

## INTRODUCTION

Planning for the strategic plan as defined by the Pennsylvania Department of Education, Chapter 4, began in October 2003 with a discussion on the basic structure that would be used. It was decided that teachers, administrators, parents, community members, students, and school directors would be invited to become members of the Strategic Planning Steering Committee. The members would define the mission statement, needs, and educational and organizational goals for the district. These documents would be given to five subcommittees that would be responsible to describe the areas needed to meet the requirements of Chapter 4 as well as to develop action plans pertinent to their areas/topics consistent with the direction of the steering committee. The work of the subcommittees would then return to the steering committee for discussion and approval and eventual submission to the Board of School Directors.

At the first meeting of the steering committee on November 13, 2003, it was explained that after the initial meetings the committee would meet infrequently. When held, the purpose of the meetings would be to review and approve the work of the subcommittees. This structure was established to encourage community members and parents, with limited time, to be willing to commit to the process. Each steering committee member was encouraged to join as many subcommittees as interest and time permitted.

After the initial meeting of the steering committee, an invitation was extended to the community to join the subcommittees. As a result, the subcommittees consisted not only of members from the steering committee, but other members from the community and district as well. The subcommittees met for several months and then provided an update to the steering committee on March 2, 2004. Each subcommittee then prioritized its action plans and presented the outcome to the priorities subcommittee. This committee applied a process to prioritize all action plans and then presented the action plan priorities to the steering committee on April 14, 2004. The prioritized action plans were reviewed by the Board of School Directors on April 26. Once consensus on placement of action plans had been reached, the final document was prepared and presented to the Board of School Directors on June 14, 2004. After a period of public review and final approval by the board, the plan is scheduled for submission to the Pennsylvania Department of Education in July 2004.

## OVERVIEW OF THE DISTRICT

The Bethlehem Area School District (BASD) serves over 14,800 students from the city of Bethlehem and its four surrounding municipalities. Sixteen elementary schools, four middle schools, and two high schools provide a consistent district-wide curriculum for all students in grades kindergarten through twelve. At the elementary level, kindergarten through grade five schools range in size from 230 to 650 students, and they are encouraged to tailor their programs to meet the needs of children in the communities they serve. All schools expect students to achieve high academic standards, and therefore, embrace the idea that intelligence can be learned and that hard work, not just innate ability, can help students to achieve the high academic expectations placed upon them.

In addition, a prekindergarten program is designed for selected three and four year old children. Parents are encouraged to participate in the educational aspects of the program by visiting the classroom, attending parent meetings, and by being available for regular home visits by the classroom staff. A Regional Academic Standards Academy is designed to assist grade five children who need extra help to reach grade level proficiency. The philosophy of the BASD is that with time and assistance, all students can reach higher academic standards.

The four middle schools in the BASD provide for the academic, personal, physical, social, and emotional needs of students in grades six through eight as they transition from the elementary school to the high school. The middle schools emphasize building positive self-concept, offering opportunities for a wide range of social experiences, and providing opportunities for students to develop skills that enable them to collect and critically evaluate information with an emphasis on how to learn. The middle schools employ a team-teaching approach to build on the foundation established by the elementary schools, introduce new programs, and encourage growth in basic and creative thinking skills within an atmosphere of respect for individual differences.

The two large high schools in the BASD offer academic courses for students in grades nine through twelve in all major subject areas. Honors, advanced placement, academic, and applied programs are available. In addition, students can select from a myriad of electives. A regional vocational-technical school provides additional opportunities for selected students who split their day between the vo-tech and the high school. Students can participate in a wide variety of extracurricular and cocurricular activities which include over 22 interscholastic sports. Over 70 percent of the graduates from Freedom and Liberty High Schools move on to higher education.

## **NEEDS ASSESSMENT**

### **Superintendent Conducted Needs Assessment Upon Entry**

As a new superintendent who took the helm at the Bethlehem Area School District on July 1, 2002, the opportunity presented itself for a thorough needs assessment as part of his Entry Plan. In preparation for planning, the superintendent conducted more than 150 hours of structured interviews and feedback sessions with board members, central office staff, principals, association leadership, support leadership, union representatives, community leaders, municipal governments, and parents. He used four separate survey instruments tailored to the various stakeholders of the school district, i.e., central office staff; principals; professional and service leadership; and parents, community, and business sector. Copies of those instruments can be found later in this section.

