

What makes an excellent education and is this goal of our strategic plan still leading us there?

These comments are taken from the worksheets used by participants.

Children are able to move around.

Comfortable furniture.

Technology at the "fingertips" of the students.

Interaction with other classes.

21st Century skills development.

Control vs. Release of Learning.

Physically great classroom that involves all senses has enough natural light small classroom sizes at less than 20, and paraprofessionals available to students.

Respect for all parent involvement and be open to ideas.

A great classroom is filled with students who listen attentively to not only their teachers but also to their fellow students.

Need for open discussion, small classroom sizes 1 to 18 max, room that has daylight and views that is clean and orderly, use attention getters such as aquariums, microscopes, telescopes and gardens. Teachers that continue their education development, are fun spirited and use a variety of teaching techniques and responses.

Full integration of IB program through to the 12th grade. Individualized learning plans that are tuned into each student and recognizes their learning differences. Embrace innovations in curriculum with the use of Davidson-based GATE, multi-languages and Singapore math.

Project based learning seems to be a valuable effort and collaboration is the key.

Being able to provide an environment where school is as stimulating as what kids have access to at home with regards to the internet, ipads, video games etc.

Project based learning such as GATE, need for an outdoor component, a community service component. Focus a greater percentage of the District's Budget to support the whole child. Have the School Board set goals.

Rigor needed in all areas, well rounded in every academic area with regards to working the left and right brain.

The world is getting smaller and a real need is for us to help kids "interrelate" globally ---- We need very creative workers in our work force. What ways can we help kids develop creativity.

Project based learning. Move numbers kids into GATE. Have passionate and fresh teachers. Outdoor field trips with learning opportunities.

Small class size. Good communication between parent, child and teacher. Active hands on learning (PBL/IB). Relevant learning. Sense of community and or leadership within the classroom.

More helping hands with the use of volunteers.

As a Kindergarten parent that volunteers weekly, I'd like to see a breakout in pace. The pace in the classroom now is very frantic. They try to quickly do 7-12 minute activities (centers). It makes more sense to allow for at least some more contemplative completion of a task - particularly with collaboration with peers when appropriate.

Reaching out to all kids -high, low and MIDDLE level learners. Engaging kids as students, expecting enough, give them the carrot and they will step up. Rigor. Hands on learning with interactive project based learning. Aggressive math curriculum - more interactive projects to physical get students up and thinking. More Science please. Need for more teaching with primary sources and current events.

First, my definition is for K-12 in preparation for matriculating to higher education: tech school, community college, MIT, etc. One hundred percent reading, and English at grade level or above in 3rd grade. One hundred percent High School graduation including junior dropouts. Eighty five percent moving on.

Leadership that creates a district wide priority for and sense of urgency around the application and implementation of creative curriculum and important trends on learning such as use of the Khan Academy. Resources deployed in a way that specifically support this type of culture of learning.

An excellent education for K-12 would have a child prepared to make intellectual risks, excellent writing skills, the skills to prepare a child for college success not just matriculation. Math and Science skills that allow career choices. Research skills - a student needs to be able to find information, synthesize information and extrapolate salient points.

Excellent educations result in a high percentage of graduates attaining their university, college, tech school, or vocation of choice. The best prep schools enable 82 - 85% of their graduates to secure admission to their school of choice. Given the poor SAT scores, which are a perennial problem, and the strategy's emphasis on "construction over instruction" it appears the strategy isn't moving us forward well.

More choices - one size does not fit all. Variety. Challenging curriculum that is tailored to fit the needs of each child with options for acceleration. Prepared teachers. Gifted education needs to be more rigorous.

An excellent education is defined by each individual student. The key is meeting their needs. Education in the formal schooling sense should not be a "one-size fits all" approach. By early secondary school kids should have multiple choices for what interest them and challenges them. (N.Y. Times article on A.P.)

Excellent Education begins with excellent leadership and teachers. Curriculum mapping is not working. I am excited about the IB program and where it is headed. I am concerned with how this is going to flow at the high school and not going to the D.I. program in the near future. Would like to see AVID. I am concerned with graduation requirement not being aligned with basic college acceptance requirements.

I would like to see basics such as reading and math taught within an integrated (themes throughout the day/week/sections of the year) continual homework. K-12 similar to the IB framework and bringing that down into the elementary and all the way up in the high school. So for example math taught within a science context with hands on project-based learning emphasis.

