

Notes
Vision Plan for Public Education in Alamance County
Stakeholder Group Meeting
ABSS Professional Library
February 6, 2013
8:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.

These Are a Few of My Favorite Things

Valentines that the Stakeholders created were to be shared with ABSS staff and students

Comments re: January 16, 2013 Draft Vision Plan Statement

What works:

- + Issues Log
- + We like the bulleted points – easier to read
- + No major issues with first page → too much information on that page which could be included in a different part of the document. Shorten the opening statements.
- + Comments well done

What could be improved:

- △ Quite wordy → How to condense? Parts we are passionate about may want longer; we each may have different viewpoints on what to emphasize and what to cut.
- △ Long; will anyone sit down and read completely or only skim?
- △ Too broad; what about the specifics around special needs? Where is that in our vision?
- △ One page Executive Summary to give the gist of the Vision plan to most people
- △ 1st sentence or 2 of the 1st section and other details moved to different section of document/ more streamlined
- △ If too broad, do we prioritize at some point?
- △ Do we create strategies? Limited resources?
- △ Have specific measures → “State of the School” specifics
- △ Need enough words to convey the nuances of the plan
- △ “Given limited time and resources” → should this be part of a vision plan? A constraint?
- △ Not all subjects are listed; what about the arts?
- △ Are we representing the collective value of our community? Can we reflect a particular balance of values that is Alamance County?
- △ Whose responsibility to prioritize? Does this group want to do some prioritizing?

- △ Hard to digest all of it; maybe have a visual piece to the vision plan to help “digest” it.
- △ Collective health of the community seems to be missing. Individually focused.
- △ Don’t think we’ve thrown the hat far enough; 75% better than US; Aim for the best programs in the US; highest outcomes
- △ Look where we are having success and how to get it out to the whole school system

All on the Wall: Question 4 –

“What should we teach children, who should teach them, and how?”

What:

The Basics

- Basics should be taught early in the educational process. Later grades should focus more on specific areas that appeal to the individual student
- A basic education should start at home when a child starts exploring his world, such as picking up objects and attempting to write on everything.
- Parents and educators should be on the same page when it comes to the education of our children being that their education begins at home. Reading, writing, mathematics and communication skills are needed before a child walks into a classroom.
- Be sure that foundational skills are taught and students are capable with those skills
- Three Rs
- Taught basics: reading, writing and arithmetic along with “basic” skills for survival.
- Core (math, science, language)
- How to read, write, reason and communicate with others verbally
- Basics in reading, math, language
- Basic core subjects
- The three Rs early in education
- Teach cursive writing/cursive handwriting
- How to sign their names in cursive
- I think we could benefit a lot by getting back to basics – math, reading science, history; stick to facts
- Grammar

Critical Thinking

- Teach children how to be critical thinkers and writers
- We need to be teaching critical thinking skills, not teaching to the test
- We should emphasize and teach critical thinking skills taught by people who are passionate in how they care for the students in a way that is tailored to their individual learning styles
- Children should be taught and led to be critical, thoughtful and insightful thinkers.
- To critically think, be able to gather/sort data, and “connect the dots” in a logical pattern
- Critical Thinking, decision making, analytical skills, problem-solving

- Decision making skills
- Analysis and data interpretation
- Problem Solving
- Critical Thinking, Problem Solving
- Problem solving skills
- How to think and learn
- Teach facts not opinions

Social Skills

- Teachers and parents alike should teach students how to respect one another.
- Teach compassion and how to be compassionate.
- Honesty
- Relational skills
- Respect for authority
- Moral values, STOP BULLYING, and respect their classmates
- Encourage children to participate in extracurricular activities
- We should teach them how to treat one another. More than anything they should be taught how respect is earned. To be taught who is worthy of respect.
- We need to teach children how not to discriminate, how to function in community/social skills
- Character and Social Norms
- Leadership, community involvement, social skills
- Students should learn needed information to become well rounded individuals and the skills they need to reach their goals whether that be college or trade school or other
- Values, Ethics, Citizenship
- Respect, Values, Work Ethics
- Social Skills
- All students should be exposed to life skills such as finance and parenting taught by professionals in this area.
- Citizenship, Life Skills
- Respect/Responsibility
- The social skills needed to survive in their community
- Common Sense
- Excellent communication (written, oral)
- Morals and compassion
- Social skills
- Character traits; social skills
- General → specific life skills
- Social skills of communication and getting along with others
- Independence
- Respect and Understanding
- Emphasize character development

STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math)

- Teach them STEM
- Teach them how to relate to the environment
- Technology is very important to our kids these days
- Math
- Science
- Computer and technology training
- Physical sciences
- Medical Technology
- Math is so important

Language Arts

- Reading
- English
- Writing skills
- Communication
- Excellent communication (written, oral)
- Teach cursive writing/cursive handwriting
- How to sign their names in cursive
- Grammar
- Literature

Health and Physical Education

- Healthy Behavior
- Physical Education

History

- The true history of America. The whole reason that colonists came to America and founded America.
- History
- History, literature

Job Skills/Career Readiness

- For students like my daughter, who doesn't fit in the traditional school model, more trade and skill courses should be available for more than the basic reading, writing and arithmetic
- Job Skills, Career Readiness including technology
- Prepare them for life after school
- Teach courses in trades; some people not going to college
- Vocational Training

Religion

- Teach all children God's Truth
- Christianity

- Biblical Foundations
- Morals
- Moral responsibility
- Compassion
- Teachers should have prayer or at least Pledge of Allegiance every day.

