

Vision 2025 Strategic Plan

Clinton Central School District Clinton, New York



District Vision

Our students are prepared for the future through engaging, meaningful and challenging learning opportunities delivered by motivated and inspired professionals, and supported through collaborative partnerships with family, our community, businesses and organizations, and institutions of higher education.

Dr. Kevin Baughman & Associates - Educational Planning Consultant

Dr. Kevin Baughman & Dr. Deborah Shea

July, 2020

Clinton Central School District

Clinton, New York



2019-2020 Clinton Board of Education

Ms. Mary Lou Lauchert, President
Ms. Erica Shaw, Vice President
Ms. Megan Burdick
Mr. Sam Catterson
Ms. Melinda Leising
Dr. Luke Perry
Mr. Timothy Thomas

Julia A. Scranton, District Clerk:

Clinton School Administration

Dr. Stephen Grimm	Superintendent of Schools
Mr. Joseph Barretta	Assistant Superintendent for Business
Ms. Kathy Fonda	Director of Pupil Personnel Services
Ms. Debora Van Slyke	Director of Instruction
Ms. Ellen Leuthauser	Elementary School Principal
Dr. Shaun Carney	Middle School Principal
Dr. Matthew Lee	High School Principal

Strategic Planning Consultant

Dr. Kevin Baughman	Principal, Dr. Kevin Baughman & Associates
Dr. Deborah Shea	Consultant

Clinton School-Community Vision 2025 Advisory Team

Amie Johnson - Parent and teacher
Angela Kramer - Parent
Ben Fehlner - Village Trustee and parent
Chloe Filippo - Student
Claire Barone - Student
Jackie Walters - Chamber of Commerce and Parent
David Goodfriend - Student
Debora VanSlyke – District administration
Ellen Leuthauser – School Principal
Garry Colarusso - Kirkland Town Council
Heidi Venero - Parent
James Scoones – Support staff
Joe Barretta – District administration
John King – Clinton Teachers Association
Katie Parker - Teacher
Landon Stilz - Student
Martin Amuso - Student
Mary Lou Lauchert – Board of Education
Dr. Matthew Lee – School Principal
Michael Debraggio - Hamilton College
Dr. Shaun Carney – School Principal
Dr. Stephen Grimm - Superintendent

Assistance to the Advisory Team

Dr. Deb Shea
Dr. Kevin Baughman

Acknowledgements and Appreciation

As consultants, we have sincerely enjoyed working with all the Clinton Central School District stakeholders in strategic planning spanning the past seven years. The Clinton school and community are a warm, welcoming place. We have found the students curious, interested, and enthusiastic. The staff have always been respectful, motivated, and open. The administration and board of education are always supportive of children and loyal to the school. The community has always been willing to assist, be open, and support the best interest of the school district and children.

The Clinton Central School District has much to be proud of. By committing to developing a strategic plan requires courage and foresight, a willingness to look inward, but also plan onward. It requires recognizing and celebrating the many positives, yet willing to acknowledge that which can be made better ... all with our children's future in mind.

Thank you for letting us share time with you.

Dr. Kevin Baughman
Principal

Dr. Deborah Shea
Consultant

Dr. Kevin Baughman & Associates
Niskayuna, New York 12309
Kevinbaughman1@gmail.com
(518) 727-5710

Table of Contents

1. Executive Summary & Overview 6

2. Terms and Definitions 7

3. Vision & Mission 8

4. Core Values 9

5. Learning Foundations, Goals & Objectives 10

LEARNING FOUNDATION 1: District Systems 12
Human Resource Processes • Facilities • Professional Development • Safety • Leadership

Goal 1.1 14
 Ensure staff are motivated and inspired professionals by recruiting, hiring and retaining high quality staff that match our values, mission and vision through clear detailed human resource processes that are consistent district wide.

Goal 1.2 14
 We will be vigilant in assessing security and safety risk for students, staff and community on school property in order to provide a safe and welcoming environment for all.

LEARNING FOUNDATION 2: Supportive Learning Environment..... 15
Social Emotional • Inclusive • Cultural Competence • High Expectations • Relationships • Physical/Mental Health

Goal 2.1 17
 Students and staff respect, appreciate, and celebrate ethnic and cultural differences in individuals and groups. Children learn to self-manage, understand different perspectives, relate effectively with others, and make sound choices about personal and social decisions.

Goal 2.2 17
 We hold all students to high standards of academic performance and conduct, supporting a culture of academic excellence and citizenship and student physical and mental health.

LEARNING FOUNDATION 3: Educational Equity and Excellence 18
Engaging & Differentiated Instruction • Curriculum • Collaboration • Career & College Ready • Technology

Goal 3.1 20
 Each student’s unique interests and abilities are incorporated into our teaching, ensuring students reach their full potential becoming career and/or college ready.

Goal 3.2 21
 Classroom instruction utilizes multiple learning tools and strategies requiring students to think and write critically, be challenged, and become self-directed learners.

Goal 3.3 22
 Each curriculum is closely aligned with state standards, vertically aligned by grade level, relevant, reflects student needs, and includes engaging strategies for the learner in order to educate and empower all students.

LEARNING FOUNDATION 4: Family and Community Engagement 23
Community & Parent Engagement • Communication • Collaborative Partnerships • Interdependence

Goal 4.1 24
 Our schools and classrooms are accessible and genuinely welcoming to parents, families and the community. Our community, its schools, and all stakeholders establish and maintain strong cooperative, collaborative relationships.

