

Core Team Strategy Session #3 Minutes

Location:	Date:	Time:
Multi-Media Center	February 12, 2009	5:00 P.M.

Team:	Facilitator(s):	Minutes Taker:
Core Team	Penny Ciaburri, Diane Reed	Judith Christiansen

Present:	Joyce Arms, Amanda Bartsch, Gena Benedict, Jim Benesh, Diane Berman, Julie Bernard, Michael Bostwick, Jamy Brice-Hyde, Bobbi Brock, Alan Brown, Mike Buck, Judith Buckley, Shelly Cadek, Julie Chevalier, Penny Ciaburri, Mary Cosgrove, Judith Christiansen, Melissa Devitt, Karen Donahue, Sharon Dupree, Maureen Ferrell, Gerald Furnkranz, Jay Hillman, Mary Anne Holleran, Deb Jay, David Kartzman, Rudy Kurniawan, Alice Learn, John Lively, Brian Lynch, Terry Malloy, Cynthia Massey, Lisa O’Connell, Susan Pelkey, Courtney Perez, Diane Reed, Damian Saks, Liz Scaptura, Patti Sotero, Mike Stuart, Alicia Stryker, Gerald Tompkins, Sharon Tyson, Sandy Williams Visitors: Teresa Pedicone
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Agenda Items / Discussion

1. Welcome/Overview

Penny Ciaburri reviewed the Agenda for the evening’s meeting and the meeting’s main order of business – to develop the Task Forces and consider Charges.

Visitor Teresa Pedicone thanked the Core Team members for their work to date.

Penny Ciaburri referred to the materials sent to the Core Team via e-mail: the Current State / Desired State discussion information, as well as the summaries of the District Performance Scan and the Community Engagement Survey.

Penny also mentioned the recent article in the District’s newsletter about the planning process.

2. Follow-up Questions

Judith Christiansen responded to the questions that were generated by the Core Team at the January meeting. The questions and answers are set forth below.

1. Using the “Value Added Analysis System,” is it possible to track children individually?

Yes – depending on what information you are tracking. For example, eventually, we could track a child’s State assessment scores from grade 3 through graduation.

2. To which Districts should we compare ourselves?

If we want to be the best, we compare to the best – so we look at Blue Ribbon Schools, as well as schools who are making exceptional strides within GST BOCES. We may also look at a school that is excelling in a particular area.

3. Why is there such a student performance difference between our four Elementary Schools?

Several answers – student demographics – slightly lower scores at Gardner Road where there is a significantly higher number of Special Education students.

One of the main focus areas the last 2-3 years has been Curriculum Mapping – and that has helped us to bring consistent instruction throughout the PreK-4 buildings. It’s an ongoing process – but one that as we work through it, should help to even out our test scores.

4. How does the High School decide which ACE/AP courses to offer each year? Do you run a course for one student?

The High School schedule is “student driven” which means that students select the courses they want to take. Once all the courses are selected, we run the numbers and make decisions about how many sections of each course will run. Generally speaking, we have sufficient numbers to run most ACE/AP courses. AP Art History historically only runs every other year because of insufficient enrollment and sometimes ACE Chemistry doesn’t have sufficient interest to run. The higher level AP/ACE offerings in Spanish, French and German tend to have lower enrollment as you are splitting a limited group of high performing students three ways. We do not run a class for one student, but once in awhile, the Spanish teacher will sponsor an independent study for an extremely advanced student at the college level and that is done outside of the school day.

5. Do we allocate resources differently for Title 1 schools (Center Street)? What is the federal determination for Title 1 (levels of free/reduced lunch) status?

Title 1 Schools – (Center Street, Ridge, Gardner Road and IS) get federal funds – the determination of which schools are Title 1 Schools is based on a federal formula that looks at, among other things, poverty factors of parents, free and reduced lunch count of students within the schools. The Title I Schools do get a bit more money for materials and to assist with parental involvement.

6. The ELA scores are consistently lower than Math scores. Why?

This is a problem in many schools across the State – and seems to have been a consistent issue with the ELA and Math tests. The two tests are very different and assess very different skill sets. That said, we do believe that once we have a consistent, aligned curriculum in place, we will see a positive impact on our scores.

7. Are we focused more on curriculum/tests/state assessments than student needs?

Our number one focus is on the students’ needs – always balanced with the requirement of state testing and assessments that have to take place. High stakes testing causes stress and anxiety with staff, students, parents – everyone!

