

BKW Community Forum Notes

Topic: Elementary School

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Table 1

- We need to do a vegetable garden.
 - We have gardens but don't really do anything with them.
 - I visited Bethlehem's garden and they are such a bigger school but their garden was only about 2 times the size of ours so we should be doing what they are.
 - It would be a great thing not only to implement in classrooms but also to use the vegetables in the cafeteria.
 - And tie it in to a recycling program.
 - The possibilities there are great for tie-ins with science, nutrition, and health.
 - It could save money with food.
 - You could work in economics.
 - Donations could be made to the local pantry.
 - The Business Administrator recently received a Farm to School grant from Tractor Supply. Could we find something similar for the garden or tie the garden to this?
 - We need to find grant money for the garden.
 - What about asking local farms to help implement the garden and get us going?
 - We can make it a community garden, like Ballston Spa to keep it going in the summer.
 - Make it part of a school club; it could be part of the Connections program.
 - They also have one in Voorheesville.
 - Make it a community-driven program. The produce could go to the food pantry.
 - One of the schools did a free salad day where they invited parents in and everyone enjoyed the produce the students grew.
 - It promotes healthy eating.
 - Kids are more likely to eat it if they know where it comes from and had a hand in growing it.
 - There are a lot of things available for raised beds.
- We need a new sandbox.
- More recycling is needed in the school.
 - So many things are just thrown out here that are recyclable.
 - We could partner with Predels or the Town of Berne – their plant is right down the road.
 - This is something we could get money for.
 - Most kids are accustomed to doing it at home already.
 - This could be a good job for the students.
 - We could also use compost in the garden
- We need to find more grants.
 - Is there someone in each school/the district looking for grants?
 - Sometimes there is free money laying there.
 - Especially for the programs we are talking about.
- More enrichment opportunities are needed.

- We understand teachers are dealing with a vast array of students with vast abilities and needs but there is a section of students who need to be challenged so they don't feel complacent.
- An Odyssey of the Mind program would be great.
- We used to have the Challenge Program. We studied whales and went on a whale watch.
- There used to be opportunities like that and I would like my kids to have them.
- It was something that was built right into the day.
- Being creative with scheduling is necessary to e up teachers to do these sorts of things.
- We need more academic activities. I'm not looking to extend their school day but to challenge them.
 - Trick them into learning by making it fun.
- We need more foreign language at an earlier age.
- Utilize the older kids coming to teach the younger kids.
 - My daughter came back from college to read to the younger kids.
 - Former students and older students could come in as tutors.
 - Use volunteers from the high school and give them credit.
 - We already have late buses.
 - Start a cadet teaching program – it's like an internship thing for those interested in going into teaching.
 - A challenge is the wide-range of where kids are in a classroom, it's hard to move everyone forward.
 - Sometimes just having someone there as an extra pair of hands.
 - It would be helpful if it was a course or if they had a teacher give the older student volunteers direction before they showed up.
- A greater diversity is needed.
 - For example, Mr. D's students used to raise fish.
 - Getting kids exposed to the outdoors.
 - More programs in biology and earth science that have real world applications tied in.
 - It's these programs that make learning fun.

Table 2

- We need more after school programming.
 - Chess, Legos, enrichment programs.
 - More 4-H sections so there isn't a waiting list.
 - There is really nothing to do after school for the younger ones.
- Start busing kids to the Duanesburg Y.
 - They have swimming lessons.
 - Kids should know how to swim. It's a skill of surviving. Nearly everyone here has a pond or water somewhere on or near their property.
 - Part of the problem is transportation.
 - It seems convenient for those of us in Knox.
 - It's 12 minutes from my house in Berne and I'm only 5 minutes from the school.
 - They also have a really great basketball program.