Goal 4.2 25
 Our schools and district expand partnerships with the community including businesses and higher education. This collaboration is essential to expand learning opportunities for children.

1. Executive Summary & Overview

The Clinton Central School District Vision 2025 Strategic Plan provides a *direction forward for the next five years*. It will help guide the district in prioritizing resources and making decisions. The goals of the strategic plan are the **focus and driving force** for all other annual district or school plans, resources, programs and initiatives needed to support the Vision 2025 district goals.

The Clinton school district Vision 2025 Strategic Plan is the successor to the initial Vision 2020 plan implemented in 2015 and developed with the assistance of Dr. Kevin Baughman & Associates. In 2019, in preparation for a new strategic plan, the Board of Education requested a progress assessment on the Vision 2020 plan. The assessment indicated the district had achieved or was progressing on many of the key goals or objectives outlined in the plan. Several of the goals or objectives from the prior plan are integrated into the Vision 2025 plan. Dr. Kevin Baughman & Associates were retained to provide assistance in the development of this successor Vision 2025 plan.

Strategic planning in the Clinton school district was a **highly collaborative and comprehensive process** involving school and community representatives who helped to identify student needs and priorities. This ensured *input from all stakeholders* on direction, establishing core values, and revisions to the vision and mission statements. Their input is embedded throughout this plan. The strategic goals and objectives address key areas of student learning and are consistent with the mission and vision of the district. The process included:

- Meetings with administration and Board of Education
- Results from the Vision 2020 Progress Assessment (2019)
- 1:1 and Group on-site Interviews (2019-2020)
- Board workshop (2020)
- School-Community Survey – 495 responses (2020) **(see note below)*
- Research on effective practices
- Review of district documents
- Superintendent Community Strategic Plan Advisory Team (2020)
- Final discussions/interactions with Board of Education and Superintendent
- Consultant observations and experience

** Note: The School-Community Survey Results are available as a separate document from the school district and/or its web site. Due to its length, it was not included with the Vision 2025 to keep the plan more manageable and easier to review.*

The format and detail of the **Vision 2025 Strategic Plan is different** than its predecessor plan. The Vision 2025 strategic plan *goals are broader* and provide greater district flexibility in addressing each one. The Vision 2025 plan is more *proactive, future oriented* and **focused on student learning** closely linked to a supportive learning environment. The prior strategic plan was more reactive, granular and prescriptive. It was focused on addressing more immediate student and district operational needs.

The result of the collaborative process produced the new Vision 2025 Strategic Plan. In addition to revisions of the mission and vision statements, 12 core values of the school district were identified. The nine large strategic goals of Vision 2025 are located under one of four key Learning Foundations. Learning Foundations are core focus areas that significantly influence student learning. Each goal is supported by a set of objectives which are programs or strategies that will help accomplish each goal.

2. Terms and Definitions of Plan Components

The following key components of the Strategic Plan are defined below:

Strategic Plan: *A long range written plan that identifies in broad terms - school district student needs, future challenges, goals and objectives. It provides direction and priorities.*

Vision: An aspirational statement committing to create a reality that currently does not fully exist.

Mission: A statement describing what the organization does and the services provided every day.

Core Values: Principles and core beliefs that accurately reflect the school and community and guide the school district.

Learning Foundation: *Core areas of school that significantly influence student learning. Each Foundation groups related strategies or resources. Under each Learning Foundation are two or more large district five-year goals. The four Learning Foundation core areas are:*

*1. **District Systems** – Core area includes human resources, professional development, facilities, safety, and school leadership*

*2. **Supportive Learning Environment** – Area includes social emotional learning, student physical and mental health, inclusive access to learning, cultural competence, student high expectations, and students' relations and interactions with others.*

*3. **Education Equity and Excellence** – Includes engaging & differentiated Instruction, curriculum development and implementation, collaboration, student career & college readiness, and technology.*

*4. **Family and Community Engagement** – Includes community & parent engagement, communication, collaborative community partnerships, and agency and community interdependence.*

Goals: Broadly defined outcomes listed under each of the four Learning Foundations listed above that reflect identified student needs, district core value, the vision and mission, and are guided by research. Goals are high priorities of the school district where energy and resources will be invested.

Objectives: Practical specific strategies, programs or actions that reinforce, support and implement each of the goals. They provide school district flexibility in determining specific steps, responsibility, timeline, or measurement.

Cross Objectives: Objectives can apply to multiple goals because all goals are interrelated and correlated with the school district vision and mission statements as well as consistent with the district core values.

3. Vision & Mission

VISION Statement

Our students are prepared for the future through engaging, meaningful and challenging learning opportunities delivered by motivated and inspired professionals, and supported through collaborative partnerships with family, our community, businesses and organizations, and institutions of higher education.

The vision statement indicates what the schools aspire to achieve in the future. It is a desired state. The district will provide relevant and challenging learning opportunities through instruction that is both inspiring and engaging *meeting the unique learning needs of all children*. Every segment of the school and community will play an active role in helping with each child's preparation. Learning opportunities will be supported through close working relationships between the school, home, and community.

MISSION Statement

The Clinton Central School District proudly educates and empowers all students to realize their potential in becoming thoughtful, empathetic and contributing members of a global society.

The mission statement indicates the present purpose and function of the school district. It indicates that the school district educates and empowers each student every day. Students leave Clinton understanding cultural differences, questioning and seeking answers, and having an understanding of the responsibility of global citizenship.