In addition, he visited all 23 schools, as well as the three educational programs within the district, during the course of the first semester, and he engaged in action planning with the administrations of all of those schools and programs.

### **District's Needs Identified**

The results of those interviews, surveys, visitations, and action planning sessions were summarized into eight general areas of concern and became the basis of his Entry Plan, which the Board of School Directors later endorsed and adopted.

#### **A. General Climate: Initiatives, Time, and Morale**

1. Too many initiatives running concurrently
2. Top down prototype
3. General morale waning
4. Lengthy meetings and overdeveloped agendas
5. Need time to reflect and renew
6. Need to evaluate the effectiveness of the programs
7. Principals' time from building administration
8. Diversity issues
9. Change is too rapid
10. Need to focus on our mission
11. K-12 articulation is an issue

**B. The Organization: Role Responsibility, Chain of Command, Reorganization, and Communications Between and Among Administrators**

1. Role responsibility clarity
2. Chain of command issues
3. Communications between administrators and staff
4. Union communications and interactions
5. Board's role
6. Avoid "end runs"
7. Clear job descriptions
8. Trust
9. Top down or exclusive decision-making
10. Need for collaboration and input
11. Animosity/competition between some administrators
12. Clarity in roles and authority
13. Some divisions move too quickly, some too slowly
14. Need for personnel reorganization

**C. Technology**

1. Obsolescence of some equipment
2. Inadequate technology spending
3. Newer software without supporting platforms
4. Three separate technology divisions not collaborating
5. Too many data depositories of different platform designs
6. Little or no sharing of data electronically
7. Need for Technology Department reorganization
8. Need for current usable Technology Plan
9. Inadequate training of office/support staff

**D. Curriculum and Instruction**

1. Need for Department of Instruction reorganization
2. Need a new sense of importance to be placed on curriculum and instruction
3. Need articulated leadership
4. Need staff development plan

5. Need to revise cyclic curriculum review, textbook adoption procedures
6. Assessment needs review...may be overassessing/redundancy
7. More collaboration needed between levels of administration and supervision

**E. Operations: Procedures, Policy, Planning, Records, and Financial**

1. Procedures and policies need review
2. Need strategic planning
3. District policy manual needs to be updated and Web based
4. Job descriptions need revision and updating
5. Business Office needs software update
6. Need administrative guidelines for areas not covered in policy manual

**F. Physical Plant and Facilities**

1. Continue renovation and construction plan
2. Broughal site issue
3. Freedom athletic facility
4. Cooling at Northeast Middle School
5. New equipment for Maintenance Department
6. Make schools safer and more secure
7. Guarantee safe bus routes
8. Long range facility plan

**G. Evaluation: Teacher, Administrator, Observation Processes, Program Evaluation**

1. Revise teacher evaluation
2. Revise administrative evaluation
3. Revise support staff evaluation
4. Provide central support of principals who pursue poor performers
5. Revise observation processes
6. Develop program evaluation

#### **H. Staff and Students: Student Code of Conduct, Special Education, Minority Issues**

1. Student Code of Conduct perceptions
2. Fairness in academic opportunity
3. Minority issues and perceptions
4. Transitional first grade
5. Eighth to ninth grade transition
6. Basic/differentiated diplomas
7. Special education concerns regarding identification, due process, etc.
8. Recruiting of minority staff

#### **Board Provides Input on District's Needs**

In an executive session in October 2003, the Board of School Directors and the superintendent participated in a self-evaluation process conducted by a representative from the Pennsylvania School Boards Association to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the school district. This information then served as a foundation to begin the strategic planning process.

