



STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT WHAT WE HEARD

Spring 2023

Buffalo Trail Public Schools is committed to maximizing student learning in a safe and caring environment supported by a highly effective team.

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Summary

In developing the 2023-2027 Education Plan, Buffalo Trail Public Schools (BTPS) engaged almost 500 stakeholders between November 2022 and February 2023. The Board of Trustees and Division administration are committed to accountability and value the time that students, parents, staff, and community members took to share their hopes and dreams for BTPS. This input will help shape BTPS' priorities, outcomes, and strategies for the next four years.

The engagement process focused on gathering input and ideas to inform possible ways forward. The aim of these engagements was for the Board of Trustees and Division leadership to hear what priorities and goals stakeholders held for BTPS schools. Over the course of multiple sessions--in person and online--the following questions were posed:

- "What do you hope BTPS will achieve in four years?"
- "What do you want BTPS to stop, start or continue over the next four years?"

Many themes repeated, including the strong pride students, parents, staff, and community members feel for their rural connections and communities. Along with a variety of data from past Annual Evaluation Results Reports, budgets and research analytics, the feedback from stakeholders will inform BTPS' 2023-2027 Education Plan.

Thank you to those who took the time to share their hopes and dreams for BTPS.

BY THE NUMBERS

482

STAKEHOLDERS

Between November and February, we engaged 482 individuals representing leaders in the community, parent councils, students, parents and guardians, community members, principals, and school staff.

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ENGAGEMENTS

Parent councils, students, parents and guardians, and community members engaged in five, 1.5-hour in-person public sessions held in Provost, Wainwright, Kitscoty, Vermilion, and one online session. Representatives also came from Chauvin, Edgerton, Hughenden, Amisk, Irma, Marwayne, Dewberry, Paradise Valley, Innisfree, and Mannville.

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SCHOOL ENGAGEMENTS

School principals led sessions with students ranging from kindergarten to grade 12 in schools all across the division.



Emerging Themes

As stakeholders shared their hopes and dreams for BTPS for the next four years, a number of common themes emerged. Collectively, stakeholders want to see BTPS:

1. Support learning success for all students
2. Foster safe and caring learning environments
3. Build strong collaborations

Within each of these themes, stakeholders identified a number of outcomes.

Theme 1: Support learning success for all students.

Stakeholders identified a number of areas where they hoped BTPS would focus their support for all student learning success.

“Help students achieve the goals they want with the most possible help.” - Student

“Encourage and support students to reach their potential.” - Community Engagement Participant

“I want all of us to work together for future-ready kids!” - School Staff Member

Learning Success Area 1: Students are prepared for life after K-12.

“Have programs that meet the needs of people’s life, job, or college that they are interested in.”
- Student

“Expand options related to career interests.” - Community Engagement participant

There was a strong emphasis throughout the engagements on students graduating from high school with the skills they need to be successful. In all public engagement sessions and many student sessions, this student’s sentiment was echoed, “More hands-on learning for high school.”

Participants identified a number of specific work experience opportunities that have been successful already and that they hoped to see built upon. For instance Career and Technology Studies, the Dual Credit program, Green Certificate and the successful partnership with Lakeland College. In this vein, participants saw the opportunity to develop more life skills by connecting students to the community. Like this community engagement participant, “Success in life-based skills ‘takes a village’ -- let’s do it!”

Other ideas related to preparing students for life after K-12:

“Continue and grow the people in the school who are able to help students with post-grad options.” - Student

“Grow critical thinkers!” - Community Engagement Participant

“Continue to focus on establishing citizenship beyond the classroom.” - Student

Learning Success Area 2: Students continue to develop strong numeracy and literacy skills.

“All students should be able to read and write functionally.” - Student

“More support in learning numeracy and literacy.” - Community Engagement Participant

“We want kids ‘nailing’ their foundational skills.” - School Staff Member

In all engagements, participants were aware of the need for strong numeracy and literacy results and the tools to help students get there. Reading, writing and math support were cited as especially critical at a time some students are recovering from pandemic learning interruptions. Varying ideas on what was needed were shared.

“We need an effective district, research-based response to literacy and numeracy.” - School Staff Member

“We need consistency in data-driven literacy and numeracy!” - School Staff Member

“Provide our staff with best support.” - Community Engagement Participant

Learning Success Area 3: Students have opportunities for rich learning experiences from highly effective staff.

