

Notes -- DRAFT
Vision for Public Education in Alamance County
Stakeholder Group Meeting
ABSS Professional Library
March 20, 2013
8:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.

Review and Small Group Conversations

Draft Vision Document and Notes from February 27, 2013 Meeting
BOE SWOT from March 11, 2013

Strategic Analysis – Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats

To strategically analyze draft vision document and process, the Stakeholders Group utilized a SWOT Analysis process facilitated by Scottie Seawell, Leading and Governing Associates. Through the SWOT, Stakeholders generated Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats of the plan and the visioning process. Once generated, the Stakeholders formed four groups, organized each SWOT category into key themes and reported out those key themes to the large group. The large group then consolidated like themes and multi-voted (1/3+1) with star stickers in order to gain a general sense of priority of the themes for further discussion and reflection in the Vision for Public Education in Alamance County. The notes below start with the priority themes and the ideas developed by small groups of stakeholders for capitalizing on these identified priorities.

Ideas and Suggestions for Capitalizing on Top Priorities -- Small Group Discussions

Community Involvement = 23 stars

- Use of technology and other media to get messages to the community
- Success of the system is dependent on the community. It is bigger than the parents.
- How are other communities tackling this issue?
- Opportunity for community to rally behind a concrete plan
- School system needs a social marketing campaign to educate the community on the value of education (economics of the county; jobs, etc.) People think they pay too much in taxes; not informed about the impact on ability to attract industry, etc.

Parent Involvement = 20 stars

- Meet the parents where they are; i.e. what if no computer for the parents to check students' grades
- Offer open houses with corresponding middle/high schools for convenience in attending
- Get teachers to offer extra credit to get parents in the door; some kind of incentive
- Help teachers understand how important it is to discuss how important their(parents') voice is to success of children
- Schools need to make parents welcome

Board of Education/Governance/Accountability = 14 stars

- Perception that BOE will not use document – concern
- BOE support and publicly address above concern
- Highlight ABSS and Chamber partnership for this process
- Highlight the broad community input

- Help BOE have tools for how to use this document for strategic planning (a) tools to help BOE move forward with opposition (to funding, “_____ organization”)→ Develop tool box, with “facts” from stakeholders group’s work
- Stop politicking and start doing what is right!
- Find commonality – address differences but find agreement; talk about what we can, not what we can’t

Local Politics = 13 stars

- Encourage pro-business and pro-education candidates for County Commissioners
- Advocacy – Community–wide on: Funding, information, candidates, return on investment, metrics/accountability
- Information spread to community of actual funding levels, relative funding levels
- Compare performance metrics e.g.; percent of budget that goes to administration compared to other systems

Funding = 12 stars

- Highlight local business giving → not just at BOE meeting
- Communication → simple, yet broad where funding comes from – break down all areas (admin, teachers, building) help clear up misperceptions! Compare like systems and where we fall
- Change the political seats

Consolidated Themes and their ranking

1	Student Content (s)	= 4 Stars	
2	Community Input (s)		
2	Community (o)		
2	Community (t)	= 23 Stars	
3	Broad Content (s)	= 2 Stars	
4	Format (s)		
4	Language Editorial Concerns (w)	= 5 Stars	
5	Accountability with BOE (w)		
5	BOE/Gov (o)		
5	Board of Education (t)	= 14 Stars	
6	Stakeholders Concerns about the Process (w)		
6	Process (t)		= 1 Star
7	Parental Involvement (w)		
7	Parents/Family (o)	= 20 Stars	
8	Technology (o)	= 2 Stars	
9	Scope of Vision (w)	= 1 Star	
10	Missing Items (w)	= 0 Star	
11	Best Practices (o)	= 12 Stars	

12	Diversity and equality (o)	= 0 Stars
13	Local Politics (t)	= 13 Stars
14	State Politics (t)	= 4 Stars
15	Funding (t)	= 12 Stars

SWOT Categories by Theme with Supporting Details

STRENGTHS

Community Input

Input from citizens

Issues presented by community that needs to be addressed

Represents a broad diverse group of Alamance County citizens committed to improving public education in Alamance County

Reasonable consensus on values across the community

ABSS/BOE/Chamber partnership in this effort

Derived from community input

Community Involvement along with student involvement

View Alamance County as a place businesses want to come

Community led process

Community support and input

of people involved in this vision process

Diverse group of citizens from Alamance County

Gathering many different perspectives -- mind opening to new ideas/thoughts

Diverse group of stakeholders working collaboratively

Committee is diverse

Includes input from many

Vision plan involved diverse stakeholders

Collaboration of a diverse group of stakeholders

Provided Alamance County to have input into the vision process

Exposure to diverse perspectives and points of view

Broad Content

Inclusive of all areas of concern from Education, care of children, care of educators, and future of system

Groups beliefs spelled out

Virtually all important concepts captured

The Vision Section

Is very ambitious

High expectations

Comprehensive

Expansive

A broad vision

Student Content

Provides opportunities for families to encourage engagement with children

21st Century Technology

Impart values of ethics, morality, citizenship, respect , social skills, honesty and compassion
Success

We believe education is the foundation for individual success

Education is the foundation for individual success

Providing an appropriate education for special needs children

Well rounded students – sports and extra curricular

Envision: Impart values to our children of ethics, morality, citizenship, respect, social skills, honesty and compassion

The commitment to include all of our children in this process

Consideration given to the health and safety of our children in this process

Health and Safety of children priority

Seek to hire motivated caring teachers and support them

Real concern for the education of our students and their futures

Helping open dialogue of ABSS needs

Challenging our kids in the school system

Education provides the foundation for democratic society

Format

In depth process to engage community to improve ABSS

Finished document will/could have multiple purposes for the community

True desire of members to produce a document that is useable

The document is comprehensive and well-organized

Format of document: Executive Summary, Beliefs, Vision

Bullet Points for clarity

Bullet points make easier to use

WEAKNESSES

Parental Involvement

Open dialogue with parents and teachers

Communication: How to communicate with parents to get them more engaged involved with the education of their children

Parental involvement is identified as a weakness in many of the schools by the group

How to get parents involved

Accountability

Perception by some of the group that this will not be used by BOE

How to hold ABSS, Commissioners, and BOE accountable

Stakeholder Concerns About Process

Decrease in numbers

Public is largely unaware of this document

Misinformation or Misinformation was frustrating

After all this, still waiting...

