

PITTSGROVE TOWNSHIP SCHOOL DISTRICT
Comments/Feedback from Public Forum #3
January 10, 2017

Each participant at the third community forum was asked to write down five key, tangible, strategic initiatives that the District can pursue to accomplish its Vision and Mission, which would align with the guiding principles and future direction of the District. The individual, participant responses are indicated below:

1.
 - Elmer residents should have a greater say in District decisions.
 - More CTE programs
 - Better Special Education placements
 - Focus on STEM initiatives.
 - Focus on innovation and technology—an appreciation for innovation is important.
2.
 - Offer more CTE programs through tech school and community partnerships.
 - Include diverse learning.
3.
 - Improve communication through social media.
 - Community engagement: Develop outreach to the community in cooperation with the Township and Borough of Elmer.
 - Clearly identify goals of the School Choice Program.
 - Develop a community library and use citizen volunteers for reading programs.
 - Develop a program to teach life skills, such as check writing, home making, etc.
4.
 - The District should emphasize STEM courses, but not exclude art, music, and civics.
 - The District should update its technology.
 - Technology should be open to the community.
 - The classroom culture should reflect caring and respect for all children.
5.
 - Personalize learning and offer more diversified choices of academic paths (i.e. more employer-driven programs).
 - Expand upon college preparatory programs (dual credit enrollment).
 - Offer STEM programs to allow students to explore possibilities using technology and sharing.
 - Arts and music should be more accessible.
 - Teach life skills at all levels, including Special Education and culture.
6.
 - Provide stable funding for extracurricular activities.
 - Engage the community in a more systemic manner.
 - Communicate more effectively with stakeholders.

- Implement technology into old programs and courses.
 - Provide a well-rounded education with an emphasis on the liberal arts.
- 7.
- Develop a whole student approach focused on 21st Century education that is capable of preparing each student for college and career readiness and global education.
 - The District should engage with communities and resources in the region in an effort to enhance the real-world educational experience for students of all grade levels.
 - The District should infuse technology into the curriculum that will prepare students for a broad base of applicable skills.
 - The District should instill a positive and collective culture that embraces the uniqueness of all students in a caring and respectful environment.
 - The District should apply best practices in an effort to ensure that all students have an opportunity to find academic success within a challenging, academic curriculum.
- 8.
- Expand STEM and extracurricular STEM offerings in K-12.
 - Use less compartmentalized learning, and more cross-curricular lessons with real-world applications.
 - Support diverse families through student counseling.
 - Increase staff to reduce class sizes, and expand offerings.
 - Community partnerships may need to extend beyond Pittsgrove in Salem County.
 - Expand shared services and programs within the County—not to compete, but work towards a common goal.
- 9.
- Intervention services
 - Diversified learning, including STEM and CTE
 - Communication
 - Community engagement
 - Maintain a positive school culture for students and in the community.
- 10.
- Reduce class sizes, especially at the elementary level.
 - Offer extracurricular activities in all schools.
 - STEM
 - Facilities—Do we really need five schools?
 - Need more community engagement.
- 11.
- Expand parental and community involvement by holding regular focus groups.
 - Follow up on status.
 - Provide more opportunities for informal interactions with the administration.
 - Improve communication at school events through the use of technology (i.e. Facebook and Twitter).
 - Decrease outsourcing of staff.
 - Evaluate the current facilities and determine if five schools are the right model.
 - Expand extracurricular activities.

- Offer more programs that focus upon career readiness.
 - Examine class sizes.
- 12.
- Reduce class sizes in the elementary schools.
 - Develop and support more STEM opportunities in grades K-12.
 - Improve the building facilities and consolidate buildings, where necessary.
 - Incorporate 21st Century skills into more courses.
 - Provide improved supports for intervention.
- 13.
- Provide students with a rigorous curriculum that promotes 21st Century skills that is inclusive for all.
 - Promote a positive culture and climate.
 - Provide efficiency through creative staffing at the elementary schools.
- 14.
- Decrease class sizes.
 - Return to old school concepts, including creative play and socialization.
 - Trust the teachers' professional opinions.
 - Reduce testing.
 - Increase technology in the schools and the community.
 - Reduce the number of transitions between elementary, middle, and the high school.
- 15.
- Consolidate the elementary schools with one pre-K to 3 building, and one 4-6 building; close one school.
 - Stop outsourcing aides, custodians, and cafeteria staff.
 - Reduce class sizes.
- 16.
- Focus on in-house support staff.
 - Reduce class sizes.
 - Improve communication with teachers, parents, and students.
 - Increase school times.
 - Require students to wear uniforms.
- 17.
- Consider bringing food services in-house (not outsourced).
 - Consider offering programs that nearby districts don't offer to attract out-of-district tuition students.
 - Encourage community service by athletic teams and other groups—not just on school property.
 - Conduct surveys of the student body when seeking to improve facilities or purchase equipment, since you should consult with the users.
 - Increase shared services with municipalities in other districts.

