

**Berne-Knox-Westerlo Central School District**  
**Board of Education/Community Goal-Setting Exercise**

Summary Report and Raw Data  
July 13, 2010



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## Overview

On the evening of July 13, the Berne-Knox-Westerlo Central School District Board of Education hosted a goal-setting discussion with community stakeholders to address the challenges and opportunities the district faces over the next three to five years.

This goal-setting exercise allowed community members to be involved in the Board's annual process of establishing short- and long-term goals for the 2010-11 school year and years to come.

Like many districts across the state, BKW faces declining enrollment and increased fiscal pressures brought on by a worldwide recession. At the same time, demands continue to rise for students to ratchet up achievement and become well-rounded, engaged citizens of the world.

The goal-setting exercise brought the Board and community together to work on balancing these important yet often dueling concerns.

The Capital Region BOCES Communications Service, in partnership with BOCES District Superintendent Charles Dedrick, provided goal-setting guidelines and facilitated three break-out groups. Each group identified district needs and opportunities, drafted short- and long-term goals, then voted for the goals they felt were most important and/or pressing to bring before the entire group of participants.

Facilitators then reconvened the participants and presented the goals that received the most votes from each group. Community members then studied the goals and voted a second time for their top three in the short-term and long-term categories.

## Next steps

The Board of Education will use the feedback from participants to inform the final short- and long-term district goals. Once the Board has finalized the goals, they will be shared with the original participants and community at large.

Throughout the year, the original participants and community will be updated on the district's progress toward achieving both the short- and long-term goals.

## Participants

The following community members and staff participated in the goal-setting exercise: Tom McGurl, Tamara Fisher, Darleen Shrederis, Vasilios Lefkaditis, Jane McClean, Sue Larrabee, Katie Forti, Matt Tedeschi, Marcia Casullo, Jeff Keller, Barry Schinnerer, Kim Audino, George Christian, Earl Barcomb, Nick McSpedon, Mr. McSpedon, Carol Willsey, John Zieske, Linda Berquist, Brian Corey, Denise Robinson, Jennifer Wright, Tom Gagnon, Patricia Miller, Nancy O'Pezio, Mary Jane Araldi, Vincent Pasquini, Deb Rosko, Amy Anderson, and Sheila Martin.

Capital Region BOCES Communications Service group facilitators: Deborah Bush-Suflita, Michele Kelley, Jennie Kerwood.

Also in attendance: Superintendent of Schools Dr. Paul Dorward, School Business Official Kevin Callagy, BOCES District Superintendent Dr. Charles Dedrick, BKW Public Information Specialist Christine Geraci (BOCES Communications Service), and the BKW Board of Education (Maureen Sikule, Carolyn Anderson, Helen Lounsbury, Sean O'Connor, Jill Norray).

## Top Short-Term Goals

***Reach out to parents to engage them and to encourage partnerships that support learning.***

**30 votes**

Notes on this goal:

- Need to improve trust and relationships between home and school and among staff
- Bridge the disconnect
- Set the bar higher
- Increased accountability so everyone feels vested in student success and is held to high standards with clear expectations
- Parent Portal to give parents better tools for effective engagement
- This goal is a theme that resonated across individual breakout groups

**Increase involvement of community members and organizations in school**

**21 votes**

**Improve communication between school and community**

**14 votes**

- This goal is a theme that resonated across individual breakout groups

## Top Long-Term Goals

**Look at alternative ways to boost the achievement of all students.**

**24 votes**

Notes on this goal:

- This goal was listed as a long-term goal, with parts identified as short-term goals
- Challenge and engage students
- Differentiated instruction
- Training for teachers in research-based strategies
- Focus on early intervention...this will lead to higher graduation rates.
- Look at new ways to motivate students to excel (e.g. peer mentors)
- Restructure and revitalize arts program

**Look at strategies and partnerships to help boost numbers of kids going on to four-year (or more) colleges.**

**17 votes**

Notes on this goal:

- Involves parent education component
- Look at International Baccalaureate program
- Need to “push” (encourage) kids beyond minimal requirements
- Use technology and speakers to cultivate world view, diversity appreciation and exposure, career awareness

**Increase students’ knowledge of professions and provide more career exploration opportunities in the classroom**

**17 votes**

## Individual Group Discussions

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Group 1: **BLUE GROUP**

Facilitator: Jennie Kerwood

### SUMMARY

#### *Top Short-Term Goals*

- Launch online grading
- Administrators should analyze their respective budgets to optimize spending with an eye on savings
- Utilize external resources to help staff and fund those services and programs the district can't afford to offer on its own
- Increase participation in BOCES program/services, and negotiate with BOCES for lower costs
- Immediately negotiate teacher contracts

#### *Top Long-Term Goals*

- Increase the lifespan of buses by installing a wash bay to clean underneath buses to get rid of salt, etc.
- Increase academic success on Regents exams and other standards-based tests and improve AYP with the goal of 100 percent graduation rate
- Haggle/negotiate contracts with outside vendors to reduce the district's costs

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Group 2: **RED GROUP**

Facilitator: Michele Kelley

### SUMMARY

#### *Top Short-Term Goals*

- Improve communication between the school district and community.
- Increase involvement of community members and organizations in the schools.
- Improve the morale of students, staff and community members regarding the district.
- Increase students' knowledge of professions and provide more career exploration opportunities in the classroom.