#### **District's Goals Identified for 2002-2004**

Using the information from the Superintendent's Entry Plan and the board's self-evaluation, the Strategic Planning Steering Committee met on November 13, 2003, to develop its Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT). That SWOT appears below:

##### **Strengths:**

- Teaching Staff
- Diversity of District
- Administrative Body
- Committed to Standards Ahead of the Curve
- Code of Conduct
- Supportive Community and Families/Parents
- Take Risks (Calculated)
- Creative Programs

- Very Supportive Board
- Not Satisfied with Status Quo
- Facilities and Facilities Planning
- Child Centered—Focused on Student
- Meaningful Partnerships
- Professional Development
- Growing Area

**Weaknesses:**

- Not Enough Input From Outside the “Choir”
- Too Wealthy For Own Good (State Thinks)
- Not Enough Community Involvement in Decision-Making
- Better Public Relations and Communications with Families
- Better Media Coverage Needed
- More Data-Driven Decision Making
- Focus More on Student Learning Objectives
- Goal Setting
- Curricular Focus is Too Concentrated
- Technology Plan/Program is Fractured and Under Funded
- Size of School District
- Evaluation System of Staff
- Gender Imbalance, Minority Staffing
- Access Guidance and Special Education Services

**Opportunities:**

- Chances to Become Leaders in Education
- To Grow With Standards and Student Achievement
- Power of Varied Cultures
- To Offer First Class Facilities at a Low Cost to All Students
- Partnerships with Universities
- Public Relations
- To Change the Way We Deliver Curriculum (Technology)
- To Communicate to State Legislators Better Ways of Doing Things

- To Correct Our Weaknesses
- To Offer Variety in Programs

**Threats:**

- Unsupportive State
- Competition from Nonpublic Schools
- Taxpayers Non Supportive
- NCLB
- Eroding Family Unit (Partnership Between Family and School)
- Voucher
- School Funding Method
- Unfunded and Unfunded Mandates
- Comparisons to Business World
- Health Care Costs, Retirement Cost
- Lack of Value That Education Has in Society
- Security/Safety Issues
- Special Education Students in a Protected Class
- Students Without Purpose/Commitment; Disenfranchised
- Dwindling Potential, Professional Workforce
- Limited Resources: i.e., Guidance to Student Ratio and Mental Health Providers
- Growing Transiency

**Strategic Planning Steering Committee Sets Parameters for New Plan**

As part of the strategic planning process, the district established the Strategic Planning Steering Committee, comprised of representatives from all levels of the school district, the student body, parent groups, and the community at large. A new direction for the district was agreed upon, and new district goals were established. The district then developed action plans for these newly identified goals and has been working towards accomplishing them ever since. Over three months, the steering committee developed organizational and educational goals for the district that now serve as the direct basis for the development of the action plans contained in this Strategic Plan. The Mission Statement and ten goals are set forth as follows:

**Mission Statement:** The Bethlehem Area School District, in partnership with the home and community, is committed to providing a safe and supportive environment in which each student will attain the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to become a productive citizen and life-long learner in our technologically demanding and culturally diverse society.

**Organizational Goals** (referred to as “O” Goals on the district action plans)

1. The district will foster the concept of being a culturally diverse learning organization where staff is encouraged and opportunities are provided to gain professional growth and development.
2. The district will develop, implement, and maintain programs and facilities, which ensure the health, safety, and welfare of each student.
3. The district will provide an atmosphere where students have the opportunity to graduate, grow, and pursue productive life choices, through technology utilization, college level education, vocational-technical education, military, and other career pathways.
4. The district will foster collaborative partnerships and communications among schools, families, universities, businesses, and communities.
5. The district will maintain an environment where students acquire recognition of the rights of others, identify societal needs, participate as responsible citizens, and gain insight into the value of diversity.

**Educational Goals** (referred to as “E” Goals on the district action plans)

1. Students will experience an articulated K-12 curriculum in all subject areas which reflects local, state, and national standards and provides opportunities for students to cultivate higher order thinking, creativity, and analysis skills.
2. Students will evidence an increase in indicators of success including academic performance, attendance, graduation rates, college and workplace placements, while becoming true life-long learners.
3. Students will learn critical contemporary skills, such as visualization, communication, technology, collaboration, problem solving, initiative, and persistence through authentic inquiry and discovery-based learning activities.
4. The district will provide a positive learning environment, which fosters the development of a healthy, happy, and resilient student and permits all students to reach his/her personal best and full potential.

5. Students will experience a variety of programs in both academics and extracurriculars, which will lead to the development of a confident individual who possesses character and ethics.

