specialist, Hillsborough

Reverend Sharon Freeland **

Executive Director, Orange Congregation in Missions, Hillsborough

Jay Gilbo,

K-12 Education; Retired Athletics Teacher, Hillsborough

Penny Gluck

Durham Tech Community College, Orange County Campus, Hillsborough

Patricia Gould

Durham Tech Community College, Durham Campus, Durham

Mat Hamlett,
Education; Retired Vocational Teacher, Chapel Hill

Bonnie Hammersley
Orange County Manager, Hillsborough

Bonnie Hauser
Community Representative, Hillsborough

Rachel Phelps-Hawkins
Piedmont Electric Membership Corporation, Hillsborough

Martinette Horner
Education; University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill, Durham

George Horton
Business; Builder/Developer, Hillsborough

Uriah Jeffries
Student, Partnership Academy

Reverend Gwen Jordan*
Faith Community; President, Northern Orange NAACP, Hillsborough

Donna King
Orange County Health Department, Hillsborough

John Link
Government; Retired Orange County Manager, Durham

Deryl McGuire
K-12 Education; Retired Teacher/Business Owner, Hillsborough

Rita McIver
Parent, Hillsborough

Earl McKee
Chair, Orange County Board of Commissioners, Rougemont

Jessica Morales
Student, Orange High School

Carlos Orozco
Student, Cedar Ridge High School

Jim Parker

Business; Chamber of Commerce, Hillsborough

Lois Pipkin

K-12 Education; AIG Specialist, C.W. Stanford Middle School, Hillsborough

Phyllis Portie-Ascot

Business; Manager/Realtor, Mebane

Carmine Prioli

Education; Wood Shop, Cedar Ridge High School; Retired English Professor, North Carolina State University; Parent, Chapel Hill

Millicent Rainey

K-12 Education; Retired Public School Administrator, College Professor, Hillsborough

Lori Rogers

Business/Parent, Cedar Grove

Pam Scism

Parent, Rougemont

Deb Sievert

Business; Realtor, Hillsborough

Danita Thompson

Community Representative, Hillsborough

Cathleen Turner

Community Representative/Parent, Hillsborough

Susan Waldrop*

Business; Realtor, Hillsborough

Norma White

Parent, Hillsborough

Natalie Zelaya

Student, Partnership Academy

* Community Engagement and Visioning Co-Chairs

** Strategic Planning Committee Liaisons

Issues Log

As a result of our hours of discussion and analysis, several issues surfaced that we recommend the Orange County Schools Board of Education consider as part of its strategic planning process. These issues are not the consensus of the Stakeholders Group, but are issues presented to and by the stakeholders as part of our community engagement and visioning process.

Issues Statements:

Arts

The Arts give the opportunity to create, imagine, promote self-expression, realize a talent and through these humanities, learn from the past, examine the present, and develop into well rounded citizens for the better community.

Creativity

Our children need to be given opportunities to exercise their manual as well as their intellectual skills. Creative making and creative thinking are complimentary aspects of what it means to be fully human.

Choices in addition to college

Everyone's interested but a lot of people are going to college and don't know why they are in college or what they will do when they finish. Plus they are carrying debt that they'll never be able to pay off. More people are needed to work with their hands – plumbers, carpenters, and mechanics. Kids need choices.

Impact of Change

- On family understanding (homework)
- On teacher stress

STEM → STEAM

Creative thinking (a capability most readily developed within the broad category of the “arts”) is a necessary component for success in the 21st century, but it is entirely lacking in STEM education, at least as STEM is currently promoted. An “A” for the arts should therefore be added to STEM, turning it into “STEAM,” with an emphasis on the ability to think critically and inventively, to communicate well in both speaking and writing, and to collaborate with people from widely divergent cultures.

