

BRAINERD HIGH SCHOOL STRATEGIC PLAN

June 2011

Brainerd High School Community

The Strategic Planning Process



- Driven by the steering committee
- Input by a 30 member stakeholder group over 4 meetings, survey of students by BHS administration & four focus groups:
 - Community members
 - Parents
 - Teachers
 - Students
- The Ochs Center was retained by the Maclellan Foundation to facilitate meetings, provide research and assist in plan development

Strategic Planning Process Objectives



1. Examine current conditions
2. Identify long term outcomes
3. Detail barriers to achieving long term outcomes
4. Identify opportunities
5. Determine short term goals that will lead to long term outcomes
6. Prioritize strategize strategies to achieve long term outcomes

“As a result of implementing this plan...”



Four long term outcomes were identified by the steering committee:

1. More Brainerd students will graduate, with a goal of 100%
2. Students, teachers, and parents will all be committed to the Brainerd learning environment
3. Brainerd will be seen as a community asset
4. Students will be better prepared for college/life

Strategic Assessment



- The Ochs Center collected data in order to assess the current conditions at Brainerd High School.
- Several key findings:
 - ▣ Less than half of all male students are graduating in 4 years.
 - ▣ In 2009-10: BHS attendance rate was 86.0% compared to 92.2% across the county and 93.0% for the state.
 - ▣ Out of the 65 students enrolled in some type of college from the graduating class of 2005, only 9 had completed a two or four year degree by 2009.

Strategic Assessment – Student Survey



- 15% of the boys surveyed said they had been stabbed before.
- 37% of the males surveyed said they had been shot at before, 9% had actually been shot.
- 12% of females and 20% of males indicated that they have been a victim of a violent crime.
- 8% of students surveyed indicated they had children of their own – ranging in age from 2 months to 4 years old.

Focus Group: Teachers

- The group was asked to describe daily challenges
 - ▣ Attendance
 - ▣ Discipline
 - ▣ Student culture is different – students are not conditioned to deal with discipline or criticism
- Is 100% graduation rate possible?
 - ▣ Some students only come to school for the social aspect and have no interest in graduating
 - ▣ Reading deficiencies are a major barrier
 - ▣ Most members in the group decided that it was possible to help every student but it would require major changes
- The group was asked to describe staff collaboration
 - ▣ Very little cooperation among staff members
 - ▣ New teachers believed there was “trial by fire”

Focus Group: Teachers

- What programs do not work and should be changed?
 - ▣ Pride Time started as a good idea but is not streamlined enough to be effective
 - ▣ Inconsistencies exist everywhere, which puts strain on existing programming
 - ▣ The faltering academy system confuses students
- What should be happening at BHS to increase the quality of student performance?
 - ▣ Everyone should know the mission and vision of the school
 - ▣ Give every class value and not use some as “dumping grounds” for trouble makers
 - ▣ Every teacher should be using Pride Time for tutoring

Focus Group: Students



- Lack of support:
 - ▣ Students expressed that not enough teachers and parents who care about their future – teachers who are “just there for the paycheck”
 - ▣ When asked to describe a teacher that did care about them:
 - Teachers who take time to explain, push students, and never give up.
 - Teachers who stay after school, act as mentors and go beyond the classroom.
 - Teachers who keep in touch with students and constantly remind students to keep up.
- Perception:
 - ▣ Students hear what is said about BHS in the community and expressed the same concerns as faculty and staff regarding unfair coverage.

Focus Group: Students



- Graduation & College
 - ▣ Students said that lack of parental and teacher support is a barrier to reaching 100% graduation.
 - ▣ Each student expressed a desire to go to college.
 - ▣ Each student had visited a college campus – they cited GEAR UP and Upward Bound as programs that made them more likely to attend college.

Focus Group: Students

- Students indicated that PrideTime is a good opportunity for extra curricular activities and doing make-up work.
- They also stated that NovaNet was a good way for students to get caught up on missed work and get ahead.
- The biggest challenges according to the group:
 - ▣ Students who don't like coming to school
 - ▣ Lack of teacher quality
 - ▣ Lack of consistency in dress code
 - ▣ Lack of support for students
 - ▣ After school programs that help academics but are interesting enough to attract participation
 - ▣ Lack of quality facilities
 - ▣ Need for more challenging curriculum

Focus Group: Parents



- Parents were asked what one word they would use to describe BHS
 - ▣ Rough, rowdy, poor, could be improved, excitement
- How is BHS different now then when you were in school
 - ▣ Less student respect for teachers
 - ▣ Teachers are not as passionate as they were back then
- What are the biggest challenges at BHS
 - ▣ Lack of safety, no encouragement, low quality curriculum, bad communication, lack of guidance

