

**ORANGE COUNTY
BOARD OF EDUCATION
AGENDA ITEM ABSTRACT**

Meeting Date: February 10, 2014

AGENDA ITEM No. 14-02-13

ACTION ITEM: (Y/N) Y

SUBJECT: Community Engagement and Strategic Planning/Accreditation

INFO. CONTACT: Dr. Gerri P. Martín, Superintendent **PHONE:** 919-732-8126

ATTACHMENTS:

1. AdvancED letter dated 2/4/2014.
 2. Systems Accreditation External Review Date Request Form.
 3. OCS Proposal for Community Engagement and Strategic Planning Consultant Services.
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PURPOSE: The purpose of this agenda item is to provide information on a proposed plan for internal and external stakeholder engagement and strategic planning in preparation for accreditation as well as updating the district's strategic plan.

BACKGROUND: Prior to May, 2015, Orange County Schools must host and successfully complete an accreditation visit from AdvancED in order to remain as an accredited district. It is very important to be an accredited district as our graduates move forward in their post-secondary pathways. There are many colleges and institutions that will not accept a student for admission if they have not graduated from an accredited institution.

A large portion of the process of accreditation hinges on a successful strategic plan, developed with appropriate stakeholder input. Clearly establishing the purpose and direction of the district is a vital part of developing the strategic plan. The accompanying proposal represents a well-planned approach to achieve the desired outcome of creating a community vision for Orange County Schools and developing a strategic plan that reflects the vision and establishes a road map for achieving that vision.

Furthermore, completing the visioning and strategic planning at this time clearly allows the community at large to have a deep look into the needs of the district from safety to facilities to academic achievement among others.

As previously stated, the accreditation must be scheduled prior to May, 2015. The Board may choose to host a visit in the Fall of 2014 or in the Spring of 2015. It is recommended that the Board approve the request for preferred dates in March, 2015. The district will not be well-positioned for a visit in the Fall. March is a time in the school calendar that does not readily interfere with a testing calendar and will provide the district the time needed to prepare for a successful visit.

FINANCIAL IMPACT: The financial impact of this proposal is estimated not to exceed \$45,000 for the 11-month scope of work.

RECOMMENDATION: The Superintendent recommends the Board of Education authorize her to contract with the vendor and begin the process as described in the proposal. The Superintendent further recommends the Board approve the proposed dates as contained in the Systems Accreditation External Review Date Request Form.



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February 4, 2014

Dr. Gerri Martin
Orange County Schools
200 East King Street
Hillsborough, North Carolina 27278-2570

Dear Dr. Martin:

Our records indicate that your system's accreditation with AdvancED will expire on **June 30, 2015**.

This letter has been sent as a reminder for your system to host an External Review visit no later than the first week of **May 2015**, to be considered for reaccreditation through AdvancED. Please return the enclosed External Review Date Request Form at least five months prior to the earliest of the three review dates you have listed. Fall is a great time to host a review, as State Offices and Lead Evaluators tend to have availability to offer assistance for the review. Our spring review dates fill quickly, so if you desire one of those, please commit to the date as soon as possible.

We also ask that you review your district's demographic profile in the AdvancED Management System and update the information, as needed.

Please contact Bethany Washburn, Systems Accreditation Specialist at bwashburn@advanc-ed.org with any questions you may have or if you are in need of assistance. We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Barbara Remondini, Ph.D., Vice President
Public School Systems Services

cc: Annette Bohling, J.D., Chief Accreditation Officer
Dr. Donna James, Director, AdvancED North Carolina Office



Systems Accreditation External Review Date Request Form
Please complete and send to Barbara Remondini (bremondini@advanc-ed.org).

The External Review to your system will last three days. The review typically begins on a Monday and concludes on a Wednesday. The team meets on Sunday afternoon to conduct a team orientation.

School System: Orange County Schools

Address: 200 E King Street

City/State/Zip: Hillsborough, NC 27278

Contact Person: Dr. Amanda Hartness Position/Title: Chief Academic Officer

Phone Number: 919-732-8126 E-mail: Amanda.hartness@orange.k12.nc.us

Type of System: Rural Suburban _____ Urban _____ ESA/ESU/ISD _____

Total # of Schools in System: 13

Breakdown:

Early Learning _____ Elementary 7 Middle 3 High 2

Other 1 (be specific) Alternative (6-12)

Preferred Dates:

Please identify your three preferred dates for hosting the External Review. **Note:** External Review begins on Sunday evening with Team Member meeting – no district personnel are needed on that day.