Trauma/Abuse

- Effects of trauma/abuse on learning
- Responding to trauma/abuse suffered by students

List of Issues:

ACEs (Adverse Childhood Experiences)
Arts in Education (arts defined as visual, musical and dramatic)
Block Scheduling
Board of Education interacting with teachers; hear/allow voicing of concerns
Brick and Mortar
Bullying
Charter Schools
Civics
Dance/Movement
Data and Statistics on OCS; Trend Data from Department of Public Instruction
Diversity and changing demographics in our schools
Early Childhood Education
Educational Equality
Elementary School Curriculum
Engagement
Evaluation
Exceptional Children
Extra Curricular Activities
Foreign Languages
Funding
Homelessness
Hunger
Impact of Change
Income
Multiple Learning Styles
Multiple Approaches to Education
Music
Mental and Physical Health
Mental Health and Substance Abuse
Needs of Business
Non-Traditional Educational Experiences
On-line Learning
Poverty
Restorative justice processes for disciplining behavior problems
Role of Community in Schools
Role of Parents in Public Education
Schools as Community Centers
School Social Workers reinstated
School System Accountability
STEM
STEM to → STEAM
Student Health
System Competitiveness
Teacher Compensation
Teacher Quality
Teaching History
The Teaching of Reading (Methods of Teaching)
Theatre (Drama)
Theater
Trauma/Abuse
Vocational/Technical/Trades Education

Public Values Framework

“What is public about public schools? What is public about public education other than its funding? ...Every society educates its children. But why, how and towards what ends? Why, in educating children, do public schools give rise to so many controversial issues? What is it that drives our common purposes in educating children and at the same time divides us so passionately about how to educate them?”

Preserving the Public in Public Schools: Visions, Values, Conflicts, and Choices

By Phil Boyle and Del Burns (2012)

The process, as highlighted below, through which a representative group of Orange County Schools stakeholders was called together to engage one another in creating a community vision for public education in Orange County was designed using the public values framework laid out in the Boyle and Burns 2012 book. As individuals, each citizen has answers to the above questions. The charge of this initiative was to explore our answers to those questions and create a community vision and build community support for public education in the Orange County Schools. What is it in this time and this place that unites the citizens of the Orange County Schools community in regard to public education and its public school system?

Overview of the Community Engagement Process

The Orange County Schools Board of Education, at its February 24, 2014 meeting agreed to undertake a community engagement and strategic planning process in lead up to its 2015 accreditation review. At that meeting, the BOE decided to secure a consultant facilitator to guide community leaders in the engagement and visioning effort and the school system in the development of its strategic plan. Scottie Seawell, principal consultant with Leading and Governing Associates, was selected by the Board to serve in this role.

As a first order of business, a Steering Committee was formed by the Board to assist in the recruitment of stakeholders from across the county and to guide the overall process. The Steering Committee consisted of the Superintendent, the Chair of the Board of Education, two community leaders who served as Co-Chairs of both the Steering Committee and Stakeholders Group and the consultant with staff support from the OCS Office of Communications. The two Co-chairs were the Reverend Gwen Jordan, President of the Northern Orange NAACP and Realtor Susan Waldrop of Coldwell Banker, HPW. Together this group along with all members of the Board of Education contacted almost 100 people to participate as stakeholders in the Community Engagement and Visioning initiative. Forty-eight community members including five high school students from each of the three high schools agreed to participate.

To keep the community informed, a link was created on the front page of the Orange County Schools' website. This link and the documents included on it provided ready access to the stakeholders and all members of the community to the presentations, agendas and minutes of each Stakeholders Group meeting. Meetings were held every other Wednesday starting on August 27 and running until December 3, 2014 in the Multipurpose Room at C.W. Stanford Middle School. Steering Committee meetings occurred on the off Wednesdays to review outcomes of the stakeholders meetings and develop and discuss the agenda for the upcoming meeting.

