



Byron Center Public Schools 2010-2011 Planning

In November 2009 Byron Center Public Schools invited parents, staff and residents to submit suggestions and provide input to the budget challenges facing our schools. We compiled the suggestions and posted them on the district website from December through January. In the January BConnection the district provided answers to several suggestions. Also during this time several studies and assignments were delegated for further research. Some of these assignments continue in their research, others we have provided responses to below.

It is important that we not implement changes that solve a budget reduction today but impair the long term future of our district. It is our desire to re-imagine our schools so that they can continue to be the best that they can be.

A timeline for the 2010-2011 decision making process will be posted in the near future. We encourage all our parents and residents to subscribe to the district's EConnection located in the lower left corner of the district website, www.bcpsk12.net for ongoing information throughout the remainder of this school year.

Responses to Suggestions:

1. Before visiting Wage Concessions, exhaust all other possibilities
BCPS is reviewing all potential revenues and expenditure for savings.
2. Eliminate B team sports immediately, save coaching stipends, busing dollars
3. Eliminate Frosh sports (9th/10th=JV) (11th/12th=Varsity)
4. Institute Pay to Play immediately
The district is currently evaluating its entire athletic program for potential savings for the 2010-2011 school year.
5. Move Central Office to NIS
6. Close or reconfigure buildings
7. Do we have capacity at other buildings to close Nickels Intermediate? Send 5th to elementary and 6th to West Middle School? Ramifications...savings/cost?
A district wide building capacity study is underway and will be shared as we proceed with decisions for the 2010-2011 school year.
8. Go to 170 schools days or fewer by lengthening days to meet required hours
This option is being considered pending state law and possible legislative action mandating seat time/minutes/days.
9. Eliminate/reassign or consolidate administrative positions:
Operations/Technology, Curriculum, Marketing/Communications,
Asst Principal at WMS
The human capacity of our administrative leadership is being evaluated.

10. Eliminate busing second semester
This change would not have been possible in the suggested timeframe. Transportation priorities are being addressed for 2010-11 in an upcoming parent survey.
11. Eliminate NCA
The district's participation in NCA (North Central Association) was discontinued, effective second semester of the 2009-2010 school year.
12. Lobby State:
 - Take requirements off dollar amounts for particular expenditures
 - Allow transfer of funds from one "category" to another
 - Eliminate 6 credit requirement or change to different form of improvement
 - Eliminate MEAPs, put money toward pupil funding
 - Raise revenue for schools by tax on bottles: beer, water, other. Let people vote.*We encourage all our taxpayers/voters to be active in the legislative process.*
13. Set up Education Foundation separate from Van Singel
Any person can donate money to a public school as a tax deductible donation. The creation of a foundation is not necessary for this to occur. Simply write a check in the desired amount and make it payable to Byron Center Public Schools. At year end, a letter acknowledging your donation will be sent from the district for your taxes.
14. Change BCHS minimum enrollment from 20 to 24 for a HS class to be in session.
This change has been implemented for second semester 2009-2010. For the most part, every class is now required to have a minimum of 24 students enrolled to continue.
15. Eliminate BConnection with exception of graduation edition, or go electronic
For the second semester of the school year two editions of the BConnection district newsletter have been eliminated. Typically 9,000 copies are printed and mailed to every residence within the school district boundaries. With our non-profit rates, each edition costs the district approximately \$4,000 for the 9,000 quantity. The district will not publish a February or April edition for a total printing and mailing savings of \$8,000.
16. Eliminate noon bus run for DK/D and alternate full day Fridays
This change would not have been possible in the suggested timeframe. Transportation priorities will be addressed for 2010-11 in an upcoming parent survey.
17. Eliminate tuition reimbursement program for employees immediately
18. Salary freeze for all employees district wide
19. Stop prescription reimbursement for all staff
20. Across the board pay/benefit reduction
21. Cut staff benefits.
22. Don't cover spouses on insurance or charge for the coverage.
This is a contract negotiated item. The district is currently in contract negotiations.
23. Turn off lights wherever we can get by with natural light
The district implemented an energy savings program several years ago. We are proud to say that district utility bills are monitored on a monthly basis to ensure ongoing savings and commitment to energy savings. Our schools have been honored for their energy

savings, even receiving the Kent County "Chairman's Award" for Green Schools in 2008.

