



# Stakeholder Engagement

## What We Heard

Spring 2021



*Buffalo Trail Public Schools is committed to maximizing student learning, in a safe and caring environment, supported by a highly effective team.*

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## History

In early 2019, BTPS Educational Stakeholders came together to develop the educational direction for the *Four Year Education Plan*. Engagements included three face to face sessions and one online session. Almost 300 people participated in this process. Planning focused on the desired states in five Domains. A desired state is a view of what success will look like and what will be accomplished within the five Domains. Resulting from the Engagements was the *BTPS Four Year Education Plan 2019-2023* that is available on our [website](#).

Assurance is seen as an approach to inspire a school jurisdiction's performance and ability that goes beyond accountability and includes the achievement of desired states and stakeholder engagement. BTPS provides assurance in the following five domains:

1. Student Growth and Achievement
2. Teaching and Leading
3. Learning Supports
4. Governance
5. Attending to the Local and Societal Context

## Process

After the completion of the first year of the *Four Year Education Plan*, evidence was gathered from schools across BTPS to provide assurance on each of the five domains. This evidence was compiled and shared with stakeholders as part of the *Four Year Education Plan 2019-2023 Year One: 2020* report that is available on our [website](#).

As part of the stakeholder engagement process, Board-Student engagements were held monthly. Students from every school across the division were asked questions related to the assurance elements and shared these responses with the Board.

In addition, staff were presented with the combined division evidence and asked questions about the next steps in providing assurance. In April of 2021, four online stakeholder engagement sessions were held for parents and community members. Results from the previous year were shared along with questions to provide direction for the upcoming 2021-2022 school year.

These questions focused on:

- What are some of the strengths of BTPS?
- What are some of the challenges affecting BTPS schools?
- What do we need to continue to do in our BTPS Schools?
- What domain areas should BTPS focus on for the coming school year?

## Responses

Board-Student Engagements included over 100 students throughout the school year. The online engagement survey had over 200 responses from staff, students, parents and community members. Respondents to the survey were asked to identify a school they most closely are affiliated with and it was notable that every school was identified.

## Results

### Strengths of BTPS

Stakeholders identified a number of strengths across BTPS. These included staff that are student focused and caring, the small school family feel for our rural communities, community connections across our schools, inclusive practices, technology to support learning, as well as safe and caring environments. Below are some representative statements.

#### Staff

- Staff that are passionate about their students and their student's education;
- The staff genuinely care for students;
- Caring, experienced and committed teachers;
- Administrators who are available to hear parents' concerns;
- Teaching staff that are supportive and going above and beyond during this pandemic;
- Excellent and devoted staff, devoted and active administration team;
- Staff go above and beyond to help student learn;
- Teachers do their best to set their students up for success; and
- Great leadership and strong teachers.

#### Small School Family

- Small numbers, the school is more in touch with the students and their families;
- Providing small personal class sizes to better connect with the students and their learning abilities;
- Smaller classes allow more focus on the students;
- Our small schools are community minded and student learning focused;
- Our school is very tight knit and I feel like my classmates are family; and
- Students help each other and work together.

#### Community and Parent Engagement

- Community engagement, municipal engagement;
- Great working relations with community groups and volunteers;
- Close connections with community;
- Close knit communities;
- Strength within our division is community and parental engagement;
- Relationship building with the student's is easier to do in a smaller community; and
- Parental involvement and interest.

#### Inclusive Practices

- They are a fully inclusive school that works hard at ensuring each student shines to their full potential academically and socially;
- Lots of support for students having difficulties;
- Inclusion, supportive ILS programming, quick response to non-academic supports (mental health); and
- Communicating and interacting with parents and communities.

#### Technology to Support Learning

- Use of technology, and technology resources, excellent support from innovation coaches;
- Use of technology in the classroom;
- Video Conferencing for students who may not be able take necessary classes; and
- Strong technology mindset and support.

## Safe and Caring

- Commitment to the wellbeing of the whole student;
- Always looking for ways to support student in all areas, academic, mental health, social emotional;
- Caring, supportive of students/parents;
- The people - they care and it shows each and every day; and
- Caring, understanding, respectful, helpful, and resilient.

## Challenges Affecting BTPS

When asked about the challenges facing BTPS stakeholders overwhelmingly mentioned the challenges brought about by living, teaching and learning in a pandemic. Further challenges identified included funding for rural schools, diversity of program offering, and inclusive supports. Below are some representative statements.

### COVID

- Addressing the learning gaps resulting from the pandemic;
- Uncertainty of ongoing concerns of pandemic;
- COVID has caused many interruptions for staff and students;
- COVID is a challenge and the feeling of instability that comes with it; and
- COVID-19 has had many impacts that directly and indirectly effect many aspects of education and school life.