Additional input to inform the development of the community's vision was collected by all stakeholders from members of their community through one-on-one interviews. Approximately 400 people were interviewed and asked to answer one of five framing questions related to the purposes of public education. This information was analyzed and discussed during the stakeholders meetings to determine the over arching themes and value preferences of the Orange County Schools community. A Framers Group consisting of the two Co-chairs and two stakeholders, Vaughn Compton and Reverend Sharon Freeland, who were also participating as community liaisons to the OCS Strategic Planning Committee, took all of the information developed by the Stakeholders Group and working with the consultant, drafted the vision and this vision document for review and consensus recommendation by the entire Stakeholders Group.

At the December 8th Board of Education meeting, this vision was presented by the community stakeholders to the BOE. Stakeholders were thanked by the Board of Education for their service to the community and hard work on behalf of the public schools and its students. A meeting to begin the work to align the community's vision with the Orange County Schools' five year strategic plan was scheduled to begin the following day, December 9, 2014. Plans to present the full strategic plan, including the community vision for adoption by the BOE was expected to occur in February 2015, in time for the March 2015 accreditation review.

Historical Perspective

“If I have seen further it is only by standing on the shoulders of giants.”

-- Sir Isaac Newton

Prior to the first meeting of the Stakeholders Group, “A History of Orange County Schools, 1732-1983” by Irene Oliver Pender was shared with all stakeholders. The vision that has been created by our community echoes Ms. Pender’s Dedication:

To all the boys and girls in the Orange County Schools who are enjoying the results of the work of these dedicated people, who have given so much in order that you may have greater opportunities to help you to prepare for a better life and a greater future, I dedicate this “History of Orange County Schools”. -- Irene O. Pender

The engagement of the community and creation of the vision was done with an historical perspective and desire to stand on the “shoulders of giants” in creating the community’s renewed vision for public education. While the issues that our school system may face change, the core public values of liberty, equality, community, and prosperity are apparent throughout the history of the Orange County Schools. As Irene Pender notes, “I found that many times conditions were the same...as one reviews the minutes of the meetings of the Board of Education you can follow the progress from time to time and get an understanding of the gradual development. There are many meetings which dealt with the same problem such as forming the many school districts, appointing committeemen, consolidation of schools, integration and others.”

A system of public education, as we know it today, did not come easily. There were many false starts. The “first public expense” made in what would one day be the State of North Carolina, in support of education was most likely the printing and distribution to the colonists of a sermon preached before the General Assembly on the “Importance of Education”. Many faith communities were involved throughout the early formation of schools in Orange County. As Pender notes, “The information concerning churches may seem out of place in the history of our Schools, however, it is given to see the relationship of the early churches and schools in Orange County.”

“The first step toward developing an ideal public education system was the adoption of our State’s Constitution of 1776 which provided for the legislative establishment of schools and for a university.” And that was only the beginning. Like today, “there was much misunderstanding” (in the development of a system of public education)...“Those who had private schools felt that the State should help finance their schools. Some feared taxation. Some felt that State money should finance “free Schools””.

As stakeholders, engaged in this current visioning effort, we spoke with other members of the community about the role of public education in Orange County, and heard the echoes of an appeal made in 1839, in the *Raleigh Star* which made a “strong appeal to the parents for better education saying, ‘They have here no matter what may be their poverty, a system which offers to them, in addition to free education for their offspring, the highest gratification which a patriotic feeling parent can desire, that of seeing their children endowed with sound learning, established in sound morals and qualified for the responsible duties of popular government...Support it, if you would strengthen the pillars of representative government; Abandon it, if you would quench the Promethean fire which returned the light of freedom in the Western World!’”

We recommend to our community this history for your reading and greater understanding of the public values, visions, conflicts and choices that arose while our system of public education took root here in Orange County, NC as well as across our state and nation. In its reading, you will likely find, as we did that while the situations and choices may differ and while we have certainly evolved and matured over time to be more representative and inclusive, at our core we believed and continue to believe in the importance of providing a high quality education to all for the benefit of the individual, our society and our democracy.