4. Core Values

Core values are the shared beliefs and principles of the school and community. The core values are often more *understood* and *assumed* than written down. These beliefs influence behavior of all stakeholders and are embedded within the school district mission and vision statements. The core values also influence the development and prioritization of goals and objectives. Based upon evidence-gathering by the consultants, twelve core values or beliefs were identified and are listed below:

1. All students are unique, highly valued, with special talents.
2. All students have unlimited potential.
3. Teacher relationships with students is foundational to student learning.
4. The student learning process is the primary goal (*How to learn and problem solve*).
5. Student learning should be rigorous and relevant in order to be college and/or career ready.
6. The school district and Clinton community are closely aligned and mutually supportive.
7. Collaboration between students, staff, parents, family and community enhances learning.
8. The school district promotes racial equity and cultural competence within our schools where all students and staff are understanding and respectful of ethnic and cultural differences.
9. Schools should provide diverse and numerous learning opportunities for all students.
10. Students' unique interests, abilities and learning styles are incorporated into our teaching and learning environments.
11. Students and staff learn and work in a collegial, compassionate, supportive, safe and welcoming environment for all.
12. Appropriate resources are provided to students and staff to enable effective teaching practices that generate high levels of student achievement and engagement.

5. Learning Foundations, Goals & Objectives

The Clinton Central School District Vision 2025 Strategic Plan is built around *four* Learning Foundation areas:

- 1) District Systems
- 2) Supportive Learning Environment
- 3) Educational Equity and Excellence
- 4) Family and Community Engagement

As previously discussed, a Learning Foundation represents a primary or core area of school resources that has a major impact on student learning and achievement. Each Foundation groups related or somewhat similar strategies or resources together. Under each Learning Foundation are two or more large district five-year goals. Each Foundation area contains one or more major goals accompanied by several objectives.

The Learning Foundations and strategic planning process are based upon the research work of Peter Senge (*The Fifth Discipline*), and the work of Robert Marzano (*Leadership that Works*). Senge urges school districts to use systems thinking which includes all district elements in planning. His concept of Team Learning suggests that multiple stakeholders play a role in shaping the district vision, mission and core values. Robert Marzano's work focused on collaborative goal setting, resource alignment, and allocation of those resources. The four Learning Foundations include the key elements of a school district that research indicates influence student and district outcomes.

A visual representation of the organization of the Vision 2025 Strategic Plan is listed below:



The goals and objectives are influenced by the school district vision and mission statements and core values, and with input from school staff and community. The major goals are also based upon identified student needs gathered from multiple data analyses including interviews, workshops, surveys, records, etc. The objectives provide suggested direction or possible actions that support accomplishment of the goal. There are often more objectives listed than can be realistically completed in a five-year period. However, completing as many objectives as possible will help to accomplish each major goal.

A review of school district strategic plans indicates a wide variance in the depth, scope and detail of each plan, with some strategic plans as short as 1 page, and others well over 100 pages. The plans vary from

simply listing a small set of aspirations to other strategic plans that are very granular: very detailed; highly prescriptive; step by step; include assignment of roles; measurement; and include a specific timeline.

The initial Clinton Vision 2020 strategic plan completed and implemented in 2015, was more prescriptive and included specific steps and actions to address more immediate and urgent student and district needs. The Vision 2025 strategic plan is different because it is matched to the current needs and educational environment of the school district. The Vision 2025 strategic plan has a wider focus. It has an emphasis on supporting the district mission and accomplishing the district vision statement.

The focus of the new strategic plan is evident in the structure of the plan. The goals are large scale initiatives under one of four Learning Foundation core areas. The objectives are linked closely to accomplishing each goal, but do not include the type of detail described in Vision 2020. This provides greater flexibility to the school district in its annual goal planning. Annual school building and district goal planning and initiatives should be guided by and consistent with the Vision 2025 plan due to the breadth of input from diverse stakeholders on plan content as well as identified student needs.

With strategic plan flexibility comes additional accountability and the need for post-plan district work. The flexibility of the Vision 2025 plan *will require school district leadership and staff to take specific actions*. The school district will need to prioritize the goals and select the objectives; identify specific action steps of each objective; establish a timeline for each goal or objective completion; and determine a method for monitoring, evaluating, and reporting progress and completion. This detailed work is best completed by school staff and leadership at the school and district levels providing greater local input and ownership of actions.

The next section of the Vision 2025 strategic plan includes the observations, goals and objectives.

Learning Foundation 1

District Systems

Human Resource Processes • Facilities • Professional Development • Safety • Leadership

OBSERVATIONS (*Consultant Interviews, Community Surveys, Committee Feedback, and other Data*)

No time in recent history have school districts and leadership faced such a crisis as the world pandemic and the resulting threats to student and staff safety and well-being. Schools were provided with little support or guidance from state or federal officials, yet in March, 2020 schools were closed for the remainder of the school year and education needed to continue. The Clinton district leadership and officials quickly distributed technology to student families in need, and **remote education** began soon after.

Overall, the school district appeared to provide continuous instruction for the remainder of the year. Given the circumstances, not all students and families were cooperative, and some feedback from the survey suggested the effort of a very small number of staff was less than engaging. The school leadership is aware that the school district must develop detailed contingency plans for **alternative delivery systems** should schools be forced to close again for long periods due to threats to health, large staff or student absenteeism, or natural disaster. These plans must also include details for reduced student attendance due to space or distancing restrictions or limitations with clear and explicit instructions and expectations for staff and students. The emergency education plan should be shared and reviewed annually.