First Choice: March 15-18, 2014

Second Choice: March 22-25, 2014

Third Choice: March 8-11, 2014

Specific Expertise:

Please identify areas of expertise that you would like members of the External Review Team to have based on the needs facing the system.

Expertise in: Instructional Technology

Expertise in: Curriculum & Instruction

Expertise in: Equitable Resources

**Orange County Schools
Proposal for Community Engagement
and
Strategic Planning Consultant Services
January 24, 2014**

TO: Orange County Schools
Attention: Gerri Martin, Superintendent
200 East King Street
Hillsborough, NC 27278
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919.732.8126

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Proposal Summary

In March 2015, Orange County Schools will undertake an accreditation review that requires a strategic plan, developed with appropriate stakeholder input and clearly stating the system's purpose and direction, be in place. In this proposal, Leading and Governing Associates recommends an approach of structured engagement of internal and external stakeholders to develop a vision and strategic plan while increasing public understanding of and support for public education in Orange County. This approach, laid out in more detail below, is designed to help the board and administration articulate the important work the school system performs, why this work is performed, how it is performed and how well it is being performed. Leading and Governing Associates is a consulting practice dedicated to strengthening the capacity of public organizations and public purpose associations to engage citizens, constituents, members and each other in meaningful policy, governance, and organizational conversations and decision-making. It is proposed that this engagement and planning process occur between February and December 2014.

Background

Roughly 87% of North Carolina's children 5-18 years of age are enrolled in traditional, NC public schools. While difficult to get a precise number for Orange County Schools, the large majority (well over 80%) of children 5-18 years of age in Orange County, NC are enrolled in traditional, NC public schools. This means, as documentary filmmaker Dawn O'Keeffe points out in her new film, "Go Public," that almost all of the next generation of workers, citizens, business leaders, parents, volunteers and politicians will be educated in traditional public schools.

In Orange County, NC a number of forces are shaping the face and future of public education including changes in leadership and administration, maintaining local flexibility when responding to state requirements and national standardization, balancing equity and consistency throughout the school system, addressing socio-economic differences that impact educational and economic opportunity, helping students develop healthy lifestyles during and beyond schooling, and responding appropriately to changing political and economic conditions.

In March 2015, Orange County Schools will undertake an accreditation review that requires a strategic plan, developed with appropriate stakeholder input and clearly stating the system's purpose and direction, be in place. Therefore, the Orange County Schools Superintendent, on behalf of the OCS Board of Education is seeking a professional consultant and facilitator, to assist in engaging the broader Orange County community in the development of a vision and strategic plan necessary for accreditation. It is proposed that this engagement and planning process occur between February and December 2014.

Leading and Governing Associates is a consulting practice dedicated to strengthening the capacity of public organizations and public purpose associations to engage citizens, constituents, members and each other in meaningful policy, governance, and organizational conversations and decision-making. Recently, Leading and Governing Associates consulted with the Alamance-Burlington Schools Board Of Education and facilitated Alamance County's public engagement initiative to create *A Vision for Public Education in Alamance County*. (See www.abss.k12.nc.us) This past year we also worked with the North Carolina Partnership for Children to design and create a *Strategic Planning Toolkit for NC Smart Start Partnerships* and from 2010 through 2012, we worked with seven of the state's Smart Start Partnerships as a governance and organizational consultant to help build and strengthen board and executive capacity in governance, organizational leadership, strategic planning and fund development.

Scottie Seawell, principal consultant for these projects and a principal in Leading and Governing Associates, proposes to work with OCS on developing its strategic plan and public engagement effort leading up to the accreditation process to take place in March 2015. A more detailed summary of Scottie's relevant experience is included below.

Recommended Public Engagement, Visioning and Strategic Planning Approach

As Phil Boyle and Del Burns illustrate in Preserving the Public in Public Schools, many decisions that school districts make cause concern or result in conflict because they involve the public's value preferences. In other words, the decisions involve more than expert knowledge of the facts or the data. On the flipside, a planning and improvement effort that intentionally involves and builds the support of a school district's community can significantly increase the likelihood of successful implementation resulting in desired outcomes.

To develop Orange County School's strategic plan, we recommend using an approach of structured engagement of internal and external stakeholders resulting in an "evergreen" and implementable strategic plan while increasing public understanding of and support for public education in Orange County. This approach will have two complementary phases: (1) a visioning and engagement phase and (2) a strategic planning phase.