24. Turn down heat a few degrees

All of our buildings heating/cooling systems are computer controlled based on activities. Typically heat/cooling is adjusted for activity immediately after school dismisses. The district has a Board policy for the use of lighting heating and cooling in an energy efficient manner.

25. Make all building newsletters electronic

Every building has made efforts to go electronic with their parent communications as of 2009-2010. We have retained as many of the BConnection district wide newsletters, as a printed and mailed communication, as possible since this is the only communication many of our taxpayers have with our schools. We feel it is important to keep all of our taxpayers informed and engaged with public education within their community as it affects their property values, taxes, and community as a whole.

26. Shorten school year by one week if savings can be achieved.

This option is being considered pending state law and possible legislative action mandating seat time/minutes/days.

27. Continue with elimination of noon bus run for DK/K and alternate full day Fridays.

Transportation priorities will be addressed for 2010-11 in an upcoming parent survey.

28. Switch K-12 to trimesters allowing more offerings at upper levels without added staff.

As of second semester of the 2009-2010 school year Byron Center Public Schools implemented a six-period school day for grades 5-12. The district believes this is a combination of the most educationally sound and most cost effective scheduling option for our district.

29. Hire a grant writer

The district has applied and received many grants over the past many years. This responsibility has been assigned within its administrative team.

30. Pay to play/participate

The district is currently evaluating this option for potential revenues/savings for the 2010-2011 school year.

31. Invite Jansen and Green to an open forum so that parents can hear State's side of issue

Both Senator Jansen and Representative Green will be speaking at a Town Hall meeting scheduled for March 11th, 6:30-8pm at the Van Singel Fine Arts Center.

32. Look for ways to generate revenue

Some parents have made a variety of suggestions for projects to raise revenues. From adding another school carnival, to offering scrap booking classes, to creating a Scrip program with Gordon Foods. Some of these fund raising projects are already offered annually by the parent groups of our buildings. Any parent with a fundraising idea is welcome to propose their idea to their building parent group. Funds raised through such endeavors certainly alleviate expenses drawn from the district's general fund when the parent group uses their earned funds to purchase or support activities within their school

buildings. The district does request that parents make a courtesy call to other fundraising groups within the district so as not to offend the efforts of others. We also ask that, together, we be mindful of our community businesses if the project requires donations from our local businesses. We are fortunate that our local businesses have always gone above and beyond with their support of our schools and students and continue to do so. Please remember that our State's economy is limiting their resources as well. This answer is not meant to discourage parents in any way from moving forward with fundraising efforts. It is meant to provide some guidance and understanding of the process as you move forward. The district appreciates all of our parent groups, community groups, and booster groups. It is our desire not to diminish any ongoing efforts or the tireless support that benefits all our children. Schools throughout our nation cry for parent involvement. Byron Center Public Schools is honored with tremendous support and involvement from our parents and we remain truly grateful.

33. Enforce volunteerism. Parents can help with janitorial services, lunches, etc. Volunteerism for students, even 3rd, 4th grades. These students can help maintain facilities they learn in and it builds a sense of responsibility. Combine student volunteerism (½ hour-1 hour before/after school) with reduction or elimination of busing. Extending the school day brings the student schedule more in alignment with parents' work schedules which might make busing issues easier to deal with.

It is impossible for the school district to enforce volunteerism. Public schools are required by law to provide an education regardless of parent/student involvement. However, students and staff do assist with emptying classroom trash, clearing white boards, etc. In addition, our buildings regularly enjoy the benefits of many parent volunteers throughout the school day who help with a wide variety of duties from lunch rooms, to tutoring, to office runners, to maintaining school habitats, and so on. Regarding the actual "cleaning" of the buildings, current state laws carry many mandates regarding the cleaning procedures/products/frequency involved with school maintenance. Our district custodians are certified by the Michigan Schools Business Officials (MSBO) for their duties.