The recent pandemic has adversely impacted both **physical and mental health**. A combination of mental and physical health issues, loss of loved ones, loss of jobs, and disruption of lives has taken a heavy toll on children and families. A 2015 survey by the National Survey on Drug Use and Health indicated that adolescents between the ages of 12 and 17 reported as being depressed had increased from 8.7% to 12.7% over a previous survey in 2005. Clearly since 2015, and considering the impact of the pandemic, this percentage has certainly risen higher for this age group. It is likely school district children and families need greater access to mental health counseling and other supports. The survey question regarding *Sufficient resources are provided to address student needs for counseling, therapies, and other key supports* showed a combined instructional response of 51% agreement, thus highlighting this need. Current staff and resources will be quickly exhausted without additional staffing and supports. Ideally, this counseling and support should also address staff needs as well.

Within the district vision statement is the phrase *motivated and inspired professionals*. Successful schools require teachers who comport themselves professionally, provide great effort, and inspire students. Two of the school district's core values regarding teaching further support professionalism. They include: *Teacher relationships with students is foundational to student learning*; and *Students' unique interests, abilities and learning styles are incorporated into our teaching*. **District hiring** filters should reflect and evaluate these key skills, values and attitudes. Hiring outstanding staff is one of the most important tasks of our schools. Clinton anticipates upcoming retirements in all areas. There is a need for more district wide documented, **consistent practices and routines regarding recruitment, hiring, monitoring, mentoring and evaluation**. Instructional staff responding to the survey indicated only 58% agreement with the statement: *The hiring process for new staff is clear, consistent, and includes stakeholders*. Regarding the question that *younger staff seem happy and usually remain long term*, Grade K-5 teachers responded with only a 46% agreement, and grade 9-12 teachers 42%. Interviews also corroborated this concern indicating that some teachers have left for other districts. Retention of certain temporary or substitute positions is also difficult.

The **approval process for teacher professional development** does not consistently require the principal's approval so principals may not always be aware of who, what or why training is scheduled which can result in building and district leaders working at cross-purposes with conflicting priorities. Support staff should also be considered when training is being planned. Clear direction and protocols are needed for training – how is it compensated? What are the criteria? How does it get decided?

Professional Learning Communities (PLC's) time is critical for teacher review of data, methods, and for collaborative strategy planning. PLC time is limited by contract as well as district prioritization of use of the available time. Most recently, this time was dedicated to curriculum mapping and data analysis. This time should be used to plan for addressing the most critical student needs and learning needs of staff. The survey statement *Professional time (e.g. PLC's) is used effectively to address the most critical learning needs of students* indicated only a 30% combined agreement of all instructional respondents.

Feedback and observations indicate that several **safety areas** need review by the district. These include parking, the procedures for elementary drop off, and the possible need for one-point of entry during the school day for both the middle and high schools – similar to the elementary school. This is consistent with the district core value *Students and staff learn and work in a collegial, compassionate, supportive, safe and welcoming environment for all.*

Research generally correlates a positive relationship between student achievement and the amount of time a school principal devotes to instructional leadership. Instructional leadership activities may include short walk-throughs, an intimate understanding of teaching pedagogy, and modeling the values and behaviors expected of staff. District leadership can free more time for building level instructional leadership by using “selective abandonment” of certain tasks or routines that are of lower priority, or can be delegated to others. In Clinton, and common to many schools, highly capable principals want to be instructional leaders yet spend time more often dealing with student discipline, academically struggling students, supervision, district work, or routine tasks. Less time is spent on supporting quality classroom instruction.

GOAL 1.1 – District Systems

Ensure staff are motivated and inspired professionals by recruiting, hiring and retaining high quality staff that match our values, mission and vision through clear detailed human resource processes that are consistent district wide.

OBJECTIVES

1. Ensure hiring practices are consistent across the district, are rigorous in vetting candidates, and ensure high quality candidates are selected consistent with our core values, mission, and vision.
2. Ensure recruiting practices attract high quality candidates (e.g. recruiting fairs, advertising, use of district brochure, maintaining a database of high-quality potential candidates, etc.).
3. Retain existing staff through training, supportive work environments, and adequate resource support.
4. Review process for professional development approvals to ensure monitoring and district oversight.
5. Professional Learning Communities (PLC's) require training of teachers on how to operate PLC's, district dedication to regular scheduled time for PLC's to meet, and clear, consistent expectations from all school principals across a school district on the purpose, outcomes, and use of time.
6. Professional development long range needs should be driven by student performance and aligned with student and teacher needs.
7. Effective instructional leaders prioritize instructional issues over management tasks to increase the focus on instructional leadership including periodically tracking use of time spent in classrooms and on instruction.
8. Strategic Plan is widely disseminated to all staff including at orientation. Plan is widely available and accessible to the public.
9. Strategic Plan is closely reviewed with all administrative staff and teacher leaders to assist in departmental and school annual planning.

GOAL 1.2 – District Systems

We will be vigilant in assessing security and safety risk for students, staff and community on school property in order to provide a safe and welcoming environment for all.

OBJECTIVES

1. Ensure a safety committee for each school is operational and activated including for emergencies.
2. Develop and implement an Emergency Education Plan that includes alternatives for closing with remote learning, part-time alternating attendance, closing one or more building, and utilizing outside space.
3. Review elementary drop off process regarding student and vehicle safety.

