

Our Charge and Approach

The community of the Benjamin Franklin Classical Charter Public School experienced upheaval and discontent during the 2005-2006 school year. To help all of us perceive the true underlying issues and envision possible remedies, the BFCCPS Board of Trustees hired a Human Resources consultant with strong educational management credentials. That consultant, Dr. Thomas P. Johnson, held a series of meetings with all BFFCPS employees, the Board, and all parents who wished to participate in this exploratory phase. In late March, Dr. Johnson proposed a series of actions, one of which is quoted here:

2. The current situation must experience a Board initiated “Time Out” to examine several issues:
 - a. Is the current HOS model of centralized organization the best model for a school of 400 students?
 - b. In what ways can a decade of school history inform the next decade about what is important to emphasize in curriculum; administrative control of the school and in staff turnover?
 - c. What levels of standardized curricula can be tolerated in a small K-8 environment?
 - d. What role should staff play in the school’s decision-making framework?

In his report, Dr. Johnson urged the Board to “Take a time out from the current model of HOS/principal and look at other models in operation (pilot schools, learning communities, etc.) in alternative public schools. A 400 student school may benefit from using administrative models that are relationship rich extended families rather than scientific management. The ‘family’ models place mission within a values structure rather than values within a mission structure. At BFCCPS the values of the charter are powerful and broadly supported by the parents and veteran staff.”

Acting on this recommendation, the Board of Trustees officially established the Administrative Task Force (soon renamed to the Organizational Task Force) at the June 2006, Board meeting and provided the following guidance:

Charge to the Administrative Task Force:

- To propose recommendations intended to augment the future organizational/leadership structure of the Benjamin Franklin Classical Charter Public School.

Process

- Instruct the task force to investigate the organizational structures of schools similar in size, grade levels served, and mission to BFCCPS including other charter schools, those adhering to the Core Knowledge Sequence, those having received recognition as schools of character, etc.

- Establish a list of “best practices” and develop recommendations specific to BFCCPS.

Timeline

- The task force should plan on activity during the summer months and have recommendations to the Board by the regularly scheduled October meeting.

The Organizational Task Force, made up of parents, faculty, and Board members, met weekly throughout the summer and into the fall. Once the task force had completed a plan and schedule of the work that needed to be done, it became clear the task force needed more time. The Board of Trustees agreed to extend the reporting date to the November 9, 2006 Board meeting.

This report is the result of the enormous amount of work undertaken by the group with the hope that the recommendations presented in **Section 3** will reinvigorate and fortify the founding mission of our school, reestablish equilibrium to facilitate a cooperative workplace, and to promote an environment of educational excellence.

When the task force began meeting, it was obvious that research would need to be done to identify current best practices promulgated by the leading educational and organizational theorists. It was also evident that visiting other schools and seeing what we could learn from them would be another important activity. In addition, the task force identified the need for more information about the roles and responsibilities currently in place at BFCCPS. As the task force members discussed the scope of work to be done, we realized we would still need to do more.

Once research was completed, school visits were done and analyzed, and the current roles and responsibilities were understood, the task force needed a method for confirming which recommendations were appropriate for BFCCPS. We wanted to avoid imposing an organizational structure that worked fine at another school without being certain that it would work here. To help us avoid an abstract or cookie-cutter solution, the task force decided to gather an extensive amount of information from the BFCCPS school community, via a survey, to better understand the unique problems or issues here that changes to our organization structure might remedy. This data gathering would also help us better understand the culture of BFCCPS which would provide the proper context for our recommendations. To gather this information in the most effective manner, a detailed survey was created for parents and staff and was delivered via the school website.

The task force met both as a full group and as subgroups. Three subgroups were created in order to allow the task force to work on three areas concurrently:

The **Alternative Structures and Best Practices subgroup** extracted key lessons, ideas, and best practices by reviewing educational and business literature; talking with a variety of researchers, consultants, and practitioners; conducting onsite or telephone interviews with several schools; and investigating many other schools via the web. The results and conclusions of the work of this subgroup can be found in **Section 4**.

The **Job Function Inventory subgroup** compiled a list of key job functions covered by BFCCPS staff and looked to identify any functions that were missing, no longer needed, or people agreed should be done by a different role. The subgroup collected the documented job descriptions of all office staff, the Deans, the technology staff, and the HOS, and interviewed employees currently filling these roles. A report on the conclusions reached by the Job Function Inventory subgroup can be found in **Section 5**.

The **Survey subgroup** was tasked with the job of assessing the pulse of the BFCCPS community by gathering data on a variety of topics. Most of the topics directly focused on organizational questions, while some parts of the survey were intended to gather opinions and perspectives on cultural issues and target possible solutions to the current turmoil at the school. Although the survey was only one of several sources of data for the task force, a large part of this report is physically taken up by the survey because the amount of data generated by the survey was sizeable. **Section 6** presents the analysis done by the Survey subgroup and the summarization of the responses to each survey section. In **Appendices D and E**, you will find charts that display the raw, numerical responses to each statement as well as all of the comments submitted by respondents. Please note that within the comments, all names have been redacted (blacked out) as have comments that would violate someone's privacy or reflect negatively on their reputation.

In order to provide the full context for our recommendations, all BFCCPS community members are highly encouraged to read the supporting documentation in Sections 4, 5, and 6. Becoming aware of what other schools are doing and knowing what empirical research leads us to conclude in Section 4 provides a strong foundation to understanding several of our recommendations. An analysis of the survey responses in Section 6 clarified, for the task force, what concerns were shared by faculty, staff, and parents and provided another building block for our recommendations. In Section 5, the conclusions from our investigation of the current organizational structure highlight several shortcomings that were uncovered and are addressed by the recommendations.

The task force has scheduled a review process to help all members of the BFCCPS community fully understand the recommendations and supporting documentation contained in this report. The schedule of meetings or forums to discuss this report can be found on the website and posted outside of the office of the HOS. At each of these meetings, feedback will be solicited and recorded. Once all the review meetings have been completed, the task force will make any appropriate corrections or changes to the report content and present any updates to the Board of Trustees at the December, 2006 Board meeting. From that point, the Board of Trustees will work to determine which, if any, task force recommendations to implement.

As the Organizational Task Force's work nears its end, its members hoped that this report and the associated review meetings will provide positive energy for moving BFCCPS forward as a reenergized learning community grounded in a sound mission, guided by its talented and professional staff, and dedicated to its students and families.