- Their swim program is awesome.
- They have a great Lego machine program and they actually compete as part of it.
- They offer programs during the day for second and fourth graders.
- Basically if you can get the kids there, they give you the programs for free.
- They have karate there too.
- It seems like it would be really easy to coordinate transportation after school to bus students to the Y.
- They can offer programs we can't.
- The students need more day trips to local industries and museums.
- We need more opportunities for the advanced students.
 - We do great with special ed but not so great with advanced students.
 - We do the best we can but we could really use help.
 - Pull out the kids that can handle a little more and have a teacher come in and teach advanced activities.
 - Years ago – like 28 years – there was a split day program called Voyage of the Mimi. Kids were pulled out in the afternoon every day of the week. (1 day per grade). This allowed the teacher to hit every grade level. It ran for a year before there was budget issues.
 - There was a cumulative event to go on a whale watch. We stayed overnight in Gloucester.
 - It was science, hands-on.
 - My son is thirty-something and he still talks about that program.
 - We have a lot of colleges in the area that we could partner with.
 - Because of schedules and man-power, it's hard to tap into those programs.
 - We need to design part of the teacher's day where they don't have teaching obligations so they can make those connections.
 - There are great programs available; we just can't get to them.
 - Makerspace would be wonderful, even if was after school.
 - Kids would really benefit from it.
- We need to have a grant writer to write grants.
- We should try to create more opportunities over the summer.
 - It would be great for those who are sliding.
 - Or to hit all levels: those that need some help and those that need a challenge.
 - Even a book club or science club.
 - Transportation historically has been a problem.
 - The library has a summer reading program. Maybe more teachers should push that.
 - Let's work with the youth councils to bring summer opportunities.
 - Summer programs should be skill driven.
 - Outreach to the youth councils, the libraries and other summer programs and invite representatives to get together and brainstorm ideas.

Table 3

- We need more remedial reading, math and science for the upper elementary grades.
 - We need someone with an elementary education with a literacy degree.
- Smaller class sizes would be great.

- We need a much better meal program.
 - We shouldn't be transporting meals from one cafeteria to the other.
 - We need to have an operational cafeteria in the elementary.
 - There needs to be a more varied menu and healthier options.
 - Week to week, it's the same options.
 - My niece had 2 Trix yogurts and roll for lunch. That's not a nutritious lunch, even if it fits the standards.
 - The food here is disgusting.
 - Someone needs to certify the food is in code.
 - Too often kids are getting old milk.
 - Refrigeration is a problem. Coolers are left open so kids can get their own milk. Then some students end up with warm milk.
 - This goes back to the need for gardens at the school .
 - Going forward, it might be cost effective to do a garden.
 - We should partner with the food co-op to bring in fresh vegetables.
- Have a school-run produce garden
 - It would be a great thing for kids to work on during recess.
 - Partner elementary kids with the FFA.
 - It would be a great program for students to start and run.
 - We need an FFA here.
- I'd like to see BKW be a Blue Ribbon School.
- Our Mission is clear on the letterhead: We need to follow through and set everyone in elementary up for a good secondary education.
 - We also need to focus on skills. There are two futures – skilled workers and college.
- How do we get the "A game" out of our students?
- We need more physical education. We don't meet the state standards now.
 - Research points to if you are physically active, a child is more willing to learn.
 - We need recess through 5th grade.
- Field trips are a wonderful option that we need more of.
 - A lot of students in this area don't get to see plays.
 - Yes, we need more cultural field trips.
- We need more interaction between the MS/HS and the elementary.
 - Have 7th and 8th graders teach a gym class.
 - What about a Future Teachers of America club? Have something that is a little more vocational.
- I'd like there to be less fundraisers.
 - It's not just the PTA, it's everything. Everyone has a fundraiser.
 - And you are constantly hitting up the same people all the time.
- The appearance of the elementary school needs to be modernized a little more.
 - Put up more artwork of the kids.
- Bring the Bulldogs morning show back.
- Also discussed off topic
 - What are we doing with \$22 million budget as the number of students are declining and the graduation rate is declining?
 - Why is the cost per pupil so much compared with schools like Berlin?
 - How many kids are there in the BKW district eligible to go to BKW? How many of those kids go to school elsewhere or are homeschooled?

- Why aren't they coming to BKW and how do we get them back?
 - Part of this is the turnover from the top down.
 - Part of it is the lack of services we have for the students.
 - I wouldn't have moved here if I knew what a mess it would be with the administration.
 - Now if we have someone steering the boat in the same direction long-term, it gives me more hope.
- If we are doing a better job than in the past, we need to get the word out.