8. The High School has a policy of not allowing students to change their schedules. Do other schools allow unsuccessful students to drop courses prior to taking the State exams?

Yes, other schools do allow students to drop and add courses. These schools have study halls which provide a place for students who are not successful and leave a course. The semester schedule at HHS was designed intentionally with no study halls. This allows students room to take more advanced coursework during their junior and senior years or earn a certificate in a technical program at BOCES. All students are actively engaged in classrooms with teachers throughout the day except during their lunch/activity. This is the reason that the area’s largest high school (nearly 1400 students) has the fewest discipline issues and the best learning environment.

9. Some other districts excel consistently. What are their demographics (i.e. class size, TAs in grades K-4, money spent per student, staff compensation)?

I think this will be an issue that a Task Force that may be looking at the specifics that impact student performance issues. We can get this information if we know exactly what groups are looking for. We are glad to respond to that.

10. How do our AP/ACE course offerings compare to other schools in the State and Blue Ribbon schools?

We do have some data on AP offerings around the State. (This chart will be attached as a separate document). ACE courses are through Corning Community College and so we would be comparing with other schools locally for that information.

11. From Grade 3 to Grade 8, the math scores have decreased. Is there any further correlation and are there any conclusions to define this trend?

Again, I think that this will be a great issue for a Task Force to delve into. We certainly have the capability to pull comparative information from other schools to see if the same trends exist there.

Following this presentation, the tables had the opportunity to discuss and reflect upon this new information.

3. Demographics and Facilities

Dr. Paul Seversky may be able to attend our next Core Team meeting to further discuss his report.

4. Community Engagement Survey (CES) and District Performance Scan (DPS)

Penny reviewed the Community Engagement Survey and District Performance Scan as a framework

for the creation of the Task Forces. Tables were asked to discuss from both surveys what strengths exist, what is most concerning, and any surprises or noteworthy items they found in the surveys. Following the table discussions, comments were shared with the Team. These comments included:

- We have a number of Assets, along with need areas that are clear.
- There appears to be a disparity between the level of support felt by District employees versus the level of trust.
- Parents need to be involved in health and wellness, character education, etc. The school district cannot do it all.
- Non-parents (community members, business owners) feel isolated from the District.
- Concern about the low marks received by the Board of Education for providing focus and direction.

Summary Reports are available on the Horseheads website.

5. Go Forward Task Forces

Penny reviewed the Task Force topics that had been suggested by Central Office. They included:

- *Facilities/Building Usage*
- *Budget – long and short-term planning*
- *Curriculum Development – centralize the work already in progress*
- *Staff Development*
- *Character Education PreK-12*
- *Gifted and Talented Program, PreK-8*
- *21st Century Learning*

Tables were invited to list their ideas for Task Forces. From those, the following ideas were discussed:

- *21st Century Teaching and Learning – Progressive Education – Community Partnerships*
- *Community Partnerships*
- *Staff Development*
- *Character Education – with Community Health and Wellness*
- *Enrichment*
- *Facilities and Transportation*
- *Early Childhood Education*
- *Special Education*
- *Fiscal Responsibility*
- *Curriculum Development*
- *At-risk Students*
- *Communication with Community*

Assistant Superintendent Alice Learn commented that several of the above items had been studied already by District Task Forces. These include Enrichment and Early Childhood Education. Judy Christiansen commented that Special Education received a full audit by an outside consultant in the prior school year and an official evaluation in Fall, 2008. The district is currently implementing the recommendations from those studies. Penny commented that a brief summary should be provided to the Core Team so that an informed decision may be made on Task Forces.

Diane Reed suggested combining several of the ideas into a Task Force for “Unique Learners”. She also suggested taking the work already completed by the District and putting it into the Strategic Plan so that it remains a priority for the District. Penny and Diane would help the District create measureable Strategic Intents in these areas.

The Core Team was reminded that Task Forces address detailed issues and may break off into sub-groups to study specific items. Task Forces will be building the Key Initiatives and Actions Plans to support the decisions of the Core Team in the areas of Strategic Intents.

6. Closure

Action Items:

1. The Core Team was instructed to come to the March 12, 2009 meeting prepared to identify the final Task Forces. An extra meeting will be scheduled in April to support the work of the Core Team.
2. Members offered that they appreciated being able to extend their Task Force decision to the March 12th meeting.
3. Penny will conduct a Board of Education Briefing on February 23, 2009.

Process Check:

Comments from the group indicated a continued need to be given the discussion time necessary to support key decisions. Many commented around the amount of information we have.