34. Run a ticker news line at bottom of website and BCTV about Subject/Time/Location/Meetings/Agenda items

All district parents and residents are welcomed and encouraged to attend Board meetings. Upcoming meetings are posted on page 2 of the BConnection and on the district website. The district website lists every board meeting agenda and minutes as they are approved. Go to www.bcpsk12.net and click on the second doorway (district), click on Board of Education, then click on Board Meetings. BCTV tapes every board meeting and airs them throughout the month. We have a link to BCTV on our district website. For a BCTV schedule to view the Board meetings, go to the district website, 4th doorway, click on BCTV, look for "On Air" along the top navigation for a list of air times. BCTV is an independent educational access channel that operates out of BCHS in partnership with the township. Programming and content suggestions may be made directly to BCTV 878-6864.

35. Highlight news at top of website and BCTV to glance over meeting news

36. Televis budget and board of education meetings on BCTV

37. Video BOE meetings and upload on website or YouTube for replay.

Crisis communication is always sent via the EConnection to all subscribers and is typically posted at the top of the website. We encourage all our parents and interested

residents to subscribe to the EConnection located in the lower left of the district website. Budget updates, throughout this process, have been maintained at the top of the website. BCTV, due to limitations in staffing, taping assignments, and scheduling, air all Board meetings through a predetermined schedule which is advertised on the district website (see above), on BCTV, and in the Advance Newspapers.

38. Can we add total dollar amount and percent of revenue BCPS may lose to the presentation so people can understand how big the number really is? (i.e. \$3.8mill & 12%)

As a common practice we make every attempt to include dollar amounts as we present considerations for the 2010-2011 school year.

39. Can we find out and communicate what other districts are doing?

Yes, and we hope that all our voters find out and discuss what other districts are doing to see if other solutions would be a good fit for Byron Center Schools. TV news, radio, the Grand Rapids Press and Advance newspapers, and MLive are all good resources to stay atop the challenges and solutions of other districts. The range of solutions varies depending on each school's resources, student population projections, and community input. It would take a great deal of time and expense for the district to compile and distribute such a mass of information, but we encourage everyone in our community to do their best to stay informed not only with regard to Byron Center, but to school challenges and solutions statewide.

40. Can we compare ourselves to other districts and communicate that to the targeted audience?

Typically schools try to avoid doing this. Every district and every community in the state is sensitive to their own situation and solutions. What we can do is collect the various solutions, i.e. District A is closing buildings, District B is taking concessions, District C is reducing programs, and evaluate these solutions to our own unique community and values in the interest of our children and providing the best education possible.

41. Can we set up an endowment fund people could contribute to like colleges do?

Perhaps we can research this more in the future if there is a tremendous interest in doing so. Creating another foundation, endowment, parent group, 501(c)3, would require organizing another organization within our schools. It would require leadership, a separate set of bookkeeping, a roster of officers, and abidance to the legal aspects of distributing funds according to the non-profit laws. Remember, anyone may make a tax-deductible donation at any time to a public school.

42. Can we find out our building capacity and offer school choice to fill all to capacity?

A district wide building capacity study is underway. In addition, the Board of Education is currently determining the number of seats to open for school choice students. Action in this regard will be taken by the Board in February or early March. The district must inform the Kent ISD no later than March 16th of the number of seats open to choice in order that the KISD may compile a list countywide. Public announcement of School Choice options will be made by the Kent ISD in April. The state funding follows each student entering the district under the School Choice option at a funding level of approximately \$7,000 pending the funding allowance of the student's home district.

43. Do we know how many of the new enrollments are from private school transfers and they may return to private when economy gets better?

Each year the district receives dozens of calls from parents requesting information and tours of our schools. Usually this is the result of a family relocation, a home situation with regard to private school tuition costs, or the grade level limitation of the charter school the family is attending. Many families make the transfer for the incoming 5th, 7th, or 9th grade school year. Several families each year transfer or move to Byron Center Public Schools which is why we typically grow in enrollment even though we have current families moving out of state for jobs, etc.

