



**PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE:**

**RESULTS OF AN OWEN D. YOUNG  
CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT**

***COMMUNITY FOCUS GROUP  
MEETING***

**HELD ON MARCH 17, 2015**

Workshop facilitated and report prepared by:  
SES Study Team, LLC  
c. 2015

*“Custom tools and research to aid a school district in defining a vision and  
decision options for serving students in the future*

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## PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE-2014

On December 3, 2014, the ODY Board of Board of Education and the Superintendent discussed and preliminarily answered the following three questions:

**Has Owen D. Young CSD made progress since 2013?**

**Has Owen D. Young CSD developed new strengths as a school district since 2013?**

**What should be the focus of Owen D. Young CSD over the next two years?**

A report of the results of the planning workshop on December 8, 2014 is posted on the district website.

On March 17, 2015, a volunteer group of residents of the community met as a Community Focus Group to discuss and answer three school district planning questions. A public communication was sent to encourage all residents of the community to consider volunteering to be considered to be a part of the Focus Group.

The members of the Community Focus Group who worked together on March 17 are listed below.

		Primary Stakeholder Group
Armstrong	Marcia	Retiree
Armstrong	Glenn	Retiree
Crouse	Jeff	High School Parent
Donohue	Henry	High School Parent
Donohue	Mary Ellen	High School Parent
Durham	Ethan	Elementary parent
Hess	Chad	Elementary and High School Parent
Kump	Jane	Retiree
Manning	Gerald	High School Parent, coach
Nestle	Bonnie	Retired Elementary Teacher
Peplinski	Kathleen	High School and Elementary Parent
Peters	Mark	High School Parent, former Board Member
Smith	Ronald	Retiree
Weber	Lisa	Elementary Teacher

### COMMUNITY FOCUS GROUP MEETING

Owen D. Young Central School

March 17, 2015

6:00 PM

Meeting facilitators:

Paul M. Seversky, Douglas A. Exley, Samuel A. Shevat

Purpose: Listen and record ideas and perceptions of a diverse group of school district residents, taxpayers, and community stakeholders about three questions:

*Outcome:* A written rank-ordered tool that the Board and the district community can use to focus their continued discussions, analysis, and actions about how best serve the pupils of the district.

## AGENDA

1. Welcome by the Board of Education President: Linda Tharp
2. Who's here today?
  - ✓ Please turn to someone in your work group that you may not have met before or may not know very well.
  - ✓ Please ask three questions of each other and write down the answers
    - In what part of the school district do you live?
    - What community constituency do you represent?
    - Why did you want to be a part of today's focus group?
  - ✓ We will take a few minutes for each person to introduce the person 'interviewed' to the focus group.
3. **Question One: *What are the strengths of the ODY School District in 2014 that should be continued to be nurtured by the district?***
4. **Question Two: *What topics, questions, issues need to be addressed by the community and the Board of Education to be able to make the best decisions about the future delivery of instruction to the students of the Owen D. Young school district?***
5. The Board of Education receives feedback from some of the community that the ODY program is not providing enough for ODY students to take their place after graduation in a highly technical and diverse society. The Board of Education also receives feedback that the program that has been 'good enough' for the past twenty or twenty-five years is still 'good enough' today.  
  
**Question Three: *What are some specific and concrete ideas for the school district and community to explore in order to continue the 'ODY experience' and help all students who graduate have the skills to be competitive in college and/or the work force?***
6. Review of tonight's results and the December 8 planning workshop of the Board of Education and Superintendent
7. Next steps:
  - ✓ Publish the results of tonight's Community Focus Group discussion and analysis to the community.
  - ✓ Use the results to guide further formal and informal discussions with the community throughout the school year as the Board of Education hones the short-range and long-range planning for the school district.
8. Closing Thoughts by:  
Board of Education: Linda Tharp  
Superintendent: Christopher Groves

***Thank you for your time, help, and support of  
the Owen D. Young School District and the pupils it serves.  
Please drive home safely.***

**This is a report of the results of both the Board of Education Planning workshop on December 8, 2014 and of the Community Focus Group Meeting on March 17, 2015.**

Planning for a people-service organization is not a static effort. The 'life' of a school district serving the young people and community is dynamic. It often is influenced by variables over which the district and community have no direct control. Such variables include future pupil enrollments, State policy about school funding, and the local economy.

