

## Bedford County Public Schools LEADERSHIP PROFILE REPORT November 12, 2020

### Executive Summary

#### *Introduction*

This report presents the findings of the Leadership Profile Assessment conducted by Hazard, Young, Attea & Associates (HYA) in October of 2020, for the superintendent position in the Bedford County Public Schools (BCPS). The data contained herein were obtained from input the HYA consultants received when meeting with individuals and groups in either individual interviews or focus group settings on October 26-30, 2020, and from the results of the online survey completed by stakeholders between October 23, 2020 and November 6, 2020. The surveys, interviews, and focus group meetings were structured to gather input to assist the Board in determining the primary characteristics desired in the new superintendent. Forty-nine stakeholder interviews and focus group meetings were used to collect information regarding the strengths of the division, the challenges that it will be facing in the coming years, and desired characteristics in the new superintendent. The online survey was used to collect data relevant to ranking desired characteristics in the new superintendent as well as suggestions for prospective superintendent candidates. Data collected through the online survey were very consistent with the input of the stakeholder interviews and focus groups.

#### *Participation*

The number of participants in interview and/or focus groups sessions, by stakeholder group, in the two methods of data gathering are listed below:

<b>Group</b>	<b>Personal Interviews or Focus Groups</b>	<b>Online Survey</b>
Board	7	N/A
Administrators	45	43
Teachers	10	244
Support Staff	4	122
Parents	10	263
Community	25	79
Students	4	244
<b>Total</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>998</b>

The Board of Education members were individually interviewed. Many other central office administrators and elected officials also received individual interviews. Many different community members and groups were invited and participated, including the Mayor, County Commissioners, Town Council members, County Executive and others. Open invitation community forums for parents, staff and community were offered at various times throughout the week.

The responses provided by the individuals and focus groups during the interviews are listed in two places: 1) "Summary of Consistent Themes. . ." which are listed on pages 7 and 8 of the report, and; 2) "Summary of All Reported Comments and Observations..." which begin on page 9. They are listed alphabetically with no attempt to prioritize them. Finally, a draft of desired characteristics for the new Superintendent, to be discussed with the entire Board on November 12, 2020, can be found on page 32. Separate documents will provide the Board with the statistical results and open-ended comments of the online survey.

The 998 respondents on the on-line survey represent an outstanding cross sampling of the different groups engaged with Bedford County Public Schools. Parents and community members were especially well represented with -- individuals participating in virtual meetings and 342 individual responses to the on-line survey. Bedford County Public School staff members were also well represented with 62 virtually meeting the consultants and 409 individuals responding to the on-line survey. Bedford student response was overwhelming, one of the highest returns of any division survey with 247 students responding to the on-line survey. The on-line survey comparative statistical analysis, ranking desired characteristics sought in the new superintendent, amplifies the findings and themes from the focus groups.

It should be emphasized that the data from the focus groups are not a scientific sampling, nor should they necessarily be viewed as representing the majority opinion of the respective groups to which they are attributed. Items are included if, in the consultants' judgment, they warranted the Board's attention.

### ***Strengths of the Division***

When asked about the strengths of Bedford County Public Schools, almost every person and group interviewed cited the quality of life and the beautiful geography of the area. Many mentioned the access to regional airports and larger cities being a short drive away. Poplar Forest, Smith Mountain Lake and the rolling geography of the area were considered assets. The long history of Bedford, including the D-Day Memorial were also a source of pride for many of the respondents.

"A great place to raise a family" was a frequent response as well as recognition of a strong economy despite the impact of the pandemic. A fiscally conservative Board of Supervisors and low tax rate combined with a low cost of living contribute to the popularity of Bedford. Many respondents cited appreciation for the small-town community feel where everybody knows someone and for the rural nature of Bedford. The school system was frequently cited as a strength and the access to major universities was also a common theme.

At 753 square miles, Bedford is geographically the fifth largest County in Virginia and that size contributes to the character and challenges of Bedford. The school division is comprised of three high schools and these three high schools and their attendance zones define and delineate the county into separate and distinct communities. The communities each have their own identity and Bedford citizens are always quick to identify the high school and community where they live. Although the differences among the zones will be discussed as a challenge, stakeholders also expressed appreciation for the community's diversity as reflected in the three zones.

There is great pride from all respondents in the commitment within BCPS to serving every individual child and to providing for the basic needs of all children. Principals and teachers were praised as respondents for going the extra mile with challenging and sometimes dire family situations to meet the needs of the child.

Many focus group and survey respondents went out of their way to praise the quality of Dr. Schuch's leadership and tenure, especially in the reopening of schools during the pandemic. The one-to-one technology devices and the move to Personalized Learning Programs were accomplishments of his eleven-year tenure. Schools are fully accredited and academic achievement is high and improving.