The next step in the process was to establish strategic planning subcommittees to develop action plans for the implementation of the educational and organizational goals previously identified. The five subcommittees were organized into the following categories:

- Academic Interventions
- Curriculum and Instruction
- Personnel and Operations
- Technology
- Graduation Requirements

Central Staff Member: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Interview: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Superintendent's Entry Plan Central Office Interviews**

*(Approximately 1 hour)*

1. Please give me a brief autobiographical sketch of yourself. What is important for me to know about you as a person?
2. Which central office tasks is your responsibility alone? Which tasks do you share with others on the central office staff? How does the overlapping of responsibilities occur? Are there areas where role responsibility is unclear?
3. Does a current and accurate job description exist for your position?
4. What is the key issue for your own work in the school system? Why is it important? Does it need immediate attention?
5. What are the most important key issues in the district that need to be addressed? What do you recommend as the Superintendent's first steps in understanding these issues? Rank these issues in priority order.

6. What network of people in the school or the community try to influence school issues? What do the members of each network share in common? Neighborhood? Blood relationship? Jobs? Concerns for issues?
7. Describe a moment when the school system was in great conflict. How did the conflict arise? What people played roles in it, and how did they react under pressure. How was the stress resolved? How should it have been handled and resolved?
8. Describe a very difficult decision you had to make. What was the issue? Why was it important? How did you reach your decision? What did others think? What would you do differently now?
9. What do you most want to preserve in the Bethlehem Area schools?
10. What leadership has the superintendent provided to the schools in the past? What do you wish he would provide in the future?
11. As you think about how the central office and school board currently operate, what do you see as the issues of significance? How can I help you maximize your effectiveness as an administrator?
12. What are the major projects you have underway at this time? What impedes your work? How would you describe the overall reputation of the Bethlehem Area School District?

Principal: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Interview: \_\_\_\_\_

**Superintendent's Entry Plan**  
**Principal's Interview**  
*(Approximately 1 hour)*

1. Please give me a brief autobiographical sketch of yourself. What is important for me to know about you as a person?
  
2. Which building tasks are your responsibility alone? Which tasks do you share with others in the district? Would you consider the operation more site-based or centralized overall? How does overlapping of responsibilities occur? Are there areas where role responsibility is unclear?
  
3. Does a current and accurate job description exist for your position?
  
4. What are the strengths and the weaknesses of your administrative staff? Of your teaching staff?

5. What do you consider to be the most important issue for your own work in the school system? Why is this issue important? Does it require immediate attention?
  
6. What are the key issues which you think the system must face? Why is each important? Which issues need immediate attention? Can you rank these issues in priority order?
  
7. What network of people in the school or the community try to influence school issues? What do the members of each network share in common? Neighborhood? Blood relationship? Jobs? Concerns for issues?
  
8. Describe a moment when the school system was in great conflict. How did the conflict arise? What people played roles in it, and how did they react under pressure. How was the stress resolved? How should it have been handled and resolved?
  
9. Describe a very difficult decision you had to make. What was the issue? Why was it important? How did you reach your decision? What did others think? What would you do differently now?
  
10. What do you most want to preserve in the schools?

11. What leadership has the superintendent provided to the schools in the past? What do you wish he would provide in the future?
  
12. As you think about how the administrative team and school board currently operate, what gives you satisfaction? What frustrates you? How can I help you maximize your effectiveness as an administrator?
  
13. What are the major projects you have underway at this time? What impedes your work? How would you describe the overall reputation of the Bethlehem Area School District?



5. What has been the nature of your contact with the superintendent? How would you like to see it changed? How should it remain the same?
  
6. What do you see as the most immediate perplexity facing the Bethlehem Area School District today? How might we begin to resolve it together?
  
7. What has been the most important thing the administrative leadership team provided the district in the past? What additional things do you wish it would provide in the future?
  
8. To your knowledge, what extent has the formal grievance procedure in the contract been used in the past?
  
9. How might I assist you in doing your job on a daily basis?

Parent, Community or Business Member: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Interview or Survey Completion: \_\_\_\_\_

If you wish to be contacted please provide your phone number \_\_\_\_\_ or email address \_\_\_\_\_

**Superintendent's Entry Plan**  
**Parent, Community and Business Segment**  
*(Approximately 1 hour)*

1. Please give me a brief autobiographical sketch of yourself.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. When was your first contact with the school system? What have been your expectations for the Bethlehem Area School District? What are your general impressions of the school system?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. From your perspective what are the key issues, which the system faces? What are your concerns? Why is each important? Which issues need immediate attention? Can you rank these issues in priority order?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. Describe the history of school - community relationships in the Bethlehem Area School District. What conflicts have arisen in your experience? How have they been resolved?