Supportive Learning Environment

Social/Emotional • Cultural Competence • High Expectations • Relationships • Physical/Mental Health

OBSERVATIONS (*Consultant Interviews, Community Surveys, Committee Feedback, and other Data*)

Recent events of discrimination against people of color remind us that schools must renew efforts to disrupt implicit racial bias and other forms of discrimination. The demographics of both the student body and staff is not representative of the national demographics. The National Center of Educational Statistics indicates that the district student demographic is 90% White, 2% Black, 4% Hispanic or Latino, and 2% Asian. The student body and staff lack substantial ethnic or cultural diversity. Instructional staff survey response to the question *All students, regardless of ethnic or economic background, feel included, valued and welcomed in the school* indicated different responses at each school. While grade K-5 and grade 6-8 agreed with the statement 79% and 100% respectively, the grade 9-12 instructional staff only indicated a 46% response. Even despite the small number of high school responses (13), this lower agreement is notable. Our children will live and work in a global and increasingly diverse society. A recent Clinton School Board resolution on racial discrimination included the key phrase: *actively work, support, and advocate for institutional practices and policies that disrupt and dismantle systemic oppression, and commit to fostering racial equity within our schools*. Although the district has previously instituted programs and efforts in this area, the work must be renewed and institutionalized. Building racial literacy needs to be a fundamental life skill as part of cultural competence and culturally relevant teaching and leadership.

The research and literature defining cultural competence somewhat varies in scope, elements and steps. However, the essence includes: a) understanding and recognizing one's own biases; b) understanding the consequences of bias that marginalizes other individuals, or groups; c) communicating and interacting with people across cultures; d) honoring different cultural practices and viewpoints ; and e) celebrating the value of diversity of a racially diverse school community.

Culturally relevant teaching is an extension of cultural competence. Teachers need to refine or enhance skills at teaching in a cross-cultural or multicultural setting. Teachers encourage each student to relate course content to his or her cultural context. Culturally relevant teaching includes explicit and recurring lessons on race and conflict resolution and the different perspectives and customs of ethnic groups. Staff must be culturally sensitive to communication with culturally diverse parents and families where language or other customs may impact communication. Finally, school staff and administration should have an awareness of how racial bias may impact the treatment of students, especially in the area of student discipline.

Observations and survey data suggest that there is a perceptual gap among students and instructional staff regarding the overall school and student academic performance, both regionally and across New York State. While instructional staff indicated 73% agreement that Clinton student achievement was one of the highest regionally and competitive across New York, only 47% of students agreed. Students/parents/community groups had a 55% overall agreement that there is a perception of low expectations for academic performance or social behavior for certain groups of students. Some students indicated that student laziness is sometimes accepted by instructional staff. Some students perceive that homework lacks relevancy, is often not completed, and timelines and deadlines not viewed as important (corroborated by some of teachers

interviewed). These perceptions are consistent with the survey data question on *holding students to high expectations in school, home and community*. Instructional respondents indicated an 88% agreement with the statement, while students indicated only an 46% agreement, and the overall combined students/parents/community was 55%. Some students indicated that lessons often lacked relevancy, were repetitive, and did not engage student interest. Adult feedback indicated concern that students seem to lack the ability to innovate, communicate, collaborate or think critically. A core value identified by multiple school and community groups as part of this strategic planning process was *challenging all students*.

The community interviewed also indicated lower student performance expectations. They perceive that students are not rising to the challenge. It is not clear whether the cause of this perception is the documented differences in these students being part of the millennial generation, or a shortage of engaging lessons and exciting classrooms.

Some students feel a sense of isolation individually and in small groups. Academically struggling students especially feel some isolation. Different social groups do not empathize with one another easily. The increase in the number of economically disadvantaged students is causing additional challenges in meeting these children's social and academic needs exacerbated by decreasing staffing and no increase in support services. High school guidance counselors are extending into social-emotional roles and assisting more of these high need groups of students.

The school district initially implemented the Positivity Project at the high school that has recently been extended to the middle school. This project promotes relationships, builds community, and expects students to work and collaborate with other students that they would not normally interact with. The reported concern is that the Positivity Project is not being consistently used across all grade levels or classrooms, some classrooms not showing the video, or following through with the program. The houses created by the middle school last year may also help. It is intended to help children interact more by building a greater sense of community.

GOAL 2.1 – Supportive Learning Environment

Students and staff respect, appreciate, and celebrate ethnic and cultural differences in individuals and groups. Children learn to self-manage, understand different perspectives, relate effectively with others, and make sound choices about personal and social decisions.

OBJECTIVES

1. Investigate programs and resources on Cultural Competence and Culturally Relevant Teaching including NEA's Diversity Toolkit – Cultural Competence, BOCES, Teacher Center, Oneida County, NYSUT, NYSCOSS, NAACP, etc.
2. Hold sustained professional development among instructional and non- instructional staff on cultural differences, diversity, and implicit bias.
3. A school youth center could provide outside activities for more engagement
4. Consistent classroom and grade level commitment to the Positivity Project ensuring 100% classroom and grade level participation at the middle and high school
5. Increase student awareness of diversity and inclusion in every aspect of the school and learning through a cultural audit of school processes and a curriculum audit to ascertain the level of inclusivity represented across curricular areas.
6. Examine programs for both staff and students in cultural competence – having an understanding, appreciation and positive attitude towards different cultural practices

GOAL 2.2 – Supportive Learning Environment

We hold all students to high standards of academic performance and conduct, supporting a culture of academic excellence and citizenship and student physical and mental health.

