

City of North Vernon Comprehensive Plan Schools Focus Group - Meeting Notes

Date: Tuesday, May 19, 2009 @ 9:30 – 10:30 am

Location: North Vernon Education & Training Center

Facilitator: Scott Burgins & Erin Shane, SDG

Participants:

Name	Organization
Mike Bushong	Superintendent, Jennings County Schools
Todd Hearne	Asst Principal, Jennings County High School
John Howard	Asst. Superintendent of Facilities and Transportation
Rita Hurley	Counselor, North Vernon Elementary
Tim Taylor	Principal, Jennings County High School
Mary Lynn Whitcomb	Director of Guidance, Jennings County High School
Kendall Wildey	Asst. Superintendant of Curriculum, Jennings County Schools

Question: *What is the biggest issue your school district faces?*

- State of economy; legislature did not pass budget
- HB 1001 will affect programming
- Daily we have parents sending notes that they have lost job; there is a trickle down – b/c parents are stressed and it is going down to their kids
- Abuse reports are going up b/c economy is going down
- The unemployment rate now is 14.3 or so
- As a district 51% are free or reduced lunch
- Thefts are skyrocketing; shoes, clothing, ipods – anything that is out is gone
- ADHD or other med related issue – and kid has to go off meds b/c parents can't afford – we have behavior issues and other b/c the medicines are not there

Question: *How about future schooling for kids?*

- Dual credits; we are offering 82 dual credits – early college credits; we are offering more AP and early college that gives our graduate a leg up
- Colleges are starting to deny credit hours now – b/c they need revenue; some schools are balking;
- The economics of organizations, esp now, are running the intent of the schools
- Education is not a priority
- More local kids are going into the military it seems
- We need our own Ivy Tech – BIG TIME; closest Ivy Tech is Madison or Columbus

- There are not a lot of options for kids that are not going to college; we need some technical skills made available here –like plumbing, etc
- Credits at career center
- Ivy tech – unlike Purdue and IU - they have an advisory committee – and talk w/ us quarterly to see what we need
- Ivy tech does have local offerings in the ETC center but not much
- 9 month sink hole – kids graduate – summer happens – if they don't get work or school during this time – they enter the sink hole and do not go out
- We need opportunities here – we don't have jobs for people to come back
- Hospital wants training to assist w/ their jobs; there are nursing opportunities here at ETC
- Our hospital sees more uninsured patients than any other St. Vincent's in the state

Question: *What are the positive trends in North Vernon schools?*

- We accommodate all students
- No Child Left Behind is a wet blanket b/c they include the special education students into the larger pool – there is no distinction; these kids can't excel and the entire program is brought down
- The rules w/ the No Child Left Behind program do not account for students - like special ed, which dings schools for the regulations
- 24% special education in this district – out of about 5400 students; but we have great improvement w/ this subgroup; and the majority of these schools are graduating
- we are always assessing to improve
- Gold star – guidance type of award – 3 schools have been awarded and one more is close
- At the elementary level the ratio is one counselor is 1 to 350 – very good
- Staff is involved in the community
- We encourage students to get involved – like Muscatatuck river clean up
- We are a very big employer here; the schools are a very positive thing here in Jennings County
- Graduation planning – we start very early like 6th grade – and involve parents' 21st century scholars – we give hope to go to schools; dual credit is good news
- Collaboration – a lot of civic groups come to teachers to be on local boards, etc
- When we have local events, like Relay for Life, they really pull together and they definitely take care of their own; they are very friendly and caring

Question: *What about capital improvements for schools?*

- 2 major additions to HS, additions to elementary schools, built one new elementary school; sewage treatment plant; roof replacements, pkg lot replacements, refurbishing bleachers at HS; adding HS; big technology updates; in the future is technology
- HWY 50 is a big issue; 8 Am or 3:15 is such an issue in this town – you can't get thru town at this area!

- If there is an accident we are in big trouble; one way in and one way out – straight shot; if we have the bypass that would benefit us greatly
- O&M Ave / Hwy 50 – no access routes now
- Traffic is one of our biggest issues – we don't even have emergency access to use
- Utilities – water needs at the schools is another large issue; like for the sprinkler system; city's water supply; so pressure and quality are an issue; we have water advisory days at the schools

Question: *How about parks and trails? Is there much need for these amenities?*

- Series of bike trails that connect county park, forest, fish and game area – people would come here to bike the trail
- We have rock climbing walls that people come here to use
- We need a YMCA! We allow them to come in and use our facilities here so they just have programming things; this is one of the biggest things our kids could use
- YMCA owns land west of town – but just can't get it off the ground
- Students health and wellness - the state is probably going to require things in the future – so the YMCA could really assist in these efforts

Question: *Where are the growth areas in town?*

- Trailer courts seem to be booming
- Our second biggest housing development is in the county – County Squire
- Country Meadows is growing – south on HWY 7
- There is only one School Corporation here

Question: *Is there anything else we need to cover?*

- Utilities and downtown revitalizations
- Parking downtown
- This community has a lot of history in this county- we need to do a better job of doing that; Madison has done a great job in dealing w/ this;
- We need to focus on railroad, underground railing;
- We are mentioned in the Friendly Persuasion movie
- We need passenger rail service b/t Vernon and Madison; Vernon wanted to be another “Nashville” at one point