44. Look at merging with another successful school district?

Many of our government leaders and a few media outlets have suggested the merger of school districts as a way to save money. On the other hand, most community members of any given school district have fought since the passage of Proposal A and the transfer of school funding to the State to retain any remaining local control of their community's public school. Much has been debated about school pride, sports, facilities, operations and the fabric of the community and its values pertaining to education as it reflects in the local schools. At this time, there has not been a movement in our community to suggest that a merger would be favorable. However, this is a debate and an option for the future that we must certainly monitor.

45. How much do we have to reduce retiree and teacher pay & benefits?

January 2010 projections from the Senate Fiscal suggest that districts will suffer a \$268 per student decrease for 2010-2011. The 2009-10 decrease of \$165 per student will hold steady, meaning the total reduction in funding from our July 1, 2009 budget will amount to \$433 per student or \$1.4 million less. Coupled with increases in state retirement, health, etc. the district, at this time, is preparing for a \$2.8 million budget cut for 2010-2011. Retirement is set by the state and not by the district.

46. How much does it save to implement pay to participate fees in extracurricular?

Byron Center Public Schools firmly believes that extracurricular involvement by its students has a direct impact on our district's high test scores, our tremendous attendance rates at each school, and the overall development and success of our community's children. Our commitment to this belief is so firm that our district has put this common practice aside for many years. That being said, the district is currently evaluating its extra-curricular programs for potential savings for the 2010-2011 school year.

47. How much does it save to eliminate busing?

The district's entire transportation budget is in the range of \$1.2 million. This includes the physical buses, maintenance, staffing, fuel, etc. Our school district covers approximately 40 square miles.

48. How much does it save to increase school day to shorten the actual number of days to attend?

The number of hours per day and number of days per year are contractual details that would need to be negotiated. Negotiations are currently underway. In most cases, the savings would be utilities, transportation and food service savings.

49. What are other schools doing (globally) to reduce cost of education including public, private, charter?

Globally the cost of education is nearly impossible to compare due to the various values and concepts as to “what is education” and “what do we value” in education. Many countries view education as mastering core (Language Arts, Math, Science) as reflected in national and global testing. In the United States, expectation of public education have been expanded over the past many decades to include health (PE, sex education, AIDS education, etc.), driver’s education, food service, transportation, athletics, arts, clubs, child care, early childhood, career planning, special facility and staffing for equal access, and more. Nationally, charter schools offer nearly as much as the traditional public schools though some have chosen not to offer such services/opportunities as athletics, etc. Private schools also offer many of the same though sometimes the number of services/opportunities is more limited.

50. How can we use technology to reduce expenses?

The district uses technology wherever possible to avoid paper use, mailing use, time specific heating/cooling, etc, without compromising our effectiveness.

51. Close the Pool.

In 2006 the district entered an operational agreement with the YMCA to save money and increase efficiency for the use of our community pool. That partnership agreement, along with others, is being evaluated for cost effectiveness and value to our district and community.

52. Drop HS AP classes.

Eliminating AP (Advanced Placement) classes at the high school level will not reduce the current budget challenge. AP classes are important offerings for our academically gifted students. Taught by our high school staff they offer a fast paced, rigorous curriculum similar to what the students can expect in college. Students may take an AP test at year end and with a passing score can earn college credit. BCHS also offers dual enrollment, Calculus for example, where students take Calculus at BCHS and earn both a high school math credit and college credit since the class is taught by a GRCC instructor. Students may also earn college credit through various KCTC classes and through classes taught at the Administration through the GRCC satellite program. Earning college credits while in high school helps to ensure our students success in college and allows them the opportunity to work to their highest potential which ultimately benefits society.

53. Eliminate busing for remainder of the year or contract with Dean Transportation and sell the bus fleet.

Transportation priorities and options are being evaluated for the 2010-11 school year.

54. Eliminate Food Service Program and students can “brown bag it.”

The district’s food service program is financially self supporting and does not impact the general fund. In addition to providing healthy meals to our students, the district has agreements and provides food services to Byron Center Christian Schools and Zion School. Eliminating the program would eliminate a service to our students/families without saving any money for the districts. In addition, all public schools nationwide are mandated to provide lunch and breakfast programs. The National School Lunch program is overseen by the USDA.