18.
 - Keep class sizes small.
 - Update the buildings/facilities.
 - Provide Special Education intervention services.
 - Promote/need community participation.
 - Use substitute teachers and part-time teachers to reduce class sizes.
19.
 - Prepare students with a 21st Century curriculum and with 21st Century skills.
 - Provide a safe and enriching educational environment for all students.
 - Maintain a rich set of traditional school social experiences.
 - Increase academic rigor and expectations for both staff and students.
 - Strive and compete for outside public recognition of the District on all levels.
20.
 - Achieve readiness in college, career, and life.
 - Build a strong school community.
 - Create a culture of excellence and high expectations.
 - Technology
 - School culture and environment
 - Strive for continuous improvement.
21.
 - Find new sources of revenue—we need a grant writer in the District.
 - Improve facilities through consolidation and a bond referendum.
 - Offer additional classes for 21st Century life and academic skills.
 - Technology—make sure that we stay current.
 - Solicit community partnerships.
22.
 - 21st Century life skills
 - There is too much testing and emphasis on rote learning.
 - Focus on character education and values.
 - Upgrade the District facilities.
 - Reduce testing to provide a less intimidating, educational environment.
 - Focus on critical-thinking skills throughout all courses.
23.
 - Offer CTE programs with real-world/life experiences for career readiness.
 - Instill real diversity that connects with various segments of our community.
 - Provide horizontal and vertical curriculum articulation that eases transitions from one school to the next.
 - Need a greater implementation of STEM programs.
 - Offer additional CTE programs and college and career readiness programs.
 - Need additional extracurricular activities and clubs.
 - Find additional sources of revenue (i.e. grants).
 - Provide greater support for Special Education.

24.
 - Curriculum
 - Assessment
 - Inclusive communication and involvement
 - Finances
 - Special Education
25.
 - Partner with Rowan university and local employers to expand STEM programs and internships.
 - Continue to build communication with parents and the community.
 - Budget for additional extracurricular activities.
 - Reduce the costs of facilities by eliminating buildings and consolidating into fewer or newer buildings.
 - Expand dual credit programs at the high school.
26.
 - Establish partnerships with trade skill schools.
 - Class sizes are too large—need to reduce.
 - Keep aides local—don't outsource.
 - Provide adult education opportunities in the evenings.
27.
 - Class sizes should remain smaller in the elementary schools.
 - Need to increase community involvement.
 - Expand communication with all factions of the community.
 - Keep staff and services local.
28.
 - Build a new K-5 building.
 - Need to bring back benefits and days off for the aides.
29.
 - Build a pre-K to 5 building.
 - Need to employ district employees as aides and not outsource them. District aides become invested in the children, the schools, and the community.
30.
 - School culture—Parents need to be more involved in the Special Education setting.
 - Need to establish a community Township channel.
 - Special Education aides should not be outsourced and need to be respected as professionals in the District.
 - Efficiency—We need a building for elementary-aged children.
31.
 - Parents should be treated as school partners.
 - Focus on academics and life skills.
 - Upgrade the facilities.
 - Look for additional sources of revenue (i.e. grants).
 - Class sizes

- 32.
- 21st Century life and academic skills
 - CTE programs
 - Establish/expand STEM programs through partnerships with Rowan University.
 - Focus on interventions through tiered services with a social worker in each building.
 - Support the early childhood budget.
 - Perform a facilities assessment plan.
 - Provide/expand dual credit programs/offerings.
 - Increase revenue sources by hiring a District grant writer.
 - Reduce class sizes.
- 33.
- Support college preparation through advanced programs.
 - Decrease class sizes.
 - Need communication for better academics.
 - Hire a reading specialist.
- 34.
- Programs should be developed that prepare students with different strengths to flourish in the real world.
 - Facilities should be maintained that promote a safe and welcoming environment that is conducive for all learners.
 - The District and its schools should focus on community relations with both families and businesses.
 - The District should utilize technology and equip students with the skills to be successful in college and business.
 - The District should utilize strategies to implement the most efficient use of resources throughout the budget process.
- 35.
- Provide a curriculum with broader offerings, and identify priorities.
 - There is an over-emphasis on assessment/testing—integrate as we go assessments into the curriculum.
 - Inclusive communication will encourage as many individuals as possible to understand and participate in the decision-making process—all opinions are of value.
 - Finances, given State funding, are dwindling. We need to identify potential grants and cost savings.
 - The Special Education curriculum should maximize student performance.
- 36.
- Develop and implement diverse school and after-school programs which cumulatively represent all students' interests and needs.
 - Develop a strong relationship with the community which will utilize all members as assets of the school district.
 - Bring schools into the 21st Century by adding technological advances throughout the District, and create programs that educate students on these advances.
 - Funding
 - Facilities

37.