Compassionate teachers who love to teach. Students that are prepared to learn and are supported. Instilling the love to learn and creating life long learners.

Passionate teachers, encouragement to do more than the basics from teachers, encouragement to delve deeper rather than to skirt the surface of the curriculum. The need for more tech opportunities such as HTV at Hemingway (this is wonderful!).

Student and teacher involvement in the development of what each student finds interesting. Teachers with energy and passion for kids and their development.

Dual language learning should be district wide. Strategic plan is still looking at language learning but is still missing the chance to complete the program.

IB program, college reading, A.P. scores above national average, 21st century skills (soft skills), college and career counseling. SAT/ACT prep classes (class of 2013 must all take ACT, SAT and Compass). More rigor in the senior year of schooling. Dual credit with concurrent enrollment. More writing and research skills.

Real world skills that challenge the student. Science and math that allows them to excel in the global economy. "Learning skills" that they carry through out their education.

Curriculum which incorporates substance abuse education K-12 and includes violence/bullying. Mendez Foundations NREPP curriculum. Too Good for Drugs and Too Good for Violence scores highest as evidence based and BCDC will pay for it - currently working with the district. Barriers for learning are counter intuitive but critical to excellence. Where are we with secondary foreign language?

What about focus on Performing and Visual Arts, that are crucial in developing critical thinking and problem solving skills. "Innovation".

More advocacy for kids. Talking with and to kids. AVID program. I like where we are headed with the IB program in the WRMS and the WRHS semesters. We are missing advocacy.

Students who are engaged and invested in their education. Students who have developed critical thinking skills. Education that addresses 21st century skills. Individualized.

Result of an excellent education should be: Broad general knowledge (know stuff). Analytical skills, such as asking the right questions. Ability to work in collaborative groups. Passion for life-long learning and the need to be curious about the world.

Need to be out of the box, AP and GATE.

The need to focus on Strategic Plan #4 and school board forum to discuss barriers to learning Strategic Plan #1. Substance abuse and how it impacts the culture in school, remembering it's a community problem not just a school problem.

Line up the focus of the district (especially Middle School) with that of the whole child. ISAT scores are only one factor. Find other ways to assess students strengths. We enjoy the whole child experience that our children enjoyed at Hemingway.

Assessment skills vs ISAT.

Leave the 12th grade having gone through a school system that prepared them with the ability to choose a life time career path whether it is a 4 year college, community college, or career. Global awareness, teams, problem solving. Math - need to be problem solvers. Use of technology. IB program. Project based learning with small groups that work together and present their work and be globally aware.

New technology companies who are leading us into the "information age" need us to educate kids to be 1) group process participation 2) problem solvers and 3) forward thinking visionaries.

Great, ethical leadership in the classroom , but especially the administration. Nobody can follow someone that they do not like or trust. Advanced degree teachers and administrators. Administrators in the classroom.

Excellent education equals acceptance of individuality and provide opportunities for working toward a common goal. With the feeling of family and community involvement. Involving the families.

Multiple forms of assessments. Continued emphasis on the arts. More involvement of the family.

I believe that music, arts, sports help some students care and learn what they otherwise wouldn't. As youth learn to work in groups together, they teach and learn together.

Advisory period and the relevancy. System wide knowledge for the teachers. Add more AP classes in language, art, music, and psychology.

What are the real or perceived barriers in our community, in Blaine County, to achieving these goals?

These comments were taken from the worksheets used by participants.

The drug and alcohol use and culture in the valley.

A great classroom is filled with students who listen attentively to not only their teacher but also their fellow students.

Project based learning seems to be a valuable effort. Collaboration is the key.

Not having access to programs/funding/infrastructure (universities, museums, etc) that people in large cities have access to which give kids a larger world/global perspective.

What caters to right brain vs left brain.

Don't we have enough "extra stuff" going already.

Testing creates too much pressure and the teachers have to teach to the test. Old and outdated even boring curriculum. There is not enough time for electives in middle school.

Scientific research support contemplative focus (a time of silence and focus on breathing or some other singular point) as increasing grey cells in the learning portion of the brain and decreasing stress and anxiety. I would like to see teachers, students and administrators exposed to the positive process.

Need for year long school with a longer school day by 1/2 hour.

Strategic plan for curriculum is not moving fast enough in the curriculum area. I want to see more writing and research skills taught in the middle and high school. I want to see measures other than ISATS used to assess student achievement such as national/international standards. Enough natural science to allow for career choice.