OBJECTIVES

1. Instructional staff identify common (applies to every student) student expectations within subject area, grade, and schools.
2. Offer additional science and math courses similar to the diverse athletic or art course offerings.
3. Revisit homework policy requirements, relevancy, class follow up, and if practices are consistently applied.
4. Hold professional staff discussions about student expectations and the “expectancy theory”.
5. Encourage face-to-face student interactions through more group projects at all grade levels.
6. Consider adding senior level Presentation Skills/Public Speaking half-year course.
7. Embed more critical thinking and problem-solving experiences in various lessons and activities.
8. Evaluate lesson content and delivery, and student engagement and choice.
9. Integrate mental health service options into multiple courses including the health curriculum in order to support student and family mental health issues and crises.
10. Inclusion training for all staff on strategies and meeting the needs of children in a regular classroom.

Educational Equity and Excellence

Engaging & Differentiated Instruction • Curriculum • Collaboration • Career & College Ready • Technology

OBSERVATIONS *(Consultant Interviews, Community Surveys, Committee Feedback, and other Data)*

Today's students of all ages benefit from customized and individualized opportunities for learning. Interviews and observations indicated that teachers at the grade 6-12 secondary level feel less equipped to modify instruction either because they lack the training or time required to personalize instruction. The recent school survey indicated that 82% of instructional staff perceived that customized personalized learning was provided, but only 46% of student respondents agreed. The survey question on utilizing a variety of approaches was similar - 91% of instructional staff indicated that a variety of approaches were used, while the combination of parents/students/community indicated only 53% agreement. Some parent/community feedback indicating that some families have moved out of the district because of the lack of flexibility of the school district to meet the needs of learners who *fall outside the typical classroom practice*. Secondary teachers also require a deeper understanding of Tier 1 interventions under Response to Intervention, or strategies that meet the current needs of students. The first of three tiers of support for struggling learners is intended for the regular classroom teacher.

After two detailed studies of the Clinton district, it has become clear that the overall instructional staff care deeply for the well-being of the children, work diligently, and are committed professionals. However, due to either a lack of time or an expectation of the collaborative learning, teachers infrequently share with one another quality classroom practices, lessons, or materials. This is supported in the survey where teacher respondents indicated only a 27% agreement that adequate time was provided for collaboration across and between grade levels. Collaboration occurs in pockets, but is not embedded in the learning and teaching culture of the district. This valuable resource needs to be utilized and become a common practice throughout each building. Professional Learning Communities (PLC) or Instructional Rounds are two processes that could be considered among several others to help address these needs. The Clinton teachers have limited time for collaboration so this precious time must be well spent. Instructional staff responding to the survey indicated only a 30% agreement that professional time (e.g. PLC's) was being used effectively to address critical learning needs of students. Most recently, this time was focused on data conversations on the assessments rather than looking at one skill vertically (from grade to grade, up and down). This would better ensure continuity and alignment of skills.

Survey feedback, interviews and input from the advisory committee focused on the need to be career and/or college ready upon graduation. One of the identified core values of the school district is there should be diverse and numerous learning opportunities for all students. While 49% of the instructional staff indicated that students were well prepared for career and occupations upon graduation, only 17% of the combined student/parents/community agreed. Yet, Clinton's size limits the amount of technical, trade or business curricula or equipment options available within the school district. The primary option is to utilize the local BOCES Career and Technical Education Center programs. Offered to high school juniors and seniors, the focus is on preparing students for employment, careers or post-secondary education through the development of 21st century skills. Unfortunately, many school districts including Clinton, have low participation numbers. This is often a reflection of several possible factors including a program's

reputation; the community's value on career and technical education; the community value on attending a two or four-year college; and the approach of staff, the guidance offices and administration. On the question of schools encouraging students to pursue career and technical skills through BOCES, the survey indicated 56% agreement from instructional staff suggesting that this option is sometimes overlooked.

Instructional pedagogy is broadly defined as how teachers and students relate together as well as the types of instructional approaches implemented in the classroom by the teacher. The interviews, observations and survey responses indicated that teachers could infuse greater challenges in classrooms and have higher expectations for student performance (88% of instructional staff vs. 46% of students felt that students were held to high expectations). Regarding students being well prepared for post-secondary two and four-year colleges, while 70% of instructional staff agreed, only 43% of students agreed that preparation was adequate. With regard for classroom approaches, while the majority of instructional staff responding to the survey (91%) felt that a variety of classroom learning approaches were used, students agreed 63%. Teachers at all levels with a special emphasis at secondary level, should include *more questioning and student discussions* in instruction which promotes more critical thinking and students taking a more active, engaging role in classroom learning. Content needs more linkages to current events and real-world learning. Further, teachers across all grade levels need less dependence on lecture and white boards and need to embed a greater variety of strategies in all lessons. Feedback from student focus groups indicated that students would like to have greater opportunity in class to collaborate on student work, and have student discussions about the content being presented.

Despite the large investments school districts make in acquiring new technologies and upgrading technology infrastructure, districts can fall short on providing full access to updated technology for students and staff. Successful technology integration in classroom learning requires two key components: 1) student and staff *access to updated* functional hardware and software; and 2) a district plan for how various technology will be *infused into instruction* including *support and training of staff and students*. When technology is embedded into lessons and content, students take more ownership over their own learning. Technology also allows more differentiated teaching promoting improved student engagement and retention of content. Technology also encourages student-centered project-based learning. Based on observations, interviews and survey data, the school district *lacks access* to sufficient updated technology (e.g. laptops, hand held devices, printers, etc.). This concern was strongly supported in the survey where only 32% of instructional staff respondents felt there was accessible leading-edge technology available in the district, while students indicated even less with only 13% agreement. The district needs to also outline and identify the technology skills students should master by grade level with suggested applications provided for unit planning. It is not clear how or when critical skills including keyboarding, word and spreadsheet programs are provided. Training of staff and students seems to be based on student or staff interest or request, rather than based on specific learning needs supported by student performance data. The district needs to set clear expectations on how technology shall be used in all classrooms.