Employee participants were often products of Bedford County Public Schools or were residents with children attending the Bedford County Public Schools with deep connections to the schools and the community. Frequent mention was made of the dedication of the professional staff and their relationships with their students. Student respondents were also very pleased with their education. They appreciated their teachers and the quality of the programs at their schools. Even more impressive were the words used by many participants to describe the teacher workforce, i.e., passionate, gracious, dedicated, and devoted.

Under Dr. Schuch's leadership, the school division established operational policies and procedures. Now, BCPS runs very well, and the Superintendent, the Board and the staff deserve praise for maintaining a well-managed organization in a rural setting. Standard operating procedures and a high quality and committed central office staff provide the support that schools need.

BCPS staff and the staff of the County government have a positive and open working relationship. Overall, the facilities are in good condition. Recent additions and a new middle school have addressed the most pressing needs. Because of aging buildings and maintenance delayed by budget considerations, there is a recognition that more needs to be done with the facilities. It is likely the division will need to consider redistricting in its near future.

Bedford is a community that has great pride in the history of its schools and it is committed to continually improve the schools to ensure that all children have equal access to the highest levels of student achievement.

### ***Challenges/Concerns/Issues Facing the Division***

In 2013, the City of Bedford went through a reversion process in the Commonwealth of Virginia to go from City status back to a Town status. The City of Bedford had a contractual arrangement with Bedford County Public Schools for City students to attend Bedford County Schools. When the City became a Town, the school division initiated a facility use plan that closed two elementary schools that predominantly served the City of Bedford. Many respondents still harbor resentment about these past school closings. Current capacity issues in a few schools in the eastern portion could call for a redistricting consideration but there is hesitation to start this consideration until all children are fully back in school and enrollments become more stable

The most frequent concern expressed by stakeholders was that trust and transparency are badly in need of improvement. The hope for the future is that there will be better communication at all levels of the school division, starting with the superintendents. Sound instructional decisions have been made in the best interest of children, but the actual “why” of these decisions has not been well communicated. The new superintendent must be willing to sustain the current levels of instruction and achievement. But he or she must also expend a great deal more time and energy engaging with staff and parents to seek their input and explain the concepts and rationale surrounding major initiatives. Visibility and access to the superintendent were also highly desired. The new superintendent should establish an open and responsive communication system to ensure that principal and teacher input and concerns at the schools are listened to when instructional decisions are made, and that parental perspectives are also sought and respected.

The three high school demographic zones were noted in the strengths section of this report, but they are also an area of concern. There is a perception, stronger than reality, that resources between the three geographic areas are not equal. Parents cite course offerings and other examples of how the zones differ. Upon closer examination, the principals and their communities have great influence in their resource allocation and course offerings, although funding resources are largely the same. Many see the autonomy of the schools and site management by the principals as an asset; however, the resulting perception of inequity needs to be addressed.

The geographic differences of these three communities leads to some of the challenges of Bedford’s infrastructure. The division is very advanced with technology in the schools. Many respondents commented that Bedford is a leader in school-based technology. But the mountainous and rural portions of Bedford lack sufficient broadband access. The Bedford BOS recently approved a plan for improvement and much progress has been made, but the necessity of remote learning has proved how vital broadband access is for all homes with children.

Board conduct and relations were cited by many respondents as needing improvement. Both community members and staff said the Board decorum at their meetings could cause concern for superintendent applicants, and they worry that good candidates may not apply. The Board recently added two new members so the dynamic on the Board has changed. The roles and responsibilities of governance versus management of the division appears to be the most divisive issue.

There was recognition that teachers are dedicated and passionate, but there was also a teacher quality issue raised by respondents. Salaries and teacher morale were cited as reasons that Bedford is not attracting and retaining the best teachers in the area. There is also concern that

Bedford has not been aggressive in recruiting and retaining a diverse workforce. This lack of diversity adds to the belief by some on the staff and in the community that Bedford is not addressing existing racial issues strongly enough.

Special Education parents shared concerns about assessment and identification issues for IEP eligibility. Parents also described difficulty with the 504-identification process. But many also cited that a new Director of Special Education has had an excellent first year and things are improving.

While Bedford is to be commended for its use of technology and the use of Personalized Learning Programs, there is a set of citizens and staff that feel there is an over emphasis on technology. As one respondent said, “technology is a great tool for teaching, but technology and screen-based instruction should not be the primary means of delivering the curriculum”. Teachers also said that many professional development activities are one shot experiences and that better follow-up and continued training would benefit the entire teacher workforce. Segments of the staff and community feel very strongly about maintaining a more “traditional” approach to instruction and even those who support more current instructional methods recognize the need for better professional development and resources for teachers.