Outline of Visioning, Engagement and Strategic Planning Process

The process begins once the BOE and Superintendent agree to include a public engagement strategy in their planning and improvement effort.

Phase 1: Visioning and Engagement

- a. Steering Committee selected and convened to further define the purpose of the engagement process and recruit community stakeholders to participate in the process.

- b. Community Stakeholders convened to develop a community vision and build support for public education in their community.
- c. Community Stakeholders and BOE approve and promote their vision to the wider community.
- d. Funding partners sought to share the financial costs of undertaking the public engagement and improvement effort. (This step can occur at any point in the process.)

Phase 2: Strategic Planning

- a. Strategic Planning Committee convened and enabled
- b. SP Committee gathers, reviews and analyzes pertinent data and information including from community focus groups.
- c. SP Committee develops and vets the strategic plan based on the community's vision, public education requirements and accreditation standards. (May also include focus groups during the vetting process.)
- d. BOE approves plan and SP Committee develops next steps for monitoring and keeping the plan relevant.

Use of Focus Groups:

During the Strategic Planning phase of the initiative, we recommend convening two sets of focus groups. The first set of focus groups will be designed to identify current, successful practices. Acquiring input on current, successful practices, as understood by a variety of stakeholders, to inform the Strategic Planning Committee's work, will build on the current strengths of the system. A second set of focus groups to vet the draft strategic plan provides an opportunity to build stakeholder knowledge of and ownership of the plan while also providing additional perspective into the plan's usability and long-term viability in guiding the work of the school system.

Organization and Structure

Throughout the engagement and planning process there are three primary groups working in concert and on behalf of the school system to develop a shared vision, build support and create a strategic plan for public education in Orange County, NC. These three groups, comprised of internal and external stakeholders should be guided by core principles of successful engagement. Face-to-face discussion is critical for making intelligent strategic decisions. Successful strategies come from envisioning preferred futures – change is so rapid that the solutions we develop to today's problems no longer work tomorrow. People will commit to plans and actions they have helped develop.

1. Steering Committee represents the Board of Education, Orange County Schools and the broader Orange County community and oversees the engagement phase of the initiative. The Steering Committee recruits a larger, broad-based stakeholder group composed of representatives from a variety of sectors across the county to carry out the visioning phase of the initiative. To facilitate

coordination and implementation, two members of the Steering Committee serve as members and co-chairs of the Stakeholder Group. (Approximately 6-8 people total.)

2. Stakeholder Group, guided by a process of engaged discussion and discernment, writes a vision that reflects the goals and aspirations of the Orange County community. This vision and process report will provide guidance to the on-going work of the school system by stating the aspirations of the community, identifying key issues facing the district, explaining the stakeholder group's vision and key recommendations, and proposing principles and criteria to help guide the school system in its development of its strategic plan; its educational priorities and funding decisions. (Approximately 35 to 50 people total.)
3. Strategic Planning Committee, using the vision developed by the community, works together to create the district's strategic plan; its purpose and direction. This committee would ideally include the Superintendent and her Leadership Team, two Board of Education Members, two-three School Principals, two-three School Level Employees, two-three Central Office Employees and two Community Members/ Stakeholders from the Visioning Process. We recommend including all of these participants on the Strategic Planning Committee to represent all of the constituents who will implement the plan, whose work will be impacted by the plan, and/or who must approve the plan. These participants will help bridge the vision and the district's goals, provide important perspectives, recommend strategies, and communicate with their peers and their communities the work of the Strategic Planning Committee toward crafting an aligned and implementable strategic plan. (Approximately 15 people total.)

The Board of Education will participate in this initiative as conveners of the community with BOE representative(s) on the Steering Committee and Strategic Planning Committee. BOE Members, OCS Staff and the public are welcome observers of the Stakeholder Group meetings. OCS staff will work in partnership with the board and the steering committee to help identify critical issues and participants, goals and outcomes, timelines, and provide input into tasks and processes. Staff will also serve as historical, professional, legal and technical experts as needed and provide information and logistical and administrative support. The consultant and members of the Steering Committee and Strategic Planning Committee will provide updates to the full Board of Education, answer questions and solicit input and feedback from Board Members to further inform the process moving forward.