A school district's curricula (combination of all subject curriculums) requires continuous, evolving revisions. All key content or subject areas should have a specific curriculum that includes specific goals, contents, sequence, strategies, measurement of learning, and resources. Every curriculum should include vertical alignment – where content is sequenced and coordinated across multiple grade levels. Each curriculum should include high expectations for students, be aligned with any state learning standards, and be rigorous yet provide some flexibility. It is important to note that textbooks DO NOT frame or serve as a subject curriculum and are not usually customized to meet New York State Standards or assessments. Based on recent English-Language Arts (ELA) state assessments at grades 3-8, the K-8 literacy curriculum needs to be reviewed. An item and content analysis of recent assessments may indicate gaps in student performance. Grade K-5 teacher survey respondents indicated a 69% agreement that a clear curriculum

exists, is well aligned with state standards, and is consistently followed. Several comments in the survey indicated that some teachers pick and choose what to teach, so consistency and fidelity to the curriculum might be an issue in some classrooms.

Among all survey respondents, skills in writing and verbal communication was rated as very important and had the highest rating (2.8 out of 3). This priority is inconsistent with the lack of a well-defined formal writing program at the elementary school. Only 35% of instructional staff agreed that there was an aligned writing curriculum that details expectations by grade level.

GOAL 3.1 – Educational Equity and Excellence

Each student’s unique interests and abilities are incorporated into our teaching, ensuring students reach their full potential becoming career and/or college ready.

OBJECTIVES

1. Investigate various instruments like the Child Interest Inventory, Student Interest Survey, and as examples of diagnostic tools that are key to differentiating or matching the instructional approach with a child’s preferred interests. Students shared that at least one teacher uses a tool annually.
2. Assess the skill set of instructional staff in strategies to meet the needs of the current learner and provide training and support as needed.
3. Examine career readiness and classes and learning opportunities within the school district and community for providing these key work skills.
4. Consider ways to increase participation in various BOCES Career and Technical programs.
5. Consider providing more interest-based electives.
6. Ensure Tier 1 interventions (core classroom instruction from primary teachers) should be familiar to all instructional staff, and staff are comfortable employing research based multiple interventions or strategies to address the unique learning challenges of each student.

GOAL 3.2 – Educational Equity and Excellence

Classroom instruction utilizes multiple learning tools and strategies requiring students to think and write critically, be challenged, and become self-directed learners.

OBJECTIVES

1. Instructional staff define and operationalize what critical thinking is and evidence (what it looks like).
2. Open ended and challenging questions are infused in classroom instruction and student interactions.
3. Provide professional development in classroom strategies that encourage greater student collaboration on projects and discussions on content.
4. Assess instructional staff's learning needs regarding classroom strategies for questioning, developing more rigor in class, infusing critical thinking in lessons, project-based learning, technology infused instruction, etc. Provide targeted professional development to ensure all instructional staff feel comfortable meeting the learning needs of the students utilizing these strategies.
5. Update technology equipment (laptops, tablets, printers and infrastructure) and provide full access to students and staff to promote more engaged learning, differentiated instruction, critical thinking, writing, and project-based learning.
6. Establish clear expectations on how technology shall be used in all classrooms and as a tool for learning.
7. Explore Universal Design for Learning (UDL) - designing instruction accessible by all students; UDL includes multiple means of representation, multiple means of expression, and multiple means of engagement; the focus in creation of UDL curricula is on technology and materials.
8. Increase professional time available for Professional Learning Communities, for sharing between and across grade levels, and determine specific expectations for efficient and effective use of time addressing the most critical needs of students.
9. Provide additional training on learning strategies for remote learning for all instructional staff.
10. Systematize the online system of data collection to rapidly identify students who need additional support and for RtI K-12.
11. Utilize a school district "data dashboard" - an agreed upon set of key indicators - that alerts all staff about student progress and overall student performance.

GOAL 3.3 – Educational Equity and Excellence

Each curriculum is closely aligned with state standards, vertically aligned by grade level, relevant, reflects student needs, and includes engaging strategies for the learner in order to educate and empower all students.

OBJECTIVES

1. K-8 literacy curriculum needs to be reviewed specifically related to philosophy, current research and creation of a seamless and consistent program of instruction.
2. Close monitoring of instruction to ensure consistency and fidelity to each curricular area.
3. Ensure well-defined formal writing program used in grades K-12 that details expectations by grade level.
4. Establish District Curriculum Audit Review process with a revolving schedule over five-year period.
5. Schedule annual presentation to Board of Education on the results of each District Curriculum Audit Review with focus on student results, gaps, strategies, needs, and future plans for the curriculum.
6. Vertical alignment of curriculum beginning with vertical curriculum conversations among subject and grade level teachers (e.g. grades 2 and 3, grades 3 and 4, etc.).
7. Outline and identify the technology skills students should master by each grade level.