#### *Top Long-Term Goals*

- Improve the body, mind and character of all students.
- Offer more opportunities for staff and professional development as a means toward developing a transparent curriculum.
- Improve the financial stability of the district.
- Look at alternative ways to boost the achievement of all students.

**SUMMARY***Top Short-Term Goals*

- Reach out to parents to engage them, support and encourage partnerships that support learning.
- Provide consistent training in discipline/acceptable behavior strategies to non-teaching staff (bus drivers, cafeteria and custodial staff, substitutes) to foster good school climate/respect.
- Look at 12-month use of schools/facilities to the benefit of the entire community (and build new relationships)
- Continue to build on improved communication across K-12 system.

*Top Long-Term Goals*

- Look at alternative ways to boost the achievement of all students.
- Look at strategies and partnerships to help boost numbers of kids going on to four-year (or more) colleges.

**Conclusions**

In the short-term, community stakeholders want improved communication between the district itself and the community, as well as more outreach efforts to strengthen partnerships between district staff and parents.

In the long-run, community stakeholders want the district to focus on boosting academic achievement put more students on track to attend four-year colleges, and provide more career exploration opportunities.

## RAW DATA

**BLUE** - number of votes received during large-group prioritizing of recommendations  
**ORANGE** - number of votes goal received during small group prioritizing sessions

### Group 1: BLUE GROUP

TOP GOALS	Goal Type	# Blue Votes received
Administrators to analyze their respective budgets to optimize spending with an eye on savings	ST	5
Increased Participation in BOCES programs/services and negotiate with BOCES to lower costs	ST	2
Online grading	ST	9
Immediately negotiate teacher contracts	ST	2
Utilize external resources to help staff and fund those services and programs the district can't afford to offer on its own	ST	3
Increase academic success on Regents exams and other standards-based tests and improve AYP with the goal of 100 percent graduation rate	LT	9
Increase the lifespan of buses by installing a wash bay to clean underneath and get rid of salt, etc.	LT	14
Haggle/negotiate contracts with outside vendors to reduce the district's costs	LT	7

Draft Goals	Goal Type	# of Orange Votes
Be more progressive in teacher negotiations analysis Evaluate benefits yearly Set up committee of management/labor	ST/LT	2
Online grading/online assignments	ST	4
Ongoing community forums and budget advisory committee	ST	1
Teacher involvement in selecting professional development	ST/LT	1
Healthier lunches	ST/LT	
Immediately negotiate contracts	ST	4
More renewable energy in buildings and in the curriculum	LT	3
Increase lifespan of buses/need to wash up and under buses	LT	5
Communication and awareness within stakeholder groups	ST/LT	1

Academic success in Regents, AYP at Elem/Middle School	LT	6
Attain status as a Blue Ribbon School	LT	3
Continue to revamp educational practices	ST	2
Work to develop parent buy-in to educational process	LT	2
Encourage parent involvement with their individual children	LT	0
Increase teacher attendance at open houses	ST	0
Increase online learning opportunities	ST/LT	
Take steps to ensure leadership stability	ST	1
Administrators to analyze their respective budgets to make sure spending is optimized/eye on savings	ST	5
Identify/implement programs to get 100% grad rate	ST (2 votes) LT	6
Increase participation in BOCES programs and services - negotiate to lower BOCES costs	ST (5) LT (1)	5
Explain budget in laymen's terms	ST	1
Develop corporate sponsorship/community partnerships with school district	ST/LT	0
Develop pride in school, and individual spaces (lockers, hallways) Get over BKW "stigma" as hilltown, and thus less worthy	ST/LT	
Increase accountability - (parents, students and teachers) Set goals and then do them	ST LT	2 2
Haggle on contracts and save (negotiate) on everything	ST LT	1 5
Seek out shared services/expenses with schools and municipalities	ST LT	3 0
External funds/resources/volunteers to do what we can't on our own	ST	4

### Needs and opportunities

- Increased community communication, especially before budget vote
- Communication between teachers and parents, especially using online resources
- Online grading/partnership between teachers, students, parents
- Take care of buildings and buses, both in the short- and long-term
- Alternative, renewable energy
- Teachers to get access to info/reaction to professional development/focus on student needs
- Increase graduation rate (83-85% now)
- Better education on health/wellness
- Increase communication support between PTA and Board
- Reduce expenses - eliminate ineffective staff

- Competitive bidding - make sure that people know that it is happening and how it works
- Get the best possible prices for goods/services
- Renegotiate current contracts

**Group 2: RED GROUP**

Goal	Goal Type	# of blue votes
Improve the body, mind and character of all students	LT	16
Develop a transparent curriculum and offer more opportunities for staff/professional development	LT	13
Improve financial stability of district	LT	9
Increase students' knowledge of professions and provide more career exploration opportunities in the classroom	LT	17
Improve communication between school and community	ST	14
Increase involvement of community members and organizations in the schools	ST	21
Improve the morale of students, staff and community members regarding the district	ST	6
Look at alternative ways to boost the achievement of all students	ST/LT	