Table 4

- I'd like to restore more field trips for the students.
 - It used to be a priority, like 4 trips a year.
 - Each grade would have specific places to visit to avoid overlap.
 - These things are relatively inexpensive as things go.
- Need more of a community connection. Let's try to bring more people to our classrooms.
 - The museum will travel to our school.
 - There used to be a Grandparents program that paired older residents with students. They would come for school activities and old-time game night.
 - There are things we can do to get the whole community on board.
 - Get volunteers to come read to the kids once a week.
 - We need to make a connection with the community.
 - I'd like to see more of a partnership with the Berne library. Have kids go there to do research.
 - I'd like us to get a dog (or a horse) for the kids to read to. We're the only school that doesn't do that.
- I'd definitely like to see more community building in our school.
 - More morning program
 - Why not on Flag Day do we not all go out and raise the flag and sing patriotic songs?
 - Or have each grade make a float for the parade?
 - We need to do things so students can get to know each other.
 - It's hard to get HS kids to come, and when they do, there isn't a lot of consistency.
 - There was a teacher who used to come from the HS to the elementary to teach a poetry class. That helped the elementary kids with the transition.
 - We need a sense of community in the school
 - Why not a beautify the school day? We can all rake and clean up.
- We need more academic extra-curricular activities.
 - A science program.
 - More offerings for the talented and gifted students.
 - Maybe work with the PTA like Scotia-Glenville did to bring in an inflatable planetarium.
 - Somehow our students that excel get overlooked. There isn't a lot to challenge them.
 - It would be nice to have some STEM program after school.
 - Why couldn't it be integrated during the day?
- There should be an elementary science lab.

- Technology is at a minimum.
 - It's a disgrace.
 - We need wifi.
 - Kids are getting a second-rate exposure to technology.
 - Kids at other schools all have laptops.
- There needs to be a transition program for 6th to 7th grade during the summer.
 - Spend a week teaching incoming MS students how to use a locker and cover their books because not everyone is learning this.
 - We used to have a kindergarten transition for 2 weeks in the summer.
 - We need to build these programs back.
- We need some sort of summer school at the elementary.
 - It needs to be open to everyone, not just those struggling, so we can prevent summer slide.
 - It would also give kids boosts that are having a tough time.
 - Once they start to slide, it's hard to bring them back.
 - There needs to be an enrichment piece.
 - There isn't an environment to support them.
 - They get overlooked.
 - We need transportation.
 - We need a grant
- Having a sense of community service is important.
 - We need to do outreach.
 - There are a lot of things we can do that aren't material. Most of what we do now is raising money.
 - Students volunteer at Never Eat Alone dinners. We should encourage more of that.
 - Why don't we put on a dinner here and have our kids work it? Why do we have to go to a church? Let's start programs in the school.

Table 5

- We need a nice playground for kindergarten/the younger kids to go get exercise.
 - After lunch we used to be able to go right out after eating and playing. We didn't have to sit in the cafeteria for a certain amount of time.
- Lunches are inedible.
 - We need more Farm to School.
 - Get the cafeteria back in the elementary.
 - We shouldn't be cooking everything in the HS and wheeling it over.
 - White pancakes in baggies heated in a microwave is cancer in a packet.
- Start a school garden and keep it going.
 - What little they do falls by the wayside in the summer.
 - Get 4-H involved.
 - Get the community involved.
 - Build a greenhouse. It wouldn't take much.

- The garden could supply produce to the local pantries or the homeless. That would help keep it going during the summer.
- We need swimming lessons.
 - Can we do something with Thatcher Park, Voorheesville or the Duaneburg Y?
 - It's life skills. They need it.
- We need staff that pushes reading.
 - We need a way to bring non-readers into the optional reading programs.
 - Offer more incentives like the pizza program, where you can get prizes after reading so much.
 - Get a reading specialist back in the elementary.
- How is accessibility in the school? We need to make sure all rails, ramps and such are available.
- We need to get foreign language started earlier.
- Students can also use typing/keyboarding skills.
 - Computer skills in general are needed earlier.
 - We could use more computers.
 - And access to iPads.
 - Maybe get some businesses involved
 - Or Grands.
- We need a grant writer.
 - They pay for themselves.
- From an educator standpoint, we need more professional development that connects the elementary with the MS/HS.
 - There could be more staff orientation between the two schools.
- We need better transition between the two buildings
 - Why not have the kids in the elementary switch teachers sooner- expand it to fourth grade.
 - That would help with the transition.
 - Upper classmen could be mentors.
 - Connect the 6th and 7th graders more.
 - The first 10 weeks at the MS are chaos.
 - Why not get 6th graders into MS classes a few times toward the end of the year?
 - Have 7th and 8th graders teach them a lesson.
 - It would make 6th graders feel they can handle the work and give 7th and 8th graders a sense of pride and confidence.
 - Use the older students to inspire kids.
 - Come up with ways to make learning fun.