



USD 246

NORTHEAST

Long Range Educational Plan

December 2005

PROCESS

The Board of Education of Northeast Unified School District 246, through a focused discussion process, identified key components of a long-term educational plan.

The Board first identified several direct and indirect factors that influence the education environment in the school system. Factors identified were:

1. Geographic elements
2. School finance
3. No Child Left Behind and accreditation regulations
4. Commitment to a quality staff
5. Current educational trends, philosophies, and technologies
6. Economic disparities in the school district
7. Demographic and enrollment trends
8. Boardsmanship
9. Increase opportunities for the school and community connectedness.

Based on the identified influence factors, a list of questions and assumptions about the Northeast school system was created. After working through a consensus building activity, the following five (5) items were identified by the Board of Education as plausible core issues of the proposed plan.

1. Recruit, retain, and maximize the talents of a quality staff
2. Commitment to improve and enhance facilities, student achievement, communications, community relations, and Board and Administrator roles and responsibilities
3. Develop and maintain a contemporary curriculum
4. Support a 21st century classroom philosophy with emphasis on technology
5. Recognize students, staff, and community achievements.

The Board of Education submitted the five (5) components for discussion and input by identified internal and external focus groups. The internal groups were high school students, and school staff. The external groups included parents and community leaders. Each group provided input on the components around which the educational plan would be created. In total 48 participants actively engaged in discussion of the five (5) proposed plan components.

After the focus groups met, common threads and reoccurring themes were identified and reported to the Board of Education. These general comments are listed in the Appendix.

SUMMARY

In summation, this long-term educational plan has been created with input from various focus groups and the Board of Education. The Plan represents a vision for the future of the Northeast school system based on local beliefs, values, traditions and culture. After it is formally adopted by the Board of Education, it should serve as a guide for the school district when dealing with future budgetary, personnel, and educational issues. This long-term educational plan will allow Northeast USD 246 some degree of control over the impact internal and external forces can have on a school system. Difficult decisions can become clearer and responses more consistent when considered against this system-wide plan.

The plan should be reviewed annually. **It may prove beneficial to review the plan in conjunction with the Superintendent of Schools annual evaluation.** Goals and objectives of the plan could be identified in measurable terms within the evaluation. As part of the plan's annual review, the district and schools mission statements should be discussed to ensure they remain reflective of the plan's major components.

Pages 4-7 of this document contain the strategic directions of the district. Items in bold print have been targeted as the resource (time and money) priorities of this plan.

NORTHEAST USD 246 STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

I. STAFF

A. Hire & maintain quality staff.

1. **Ensure teachers are equipped with instructional strategies.**
 - High Quality Professional Development program**
 - Provides collaborative planning time**
 - Study teams are developed around literature on**
 - Brain research**
 - Effective instructional strategies**
2. **Define quality staff using measurable qualities.**
 - Update evaluation instrument.**
 - Ensure all staff are good role models.**
3. Implement the 2/14/2005 recruiting procedure (ongoing)
 - Hire quality staff
 - Excellent teachers who are willing to sponsor extracurricular activities should be sought out.
4. Students feel they deserve the best staff possible.
 - Include high school students in hiring process (ongoing)
5. Implement the Haberman Star Teacher Interview process (ongoing)
6. Perform background checks on perspective staff. (ongoing)

B. Offer competitive salaries and benefits.

1. Maintain a competitive salary schedule (ongoing through negotiations)
2. Maintain health insurance policy for all staff (ongoing)
 - Seek to add a family health insurance stipend for recruiting (negotiations)
3. Develop a wellness program (include with new policy development)

C. Continuously improve communication.

1. Improve communication between administration and staff. (ongoing)
 - Regular staff meetings – principals
 - Monthly “visit with the Superintendent” meetings at schools
 - Superintendent Walkabouts on regular basis with
 - Classified Directors & Principals
2. Get input from students who have already graduated.
 - High School principals call graduates each fall (October or November)
 - Submit report of findings to BOE annually
3. Emphasize respect between students, teachers and administration. (planned)
 - Professional development activity on the problems with office gossip.