Scottie Seawell of Leading and Governing Associates, Inc. will work with all involved to design the process, schedule and plan and facilitate the meetings, and capture information throughout the process for use in the development of the vision and the strategic plan. The process, meetings and communication about the effort will be designed to encourage learning, understanding and support for the work of public education in Orange County, NC.

Realizing the Promise of an *Evergreen* Strategic Plan

The potential promise of an in-depth inclusive process to create a well-grounded strategic plan is its "evergreen" quality. Once created, changes and new challenges will inevitably arise in the school system's environment, but the plan can be modified and adjusted with less effort to meet those challenges and explain necessary changes to all impacted. This is so because a strategic plan developed with a process designed to build community support, awareness and engagement and which clearly articulates the district's purpose and direction (including meaningful and measurable goals, strategies and actions) increases the likelihood of positive outcomes and greater adaptability to change for all concerned and further into the future than the typical 3 to 5 year timeframe of most traditional strategic planning processes.

Proposed Timeline

The proposed timeline is February to December 2014. Exact meeting dates, logistics and specific protocols will be determined by the steering committee and strategic planning committee accordingly.

Phase 1: Visioning and Engagement: (February – August 2014)

February – March 2014

- BOE formally adopts community engagement and strategic planning initiative.
- Steering Committee members recruited and meet to further develop their charge, work plan and schedule; and identify and recruit stakeholder representatives.

March – June 2014

- Stakeholder Group Meetings
These meetings should be held roughly every two-three weeks. Meetings should be held in the morning, for example, 8:00 AM – to 11:00 AM or 8:30 to 11:30 AM, so as to allow participants to make lunch and afternoon plans. The Steering Committee will convene between Stakeholder Group meetings to identify specific meeting goals and tasks, adopt appropriate engagement processes for the Stakeholder Group meetings, identify resources, and plan for communications with members of the Stakeholder Group.
- Steering Committee prepares draft vision based on work of Stakeholders Group for review during stakeholder meetings.
- Stakeholder Group approves final version of vision through consensus adoption.
- Present Vision to BOE at August Meeting

Phase 2: Strategic Planning: (May to December 2014)

May- July 2014

- Administrative Committee meets to plan:
- Initial Meetings and Work of the Strategic Planning Committee

- BOE Update Meeting

August – October 2014: Gather, Review and Analyze Pertinent Data and Information

- Three (3) administrative planning meetings (approximately 1/month)
- Three (3) strategic planning committee meetings (approximately 1/month)
- Four (4) fall focus group sessions to gather input (2 internal, 2 external)
- One (1) BOE quarterly update and input meeting

October – November 2014: Develop and Vet the Strategic Plan

- Three (3) administrative planning meetings (approximately 1/month)
- Three (3) strategic planning committee meetings (approximately 1/month)
- Four (4) late fall focus group sessions to vet the draft plan (2 internal, 2 external)
- One (1) BOE quarterly update and input meeting

November – December 2014: Plan Approval and Next Steps for Keeping the Plan Present

- One-two (1-2) Superintendent and Cabinet staff meetings to finalize strategic plan
- One (1) BOE update and plan presentation for final review and approval
- Reconvene stakeholder group for progress report and strengthening of community's engagement and support.

Cost Proposal

For strategic planning, navigation and facilitation, Leading and Governing Associates charges a \$150/hour plus 15% for administrative costs. Based on the proposed tasks and 11-month schedule, we estimate a total not-to-exceed cost of \$45,000. This total includes the following professional and administrative costs:

1. Professional time: approximately 251hours @ \$150/hour = \$37,650
 - Professional time includes all consultation, meeting planning, design and facilitation for an estimated:
 - 12 Steering Committee Meetings
 - 8 Stakeholder Group Meetings
 - 8 Administrative meetings
 - 9 Strategic Planning Committee/Superintendent and leadership staff meetings
 - 4 Board of Education meetings
 - 8 Focus Group sessions
 - 4 days for summarizing and compiling focus group input
 - 3 days for writing/written contributions to vision and strategic plan documents and reports

2. Administrative costs: 15% x 37,650 = \$5,647.00
 - This includes administrative overhead and support costs including liability insurance, travel, telecommunications, materials and equipment costs. Hourly consulting rate includes all payroll and personnel benefit costs.

3. Copies of Preserving the Public for Public Schools, by Phil Boyle and Del Burns:
 - 50-60 Copies of the book for all participants @ 17.50/book plus shipping = \$1,200.00. (This price reflects the publisher's discounted rate.)