5. What has been the nature of your contact with the superintendent? How would you like to see it changed? How should it remain the same?
  
6. What do you see as the most immediate perplexity facing the Bethlehem Area School District today? How might we begin to resolve it together?
  
7. What has been the most important element the administrative leadership team provided for the district in the past? What additional things do you wish it would provide in the future?
  
8. To your knowledge, what are the items of excellence in the Bethlehem Area School District?
  
9. How might I assist you in your future relationships with the Bethlehem Area School District?
  
10. Do you have any other comments relative to the district, the administrative team, or the board of education?

## STRATEGIC PLANNING STEERING AND SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS

### **BOARD OF SCHOOL DIRECTORS' REPRESENTATIVES**

Rosario S. Amato  
Loretta M. Leeson  
Margaret J. Williams

### **COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVES**

Michael Albarell  
William Bartle  
Clayton Bond  
Mohamed Bugdighis  
James Drumheiser  
Thomas Harrington  
Charles Kunesh  
Rev. Ismael Medina  
Stanley Rugis

### **PARENT REPRESENTATIVES**

Carol Burns  
Judith Dexter  
Sarah Dunn  
Mary Lou Hatcher  
Peggy McKinnon  
Grace Perez  
Stanley Rugis  
Mary Sawyer  
Gina Scala

### **CENTRAL ADMINISTRATOR REPRESENTATIVES**

Richard Agretto  
Iris Cintron  
Doris Correll  
Maria Fernandes  
Scott Garrigan  
Claire Hogan  
Michele Kostem  
Joseph Lewis  
Stanley Majewski  
William Nelson  
Monty Perfetti  
George Van Doren  
Julie Victory  
Anthony Villani

### **STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES**

Danielle L. Knecht  
Samuel Parker  
Caleb H. Schwarzbach  
Catherine Simonetta

### **SUPPORT STAFF REPRESENTATIVES**

Marie Bachman  
Patrick Connolly  
Jeffrey Donovan  
Cindy Grebs  
Joseph Palhofski  
Charlotte Zimmerman

## **TEACHER REPRESENTATIVES**

Richard Baksa  
Kathleen Bast  
David Beck  
Peter Boccadoro  
Dawn Bothwell  
Thomas Braun  
Maureen Calvo  
Catherine Caporaso  
Jane Cassidy  
Patricia Dinsmore  
Jennifer Eisenhart  
Barbara Fowler  
Linda Frederick  
John Freeh  
Matilde Garcia  
Donald Harris  
Cynthia Hartman  
Donald Horst  
Joan Irvine  
Carol Jacoby  
Diane Jordan  
Luz Jorge-Rosario  
Danny Kunkle  
Louise Kwiatek  
Paula Laughlin  
Kevin Long  
Gregory Martucci  
Patrice Masluk-Schwartzman  
George Maunz  
Lee Ann McCullagh  
Christine Mellor  
Dawn Mendez

Donald Midway  
Michele Miller  
Peter Mindler  
Nancy Mitchell-Kvacky  
Rebecca Ormesher  
Kathleen Packo  
Samuel Parker  
Leonard Perrett  
John Petro  
Lois Pinto  
Rene Rawhouser  
Carolyn Roman  
Rafael Salazer  
Nanette Sawyer  
Carole Schachter  
Kris Scipio  
Eric Smith  
Brenda Solitario  
Allan Snellman  
Mary Catherine Tachovsky  
Stephen Teeno  
Craig Weber  
Paula Weychert  
Craig Zieger

**BUILDING ADMINISTRATOR REPRESENTATIVES**

John Acerra  
James Ackerman  
Karen Aulisio  
Frances Bentkowski  
James Bertoni  
Elizabeth Burak  
William Burkhardt  
Edward Crawford  
Dean Donaher  
Barry Dubbs  
Jonathan Horvath  
Carol Leasure  
Jake Llewellyn  
Lisa Lynch  
Michael Metarko  
Michele Mullen  
Jill Moran  
Kathleen Quigney  
Joseph RaHS  
Jose Rosado  
Carol Turoczi  
Roger Washburn  
Thomas Washington  
Brian Williams