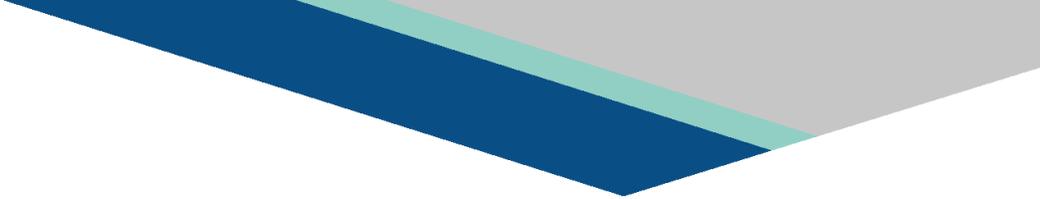
Despite these concerns, the citizens and especially the Board, staff and parents should and continue to be very proud of the many strengths and accomplishments of the Bedford County Public Schools Division.

### ***Desired Characteristics***

The most often-mentioned response to this question was a dedicated and respected educator, able to maintain the current achievements yet provide a vision for continuous improvement for BCPS. Many expressed a desire for stability and went out of the way to say passionately “do not hire a change agent”. At the same time, there is also a desire for a fresh perspective and someone who has the strength and commitment to solve problems identified in this report.

The new superintendent must be a community builder! Relationships in Bedford for the Superintendent extend far beyond the Board and the school staff. The relationships with the Town of Bedford and the County Board of Supervisors must be improved and maintained. Funding and other resources depend upon the Superintendent’s ability to set and communicate the vision for the schools. At this point in its history, impediments to the quality of public education in Bedford are not its teachers and other dedicated staff members nor its capable students. The deep divides and lack of communication and collaboration among BCPS and community leaders must be addressed, not just by a new superintendent, but by all of Bedford’s leaders so the school system will no longer be impacted negatively by these issues.

The successful candidate should also be a great communicator who can reach out to engage the entire community, parents, and citizens across the wide spectrum of the different Bedford communities. Communicating, supporting and seeking the input from teachers will also be vital to the success of Bedford County Public Schools. The superintendent should be extroverted to a fault



and seek out opportunities to engage with all constituents of the Bedford Community. Community involvement and visibility in schools and the community are highly desired.

The candidate should also be able to analyze and create a strategy to ensure standard operating procedures, curriculum and instruction occur with greater consistency in all schools for all students. Taking time to assess current initiatives and seeking staff input on changes, rather than immediately bringing in new initiatives would be a welcome approach for the new superintendent.

In summary, the high level of survey responses, along with participation in the focus groups and community meetings, are strong indicators of a school division that is very proud of the past accomplishments, but seeks a talented leader who can build on this excellence and move the division forward with transparent communication, community engagement and continued and improved high student achievement.

HYA cannot promise to find a candidate who possesses all of the characteristics desired by respondents. However, HYA and the Board intend to meet the challenge of finding an individual who possesses most of the skills and character traits required to address the concerns expressed by the constituent groups. We will seek a new superintendent who can work with the Bedford County Public Schools Board of Education to provide the leadership needed to continue to raise academic standards for all students, while meeting the unique needs of each of its students.

The consultants would like to thank all the members of the Bedford County Public School Board of Education who provided valuable information through individual meetings, as well as Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Doug Schuch, for sharing time with us. We would like to thank all the individuals who participated in the focus meetings for their candid “on the ground (ZOOM) input” and specificity in dealing with the positive aspects of the division, varying challenges facing the division in the future, and comments regarding characteristics they would like to see in the new superintendent. Equally important was the input provided through the online survey in ranking the top characteristics for the new superintendent and candid comments regarding the superintendent search. We would also like to thank the Bedford County Public Schools staff members who were most accommodating us by interrupting their schedules to meet with us. Finally, a very special thank you is extended to Diana Johnson, who assisted us greatly in identifying constituent groups and coordinating meeting times within the Bedford County Public Schools community.

Respectfully submitted,

Brad Draeger, Ed. D.