DRAFT GOALS	# of orange votes
Develop a transparent curriculum for district, K-12 Curriculum mapping Available to all community members online Provide more staff/professional development opportunities Develop a coordinated curriculum that works both horizontally and vertically (across teachers in grade level and between grade levels) Take advantage of collaboration opportunities with other districts	8
Improve the body, mind and character of our students - Meet State PE requirements (body) -Test scores (mind) -Discipline referrals (character) - i.e. 10 percent improvement (1 year)	3
Improve morale of students, staff and community members in district	10
Communication: Improve communication between school	10

and community	
Improve financial stability of district	5
Increase involvement of community members and organizations in school	6

### Needs and Opportunities

Needs	Opportunities
New construction	Increased support for teachers during assessments
Increase publicity in newspapers re: student achievement	Increase morale for staff and students through collaboration with stakeholder groups
Increase community access to the internet	Increase student participation in other areas, i.e. communication/website
Increase parent involvement	Increase graduation rate
Increase teacher/parent communication	Establish cost/savings committee for all areas
Technology reassessment	Database for quizzes/tests
Expand Website - increase transparency - Establish a blog with comments	Take advantage of green energy
Utilize community for: More career development Opportunities in classroom Knowledge of professions	Leverage community resources/ volunteers/ mentoring
Increase access to news for students - These kids are all listening to iPods on the bus, why can't we get more news into their hands	Great opportunity for positive change with new superintendent
Increase time for faculty to meet? - Curriculum development, curriculum mapping	Buy St. Bernadette's church for admin building and expand transportation office

### Group 3: GREEN GROUP

Goal	Goal Type	# of Orange Votes	# of Blue Votes
<p><b>Look at alternative ways to boost the achievement of all students.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Challenge and engage students</li> <li>▪ Training and delivery of differentiated instruction</li> <li>▪ Training for faculty in research-based teaching strategies</li> <li>▪ More early intervention...which will also lead to higher graduation rates.</li> <li>▪ Look at new ways to motivate students to excel (e.g., peer mentors)</li> <li>▪ Look at alternative ways to restructure and revitalize the arts program</li> </ul>	LT (parts ST)	12	24
<p><b>Reach out to parents to engage them, support and encourage partnerships that support learning.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Need to improve the trust level and forge more productive relationships with parents.</li> <li>▪ Bridge the disconnect between home and school.</li> <li>▪ Set the bar higher for academics.</li> <li>▪ Increased accountability so <u>everyone</u> feels vested in student success and is held to high standards with clear expectations (students, staff, parents and community at large).</li> <li>▪ Parent Portal to give parents better tools for effective engagement.</li> </ul>	ST	10	30 (16 from green group plus overlapping votes of 14) for a total
<p><b>Provide consistent training in discipline/acceptable responses to student behavior issues for non-teaching staff (bus drivers, cafeteria and custodial staff, substitutes) to help foster respect and a positive school climate.</b></p>	ST	9	5
<p><b>Look at strategies and partnerships to help boost the percentage of students who continue their education at four-year colleges.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Recognize this involves a parent education component</li> <li>▪ Look at offering an IB program</li> <li>▪ Need to “push” (encourage) kids beyond minimal requirements</li> <li>▪ Use technology and speakers to cultivate</li> </ul>	LT	8	17

our students' world view, exposure to and appreciation of diversity, and career education/awareness			
<b>Continue to build on improved communication across K-12 system.</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Focus on helping students make successful transitions.</li> <li>▪ Improve communication between K-12 faculty/staff.</li> <li>▪ K-12 curriculum mapping.</li> <li>▪ Help parents see what's coming for their children in ways that demystify school and get students and parents excited about the "next" series of opportunities.</li> </ul>	ST	7	--
<b>Look at 12-month use of district facilities to benefit the entire community and foster improved home-school/community-school relationships.</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Evening use for activities with students and parents</li> </ul>	ST, though not on a cont. budget	8	--
<b>Develop a budget that earns the informed consent of the community on the first vote.</b>	ST	4	--
<b>Look at new ways to maintain a viable bus fleet with limited resources.</b>	ST	2	--

### NEEDS and OPPORTUNITIES

- Expand adult education programs - both in the traditional sense as well as offering parenting education programs that support student learning and higher expectations.
- Reach out and engage hard-to-reach parents.
- Foster "bridge-building" district-wide (among staff, between staff and the board of education, between the school and community).
- Look at BKW as a K-12 education system, with better staff communication throughout that system.
- Launch a "parent portal" that gives parents online access to their child's grades, attendance, etc. Also offer PayPal information for lunch program.
- Use the district website to highlight more student and staff successes (academic, athletics, etc.).
- Look at maximizing new/alternative funding resources (e.g., grants, fundraising).
- Start the annual budget process earlier to increase community input and awareness.
- Develop a three-year financial plan for the district.
- Look at innovative/alternative ways that students can use community resources to earn high school academic credits.
- Investigate ways to restructure, rejuvenate the district arts program.