- Need smaller class sizes to focus on each child's needs.
- STEM programs
- Advanced programs
- Need collaboration and communication—teachers, students, parents, and community members.
- Offer CTE programs with real-world applications.

38.

- Need an increase in diversity of opportunities.
- Build partnerships with the community, internships, and colleges.
- Improve learning opportunities: smaller class sizes, technology, grading for growth, etc.
- Improve communication with the community.
- Increase extracurricular offerings, including the Arts.

Each table was asked to discuss the goals identified by the individual participants, and reach a consensus on their top five goals in order of priority.

Table One:

1. Underrepresented populations advocating for their children and breaking down barriers
2. Reduce class sizes by using creative staffing strategies.
3. Build on academic and social foundations to boost student success at all levels, including higher education.
4. Implement STEAM programs from beginning to end.
5. Work with community resources and other school districts.

Table Two:

1. Provide improved supports and interventions for struggling students.
2. Reduce class sizes in the elementary schools.
3. Expand opportunities for parental and community involvement in both formal and informal settings.
4. Revise the curriculum to meet the needs of 21st Century learners (i.e. STEM and CTE programs).
5. Evaluate and improve the buildings and facilities.

Table Three:

1. Evaluate each school building and determine whether to update, consolidate, or close to account for aging facilities.
2. Bring back services that are presently being outsourced, including aides, custodians, and cafeteria workers.
3. Reduce class sizes to the following: Pre-K: 13-15; K-4: 18-23; 5-8: 20-24; 9-12: should not exceed 26 students.
4. Implement a dress code and school uniforms.
5. Continue ICS and resource room programs for Special Education students. Offer enough of these programs so that students are appropriately placed.

Table Four:

1. Increase differentiated learning through smaller class sizes, and offer opportunities for technology and Special Education programs.
2. Implement better guidance programming, collaboration at the high school, written goal-setting, and ongoing development plans to meet the needs of non college-bound and college-bound students. Utilize diverse programming, including CTE, Academies, and STEM.
3. Track progress by revising student goals.
4. Focus on communication between students, teachers, and parents.
5. Let kids be kids—expand extracurricular activities.
6. Teachers should give less homework to allow for more family time.
7. Improve communication, especially with the community.
8. Focus on learning through standards-based grading.
9. Have less testing.

Table Five:

1. Achieve readiness for college and careers.
2. Prepare students for the 21st Century workplace.
3. Build enhanced community relationships.
4. Create a culture of excellence by setting high expectations.
5. Upgrade and modernize the school facilities.

Table Six:

1. Focus on life skills, especially those necessary to navigate and communicate in a 21st Century society with technology.
2. Facilities Plan—The District must assess and plan for the future.
3. Develop community and regional relationships, especially with colleges and universities in the STEM field, with families, and businesses.
4. Need an efficient use of resources, including a focus on grants and partnerships.
5. Reduce class sizes.

Table Seven:

1. CTE and career readiness programs
2. Communicate the need to upgrade facilities.
3. Seek alternative sources of revenue, such as grants.
4. Special Education—The District needs to challenge students more.
5. The curriculum should focus on STEAM.

Table Eight:

1. Increase STEM education opportunities for all students of all backgrounds, in all grades.
2. Apply best practices to ensure that all students have an opportunity for academic success, including cultural education, the Arts, CTE skills, and real-world applications.
3. Provide supervision in transportation to expand extracurricular programs in grades K-5.
4. Build community and regional partnerships to share services with the Township, other districts, colleges and universities, and businesses.
5. Improve communication between the District and the community, beyond just current students and parents.

Table Nine:

1. Build a new K-5 building.
2. Create a community local access channel to bring together the school, the Township, and the community.
3. Need fair wages and benefits for support staff.
4. Offer adult, community-based educational courses.
5. Reduce class sizes.

Following the large group discussion regarding reaching consensus and prioritization of five goals by the various tables, the tables were asked whether they would like to change their number one priority. Below are the priorities that were provided by each table:

- Table 1: A new K-5 building and smaller class sizes
- Table 2: Interventions for struggling students
- Table 3: Facilities
- Table 4: College readiness and life skills
- Table 5: Finding additional sources of funding/revenue
- Table 6: Increase in differentiation of instruction
- Table 7: Community relations
- Table 8: Bringing the community together
- Table 9: Regional and community partnerships