Ann Monday

## **SUMMARY OF CONSISTENT THEMES FROM INTERVIEWS AND FOCUS GROUP MEETINGS**

### ***Strengths***

- Amenities such as Smith Mountain Lake, Poplar Forest, D-Day Memorial and the short drive to many other amenities and cities makes Bedford ideally located
- An engaged and supportive community that wants BCPS to succeed
- BCPS has been leader in providing instruction and logistics during the pandemic
- Bedford is a beautiful and sought-after region of Virginia and a great place to raise a family
- Economy is stable and expected to grow
- Extensive use of technology in instruction
- Longevity of current superintendent has contributed to the stability and growth of the Bedford County Schools
- School facilities and maintenance are in good shape
- Staff is passionate and committed to all students
- Talented teachers, principals and staff that are dedicated, committed, and responsive to parents as well as students

### ***Challenges/Concerns/Issues***

- Board and superintendent roles, relationships, governance and engagement are vital to the success and longevity of the next superintendent
- Board has a wide diversity of philosophies and there is rarely consensus on any issue.
- Diversity—especially socio-economic, rural/suburban/town and even the diversity of broadband infrastructure; recognition of existing racial issues and need for a more diverse staff
- Facilities and school capacities need the attention of the Board in the near future
- Overemphasis of technology and the Personal Learning Program concern some parents and staff
- Parents seek more openness and communication with the superintendent and BCPS staff regarding decisions about curriculum and instruction
- Trust and transparency needs to be better established with all stakeholder groups
- Relationships between the school division and political leaders in the County need to improve

### ***Desired Characteristics***

- Communicates and connects with parents and all citizens in a caring and open manner
- Collaborative with the community, the schools, and especially the governance structure of BCPS, the Town of Bedford and the County of Bedford

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- Engages, supports and seeks the input of teachers
  - Instructional leader with rural experience
  - Systemic thinker who is proactive - not reactive
  - Teaching experience, school administrator experience and a terminal degree are highly desired
  - Honesty/integrity/transparency are critical attributes
  - Willing to listen and observe while learning the division – doesn't start changing things immediately
  - Studies and analyzes BCPS current programs to develop a long-range strategic plan that has wide support of the Board, the staff and the community.

## • **Comments from Interviews and Focus Group Meetings**

Listed in alphabetical order

“/” indicates multiple similar responses from different interviews

### **Board Members—Participants (7)**

#### **Strengths**

- All 19 schools are accredited
- Beautiful area—very good for small businesses
- Bedford Connects - maintain post-COVID-19
- Bedford County supports growth but we want our traditional values to remain
- Bedford has been a model in the state — a shining star in VA, often a model for best practice
- CIP is sound — needs to be supported
- Close-knit community
- Community is supportive of having a great school division, fine arts center, musicians
- Community partnerships
- Core values developed that include sharing resources — spirit of cooperation; teachers share with colleagues
- Cost of living is very good
- Current superintendent has improved Bedford tremendously—concerned about impediments
- Economy is in good shape
- Everyone knows everybody
- Faith based community is huge and positive
- Great place to raise a family
- History, outdoors—backdoor of many Universities—largest one of the East Coast—Liberty
- Innovation, openness to change – Dr. S. always asks, “Are we doing the best for kids or doing what is comfortable?”; willingness to examine practice
- Outstanding superintendent for the last nine years—learner focused education
- People - high quality staff from top to bottom; all-star team
- Planning – Dr. S. emphasized long term view; capital planning, maintenance needs planned for
- Principal autonomy to respond to unique needs of schools
- Recreational opportunities
- Slower pace—low cost of living
- Smith Mountain Lake, History—Popular Forest—summer home of Jefferson, Peaks of Otter, D-day Memorial, Town of Bedford //
- Social Agencies work and support the school system and are very willing to offer more support
- Tax Base is low
- Technology is strong but many parents still want to see their children with books and not 100% on technology

- Technology used in innovative ways — forward thinking; Bedford prepared for pandemic far better than other divisions; ahead of the curve on technology so ready to support virtual learning
- Very dedicated staff
- Very diverse county—suburbia on one side and rural on the other
- Very diverse population—socio-economically
- Very traditional

## Challenges

- 14 mobile classrooms in use for 25 years – this type of challenge
- Academic Leadership Team under the Deputy—all schools were accredited.
- Administrators feel they need to say yes—fear of firing
- Attracting and retaining high quality people — continue to build top notch staff
- Board is not in agreement—some Board members have an agenda that is not in the best interest of all students
- Board needs more information—we need a more collaborative environment between the Board and the Superintendent needs to connect with the community
- Broadband access
- Building a positive relationship with Co Admin and BOS - as has Dr. S. - to get school funding and support; establishing and maintaining good relationship with community and School Board
- Building the trust—no one trusts the current superintendent
- CIP—needs prioritization and funding
- Closed schools—didn't save money and are now overenrolled—we need to keep our schools open
- Closed two schools about eight years ago when city became a town—led to demise of the current leadership
- Compensation - have made progress with step increases for teachers and staff; one of the first in our area to restore step increases after recession; need to unfreeze steps to be fair; need COLA adjustment; 30+ year employees maxed out on scale
- Country club mentality does not serve Bedford well
- COVID-19
- Efficiency review was used only to close schools
- Eight of the last ten years Bedford was not accredited
- Experienced teachers are leaving because of the administration
- Facilities - deferred maintenance & delays because of recession must be dealt with; 40+ year old buildings; finding a way to continue to make progress on addressing facilities; HVAC systems at or past life expectancies
- Good instruction is not always supported
- Google oriented—much of the world is in Microsoft—is that a disadvantage for our students
- Heavy growth on eastern side—no or low growth on the central and western side
- Literacy is an issue for some parents in Bedford—so communication must be a complete outreach