This report lists the values expressed by the leadership of the Owen D. Young School District and a representative group of community residents. **It can help focus the development of a plan and options to deliver and implement the educational program in the future. It is a tool that may help community discussion of possible very important public policy planning decisions faced by the Board of Education over the coming months.**

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>December 8, 2014</b>  <b>Board of Education and Superintendent Responses to:</b>  <b>What are the strengths of the district that should be nurtured by the district?</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>March 17, 2015</b>  <b>Community Focus Group Responses to:</b>  <b>What are the strengths of the district that should be nurtured by the district?</b></p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A family atmosphere exists within the school and community.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The school is a safe place for students and staff.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deep historical sense of the school district.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The school is the center of the community.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is a wide range of summer and after school activities.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Board of Education and the administration are responsive to the community.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Board of Education is competent, caring and effective.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teachers care for the children; although retention is an issue.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The traditions of the school district and the community like the Memorial Day Parade, Christmas festivities; the Senior Trip.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The small size of the school and student enrollment provides opportunities for student participation in such items as athletics and drama.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Class sizes at all grade levels are within an ideal range.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The ODY Scholarship Fund provides unique opportunities for students.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The caring for students by the school district and community; all are invested in a positive way.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The school provides a sense of community for students and families.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The teachers and administrators are easily accessible.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Small size of enrollment permits staff to know students and families.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is a comfort level between families and staff.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community pride in the school</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is a proud history and culture of the school district; the community; the school building.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Professional development for staff is appropriate and helpful.</li> </ul>

<p align="center"><b>December 8, 2014</b></p> <p align="center"><b>Board of Education and Superintendent Responses to:</b></p> <p align="center"><b>What are the strengths of the district that should be nurtured by the district?</b></p>	<p align="center"><b>March 17, 2015</b></p> <p align="center"><b>Community Focus Group Responses to:</b></p> <p align="center"><b>What are the strengths of the district that should be nurtured by the district?</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The district uses programs and services from BOCES appropriately.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Programs are available for students beyond the district boundaries.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Excellent music teacher (McMullin).</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students are respectful within a friendly, nurturing environment.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Full day pre-school program is effective.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Science programming is strong for a small school.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uniqueness of the school facilities.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Arts and music programs.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The writing program in grades K-8.</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The progress so far in the development and implementation of the Common Core Curriculum.</li> </ul>	

<b><i>What are topics, items, conditions, opportunities or challenges that the district should address in a planned fashion?</i></b>		
<b>Board Initial Rank Order</b>	<b>Key Topics/Items, Conditions, Opportunities/Challenges/Questions Identified and Rank-Ordered by the Owen D. Young Board of Education and Superintendent on December 8, 2014</b>	<b>Key Topics/Items, Conditions, Opportunities/Challenges/ Questions Identified by the Owen D. Young Community Focus Group on March 17, 2015</b>
<b>1</b>	Need to develop a plan with the community for the use of the soon to be available high speed internet to enhance learning opportunities for all pupils K-12.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need staff person who can focus on technology and future planning.</li> <li>• Rural area handicapped by lack of technology, however, computer literacy can't take the place of actual classrooms-more technology doesn't mean more teaching-need to be careful about the overutilization of technology in teaching.</li> </ul>
<b>2</b>	How do we help all pupils grasp that "just getting by" is not enough?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need ways to expose students to opportunities with colleges and the larger workforce preparation. programs-look at two year community college options</li> <li>• Pushing kids too hard-overemphasis on larger colleges-need to guide students towards community colleges as necessary.</li> </ul>
<b>3</b>	How do we challenge and achieve higher level learning by our pupils?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need tracking mechanism of our graduates-how are they doing at college-need the data to inform and promote the district based upon the successes of our students</li> </ul>
<b>4</b>	How do we re-establish the summer program for grades K-6 in an ongoing sustaining fashion?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Summer program, pool program-both have been reduced-need community input about the programs</li> </ul>
<b>5</b>	Need to ensure that the community members without school-aged children know about school activities and about the school.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need more involvement in the school from all residents</li> </ul>

