

Westbrook School Department Strategic Planning Process

Community Outreach Meeting – “Quick Notes”

November 11, 2009, Westbrook High School, Room 114

These notes were recorded on the spot by Craig Freshley of Good Group Decisions at a public meeting on November 11, 2009. They are not a complete representation of what was said at the meeting and they have not been checked for accuracy.

Ways to get public involvement in this Planning Process

- Distribute through Westbrook Housing
- Each teacher invite a friend
- Young people as surveyors
- Church Fairs
- On-line survey
 - Encourage others to pass along the link to their own lists
- Get coverage in the Press Herald
- Facebook
- Advisory Committee members distribute the survey
- Use PTO listserves
- Mail survey with return postage envelop
- Reach kids with surveys through student leaders and in other ways (although not ask each kid to fill out a survey)
- Adult Education and Rec. Department
- Voicemails to all the parents

Community Input about Westbrook School Department

1. Doing well

- a. Many diverse offerings
- b. Great budget process
 - i. Works up from the teacher level
 - ii. Input from every level
 - iii. Very transparent
 - iv. Lots of public input
- c. Partner well with community services
- d. Good outreach to parents

- e. Good infrastructure and resources
 - i. Facilities
- f. Attract and retain excellent staff
- g. Focus on learning
 - i. Focused on children
 - ii. And focused on lifelong learning for staff
 - iii. Customized learning
- h. Focusing on at risk at a young age
 - i. Attendance
 - ii. Attachment
 - iii. Achievement
- i. Many supports for students
 - i. Comprehensive guidance program
 - ii. Credit recovery programs
 - iii. Winter Academy
 - iv. Spring Academy
 - v. Alternative learning program
 - vi. Customized for the child
- j. Great School Committee
- k. Good partnership with the City and others
 - i. School departments working with City departments
- l. Good planning because our administration has a lot of foresight

2. Could do better

- a. Drop out rate is too high
- b. Assessment results in certain areas
- c. Encourage kids to
 - i. have high aspirations
 - ii. have more respect for themselves and others
- d. Transition out non-performing teachers
- e. Better transitions between levels K-5 6-8 9-12
 - i. Provide better for transitions
- f. Move out of our comfort zone
 - i. We could look to the future better and think differently
 - ii. Do we have the best configurations?
- g. Embrace change
 - i. Consider different:
 - 1. Schedule
 - 2. Time of day
 - 3. Length of day
- h. Hard to conform to regulations and protocols that are outdated
- i. Improve school readiness
 - i. Offer universal pre-K
- j. Ways that the kids are connected to their community

- i. Service learning and other ways
- k. Serving kids well who are staying with the process by connecting them to the workforce or college
 - i. Our kids can attract the attention of potential employers or colleges
- l. More individualized curriculum
 - i. Need to develop individualized plans early
- m. Be able to send Juniors right to college
- n. Need to support kids emotionally
 - i. Requires better reach out to parents
- o. Need to shift resources to support parents
- p. Partnering with caregivers – more than just episodic
- q. Model shared respect for our kids
- r. Keep an eye on future trends and patterns
 - i. What will be the careers of the future
- s. Increase offerings in after-school programming
- t. Increase opportunities for mentoring among students
- u. Help teachers teach for deeper understanding
- v. Help teachers be more technologically adept
- w. Acknowledge our growing diversity
 - i. Economic
 - ii. Cultural

3. Worries or concerns

- a. School Committee recruitment
 - i. This is a very important role
- b. Federal and state mandates
- c. Significant reduction in revenues
 - i. We need to address this
- d. The mentality that we have to do more than less
 - i. We need to speak up more to our representatives
- e. Always having to respond to external forces
- f. Sense of complacency regarding safety
- g. Ask too much of our schools besides teaching
- h. Increased graduation requirements will take away interesting things that keep kids in school
- i. Losing skills (like patience to read a book, handwriting, spelling, etc.) in the face of new technology
- j. We're producing kids that can't think critically

4. Spending

- a. Spend more on:
 - i. Incentive pay so we could reward stellar and outstanding staff
 - ii. Building maintenance
 - iii. Capital reserve fund for physical plant
 - iv. Professional development for staff
 - 1. Helps retain outstanding employees
 - v. Outside of school experiences
 - vi. Engaging students in school activities other than academics
 - vii. Bring back recent graduates to talk to current students
 - viii. Expose kids to virtual experiences
 - ix. Community fundraising
 - x. Community education
- b. Spend less on:
 - i. Not too much on athletics
 - ii. More collaboration with the City
 - 1. Administrative functions
 - iii. Substitute budget
 - iv. Stipends
 - 1. need better understanding
 - 2. consider changing away from stipend at every change

5. Anything else

- a. Let's re-think the structures of our schools so we now why they are structured as they are or consider changing them
- b. Rethinking how we deliver elementary school education
 - i. Consolidation of elementary schools
- c. Rethink the calendar and the day
- d. Consider aggressive partnerships with business and industry, colleges and universities
 - i. Internships
 - ii. Service learning
 - iii. Volunteers into the schools
- e. Rethink transportation – how we get kids to/from school – expectations of families
- f. We are victims of mission creep – we get asked to do so much – it's very hard to prioritize when everything is “you have to do this”