- Maintaining excellence established by Dr. Ss and School Board
- Many Board votes are 4 to 3
- Morale has been decreasing over the last few years in surveys by the BCEA
- Pandemic
- Poor planning and implementation for PLP—not an experiment—we need a master plan for PLP
- School improvement — some schools struggling academically; lots of progress made, but need to keep going
- Small population—very traditionalist—opposed to personalized learning—especially technology
- Still some vestiges of good old boy in the staff—but it has improved tremendously
- Students and teachers who do not feel accepted welcomed and valued — growing awareness of those who have been marginalized
- Students are learning technology—but not content
- Tax base is so low—and the CIP is suffering.
- Technology approach is not working as well as touted
- Three attendance zones—must be an incredible balancing act to ensure equity
- Trust between BOS and Board is large. BOS does not like current superintendent.

### **Characteristics**

- Ability to build bridges with BOS, Town Council and other agencies in Bedford
- Accessible to the greater community
- Administrative skills — can implement plans
- Can deal with the reality of social media and the platform it provides
- Can deal with vocal parents, can address complaints productivity and with good judgement;
- Charismatic—can convince people
- Clone Doug Such—with more communication skill
- Combines both PR strength and ability to get things done; talk and action
- Communication ability — can sell an idea to community AND the ability to listen
- Current superintendent experience is important
- Demonstrated understanding of practices
- Doctorate highly preferred ////
- Focus on community schools
- Focused on student achievement
- Fresh set of eyes—we need to examine our current practices
- Listens to the community /
- Need someone who is hands on and visible
- Passion for kids and schools
- PLP—community is more teacher based than a complete PLP approach
- Political savvy — knows how to work in a political environment; builds relationships with key leaders; understands the political environment we are in
- Practical learning—versus Socratic method
- Prior experience as principal—current sup was not a principal

- Professional engagement — engaged in community, state, and national educational trends and ideas; maintains professional relationships at the state and national levels
- School experience
- Small town experience would benefit Bedford
- Someone who will embrace the new community as their own
- Strong instructional person
- Supervising compelling vision for future
- Technology experience would be good—but not to be all end all
- Technology is a tool for the teacher—not a substitute for a teacher
- Thick-skinned - strong enough to withstand pressure from School Board while being responsive; able to challenge Bedford practices to make sure that they are best practices;
- Visible, open, available - Dr. S. was good at this; takes time to talk with people; is in schools, seeing what is going on (Dr. S. visited schools regularly)
- Visionary - stays on top of ed trends; moves us forward

## **Administrative Team (Cabinet) Participants (3)**

### **Strengths**

- “What’s best for kids?” drives decision-making
- Administrative and operational processes — budgeting, agenda building, staffing, etc. are sound
- Career Experience is also robust in Bedford
- Collaborative work environment, people share data and ideas
- CTE programs are strong
- Culture - work done by Dr. S. to steer practices to a student-centered philosophy; thinking about individual kids and their needs is part of culture and a systemwide expectation
- Employees, including teachers, bus drivers and food service workers stepped up in pandemic
- Facilities: took on some hard issues; closed elementary schools six years ago; use capacity more efficiently; facilities assessment in 2016 as basis for CIP/planning
- Innovation - Dr. S. has led work to be a forward thinking and future oriented division
- Innovative—rural county became more sophisticated and we broke out of the rural education mode
- Innovative—rural county became more sophisticated and we broke out of the rural education mode
- New young administrators—they want to push the envelope
- Openness, no fear of reprisal among staff for questioning leadership
- Relationship between schools and county government leadership; trust between county administration and school administration
- Relationships with County and Town - good dialogue with County; have done the hard work of transitioning Bedford City to town status
- Size-large enough to have several schools and pull in large staff; size provides opportunities for divergent thinking
- Staff - capable leaders, most have doctorates; high quality of staff overall
- Stem Academy and two Governors Schools
- Teamwork on senior staff and throughout the division
- Technology and infrastructure in place for now and future
- Transparency on financial side — take responsibility for decisions good or bad; never any attempt to bury problems
- Very dedicated teachers and school administrators