Focus Group: Parents

- Parents were asked to talk about challenge of entering freshmen already behind
 - ▣ School lacks programs to help students who start out behind
 - ▣ It seems like teachers have given up on students that are behind
- The group was asked to comment on public perception
 - ▣ Some members see safety as the underlying issue
- Parents were asked to describe their experience talking with teachers
 - ▣ General lack of communication – no positive calls, no distribution of teacher emails, inability to check progress on the web
 - ▣ If a child is an athlete, they get better treatment
 - ▣ Teachers don't seem organized

Focus Group: Parents



- Parents were asked to describe a great teacher at BHS
 - ▣ Dedicated, weekly communication, high expectation for their kids, no nonsense, consistency, and always prepared for class
- Parents were asked to describe things that work at BHS
 - ▣ GEAR UP, some staff members are very dedicated
- What could BHS do to reach more parents
 - ▣ Make phone calls, have an interactive website, newsletter

Focus Group: Community Members

- Perception
 - ▣ BHS used to be a middle class school that was an asset to the community
 - ▣ The current perception is more negative
 - Violence
 - Low graduation rate
 - ▣ The group said that they receive their news about BHS from family, community members, and from local news outlets
- Advice about sending a child to BHS
 - ▣ Some participants would recommend BHS as a good school to friends
 - BHS is a good school, despite current problems
 - ▣ Most participants would not recommend BHS to friends
 - Brainerd doesn't motivate or push students
 - Not enough structure and support for students

Focus Group: Community Members

- All participants said they had been to an event at BHS and most said they would like to attend again.
 - ▣ They did express a disconnect between BHS and the community. The community at large wants to help – but doesn't know what the needs are.
- The participants were asked how BHS could repair its community image
 - ▣ Fix up the building
 - ▣ Encourage parents and students to think positively
 - ▣ Increase coordination between all volunteer groups so that work and donations are used in the most effective way
 - ▣ Become more pro-active about perception
 - Build partnerships to work on projects
 - Put more emphasis on the rich history of Brainerd High School

Challenges Identified by Stakeholders Reflect Assessment, Focus Group and Survey Results

- ▣ *Before students get to Brainerd*
 - Limited reading ability and literacy
 - Lack of early focus on academics
 - Student inability to effectively communicate
- ▣ *Community*
 - Violence
 - Teenage pregnancy and students with children
 - Number of students with child welfare and justice system issues
 - Low Expectations

Challenges

▣ *Parental*

- Lack of Parental involvement
- Low Student attendance
- Lack of Support at home
- Low Expectations

▣ *School*

- Curriculum
- Need for faculty training and professional development
- Communications with parents
- Communication with students
- Low expectations and difficulty identifying gifts of individual students
- Hard to engage and motivate students

Opportunities

- *Community:*
 - ▣ THRIVE, field trips, internships, mentoring, before and after school programs that deliver results
- *Partnership with feeder schools:*
 - ▣ Develop a common language, shadow teachers, and develop a mentor program
- *Parental:*
 - ▣ Better communication with faculty, parents as peer mentors of other parents
- *School:*
 - ▣ Teacher shadowing, best practices, and create a schedule that works for all students

Short Term Goals to Achieve Outcomes

- *Long term outcome: More BHS students graduating with a goal of 100%*
 - ▣ Increase “effective” parent contacts by 15%
 - ▣ Increase number of students with a certain number of credits by 9th,10th,11th grade.
 - ▣ 100% of remedial students have mentors
 - ▣ Increase attendance by 5 percentage points each year
 - ▣ 100% remediation of deficient 9th graders based on proficiency at the end of 9th grade end of course test
 - ▣ Increase number of students proficient in English/Math before they enter ninth grade - “Success at Brainerd begins at birth”

Goals



- *Long term outcome: Community leaders and residents will be involved in BHS and view the school as a community asset*
 - ▣ Increase community partnerships and fundraising
 - ▣ 5+ hours of community service or in school volunteer activity required for every student
 - ▣ Increase positive publicity
 - ▣ Increase the quality of the facilities and the overall appearance of the building

Goals



- *Long term objective: BHS Students will be better prepared for college/life*
 - Decrease number of in school suspensions
 - 100% alignment of expectations measured by classroom observations
 - Increase the number of students exposed to college and career options
 - Increase students in life skills and financial literacy classes
 - Increase number of high performing teachers
 - Increase ACT scores
 - Reduce unemployment rate for students
 - Increase college admission and retention rate

