

Goal Four
Strategic Planning Committee
The Whole Child

Recommendations to Blaine County
School District



Introduction - Continue to define the whole child in the community (4.1)

A successful learner is characterized by **more** than one whose achievement is solely defined by academic assessments. Rather, we must consider a broader definition which includes knowledge as well as physical and emotional health, engagement in the arts and the community, and preparation for self-sufficiency including the world of work and ongoing learning. Blank and Berg in *All Together Now: Sharing Responsibility for the Whole Child* (2006) suggest that after nearly a century of research, one conclusion emerges: “Children develop along multiple, interconnected domains, and when one developmental domain is ignored, other domains may suffer” (p.6).

Blaine County School District has demonstrated strong commitment to the whole child. This is evident by the numerous opportunities available for students within the school system and as a partnership with community resources which includes activities such as the ski program, presentation of the arts (field trips and assemblies) to the students, professional development and committee membership in character education, breakfast programs, afterschool programs, expanding early childhood opportunities, activities spearheaded by the social workers (lunch buddies, Circle), as well as collaborative efforts (carnivals, ice skating) between the school staff and parent organizations. We hold the firm belief that we can do more, that we can do better, that there are opportunities for increased celebration of each individual student’s success.

The Whole Child tenants put forth by a commission of researchers, practitioners, and leading educators sponsored by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD), match the goals to be addressed in BCSD’s Strategic Plan 2015. It becomes clear that the whole child is addressed whether we are planning for intellectually challenging environments which prepares students for success beyond high school (Goals 1 and 2); providing environments that are physically and emotionally safe (Goals 5, 8, and 9); engaging our students in personalized learning that is connected to the school and broader community (Goals 3, 7, and 10); and supporting students through qualified, caring adults (Goal 6). With this in mind, the Goal Four Committee has taken a more narrow focus by spotlighting the following strategies.

- 4.2 Provide opportunities for music, drama, art and creativity
- 4.3 Investigate multiple forms of assessment of student knowledge and skills
- 4.4 Promote opportunities for expectations for student to express themselves in a variety of ways through multiple mediums
- 4.5 Nurture the emotional, social, ethical, and physical well-being of our students

4.1 Continue to define the whole child in the community

4.2 Provide opportunities for music, drama, art and creativity

4.3 Investigate multiple forms of assessment of student knowledge and skills

*** STUDENT-LED CONFERENCE MODEL**

Research by Pearson and Fletcher indicates that meaningful education results when students are actively involved in educational matters. One way to accomplish this undertaking is through the development of student-led conferences.

Definition and Purpose: Student-led conferences replace traditional parent-teacher conferences and may include students of any age (K-12). Although format and content may vary from elementary to secondary schools, the concept remains the same: the student is in charge of the academic conference with the parents. The teacher serves as a facilitator for discussion during the meeting. Aside from assuming a more active role in his/her own learning, students who participate in student-led conferences also improve in communication skills, increase organizational abilities, accept responsibility for academic performance, engage in self-reflection of personal learnings, and work collaboratively with the teacher and parent to set appropriate learning goals.

3 Phases of the Process:

- Preparation – Teachers instruct students and provide the appropriate structure for the conference. Consideration is given regarding how to lead the conference, collection and preparing of information, explaining and interpreting data to be shared, and setting goals. Expectations are set with a ‘no-excuses’ attitude. Rather, a focus on improvement toward a goal is emphasized.
- Conference – Different approaches are used across the nation both of which involve the student as the lead communicator in the meeting. In some cases, the teacher is present for the entire meeting and intervenes when necessary. At the secondary levels, some schools schedule multiple meetings at one time and teachers rotate between conferences. Although grades are typically one focus of the conference, it also provides opportunities for students to share artifacts kept in their student portfolio. Finally, the meeting provides a format to spotlight an action plan for continued academic progress. Timeframes: minimum of 20 – 30 minutes per meeting.
- Evaluation – Shortly after the conference, parents, teachers, and students are given an opportunity to provide feedback concerning the effectiveness of the student-led format.

Suggested recommendations by the committee:

* 2009-2010 – Through professional development provided by the Cognitive Coaches, the elementary schools would begin the process of involving students in self-evaluation and setting goals. At the secondary level, develop a task force of general education teachers and cognitive coaches to further investigate and determine a model that would work.

* 2010-2011 – Begin further professional development in student-led conferences at the elementary level with the intent to execute fall and possibly late winter student-led conferences. At the secondary level, the Student-led conference task force with the collaboration of Cognitive Coaches would begin professional development beginning the process of involving students in self-evaluation and goal setting.

2011-2012- Full implementation of Student-led conferences at all schools with ongoing professional development for existing staff and professional development for new staff at one of the New Staff Meetings provided district-wide.

COSTS: All professional development costs would be provided in-district by district personnel. (One of the Cognitive Coaches, Marcia Rausch, has provided Student-led Conference seminars to teachers within our district (2006) and to teacher nationwide.)

4.4 Promote opportunities for expectations for student to express themselves in a variety of ways through multiple mediums

4.5 Nurture the emotional, social, ethical, and physical well-being of our students