Cost Exclusions or Exceptions

These costs do not include the cost of meeting space, meeting supplies, refreshments, or other costs associated with supporting the committee and stakeholder meetings or the focus group sessions. Specific decisions on process, tasks, and timeline will be made in concert with the Steering Committee and the Administrative Committee accordingly and as this initiative unfolds. Work outside the scope of this proposal may necessitate an extension or change to the scope and/or cost of this proposal.

Deliverables and Outcomes

1. **Community Engagement** – Increased public commitment to working in partnership with OCS to advance the district's mission and achieve the community's vision for public education in Orange County.
2. **Community Vision and Report** - Through a process of community engagement the creation of a vision that captures the broader community's aspirations for public education and becomes the foundation of the OCS strategic plan.
3. **Strategic Plan** – Built on the community's vision for public education in Orange County, an "evergreen" document to provide direction and decision making guidance for the next three to five years.
4. **Community Support** – Increased support and understanding of the work of OCS, its strategic plan and how the strategic plan helps guide the system's advance on mission.
5. **Board and District Governance** – Improved understanding of the governance and administrative roles and responsibilities of the Board of Education and the district's leadership team.

Summary of Consultant's Relevant Experience

Leading and Governing Associates has worked with a variety of public, public purpose, and non-profit organizations to help craft strategic visions and plans, strengthen governance and public engagement, and build organizational capacity. Below are four examples of recent projects relevant to this request for strategic planning consultant services. Additional examples available upon request.

1. A Vision for Public Education in Alamance County

As lead consultant, Scottie facilitated the process of designing and developing the community's *Vision for Public Education in Alamance County*. This effort was led by a steering committee composed of representatives of the Alamance-Burlington School System, the Alamance County Chamber of Commerce and the Alamance-Burlington community. It was carried out by a stakeholder group including representatives from education, government, business, health and medical, social services, legal and judicial, community and civic, faith and interest and advocacy organizations. It resulted in greater community understanding and support for public schools in Alamance County.

2. Strategic Planning Toolkit for NC Smart Start Partnerships

Created a strategic planning toolkit for use by Smart Start Executive Directors and board members to support their strategic planning efforts. Version 1.0 of the toolkit exists in a MS PowerPoint Slideshow which includes links to videos, tools, templates, a resource list and suggested steps when undertaking a strategic planning process. The toolkit, developed in consultation with North Carolina Partnership for Children staff and local partnership Executive Directors, aligns existing and previous Smart Start organizational capacity-building efforts.

3. North Carolina Partnership for Children – Capacity Building and Smart Start Board Governance Initiative

Leading and Governing Associates was selected by the North Carolina Partnership for Children as one of several board governance consultants to work directly with Smart Start Partnerships across the state. We worked with seven Smart Start Partnerships over a two-year period to deepen and improve each participating partnership's governance practices. Our work included conducting a board governance self-assessment, conducting board member and executive interviews, preparing specific board governance recommendations based on assessment and interview information, and recommending specific governance capacity-building actions.

Following the data collection and analysis phase of the capacity-building process, we worked with Executive Directors and Board Chairs to structure a board retreat, design an action plan, and help the board and administration design and take action on priority items. This included design and facilitation of planning meetings, consultation with board chairs and executive directors on implementing

their organization's improvement efforts, and coaching and mentoring Executive Directors in their governance work with partnership boards.

4. Durham County Department of Social Services – Contract Work Group, Management Team Retreat, and Board Member Retreat

In response to findings in a Durham County Auditor's report, Leading and Governing Associates worked with executive staff in the Durham County Department of Social Services to vet and implement audit recommendations and to prepare and train staff for changes in contracting processes. Our work included meeting and coordinating with a Contract Management Advisory Group consisting of fifteen DSS, Durham County, City of Durham, and community members with contract expertise. Based on the recommendations of this advisory group, we planned and facilitated a two-day management team retreat to both strengthen the management team and prepare the newly formed Customer Accountability Staff to begin implementing recommended changes. We facilitated the DSS Board of Directors' retreat to help members deepen their collective understanding of the DSS mission and identify opportunities for advocating as a board on behalf of the DSS organization and its programs.

References

Strategic Planning and Work with Public Schools:

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- Former Superintendent, Wake County Public Schools
- Former Interim Superintendent, Alamance-Burlington, Edgecombe and Orange County Public Schools

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