### **Challenges**

- Animosity between current SB and school leadership
- BCPS was disproportionate in Special Ed—intense remediation was initiated which means some parents see this as a delay
- Continued criticism of superintendent for past decisions, such as school closings and other actions done in response to fiscal pressures and recession

- Declining enrollment — already happening and COVID-19 may impact this (parents opting for private schools, home schooling)
- Division - portions of population that are critical of Dr. S.; criticism for personnel action; closing schools; decisions made during recession and declining budgets
- Facilities - aging buildings, need HVAC systems, renewals, roofs, etc.; need to preserve what we have and prepare for renovation and new builds; may need to do another assessment;
- Fiscal responsibility expected in a conservative community
- Funding gaps — local needs surpass what BOS will support, declining State funds
- need to be future oriented with facilities — lighting and solar options that are less costly
- Perception of inequity in funding in different zones — for example, school-based management allows principals the autonomy to use staffing to meet unique needs. One school may have an extra administrator or counselor or whatever is most needed for that population, but all have the same formula for staffing; when people see differences, they conclude unfairness
- Relationship with BOS needs to be better—no children in the public schools
- Relationship with the BOS - BOS at times appears to punish the school division Shared revenue - BOS splits revenue 50-50, most years
- Salaries could be better—more support needed from BOS
- Three distinct zones in Bedford—keeping all engaged with a voice is difficult
- Very difficult Board—very disrespectful of staff

## **Characteristics**

- Ability to grow through risk taking
- Accessible - sets tone that makes community comfortable with school division; visible; listener; connects with all types of employees and community groups
- Board management skills — will guide this School Board toward maturity and responsible leadership
- Collaborative spirit
- Communication ability
- Consensus of the Board will go a long way for a good start for the new Superintendent
- Decisive
- Educational knowledge and expertise — thorough understanding of issues and best practices
- Encouragement is more important than the micro manager
- Good communicator—someone who can connect with the community
- Healer, unifier — unites divided Board and community, moves the Division pass old grievances
- Innovative, forward thinking, brings in new ideas and perspectives
- Integrity - transparent, honest, trustworthy
- Political awareness and savvy
- Savvy enough to handle the Board
- Strategic-anticipates and plans for what students will need for success
- Strength is in the team and not in the individual
- Strong but not a micromanager
- Superintendent experience would assist working with the Board

- Trusts staff to do their jobs
- Values the strengths of the system and the good things done under Dr. S.'s leadership and does not change what is working well

## **Principals Participants (27)**

### **Strengths**

- Area is beautiful and the people are great /
- Autonomy for principals to make decisions about staffing and curriculum that is best for individual schools; site-based management; diversity of school needs; top-down direction would not work //
- Bedford County as a place to live — historic background, beautiful location
- Collaboration - strong sense of community in schools and between schools — more camaraderie than rivalry; welcoming, supportive collaborative culture in BCPS ///
- Community support — outside agencies, community groups, churches and other groups are supportive of schools; never been told no in this community; supportive parents
- COVID-19 response — staff is positive right now with this situation; BCPS willing to take on any initiative; division has a good set of values, teachers want to do what is right for kids, to be innovative to meet needs; staff positivity and willingness to take on challenges
- Diversity is strengths in some areas
- Forward thinking and future thinking — one-to-one; looking at grading policies; Bedford reimaged; atmosphere that supports innovation and new ideas ///
- Integration of technology //
- Positive progress in the last ten years /
- Schools trending in the right way
- Student achievement has been moving up
- Technology is very advanced to other divisions

### **Challenges**

- Addressing learning gaps caused by pandemic, support will be needed; pressure on custodial staff during pandemic; things are being missed, such as grounds care
- Bedford learning curve could be long for an outsider
- BOS and SB/Superintendent relationship often contentious — hard to navigate these relationships when it comes to funding or any issue involving the community, lack of trust
- Central office can be slow and difficult
- Change management — ideas, innovation a plus, but implementation and follow through not a strength; change not managed as well as it could be
- Communication - even great ideas have not been communicated well; good things are seen as negative, like one-to-one capacity is seen as anti-teacher; community members and parents do not always know why things are changing; messages not clear