“Continue to hire strong teachers.” - Student

“Staff make kids feel so special--they’re not a number and they go above and beyond what they can do!” - Community Engagement Participant

“BTPS’ emphasis on teacher growth and empowerment is what attracted me to working in this division. The optimal learning coach meetings for teachers is so meaningful. ” - Community Engagement Participant

Strong teachers and support for staff was a frequent theme across all engagements. The benefit of professional learning and development was repeated, “*Do more staff professional development and learning days,*” said one community engagement participant. Developing leaders was highlighted.

“Continue developing staff leaders in their strength area and share positional leaders between schools.” - School Staff Member

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Stakeholders saw shared services as a way to achieve learning success, as this school staff member reflects, *“Let’s continue to find ways to coordinate resources effectively; human, financial, program planning, literacy, numeracy.”*

Technology is considered to be a critical tool, though online learning was not always preferred by teachers in front of students. Participants had this to say about technology:

“Continue to provide a diverse list of tech (2D/3D printing, Chromebooks, Ipads).” - Student

“Maintain and improve connectedness through effective and efficient technology.” - School Staff Member

Theme 2: Foster safe and caring learning environments.

To foster safe and caring learning environments, stakeholders further identified areas where they believed BTPS could focus their work.

“Accept everyone and their differences.” - Student

“Create inclusive spaces and welcoming and caring environments that focus on critical and creative thinking.” - Community Engagement Participant

“We all need to learn about mental health and how to deal with it.” - Student

“Be a safe place to be valued and cared for.” - Community Engagement Participant

Safe & Caring Area 1: Students learn in inclusive spaces that are welcoming and caring.

“I think more kindness will build better goals and a better place for new people to feel safe.” - Student

“I hope diversity within the division is increased and thriving.” - Community Engagement Participant

“I hope everyone in our schools feels important.” - Community Engagement Participant

Students have diverse needs and in every session, participants acknowledged these diverse needs: *“Keep focussed on the social and emotional needs of students,”* said one community engagement participant.

Safe & Caring Area 2: Student and staff health and wellness are supported.

“Build mutual trust between staff and students.” - Student

“Allow time for mental health breaks during the day.” - Student

“Build better mental health programs including public school counselors.” - Student

“I hope BTPS continues to support healthy students--both mentally and physically!” - Community Engagement Participant

Across the engagement sessions, participants identified the hope for continued supports for students and staff members’ health and wellness. These supports included but were not limited to: mental health supports, services provided by community partners, and extracurricular programs. As the one student mentioned above, fostering good relationships between students and teachers was considered a strategy for improved health and wellness.

Participants across all engagement sessions saw opportunities to partner with organizations and services within the community:

“Let’s bolster and create mental health partnerships.” - School Staff Member

“Increase supports from AHS for students with learning needs. More accessible wrap-around services.” - Community Engagement Participant

“Higher level mental health support- universal, accessible, consistent- where service comes to the child and is provided by trained individuals.” - School Staff Member.

Theme 3: Build strong collaborations.

To build strong collaborations, stakeholders identified partnerships they hoped BTPS would continue to nurture and grow.

“Continue to empower students to be leaders within their schools and communities.” - Student

“Staff in our small rural schools go over and beyond what they can do. They know our kids.”
- Community Engagement Participant

“Continue and build innovative partnerships and engagement with the community.”
- Community Engagement Participant

Strong Collaborations Area 1: Students benefit from strong collaborations with families, our rural communities and external partners.

“Bring in community members to share about their jobs.” Student

“Be sustainable within the changing dynamics in rural communities.” - School Staff Member

“Build connections between parents and staff.” - Community Engagement Participant

“Build new innovative partnerships and engagement with the community.” - Community Engagement Participant

“Rural is cool.” - Community Engagement Participant

Many participants were proud of BTPS’ strong partnerships with the community and saw an opportunity in building on these connections. The partnership with Lakeland College was emphasized at every public session and many student sessions. It is seen as highly successful and some thought more programs could develop from this: *“Build connections with more post-secondary institutions.”* - Community Engagement Participant

Partnership wasn’t limited to those with parents, community leaders and institutions. Continued and increased sharing between schools within the division was a common theme. *“Let’s redefine teacher capacity sharing within the district (for example, let’s leverage our specialists!”* - School Staff Member

Conclusion

Buffalo Trail School Division's Board of Trustees and administration are grateful to those who shared their hopes and dreams for BTPS schools.

See [LINK TO BE COMPLETED] for Buffalo Trail School Division's 2023-2027 Education Plan.