NORTHEAST USD 246 STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

II. CONTEMPORARY CURRICULUM & STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

- A. Think innovatively when it comes to curriculum development.
 - 1. **Involve all staff in discovery and implementation of “high yield” curricular strategies and programs.**
 - 2. **Involve focus groups in curriculum development.**

- B. Student achievement.
 - 1. **Stress rigor & excellence in all endeavors**
 - Increase rigor in assessment**
 - Increase ACT performance to state average or better**
 - Establish goal of reaching standard of excellence on all state assessments.**
 - Establish Extended learning programs for at-risk (individualized)**
 - Return to self-contained classrooms at K-5 level**
 - Increase language arts (especially writing) instruction at 6-12 level**
 - Establish block schedule at 6-8 level**
 - 2. Provide more opportunities for upper level mathematics. (ongoing)
 - 3. Maintain seminar for high school study. (ongoing)
 - 4. Provide tutoring opportunities, i.e. high school students working with younger students or their peers.
 - 5. Provide more opportunities for foreign language.
 - Provide individualized options for other languages
 - On-line; Software-based; IDL-based

- C. Provide additional course offerings.
 - 1. **Offer hands on learning opportunities including home economics, technology, vocational opportunities etc. (ongoing)**
 - Improve and expand vocational program opportunities at NHS**
 - 2. **Provide ACT and other testing prep classes.**
 - Establish an ACT test prep class in the NHS schedule**
 - 3. Share programs and/or classes with other schools. (ongoing)
 - Work with Crawford County schools, FSCC & Pitt State
 - 4. Integrate personal finance and legal aspects into high school curriculum.

NORTHEAST USD 246 STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

III. COMMUNICATIONS, COMMUNITY RELATIONS, FACILITIES AND BOARD AND ADMINISTRATOR ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

A. Communications.

1. **Encourage and provide opportunities to exchange ideas and communicate between elementary and secondary staff.**
Schedule professional development together as possible.
2. **Students want direct communication with teachers, administration and board of education.**
3. Ask for input from every sector, listen, and follow up.
Use survey tools; Schedule focus groups with the board annually.
4. Improve *daily* communications.
Establish expectation of “two-week” planning calendars
Notify staff of information relevant to their jobs via email
Establish Focus group meetings with each group
5. Better utilization of existing groups, councils, etc. (ongoing)
Greater use of site councils in decision-making
6. Schedule regular meetings between administration and teachers.
Superintendent meetings with staff (monthly)

B. Community Relations

1. Bring community leaders into schools for tours, volunteering, etc.
Establish monthly community luncheon (tour)
2. Consider community calendar when planning school calendar. (ongoing)
3. Increase publicity opportunities with the media.
Monthly “Viking” page in the Morning Sun distributed to all students

C. Facilities

1. Increase classroom space.
Need up-to-date high school science labs
Need more space in library media centers
Plan for 3 sections per grade (up from 2 historically)
Study feasibility of a 7th / 8th grade center.

D. Board and Administrator Roles and Responsibilities

1. Provide stakeholders opportunities to visit with the board on a regular basis.
Establish annual calendar of BOE focus group meetings
2. Board maintains focus on leadership through policy development and evaluation of administration. (ongoing)
3. Document and assure compliance with district policies and procedures. (ongoing)

NORTHEAST USD 246 STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

IV. 21ST CENTURY CLASSROOM WITH STRATEGIC INTEGRATION OF TECHNOLOGY

A. Technology/Computer Use

1. **Maintain a commitment to upgraded technology.**
2. **Provide time for staff to learn to use new technology.**
 - Send staff to “model” programs
 - Encourage staff to learn from students
3. **Expect classroom integration of technology that mirrors “real-life” applications.**
4. **Integrate the teaching of digital citizenship and ethics into all subjects.**
5. **Increase the time students are using technology to construct relevant projects.**
6. **Increase access to computers, especially laptops/portable/wireless.**
7. **Utilize web-cam and other technology to aid in student achievement i.e. help kids stay connected to the classroom when home sick.**

V. RECOGNIZE ACHIEVEMENTS

A. Student

1. **Recognize academic success through end of the year awards ceremony.**
2. **Balance athletic and academic recognition.**
3. **Include positive communication with parents.**
4. **Provide release time for academic success.**
5. **Recognize students for progress made – not just A’s.**

B. Staff

1. **Recognize staff’s professional achievement in a consistent manner.**

NORTHEAST USD 246 APPENDIX

Using a nominal group technique to rank order possible components/elements of a long-term educational plan, the Board of Education of Northeast USD 246 suggested the following areas to be included.

Recruit, retain, and maximize the talents of a quality staff

Commitment to improve and enhance student achievement, communications, community relations, facilities and board and administrator roles and responsibilities

Develop and maintain a contemporary curriculum

Support a 21st century classroom philosophy with strategic integration of technology, etc.