- Consistency across division — more consistency of services and guidance from central office — hard to find people responsible for areas; keep autonomy for staffing at school level but still look at need's division-wide
- Diversity is a strength—schools are very different
- Divisions in the community — community split as to where the division is going; some do not want change, want traditional approach, even on current School Board; everyone has best interests at heart, but different opinions are creating divisions; in portions of community trust is an issue; what we are doing is not always understood by parents and community
- Divisions within the school system — pockets of teachers who do not trust in division and go to SB and certain central office people; tension between the SB, central office staff and some teachers, usually because of miscommunication; different perspectives dividing people
- Facilities - need to keep up with demands; some buildings falling apart; outdated furniture; grounds maintenance; HVAC systems going down with no funds to fix them; plumbing issues; elevator without adequate electrical infrastructure; ongoing preventive maintenance and upkeep needs to be supported ////
- Funding - schools always have to prove that we need funding
- Large change is not needed
- Many school administrators have worked in on both areas
- New school board—they are portraying issues in a negative manner
- Pandemic will still be an issue — continuing virtual school, using what we have learned;
- Political issues are not always best for children
- Racial issues — sensitivity about race; lack of diversity in staff
- Redistricting
- Retention of teachers is a huge issue
- Rural population
- SB - splits among SB members is quite embarrassing; this dynamic needs to be settled down
- Size of division and— diverse needs — unique needs of each zone; expansive size of county; large division with small town characteristics
- Special education services—in good shape but parents are getting more vocal
- Teacher shortages
- Technology support — internet access now and in future
- Three different communities—three different and distinct zones of attendance—communities have different resources because of socio-economic status
- Transition out of the pandemic
- Vicious differences in communities

## Characteristics

- Hands off
- High school experience—knows VHSL
- Knowledge of the Bedford communities would be helpful
- Not a change agent
- Staffing—don't micromanage us

## **Directors and Instructional Staff Participants (15)**

### **Strengths**

- Autonomy for leaders to do their jobs — support for people at their levels
- Bedford known for leading innovation and best practices, often a model for other divisions; ahead of the curve, forward moving //
- Culture of collaboration — sharing and collaborative teaming a core value of the division
- Decisions based on what is best for learners
- Fiscal responsibility in budget development and use of funds
- Relationship with BOS has grown and allowed more support for the schools
- Tech advancement — one-to-one devices puts us ahead, and put us in a good position for now and future
- Trust and communication among staff — even when there is disagreement there is respect; senior leaders and colleagues have broken down silos and work as teams //

### **Challenges**

- Community: segments of the community have defined innovation as technology only, therefore resists positive changes; lack of unity in community; breakdown of trust among some parts of the community /
- Equity among zones — need to address issue of equity; Bedford has three distinct zones with very different cultures and expectations
- Maintaining what has been successful — especially the trust and collaboration that characterizes Bedford Schools; fear of going backward, from work that supports 21st century learners to what was done in the past ///
- School Board - not functioning as a professional entity; micromanaging staff;
- staff feels like they have two masters, with SB demands that take time away from students and teachers; SB members who have made it clear that they do not support our superintendent or support the division strategic plan; SB is seen as actively rejecting the work of the system //
- Support services feel forgotten, employee needs overlooked

### **Characteristics**

- Approachable, available — visible here in Bedford
- Authentic
- Builds bridges — continues community partnerships
- Communication skills, personable — can communicate with all levels of employees and segments of community
- Doctorate
- Fiscal budgeting skills
- Forward thinking
- History of trust and respect; treats staff with trust and respect, does not use fear to motivate or control people; legacy of collegial respect /

- 
- Humble - not a big ego that needs to change everything
  - Integrity
  - Knows Bedford - understands geography of our county
  - Professional
  - Servant leader — committed to children and families; shows up when needed; person with legacy of service who models leadership
  - Team builder, collaborative — not a self-promoter — but builds teams //

## **Teachers Participants (11)**

### **Strengths**

- Chain of command was established under Dr. S so that parents with a complaint cannot just call the School Board or Superintendent
- Collegiality-great collegial relationships among people in schools; camaraderie within faculties
- Continuing professional development
- Curriculum - improved over the past years when there was no division-wide plan
- Large geographic county—both positive and negative—much diversity
- Leadership quality — good leaders in some areas of the system; very qualified and dedicated principals in some schools
- Mentors for beginning teachers and counselors
- Much professional development
- Pandemic - dealt with by BCPS with grace and professionalism, not a lot of complaining; going very well at elementary level
- Parents are very involved
- Parents were teachers—close knit community—can also be a deterrent
- Parents, students and staff are very engaged for the decision-making process
- People moving to Bedford because of our COVID-19 response
- People of Bedford are very accepting—great place to live and work
- Positive attitudes
- School system is a welcoming community and functions as a family
- Site based management, schools not as centrally controlled as in other divisions; principals can match resource and procedures to unique needs
- Some of the best teachers of the year—most of the teachers of the year come from Bedford
- Strong instructional team—central office
- Superintendent has risen to the challenge of leading in COVID-19—he has done an outstanding job
- Teacher input the superintendent selection process is appreciated
- Teachers and other staff — dedicated, with long years of service; most professionals work hard
- Teachers are problem solvers—we work together across the schools
- Teachers work well with very view resources
- Very good students
- Very strong professional committee
- Working relationship with the superintendent is very good