The Arts

- Electives
- Humanities and the Arts
- Core Subjects and the Arts
- The Arts

Second Language

- In the fluent authentic languages
- Foreign Languages
- Second Languages such as Spanish
- Given the large Hispanic population, Spanish should be taught in Kindergarten
- Spanish in Middle School is great

Entrepreneurship

- Entrepreneurship

Who:

Parents

- It starts with engaged parents
- Parents
- Parents first
- Parent primarily responsible for teaching and making educational choices for children
- Parents should teach our kids general good people skills
- Engaged families
- Parents could also help teachers because they play a big role in children's lives
- Teachers and parents alike

Home School Parent

- Parents in a home school environment

Certified/Qualified Teachers

- Qualified and caring teachers
- Certified teachers
- Competent, qualified
- Passionate/dynamic teachers
- Well paid, creative, innovated educators; those with high expectations

- Experienced, qualified teachers; who have command of the subject; not next person inline to teach Chemistry even though he/she comes from Math Department
- Teachers who are held accountable
- Their teachers should be educated people that care about the future of our children
- Teachers that love to teach and know what they are doing
- Qualified teachers
- Don't let teachers be bullies
- Motivated teachers
- Proficient teachers in age appropriate subject matter
- Qualified teachers
- Teachers and parent alike
- Teachers should act as facilitators of this process. Our teachers should be well qualified; more importantly they should value education at its highest level.

Community

- Community
- Parents, teachers and community as a whole
- Community engagement via experiential learning
- The entire community with parents taking the lead
- All of us, but primarily our teachers
- Community. Primarily ABSS
- Community partners who are thinkers and problem solvers
- Those with Biblical foundations and practice what they preach
- Mentors
- Community Members
- Leaders from the community

The Best

- Not retired folks with no zeal
- Teachers who are qualified, not straight out of college and who can't deal with them
- Competent qualified teachers who receive proper professional development and support with parental input
- Those with abilities, skills and passion
- Well educated; we should be pouring our resources into our teachers
- Teachers who are fluent in the Spanish language
- The best teachers who inspire
- Teachers with great subject knowledge and great interpersonal skills
- Teachers – they are properly trained
- By highly motivated teachers with the support of the family when possible
- Trained teacher should teach students in our schools in addition to other trained human service providers can add to the teaching process in helping students become well rounded.
- Those equipped with the education and knowledge. A successful teacher MUST be able to identify needs of every child.

Passionate

- A person has to have a special knowledge of the subject through education or experience and training on how to teach it and are not otherwise disqualified , such as having a felony conviction
- Educators with a desire to succeed at their mission
- People who care; highly qualified teachers with ability to teach; passion for teaching
- Teachers who are motivated in teaching the kids should be the one. Some teens may not have motivators at home so it is good to have teachers who want to see teens actually succeed.
- Passionate, driven, happy, caring, highly motivated and innovative individuals
- Educators that are passionate and knowledgeable in their area of instruction.
- Those who keep the student engaged
- Teachers who are excited about teaching and love children, engaged parents and accept parental involvement.
- Love of learning; teachers must have the academic skills and passion to motivate students.

Peers

- Peers
- Good role models

How:

On-line

- Colleges are now offering online classes and so should high schools. Like most industries, brick and mortar has gotten expensive, so “education outside the walls” must be part of future education
- Use of technology; computers
- Use of World Wide Web for expanding ones exposure to a subject
- Homework on computer is awesome; using technology while they learn

Experiential

- Field trips; seeing things first-hand
- Field trips
- When teachers give contracts to the kids to help kids focus and be able to learn how to be organized and for the future; in college and work life
- Customized methods according to what students relate to
- Hands on; children learn differently

- By example
- Be interactive
- They should be educated in classrooms and beyond – in the community with hands on learning
- Intellectually, emotionally, experientially with modern technology/resources
- With hands-on real world experiences; thought provoking interactive learning
- I think hands on and visual learning may keep kids interested and that teachers should get the training to know how to better teach future leaders
- Experiential teaching
- Experiential learning as much as possible
- Hands-on/practical; first hand experiences, shadowing, internships, afterschool activities
- More labs, field trips, speakers, projects
- Engaged methodology