Members wanting to move ahead faster than process (no patience)

Members dropping out of the process

Some important stakeholders dropped out

Scope of Vision

Expansiveness identified as strength

But also may be weakness as this may be too overwhelming

Low expectations

Document is a summary, no synthesis

Vision should be clear that it is fluid and adaptable to changing conditions

Sometimes perceived a lack of clarity of direction

Language Editorial Concerns

Doesn't address how to reach the vision

The ordering of the bullet points under "vision"

Some overlap of ideas in document

Bullet points repeat some of the same themes

Language is non-committal

Language is vague e.g. "committed to" vs. "will/shall"

Too broad?

Some statements are repetitive in nature

Very lengthy but not a complete layout on how to arrive at the vision

Repetitive comments

Over wordy; too much fluff

Vision Plan is somewhat redundant

Missing Items

No mention of the importance of preschool impact

Does not include all socio-economic perspectives

Emphasis on the word "character" missing throughout document; elements present, but not word

The ability, slowing down the curriculum so that slower kids can keep up

Discipline in the classroom

What is the 21st Century tech. to be used?

OPPORTUNITIES

BOE/GOV

Fulfilling the Vision – Next steps need to be a focus

The commissioners are hearing concrete evidence of support for education

Chance to hear and identify issues not previously addressed

Opportunity for BOE to change the perception by some that they don't listen to the community by incorporating the Vision Plan into the Strategic Plan

BOE has been given a mandate to improve our schools tremendously

For BOE to engage in meaningful discussion with Administration and Community to develop strategic plan and implement

To set a clear course and direction for the BOE

Community

Define the purpose of public education

Change perspectives – for better relationships across board

Stakeholders can return to agencies/businesses with an added insight into school system

Making other people in the community AWARE!

The public has something to rally behind

Build communication across Alamance County

To see what the community is made of. To know that we do aspire to be successful

To spotlight education in the county

Increase community buy-in

To improve community engagement
Opportunity to go beyond the initial focus group to engage broader community for further discussion on improving ABSS
Use document because of community involvement

Parents

Provide opportunities and resources for family involvement with child's education
Parent/community outreach programs created by the school system
Parental Involvement

Best Practices

Opportunity for critical thinking skills
The chance to produce more outstanding students
Create a more friendly learning environment
Should improve schools
Change the way education is taught to students
The goal of being the "best"
Replication of Best Practices/Evidence-based from other places
Alamance County Schools will have the framework in place to become an exemplary system
Focus on what we "can" do...not what we "can't" do
Focus on what we CAN Do, not on what we can't
Use evidence based practices (interventions that work)
Adopt proven practices that are working in other districts

Technology

Major move toward technology use
Increase the use of technology in the classroom

Diversity and Equality

Strategies for all; Equal Access
Focus on the diversity of the group that worked on the project

THREATS

Community

Not looking at the big picture
Lack of support from community due to lack of knowledge. Need buy-in
Buy-in from general community
Lack of understanding by Alamance County in general, to the value of a high quality ED system in our community
Lack of support for innovative ideas
People who do not value public education
Systems do not want to change
People do not want to change
Community apathy
Narrow minded views of some community leaders/parents
Lack of community involvement

Board of Education

Unwillingness of BOE/County Commissioners to adopt Vision
The BOE not feeling like they can use our plan
BOE/County Commissioners Dysfunction

School Board Conflict
School Board Ignores/Dismisses input
Lack of support from BOE, Commissioners, public
Certain members of BOE – stop micromanaging! And squabbling

State Politics

Legislation that sets limits/restrictions
Legislative mandates that undermine local efforts
State mandates for education
Governmental mandates
Legislation
State and Federal mandates that don't reflect local values and needs

Local Politics

Apathy of: BOE? Commissioners? Parents?
Local politics (BOE)
Politics: getting re-elected as opposed to doing the right thing
County Commissioners taking control

Funding

Lack of funding from commissioners
Opposition to increased funding to achieve vision(s)
Money issue or issues
Don't let lack of resources stop movement of vision
Funding
Lack of funding

Process

That the document will be intimidating and will get lost in the development and implementation
This process should not be a one and done deal; must be continued on periodic basis
People leaving the process
All of our efforts not acknowledged

Miscellaneous

Equal Access
Nature of vision plan is 50,000' allows for groups to spin the language to meet their own purposes – not in the spirit of the document
Without a strategic plan and implementation – these are just good ideas
Finding qualified teachers in this economy
Bullying

Timeline Moving Forward

Thursday, March 28, 2013; 3:00 – 5:00 p.m.

Editorial and Steering Committees Meeting

Wednesday, April 10, 2013; 8:30 to 11:30 a.m.

Tentative Agenda: Review Draft Vision Document, Reach Stakeholder
Consensus

Wednesday, April 24, 2013; 8:30 to 11:30 a.m.

Tentative Agenda: Plan Roll-out