Funding is clearly not a barrier nor are teacher qualifications which are wonderful and the facilities are world class. That leaves leadership and commitment to excellence and the zeal to embrace a new curricula.

Function of schools is limited by its design. The system is still designed to sort kids into classic "thinkers vs doers" instead of being designed to optimize each child's development. So long as we assign a set curriculum for a set group of kids for a set period of time (day, week, year) we will continue to support a "sorting" process. If we were to set a curriculum which must be completed by a child in order to advance to the next "grade" in that curriculum and remove the time parameters then we would have children entering the next "grade" in a given subject on a "rolling" basis. (In other words we need to separate the age from grade and separate by proficiency in a given subject. Example: Envision a 10 yr old child (age 4th) in 6th grade math, 4th grade reading, 5th grade art, 8th grade music etc.

It is a roll of the dice now - hit or miss. Some students get a great class with a great teacher, while others end up in a class that is not challenging.

Lack of passion on the teachers front. Lack of ability to get kids involved in classroom learning. The No Child Left Behind is holding back kids that are able to excel. Teachers attention is being consumed by the slower kids.

One of the barriers is the thinking that is always cost more. That language learning is actually for every child.

One of the barriers is that lots of programs are starting, IB, Semester, CFS.

We need advanced degrees for our teachers. Knowledge of rigorous curriculum by administration.

Integration

The need for long term (veteran) teachers to change their curriculum and how that can be enforced. How students are being measured (ISATS) and what if they don't meet these requirements. How do online courses meet 21st century skills.

How what they are learning transfers to real-world, career experiences, internships or even just site visits in the community.

Some perceived barriers are that parents and older citizens may get stuck on "it was good enough for me the 'old' way, so" or " these kids are using their computers too much! "

Some of the barriers are poor leadership. Non-listening, non-participative, non-collaborative environment. Homework such as AP memorization vs. GATE/project based AP learning. Poor fiscal management along with nepotism and the old boys network.

Class system and accountability.

Drug and alcohol use and culture in this valley.

Technology - these notes are taken from the easels used at each breakout

Question asked about Tom Luna's Technology bills. How does his initiative fit into what we are already doing and plan to do? Can the technology replace teachers?

Currently we seem to be using technology to enhance traditional teaching methods - is the district looking at seeing how to use technology to allow more individualized instruction?

Use the technology to help the teacher allocate their time better to best meet the needs of all students.

The internet is the gigantic information source. Kids need to know how to access it and evaluate the source. As opposed to software packages which can be expensive.

With the technology we have; what do we need to expect them to know vs. what can they be learning "as needed".

Plant facility levy - what does the district plan to implement the technology money.

Does technology make more work for teachers?

Brink of new phase in technology and in the hands of students information is at their fingertips.

Kids learn by trying things where do we set the boundaries that allow the needed exploration and keep the technology working?

What is truth? How do we teach students to discern the truth?

Easier to be a lazy learner when doing an online class.

The Whole Child - these notes are taken from the easels used during breakouts

1) Arts, music 2) Multiform of assess 3) Modes of expression 4) Emotional, social, ethical, well-being.

Language for all - integrated

Develop assets

Emphasis on ISAT's

Acceptance of integration

Opportunities to work toward a common goal.

Community and family involved.

Principal's club at Hemingway

Additional family involvement

Flexible times for parent teacher conferences.

Community service

Sports

Music

Time with family (homework)

Do more to celebrate culture.

Need for a peer/mentor community

Healthy choice opportunities such as Idaho Drug Free Youth.

Need for movement/activity rewards.

More events to bring in community.

No pop machines or candy machines

BARRIERS

Language barrier

Class distinction - integration needs to be addressed.

Session Two

Positives

A great tool is the Principal's Club at Hemingway, to discuss character education at home.

Heightened awareness by students

Academics

Passionate teachers.

Continue with project based learning.

Concerns or Questions

Why do we have Leader in Me? (Too much money)

Should parents be the individuals who provide character education?

How can we put less emphasis on high stakes testing across the district?

Have we addressed alternative/wide variety of physical activities? (archery, ballroom dancing?)

More outdoor education and more community service activities.

Continue with project based learning.

GATE opportunities for all.

Short school days and school years.

Barriers

Testing

Financial concerns

Putting too much importance on right brain thinkers.

Classrooms and Teachers - these notes are taken from the easels at the breakouts

What are the things that students like?