55. Eliminate “paper” payroll checks.
Currently the district has all but a handful of employees using “direct deposit” to eliminate mailing and internal distribution of checks. Even so, the district is still required to print out pay detail reports for each employee.
56. Deposit incoming checks immediately.
Checks that arrive at the Central Administration are deposited either daily or at a minimum of three times per week pending the quantity received. Programs and buildings are encouraged regularly to deposit checks within days of receipt. If you are aware of situations where this is not happening on a timely basis, please feel free to call the Central Administration at 878-6100 and we will follow up on any delayed practices.
57. Everyone pay the \$127 for each of their students.
A public school cannot require payment in exchange for education. All students in Michigan are entitled to a free and appropriate public education.
58. Raise property taxes
In 1994 Proposal A eliminated the ability for schools to ask for operational millages from its voters. Schools are allowed to seek bond approval (millages for construction of buildings, technology improvements, recreation millage, building maintenance (sinking fund – approved by Byron Center voters in 2008) etc. Each of these millages is very specific in what the funds may be spent for, none of which may be used for operational expenses.
59. Seek more local funding for 2010-2011
The district is considering its best options for increased local funding.
60. Paying a fee for transportation.
The law does not mandate busing, except for special education. If a district provides busing, it cannot charge for the service to transport students from home to school or from school to home. If necessary, the district could consider charging for transportation to after school events and field trips.
61. Seek corporate sponsor for the pool.
In 2006 the district entered an operational agreement with the YMCA to save money and increase efficiency for the use of our community pool. This partnership agreement, along with others, is being evaluated for cost effectiveness and value to our district and community. A corporate sponsor of the pool is an option that could be discussed if any interest is expressed.
62. Pay class fees at each grade level.
In some cases this is an option where the district could legally charge a fee (field trips, parties, special activities, etc.) otherwise this practice is not allowed.
63. Charge for concerts or cancel for this year.
There would be no benefit to canceling concerts since it will not reduce the budget. The district faces no additional charges when students perform a concert, other than utility costs if heating or cooling is needed. There are no coach fees, officials fees, etc. The Van Singel is self-funded and provides staffing at no cost to the district. As we consider adding “charges” for student activities the objective is to add charges to help cover the

costs involved with the activity. An entry fee to student concerts could be an option to consider for both the Van Singel and district revenues.

64. Look for ways to allow the school district to start making “revenue.”

The district is considering its best options for increased revenues.

65. Double or triple the amount of Schools of Choice students.

The district is completing a capacity and School of Choice study. Action in this regard will be taken by the Board in February or early March. The district must inform the Kent ISD no later than March 16th of the number of seats open to choice in order that the KISD may compile a list countywide. Public announcement of School Choice options will be made by the Kent ISD in April. The state funding follows each student entering the district under the School Choice option at a funding level of approximately \$7,000 pending the funding allowance of the student’s home district.

66. Partner with GR Civic and VSFAC

The district does partner with the VSFAC. The VSFAC is a self-funded facility owned by the district. Community members who comprise the VSFAC Council and Foundation fundraise to cover the annual operating costs of the facility while providing services to our district at no charge to our building or general funds. A part of our agreement with the Van Singel and a part of the founding mission of the Van Singel was to encourage and provide arts access at no cost to the district or its students. There is a third partner in this facility, the Kent ISD. The VSFAC was built as a teaching/learning theatre. It is one of a very few such facilities nationwide where high school students can learn the technology and skills required for backstage work in stage, television and film. The Kent ISD KCTC Regional Theatre Technology program is housed at the Van Singel with students from throughout Kent County attending.

67. Eliminate bus transfer at NIS.

The bus transfer at Nickels actually saves the district transportation costs as it consolidates runs. Transportation priorities and options will be addressed for 2010-11 in an upcoming parent survey.

68. Require salaried employees to contribute 2% of their pay to the Michigan Public School Employee Retirement System and contribute 15% to the cost of insurance premiums.

Contributions to the Retirement System are determined by the State of Michigan Office of Retirement Services. Regarding insurance premiums, this is a contract negotiated item. The district is currently in contract negotiations.

11-24-09
2-16-10