Goals



- *Long term objective: Parents, teachers, and students will be committed to the BHS learning environment*
 - ▣ Increase attendance and decrease tardiness
 - ▣ Increase the number of students successful in grade to grade transition
 - ▣ Increase accountability in attendance keeping
 - ▣ Decrease the number of returned parent mail
 - ▣ Increase the number of positive parent contacts
 - ▣ Increase dress code compliance
 - ▣ Increase teacher/administrative retention

Strategies



- *Long term objective: More BHS students will graduate with a goal of 100%*
 - ▣ Upper class students and parents should act as mentors for incoming freshman and their parents
 - ▣ Professional development for faculty and staff focused on how to better work with and communicate with parents and how to address workplace-based challenges
 - ▣ Develop and provide training to teachers on the best uses of Pride Time
 - ▣ Create high expectations for teachers and students and hold them accountable – Expect and Inspect

Strategies



- *Long term objective: More BHS students will graduate with a goal of 100%*
 - ▣ Create incentives for parents to become more involved
 - ▣ Implement Quantum Learning (research based school reform model)
 - ▣ Plan and hold staff retreat
 - ▣ Develop a system of regular celebrations for student and staff achievement

Strategies



- *Long term objective: Brainerd students will be better prepared for college and life*
 - ▣ Implement a “Rewards Plus” program providing privileges to students based on student research on privileges extended to best students at best school
 - ▣ Create incentives to increase the number of high performing teachers
 - ▣ Increase student exposure to existing career and college preparation programs (such as ACT prep afterschool)
 - ▣ Introduce financial and life skills into the curriculum (based on what would appeal best to students)

Strategies

- *Long term objective: Parents, teachers, and students will all be involved, excited, and committed to the BHS learning environment.*
 - ▣ Create monthly incentives for individual students and the entire school for attendance and reductions in tardiness
 - ▣ Connect current BHS students with future BHS students when they are in middle school to talk about “What is happening at Brainerd”
 - ▣ High individual student achievement – “Catch students doing well”
 - ▣ Provide training and hold teachers accountable for accurate attendance record keeping
 - ▣ Ask students to provide quarterly updates on parent contact information
 - ▣ Send regular information and updates to parents
 - ▣ Bring parent orientation to the community and create incentives and support to attend events and BHS

Strategies

- *Long term objective: Parents, teachers, and students will all be involved, excited, and committed to the BHS learning environment.*
 - ▣ Work with parents to determine the most effective incentives for parent participation
 - ▣ Create incentives for dress code compliance and work with the community to establish a clothing drive and community closet
 - ▣ Work with HCDE to create district level incentives for the retention of quality teachers
 - ▣ Establish an active teacher mentor program
 - ▣ Use interviews with new teachers to set high expectations for performance

Strategies

- *Long term objective: Community leaders and residents will be involved at BHS and view the school as a community asset*
 - ▣ Map existing community resources that could provide assistance to BHS
 - ▣ Identify potential resources in the community and make them aware of needs at BHS
 - ▣ Regularly bring community leaders to BHS for school visits
 - ▣ Include someone who understands and/or will regularly reach out to local media on the school leadership team
 - ▣ Involve students in a “makeover” of a specific area of the school
 - ▣ Create BHS billboard to high positive changes

Implementation of Strategies



- Prioritize: The steering committee was convened and asked to rank each between 1 and 10 based on the following two factors:
 - ▣ Importance to achieving one or more of the above outcomes
 - ▣ Degree to which it is likely to succeed (e.g. research supported, best practices, low cost, no new resources)

The group was also asked to identify five strategies that would be the best start to implementing the strategic plan.

Prioritizing Strategies



- Strategies given the highest priority:
 - ▣ Create high expectations for teachers and students
 - ▣ Implement Quantum Learning
 - ▣ Develop a system of regular celebrations for student and staff achievement
 - ▣ Increase student exposure to career and college preparation programs
 - ▣ Provide training and hold teachers accountable for accurate attendance record keeping

Prioritizing Strategies



- Strategies awarded the highest number of points
 - ▣ Create monthly incentives for individual students and the entire school for attendance and reductions in tardiness
 - ▣ Create high expectations for teachers and students and hold them accountable – Expect and Inspect
 - ▣ Increase student exposure to career and college preparation programs
 - ▣ Implement Quantum Learning
 - ▣ Send regular information and updates to parents

Next Steps



- Get buy in from HCDE central office, administrators, faculty, parents and students
- Identify funding sources where necessary
- Designate coordinator for overall effort
- Designate one “wake up in the morning” person to drive each of the initiatives
- Determine interim metrics to measure progress or need to improve (e.g. teacher evaluations, student attendance, ACT practice tests, grades, teacher attendance, surveys)
- Rigorous and relentless follow up (e.g BrainerdStat – monthly meeting to review progress based on data)
- Evaluation and re-assess priorities on ongoing basis