- 1) Students report that they like Project Based Learning.
- 2) Social opportunities
- 3) Learning opportunities.

Were the Students well prepared?

- 1) Daughter pleased that she took AP courses at WRHS.
- 2) Son is challenged at Stanford.

Were guidance counselors prepared?

- 1) There was a lot lacking.
- 2) There are things that we should do to get better.

Is there enough parental input and involvement at the High School?

- 1) No not really - need to provide more opportunities for parental involvement.
- 2) Can parent/community members volunteer to Tudor or be more involved.
- 3) Big Brothers/Big Sisters offer programs.
- 4) More parents would get involved if they felt a need or were recruited.

5) Need an avenue for parents to volunteer in the schools - BCSD could use e-mail.

6) Considering a college career center at WRHS to be manned by parents who have an expertise in a area. This would need a separate space.

7) Strong point is that all but one senior (2011) at WRHS has applied to college.

8) High school counselors are working with students to find funding for college.

What is important in the classroom?

1) Recognize each Childs gifts.

2) Exposure to art/electives is very important. BCSD should give this opportunity to all children.

3) Broad offerings for students.

4) Great extra-curricular programs and opportunities.

5) Having small class sizes - especially in the primary years.

6) Space in schools is critical.

7) Project Based Learning - engages the students and gets them interested.

8) Math initiative

9) High school SAT class.

Session Two

Classrooms and Teachers - these notes are taken from the easels used during the breakouts

- 1) Great classrooms/physically/ nature of the class/ ideal teachers.
- 2) Classroom where kids can experience the class differently, if they need to stand they can stand if the need to sit, let them sit.
- 3) Too many posters on the classroom walls.
- 4) Need for calming classrooms, not a forced environment.
- 5) Allow freedom of movement, there is a fear of letting kids move around.
- 6) Mutual respect
- 7) Embrace individual learning plan for each student, different kids learn in different ways.
- 8) Use of Singapore Math - Singaporemath.com is available to the public.
- 9) Individualization of instruction
- 10) A Range of Pace - kids work and think at different rates, can be important to be pushed for time.
- 11) Structure to Recess - things happen outside - no support - need for more purpose and adult structure. Ease of tensions, more teacher and paras on the playground. Recess away from room but social and emotional learning needs to take place in the elementary schools.
- 12) Supervision on the playground, adult resources for conflict support.
- 13) Parents who volunteer need training.
- 14) Teachers need to be approachable and be open to suggestions from parents.
- 15) Ideal student to teacher ratio, around 20.
- 16) More parent volunteers at the middle school.
- 17) Professional development is important.

18) What makes a great classroom - it is filled with students who listen attentively to both the teacher and other students.

19) Classroom structure is not as important as what is happening in the class.

Teaching and Classrooms - these notes are taken from the easels used during the breakouts

1) Twins at Woodside - D.I. 4th grade.

2) Great forum and chance to be heard.

3) Relatives who are considering moving - for the choice of schools.

4) Put children on buses according to age.

5) Thoughts on Pre-K. Thankful that we have it.

Ideal Classroom Environment

1) Tough?

2) Teacher is the most important thing.

3) Also want good facilities - small class size is important. Important in secondary school to keep classes small (except PE).

4) Ideal class size?

5) Kindergarten should be kept at 20 students.

6) What is a variety of teachers? All kinds, new teachers/old teachers, don't think the older teachers are always better.

21st Century Skills - these notes are taken from the easels used during the breakouts

1) Professional Development - math initiative - Project Based Learning. 2) Technology 3) IB Program (M.Y.P.) 4) Curriculum.

Barriers in our Community

1) Goals - strategic plan - how is it being measured and if not what is the protocol.

2) How are veteran teacher to meet the new expectations of the 21st Century Skills. What is the motivator and where is the accountability other than ISAT Scores.

3) It seems so much of the Project Based Learning is subjective - so it is one thing to say we are doing it but how do we know they are benefiting.

4) We have the what - problem solving skills - but not sure that we have the who or the how?

5) Being a small community how do we ensure students have same opportunities and experiences that large urban communities offer?

6) Non-collaborative environment, parents are made to feel as if they are outsiders.

7) Poor fiscal management, there is a need to allow experts who will give time to offer their talents, this includes parents and professionals.

What makes an excellent education?

1) A graduate of our school district who truly feels that they have options and the skills they have gained are transferable as seen through successful internships - opportunities - business partnerships.