### Funding for Rural Schools

- Being rural schools and keeping rural education a priority with provincial government;
- Funding; smaller schools cannot offer the same variety of classes;
- Declining enrollment and funding;
- Declining enrollment and funding; and
- Budget concerns year after year after year.

### Program Offering

- Low enrolment means not the same opportunities in smaller schools;
- Maintaining small schools with student and staff numbers;
- Keeping options available for students in small schools;
- The inability for smaller schools to provide a greater number of options for their students;
- Limited option classes (CTS);
- Rural education challenges such as ability to offer variety, supporting small schools;
- More rural schools do not have as great of access to courses and opportunities, most often due to school size or space, and/or costs; and
- Not able to offer options due to lower enrolments.

### Inclusive Supports

- Mental health supports for students in our rural schools;
- The increase in mental distress students are experiencing given the recent pandemic;
- Resources are often focused on those who require assistance (OT, speech, mental health, etc.) which are all very valid;
- The change in service model from AHS eliminating school based support and intervention is a challenge; and
- Responding to the increasing mental health challenges of students.

## Continuing at BTPS

Stakeholders provide many aspects of practices in BTPS that need to continue. These included, professional development, staying student focused and support student mental health. Below are some representative statements.

### Professional Development

- Division wide professional opportunities to collaborate on for professional learning; and
- Concept-based learning and practicing and giving teachers time to learn.

### Student Focused

- Focus on student and staff well-being;
- Promote seeing students as individuals and knowing each person is unique in how they learn;
- Keep focus on our student's success and maximize student learning in a safe and caring environment;
- Give students the tools for success; and
- Assisting students to close the gap in learning challenges from pandemic teaching.

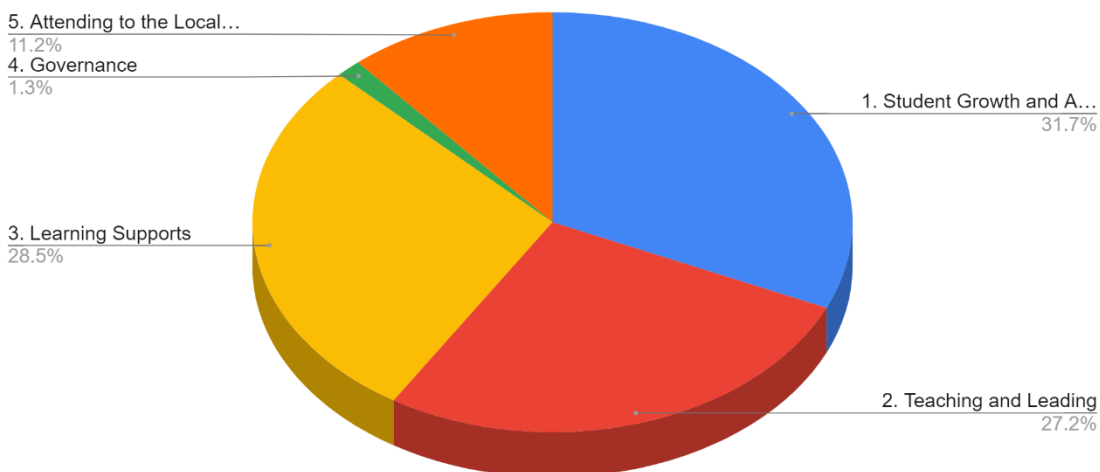
### Mental Health

- Continue to work on the mental health of staff and students;
- The focus on wellness;
- Educating students and staff about mental health and resiliency; and
- Continue to provide support for mental health.

## Domain Focus Areas

Stakeholders were asked to identify two of the top domains that should be a focus in the coming school year. The following chart represents responses. Student Growth and Achievement, followed closely by Learner Support and Teaching and Leading are the priorities.

Domain Priorities



## Actions

### Identified Priorities for the Coming Year

Based on Stakeholder input the priorities set for the coming year will include:

#### Student Growth and Achievement

- Support student resiliency and mental health.
- Continue to focus on programming and students' academic and socio-emotional needs
- Support student learning to address unfinished learning due to the pandemic.

#### Teaching and Leading

- Continue to build teaching and leading capacity through robust professional development, a focus on students, and using technology to leverage learning.
- Look to use technology to leverage increased program offerings to students.

#### Learning Supports

- Support the inclusive needs of students including universal supports to address unfinished learning, mental health supports and specialized learning support.
- Continue building the family culture of our rural context and schools.

#### Governance

- Continue to advocate for funding and supports that address the unique needs of small schools and the rural context.

#### Adhering to Local & Societal Context

- Continue to recognize and leverage the close connection to communities that is a strength of BTPS.