

West Hempstead School District

Strategic Planning Council

Meeting Summary February 27, 2008

In attendance: L. Abruzzo, R. Bernato, J. Bonasia, A. Brita, T. Cali, M. Calick, J. Castoro, A. Cavaliere, J. Cirnigliaro, J. DiMarco, J. Eisen, W. Ejnes, L. Gagliano, T. Ganley, D. Gould, B. Hafner, W. Heckler, A. Hoffman, J. Hogan, J. Hume, M. Keating, J. Kurs, T. Lee, E. Loewy, P. Lotito, J. Mariano, P. McVetty, E. Messina, C. Morales, R. Norton, A. O'Keefe, A. Peluso, H. Schulman, M. Schultz, M. Schumacher, S. Schwartz, L. Stone, J. Trapani, C. VanKovics, M. Vitale, R. Yanni, M. Zunno

The following materials were distributed to council members upon arrival:

- Agenda for 2/27/08
- Meeting Summary of 2/13/08
- Updated Council Member Contact List (as of 2/26/08)
- Working Backwards Timeline, Future Wheel, Fish Tale
- Academic Report Analysis Outline
- PowerPoint: *West Hempstead Schools: Our Schools Do Not Exist in a Vacuum*
- Two Articles from *The Learning System*, a publication of the National Staff Development Council, February 2008:
 - "Begin with Ambitious Learning Goals" by Hayes Mizell
 - "A Data Dilemma" by Pat Roy
- Number of LEP (Limited English Proficiency) Students Served District wide in 2006-2007 (sorted by grade level and native language)
- West Hempstead High School New Enrollees and Withdrawals 2007-8 and 2006-7

Dr. Bernato welcomed the members of the council and opened the meeting at 7:00 PM. He asked members to review the summary of 2/13/08, allowed time for recommendations of changes, and proceeded to preview the outline of the meeting agenda and goals for the evening's meeting. The "working backwards" proposed timeline of the council's work was previewed beginning with the "end" which will be the review and finalization of the recommended Plans at the May 28th meeting.

Root cause process was reviewed. Dr. Bernato discussed "peeling back the onion" to identify the reasons for/causes of an issue. The fish tale technique was presented. A model was developed collaboratively with the group. The problem of traffic was used—connections made by the group included: time, construction, and driver's ability. Dr. Bernato encouraged the group to put everything together—what do they all boil down to?—delays (symptom), overpopulation, too

many people. The 5 why technique was utilized by Dr. Bernato to identify the root cause of the issue following the fish tale analysis.

The group split into small groups. Council members reviewed the mission statement and identified key words in the district's mission statement:

- Student
- Unique
- Dedicated
- Respect
- Success
- Quest
- Self esteem
- Challenge
- Lifelong
- Excellent
- Positive

Ann asked the members to keep these key words in mind as we used data to measure success. One council member questioned whether state assessments would be the only way used to measure success.

Using this question as a jumping off point, Ann facilitated a discussion of ways to measure success. The group brainstormed tools that might be used to measure success of the students:

- Self assessment of students, staff and community
- Formal Assessments
- Observations
- Portfolios—student work samples
- Attendance rates
- Parental involvement
- Staff turnover
- Interpersonal environment
- Student involvement
- Post graduate plans
- Atmosphere in school—physical upkeep, grounds, a “successful look” of schools
- School safety
- Discipline records

Various criteria used to measure success with NYS assessments were reviewed:

- AYP (Adequate Yearly Progress)
- Proficiency levels
- Distinction levels

Perspectives of viewing data were also reviewed including:

- Snapshots
- Longitudinal
- Value-added

The small groups examined 2006/2007 Snapshot Assessment Profile for West Hempstead comparing results of the ELA and Math NYS assessments in grades three through eight with regional results. Each table discussed various elements of the snapshot report. Following the small group discussions, observations of the members were shared which included:

- Many students performing in Level 3 and not as many in Level 4
- 6th grade students may need intervention strategies
- Level 2 seems high
- Most groups are below regional average
- A concern was expressed regarding 5th grade results
- Is student transience a cause of scores?
- Data indicates a multi-year pattern of 94-95% stability in student population
- What is the demographic background of students?
- Since our district has fewer students than some of the larger districts, each student's score impacts the total score more significantly
- The capacity to review data from new perspectives (through data warehouse) has just been made available during the 2006-7 school year while other districts have had access to this analysis for seven years.

Dr. Bernato presented the PowerPoint which gave an overview of changing demographics on Long Island, Nassau County, the Town of Hempstead and West Hempstead. He suggested several text resources for further reading on this topic:

- *Long Island, the Global Economy and Race* by Martin R. Cantor, Long Island Development Corporation, 2006
- *The World is Flat* by Tom Friedman (chapter 5 in particular)

After reviewing demographic data, the question was posed: Are we better off now than we were five years ago? Recent shifts in the economy on Long Island were highlighted and are noted in the PowerPoint. The point was made that Long Island does not exist in a vacuum and is affected by the global economy. Currently there is a need to replace an aging workforce. Younger people are moving off Long Island due to the high cost of living, and they are taking skills, energy, resources and their tax contribution with them. There is a need to pump up technological prowess to compete in the global economy. The current work force on Long Island represents a reduction in the level of education compared to the aging workforce.

Following the overview of trends in the Long Island economy and population, Dr Bernato gave an overview of the 2006 demographic study completed by Lloyd Bishop and Deborah Inman. In the discussion of the study several points were raised:

- The Island Park component of our high school population was not included in the study.
- There is a rise in single parent homes.
- The breakdown among ethnic subgroups has shifted, diversity has increased in our school population.

The demographic data was discussed in small groups. Dr. Bernato encouraged the members to reflect on how the demographic and achievement data come together.

Several issues were discussed by the members:

- With changing demographics, are we reaching all groups?
- What percentage of our students is lost to private schools?
- What measures do we take to retain students?
- Are exit interviews conducted?
- How does the district market itself?
- It is important to counter inaccuracies in perceptions of our schools with data.
- Does our mission statement accurately reflect the changing demographics?
- The mission statement should include a reference to families and the community.
- It was agreed that the mission statement did not adequately reflect current district needs and priorities.
- Can we get factual data on the number of students transferring to private schools from our district?

Members raised concern regarding the need to update the mission statement. It was agreed that a small group would work via email to draft a revised mission statement which would then be presented to the full council. Volunteers to work on this subgroup included:

- Terry Ganley, Chair
- Camille Morales
- Tony Brita
- Walter Ejnes
- Chris VanKovics
- Helen Schulman

Volunteers were thanked for their willingness to serve on this subcommittee.

After discussing the increased diversity in our community, concern was raised regarding the lack of diversity among council members. Several members agreed to try to encourage additional students and community members to join the council so that the make-up of the council reflects the diversity of our community.

Dr. Bernato asked members of the council how they are getting out the word about the work of the council. He asked if the members have been able to communicate out to others. Members mentioned several ways the information is being shared: site based teams, PTA meetings, notices to staff. All agreed that word is getting out. Dr. Bernato encouraged members to share the official summaries of the meetings rather than personal reactions to topics discussed. The meeting closed promptly at 9:00 PM.