Flexible

- “Flexible methods” as opposed to traditional classroom.
- Focus only on important, meaningful work; not busy work
- Broad scoped; offering multiple options for learning any and all subjects
- Challenging content in all subjects
- Don’t teach to a test
- Flexible for new environments and techniques
- Children should be taught with compassion, understanding, discipline and with resources that are appropriate to students skills
- In a way that is personally tailored to each student’s needs; i.e., teach more visual for kids who learn visually.
- Flexible
- A variety of methods should be available to reach students with different learning styles.
- Give teachers freedom to decide

Creative Strategies

- Creativity! Rather than focusing on end of year test scores, I think that each individual should be focused on, as each individual will learn differently. Much easier said than done...
- Based on creative strategies to engage kids, not teaching to the test
- Creative!
- Setting high goals; belief in achievement; can do attitude
- Multiple pedagogies; lecture, experiential, case studies, in and out of classroom

Community Involvement

- What it takes to be prepared for higher education, so they will be a successful part of society. Teachers along with us all, get Involved

In the Classroom

- Exposure to actual classroom instruction
- They should be educated in classrooms and beyond – in the community with hands on learning

Small Class Size

- Small class size with regular homework with feedback from teachers.

Student Directed

- How we should teach them requires different methods because each child learns differently
- On the child's level whether reading books or computer
- Individualized to student's needs
- Teaching should be taught with the individual in mind. Each person responds differently to different methods.
- Give choices
- Keep individual in mind
- Require students to express their learning verbally, written

Theory/Evidence Based

- Theory Based: A. Classroom Instruction, B. repetition, C. core subjects
- Use evidence based; explore what works! Don't do something because we've always done it that way.

Practical

- Traditional learning, open forums
- Purposeful activity; repetition and exactness

Best Resources

- Taught with the best resources available
- Using all of the tools at our disposal
- Provide substantive supplement for those with Masters degrees
- Well paid, creative, innovative educators

Mentors and Role Models

- Role Modeling
- By example; if teachers show respect to kids, kids in turn show respect to the teacher
- Lead and teach by example
- Learn by example; actively seeing
- By example

Home School/At Home

- Home School
- Respect and understanding; decision making and independence need to be taught at home and school for consistency; by example, by praise; most kids are ready to mimic
- A basic education should start at home when a child starts exploring his world.
- There are many tools available such as objects in the home, research on the internet, iPhones, Face Book, Google search engine, the public library...many of these tools are available in the home.

Issues Log

- Parental Involvement/Engagement
- Too Internet Dependent
- Financial Investment. Measurement of Investment or Return on Investment
- Drop-out Age
- Schools expected to raise children
- Gang Issue
 - Where are gang members being educated?
 - What is purpose of Ray Street School
 - School Administration needs to be more responsive to public
- Highest level of success without limits – constant improvement
- Rigorous learning
- State of the art facilities
- Recruit and Retain best teachers and administration
- Perception v. Truth → lack of knowledge?; Too much spent on Administration and not enough on classroom. Could we get the numbers?
- Define “Equal Access”
- Define “Resources”
- Some of the only meals and health care that kids get is in the schools
- Discipline
- Community dissatisfaction with quality of school system as compared to other school systems
- Define “Preparedness”
- To do: talk to your friends, neighbors and co-workers → communicate about this effort, get more community feedback
- Facts; education; orientation to school administration → can we get more information about these things?
- Rant: (compiled from responses to framing questions)
 - Educate: This is the only purpose
 - Discipline
 - Children that don’t want to learn should be placed elsewhere
 - No tenure
 - To stay politically unbiased in educating our children

- Administration get out of politics
- To teach our children. I think they made a mistake when they consolidated the school systems. Children have no respect for teachers.

Additions as of February 7, 2013

- “Train-the-trainer” programs to allow and encourage successful colleagues to share their techniques, passion, etc.
- Excellent/Empowered Principals
- How do we motivate kids/parents who don’t really care?
- How do we motivate employers to care?
- How do we get community understanding of how ABSS works? What does it do, why → greater understanding of system’s requirements
- Invite public officials in and remind them how they were educated and who they serve.

Before the next meeting:

Review Website Links, Review out work together so far.

Next meeting is: Wednesday, February 27, 2013; 8:30 to 11:30 a.m.

Tentative Agenda:

Review Draft Themes/Statements from Question 4

All on the Wall Question 5:

“What role should public schools play in our children’s lives and in our communities?”

What worked well/What could we improve

Worked Well:

- + Direct feedback that is being given to Vision Plan Draft from everyone/small groups
- + Closer to the Vision Plan → can see it/getting a picture of it in my mind
- + With cards we are hearing from the entire community; from people all over the county; not just the squeaky wheels at school board meetings
- + Very representative of the county
- + Not just the few

What could be improved:

- △ Too little input from the school board about the vision plan and process?
- △ Concerns expressed by stakeholders about newspaper article on the School Board’s upcoming Public Forum and question raised regarding how representative this Vision Plan process is of the Alamance community
- △ We want to encourage School Board to continue to seek input from the public; just wish the Public Forum could wait until after this process is completed; don’t want to cause confusion in the public’s mind about these efforts