Board Initial Rank Order	Key Topics/Items, Conditions, Opportunities/Challenges/Questions Identified and Rank-Ordered by the Owen D. Young Board of Education and Superintendent on December 8, 2014	Key Topics/Items, Conditions, Opportunities/Challenges/ Questions Identified by the Owen D. Young Community Focus Group on March 17, 2015
	More information about how successful ODY graduates are at the college level. Are we preparing ODY pupils to succeed in the work place and/or in college?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some students at college have said they were not prepared in some of the key basics; ex. advanced math and writing</li> <li>• Questions regarding return of investment of our taxes-are kids getting the best they can for the money we're paying for them.</li> <li>• Accountability of success of students-needs to be shared between staff, students and parents</li> </ul>
6	Achieve more and clearer communication with pupils, the community and the staff about all of the items facing the school district.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perceived disconnect between administration/BOE/staff/community</li> <li>• Accountability of staff-local and state measures-understand how ODY defines accountability.</li> <li>• Concentration is on the negative instead of the positive-negative is detracting on the positive (ex. athletics and personnel)</li> </ul>
7	Are there other ways we have not tried already to provide more learning opportunities for ODY pupils?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can't compete at all levels with our sports programs (size of school is an issue-low numbers of student) which means we should examine sports mergers with other schools</li> </ul>
8	Continuation of cultural experiences for all ODY pupils.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Problems associated with being able to deal with the impacts of poverty on students-poverty is an important issue</li> </ul>
9	Broaden career knowledge for pupils (begin an internship opportunity).	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cliques-some students being on the 'outside' due to the small population of the school.</li> </ul>

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Over focus on testing.</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Concerns regarding inexperience of many of our staff-in/out-transient nature of our staff.</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of late bus transportation-cut from 5X week to 2X a week.</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of consistency-sports and academics-frustrating to students and parents.</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discipline issues-don't seem to be enough consequences; leads to disrespect of adults.</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some staff may have problems drawing the line between being a friend to students and being friendly to them-small size of the school may impact this issue.</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enrollment projections-need to see what we have to get the best 'bang for the buck' for our school.</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need accountability for substitute teachers.</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reactions to students opting out of tests-how they are perceived.</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of opportunities for students to prove they are responsible young adults-trust factors.</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Follow up to help students-special education as an example-don't know all the staff (BOCES teachers) which can lead to communication problems and understanding the role of BOCES.</li> </ul>

**Community Focus Group Responses to the Question:**

**What are some specific and concrete ideas for the school district and community to explore in order to continue the 'ODY experience' and help all students who graduate have the skills to be competitive in college and/or the work force?**

- Focus on addressing the necessary skills and opportunities for students; not worrying about the 'ODY experience'.
- What does accountability mean for ODY?
- Expand club and athletic opportunities for students (including possibly combining activities with other schools).
- Expand public information strategies and outreach.
- Continue to explore unique opportunities for students with area colleges and businesses.
- Can we do more with other school districts to increase opportunities for students (irrespective of financial cost)?
- Can we establish a mechanism or network for communicating and/or sharing information within the community such as who will volunteer to assist providing students more opportunities (i.e. transporting students to outside the district activities)?
- Create 'differentiated instruction' within the system to address individual differences.
- "Give my children a better experience than what I had".
- Address teacher and administrator retention issues.
- Encourage faculty to become more involved in local / regional conferences and professional development issues
- Make sure the web site is updated daily.
- Board of education follow up with members of the focus group to discuss and further define issues and future steps.