Recognize students, staff, and community achievements

- * Financial capabilities
- * Marketing the district positively through improved education and communication with the community
- * Identify goals with specific objectives and an evaluation component
- * Facilities maintenance plan
- * Identification of roles and responsibilities of the board and administration
- * Assessment of exit outcomes, including follow-up
- * Grade configuration/District Growth

USD 246 FOCUS GROUP SUMMARY

On March 29, 2005, the Board of Education of Northeast Unified School District 246 met in special session to begin work on a long-term educational plan for the district. The board identified fifteen (15) possible components upon which a long-term educational plan could be created. After using a nominal group technique to rank order through consensus, five (5) items were selected as more important. These five (5) proposed components of the plan were:

- 1) Recruit, retain and maximize the talents of a quality staff
- 2) Commitment to improve and enhance student achievement, communications, community relations, facilities and board and administrator roles and responsibilities
- 3) Develop and maintain a contemporary curriculum
- 4) Support a 21st century classroom philosophy with strategic integration of technology
- 5) Recognize students, staff, and community achievements.

On April 9th and 10th, May 23rd, and July 19th, Dr. Chris Christman from Pittsburg State University and Mrs. Brandy Olivera from the Southeast Kansas Education Service Center facilitated a series of round table discussions with identified focus groups. Internal focus groups were comprised of students and school staff. External focus groups included parents and community leaders.

An attempt has been made to identify common threads and reoccurring themes discussed by the focus groups on each of the five (5) proposed components. Overall, both internal and external groups were very supportive and proud of the Northeast school system.

I. Recruit, retain and maximize the talents of a quality staff

All groups thought this was an essential piece in the long-term plan as part of providing a quality education. Both internal and external groups identified that the quality staff is critical to a quality educational experience. Identified factors included providing staff with the tools necessary for success, including competitive salaries and benefits, recognition, opportunities for communication with the board of education and support. Students emphasized the importance of hiring quality staff who relate well to the students and are good role models. Students indicated an interest in being included in the hiring process.

II. Commitment to improve and enhance student achievement, communications, community relations, facilities and board and administrator roles and responsibilities

This topic was discussed heavily in regards to how improving and enhancing all of these areas can impact the district. Every group indicated the importance of improving and enhancing student achievement. Parents indicated they would like to see additional

opportunities for foreign language and upper level mathematics as well as additional opportunities to get involved in their children's education. Staff saw the importance of recognizing student progress throughout the year.

When it comes to communication, every group indicated they would appreciate more ways to communicate between students, staff, administration and the board of education. Community leaders pointed out that they would be interested in ways they can become more involved in the school setting. Staff indicated a need for opportunities to exchange ideas and communicate between elementary and secondary staff.

All groups agreed that community relations could always be enhanced. Suggestions included bringing community leaders into schools for tours, volunteering, etc., considering the community calendar when planning the school calendar so events don't coincide and developing relationships with media outlets that will lead to increasing visibility of the positive things taking place within the district.

There was not a lot of discussion regarding facilities. Maintaining and replacing furniture in a timely manner and increasing classroom space seemed to be the only concerns.

Staff indicated they would like to see a spot on the board agenda for faculty updates and they would appreciate more opportunities to visit with the board on a regular basis.

III. Develop and maintain a contemporary curriculum

In regards to maintaining a contemporary curriculum, each group agreed that additional course offerings are essential. Suggestions included offering hands on learning opportunities, college prep classes, additional opportunities for seniors and on the job training opportunities. Staff indicated that additional time for staff development is important, as well as involving focus groups in curriculum development.

IV. Support a 21st century classroom philosophy with strategic integration of technology

Technology was identified as a necessary instructional tool. Business leaders thought kids should learn the technology relevant to what they will be expected to do once they are in the workforce and several groups pointed out that all kids are not headed for college. Staff was interested in more support in the areas of technology. Students would like to see better access to technology, specifically laptops and wireless technology. It was mentioned by several groups that technology should be used as a tool and should not replace people.

V. Recognize students, staff, and community achievements.

All groups saw the importance of recognizing students, staff and community achievements. Each group indicated that recognition is currently taking place, but can definitely be enhanced. Community leaders indicated that media recognition is an area that should be explored. Students felt that they should be recognized for progress made, not necessarily for just A's. Students also indicated that staff should be recognized as well. Perception among students seemed to be that staff morale is often low. Staff suggested recognizing professional achievements in a consistent manner and offering a motivational speaker.