Family and Community Engagement

Community & Parent Engagement • Communication • Collaborative Partnerships • Interdependence

OBSERVATIONS (*Consultant Interviews, Community Surveys, Committee Feedback, and other Data*)

Research consistently indicates that when families and community members are involved in student learning, students improve their academic performance. When families and the community partner with schools, student affiliation increases which further enhances student learning. A community, its schools, and all stakeholders develop successful schools by establishing strong cooperative, collaborative relationships. Schools need to be invitational and genuinely welcoming to parents, families and the community on a regular and frequent basis making the school buildings and classrooms more accessible. Frequent school and district communications with all stakeholders is very important. Despite the efforts, most schools and districts fall short.

Although there is a Clinton PTA newsletter at the elementary, there is a lack of evidence of a regular similar parent communication at other schools and grade levels. The district newsletter is limited to one or two mailings annually – with one solely focused on the school budget. *There is a lack of multiple strategies and practices to communicate “who we are” with all external stakeholders.* Despite the excellent student work in art, music and the performing arts, there is a paucity of shows, events or other opportunities for parents, families and community members to view exhibits or events. Further, the lack of communication of these events may explain the wide gap in response on the survey question that *students exhibit outstanding work in music, art and other performance.* While instructional staff agreed with the statement 92%, only 48% of the combined students, parents and community agreed. The most notable survey data on this topic is the survey question *staff frequently encourage active parent participation in school activities and events.* While 77% grade K-5 elementary staff agreed with the statement, the combined agreement of the staff in grades 6-12 was only 35%. Grade 6-12 staff less frequently encourage parents to be active in school events and activities. This disparity is inconsistent with the school district vision which contains the text *supported through collaborative partnerships with family.* This is an area that requires further district and school discussions about expectations and the importance of parent participation.

Partnerships with the community including businesses and higher education are essential in order to expand learning opportunities for children and help empower them to reach their potential (part of district mission statement). One of the core values of the school district and a part of the vision statement indicates the need for *collaborative partnerships with businesses and community.* The survey of instructional staff indicated that only 46% of high school staff respondents agreed with the statement *school and/or district has created partnerships with the community, businesses and the local college.* Some partnerships already exist including the Hockeyville initiative that is an excellent example of this collaboration. However, many more partnership opportunities should be considered and pursued.

There should be a mechanism to *regularly* bring key community representatives to a School-Community Roundtable. Representatives might include the county, village, towns, Hamilton College, law enforcement and fire, clergy, business, media, Clinton Foundation, hospital or medical, parents, community, Board of Education, a principal, guidance, and the Superintendent. Each community entity is relatively untapped in what each could contribute to the school and may be waiting for that invitation or suggestion of how the

district and community may mutually reinforce each other. These round table meetings would likely spawn new partnerships, collaborations, and learning opportunities for students. For example, a collaboration with Hamilton College might include practice mock college interviews, grant writing expertise, financial aid and admission seminars, etc. The School-Community Round-Table might begin linking students with summer or afterschool internships/externships with local businesses, governmental offices, fire or law enforcement. Perhaps the Round-Table might organize a Career and Jobs fair or a Health Fair.

GOAL 4.1 – Family and Community Engagement

Our schools and classrooms are accessible and genuinely welcoming to parents, families and the community. Our community, its schools, and all stakeholders establish and maintain strong cooperative, collaborative relationships.

OBJECTIVES

1. Frequent school and district communications and messaging with all stakeholders including newsletters, media news, district website, social media (Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Google+), parent portal, and district website.
2. Establish private, protected web address bank of parents/families/students for contact and mailing.
3. District website frequently updated, more easily navigated, and include a “Parents/Community” tab.
4. Include consistent and regular messaging on all district letterhead, envelopes, websites and emails that should include web address, and might include the district vision or mission statement, or select core values, etc.
5. Parent/community brief survey of preferred communication types about events, activities and access to schools.
6. Regular secondary level parent communications from school electronically.
7. Send district newsletters optionally to email addresses on file.
8. Encouragement of greater parent and community participation at the secondary level.
9. Consider how communication is marketing the Clinton “brand” which makes the community and district a place where families will choose to purchase a home.
10. Seek opportunities for community members to complement curricular content through classroom speaking engagements and/or serving as mentors and role models in specific areas of employment and careers.
11. Establish a parent volunteer program that would serve to provide additional opportunities for students such as early reading tutors, robotics, student newspaper, or a literary magazine at the secondary level.

GOAL 4.2 – Family and Community Engagement

Our schools and district expand partnerships with the community including businesses and higher education. This collaboration is essential to expand learning opportunities for children.

OBJECTIVES

1. Develop mechanism for regularly linking key school-community partners like the county, village, towns, Hamilton College, law enforcement and fire, clergy, business, media, Clinton Foundation, hospital or medical, and parents with school representatives (e.g. Round table).
2. Round tables would generate intersections between the content by curricular area and talents that reside in the community. A list of available community members could begin with a focus on one curricular area at a time.
3. Develop a formal student internship/externship work experience, co-op or summer job program with various community entities including business, governmental, medical, college, etc.
4. Develop formal mentor program with Hamilton College and other community organizations. One such program called “Sponsor-A-Scholar” seeks to assist students in envisioning their participation in post-secondary education.
5. Investigate if Hamilton has any facility that would provide a superior learning experience in the arts or laboratory sciences, or one that might offer a different and equally enriching experience.
6. Consider joint research studies with the college that would allow students to gain some experience in the scientific inquiry model. Or, professors could be called upon to guide student research and offer their wisdom to students.