2) A high percentage of advanced degrees for our staff supported by the district (given the time and encouragement to seek opportunities at a higher level) they will get a return back.

3) Administrators need to be visually present with continuous classroom impromptu and formal visitations.

4) An effective avenue for teachers to share what's going on in classrooms with parents.

5) Administrators schedules allow for optimal time in their schools.

6) Teachers as facilitators not just a sage on the stage. Students as explorers.

Barriers

1) Homework - the AP homework is all rote based and not Project Based Learning

2) Stuck in the old ways "it was good enough for me". The need to educate the community on Project Based Learning.

3) What text and tools are irrelevant in today's tech savvy world.

4) Internet closed.

5) Nothing to evaluate the goal of students being skilled in the 21st Century.

6) Not enough collaboration in our schools - consistency. Strong elementary schools, but then it loses steam as we go up in grade levels. The need for teachers to share expertise within the district, not just in their room.

7) TIME - hungry for collaboration - how to facilitate?

8) Sustainability - the next best thing always requires money and then the next best thing will require more money etc. etc.

9) "IT" is going to change, so how to change and stay relevant and still become proficient without falling behind in a cost effective and responsible manner?

10) The need for in school discussions - how long do we try something before we move on and or accept that is didn't work?

Session Two

Barriers

1) How do we engage parents on a regular basis and still accommodate language barriers, work schedules etc.

2) How do we balance academic success/skills and social/behavioral needs? What tools do teachers need to meet all of these varying student needs?

3) How do we take and teach every child since no two are the same? Class size, modalities of learning, culture, identifying the strength of the individual child to allow each to reach their potential, professionals accessing professionals to glean and grow, problem solve, differentiate.

4) Archaic report card this does not reflect 21st Century concepts.

5) Testing systems also need to reflect 21st Century skills.

6) Performance indicators - what is mastery?

Rigorous Curriculum - these notes are taken from the easels used during the breakouts

1) Performance metrics at the 3rd grade (math and literacy) Grade Level Expectations

2) Know the names of 100% of the students

3) 100% high school graduation - not a 12th grad measure - GED is okay.

4) 85% of GED to further education.

5) All students need to apply to college not just 98%.

6) 4 year co-hort.

7) Dropouts? Some to Silver Creek.

8) Track college choice - what is the number one choice among high schools students?

9) Tracking is difficult at 3rd grade it should be done in 5th grade.

10) With time held constant.

11) A 9 year old proficiency based advancement promotion independent of chronological age.

- 12) Potentials are developed.
- 13) Math and its relevance to the real world.
- 14) More hands on science.
- 15) Expect more.
- 16) I don't like H.M. use more.
- 17) Use more writing in the 9th Grade - doing it! P.P. is shallow.
- 18) Research skills prior to 9th grade.
- 19) Have strong skills entering college, the need to be prepared.
- 20) Board needs a sense of urgency. They need to encourage teachers to try new things.
- 21) Take budget money to support.
- 22) Priorities of curriculum.
- 23) Entrepreneurial spirit.
- 24) Kahn Academy.
- 25) AP correlation to NYT
- 26) Lagging SAT scores as compared to ID. Need to investigate.
- 27) Passionate teachers - already present, keep it going.
- 28) Excellence equals teacher excellence. Continuity of curriculum mapping. Same "standards" doing the same thing across the subjects.
- 29) Hailey math chains - do that in all subjects.
- 30) Different instructions that meets the need of all students.
- 31) Math and reading in broader context. Reading and Science. Social studies in literacy.
- 32) Is there a way that teachers can observe one another - the need for "peer review".

33) Essay writing.

Session Two

- 1) Every student needs a rigorous curriculum.
- 2) IB Program with staff training.
- 3) All day Kindergarten.
- 4) Advocate and support. CAP/CES and no excuse university.
- 5) ACT/SAT prep. AVID, GATE, A/P
- 6) Math acceleration.

Focus on Performing/Visual Arts

- 1) A/P classes in Art/Music/Drama.
- 2) Parental support.
- 3) Relevancy/systemic knowledge
- 4) Independent study to allow the A/P classes.
- 5) Outside the box, A/P offerings. Project Based Learning in A/P classes.
- 6) More support for teachers to get advanced degree. Released time. Financial.
- 7) Develop critical thinking skills.
- 8) Substance abuse curriculum such as the Mendez Foundation.
- 9) Wide variety of learning facts, cultural, historical, critical thinking.

10) Advisory period.