### **Challenges**

- Academic programs - Pilot Program at HS - lots of autonomy for students, but some of the plan just did not work; some students barely passed; self-paced learning creates issues;
- BCPS and County hide racially challenging situations
- Build relationships in the County
- Central office is very large

- Change management — good ideas not always implemented well; lack of training, resource or staff; this leads to mistrust of change
- Classes are not offered at all the high schools — need to provide equal opportunity at all high schools; Forest parents can raise funds to support their schools causing more inequity
- Current superintendent is not well liked
- Decisions made should be communicated well so that everyone knows it's in the best interest of the children
- Division-wide leadership: nice, hard-working people but all not suited for their leadership positions; not all the right people in the right seats on the bus ala "Good to Great"; lack of clarity about who is responsible at central level, people have multiple hats, change titles
- Division between school district and community — turmoil between BOS and SB; BOS withholds funding as a control tactic over the schools
- Dr. Schuch had a very clear vision of personalized learning—and some don't like that vision—including some school board members
- Establishing trust — at division-wide leadership level, lots of distrust and people wanting to leave; distrust for schools in our communities
- First elected African American on Board—more diversity would be welcome
- Following a great superintendent is going to be very hard—a certain portion of the county will not like you and not give you the benefit of a doubt
- Football will get support
- Funding the school division is difficult—BOS is not committed to funding the schools
- Good old boy vestige exists at some levels of governance
- Grants are available for teachers—but that was switched to broadband access—all part of the Bedford Area Education Association
- Hard feelings from the legal issues surrounding the central office demotion
- Idea started as very appealing but in reality, did not work for some students; elementary math program does not match SOLs; teachers use math materials, but do not support the program
- If every student day is facilitating a technology project, that's as dangerous as a stand and lecture model. There is still not enough differentiation
- Inconsistencies among schools — need for policies in some areas at the division level, for more consistency and equity; different school schedules at high schools; need for balance between principal autonomy and consistency when it impacts quality of services (i.e., when students move among zones, reading programs can be completely different from school to school)
- Inequities - perception of inequities among schools and zones, some of which are real;
- Low morale — in some school buildings morale is very low
- Most policies and emphasis are curricular based—extracurricular activities not so much
- Motivation is still lacking for some students, especially in remote learning
- Must develop good relationships with community
- Must recognize this is a small community and they must appreciate they will be scrutinized
- Perception of communication is it's horrible—but it's not
- Providing more equity of education across the county—resources for each school differ greatly
- Quiz Bowl—only 4 students—not supported or pushed

- Racial tensions in schools and community-issues with racial tensions that have not been addressed properly; one high school has had racial issues that were not dealt with for at least four years; lack of diversity in some zones/schools, other have more diverse populations;
- Reading programs vary and change which can be good for individual schools, but can cause inequities; curriculum countywide is not consistent; different reading program in every school; need more standardized curriculum for the basics
- Successful extracurricular activities get emphasis—but the whole program is not supported or celebrated
- Too much professional development—not all can be used all the time—prioritization would help
- Transparency is lacking—not a strength of the current superintendent
- Transparency of COVID-19 cases—Board had to push for it—not the superintendent
- Very different high schools—different needs
- Very strong push for personalized programs (too much push)—teachers are pushing back—started with technology—but how we will use technology effectively—some schools
- Visibility—remote work has increased the divide that central office is remote but teachers are expected to be in person
- Zones have different challenges and the superintendent must be able to speak to all three

### **Characteristics**

- 21<sup>st</sup> century skills are needed for one to one initiative—we have to move forward and can't move backward
- Balanced approach to curriculum — makes sure that new ways to deliver instruction are balanced with more traditional approaches when students need them
- Balanced approach to school autonomy — knows when central direction is needed
- Builds trust, with transparency and no hidden agendas; consistency and repeatable behavior is key to building trusts
- Change agent is not needed
- Clear vision is imperative for Bedford—we can't back off from that
- Communicator - establishes effective channels for communication; employees must hear about issues before they are in the news; maintains an open line of communication
- COVID-19—help us move to the next level of pandemic planning
- Diversity—female candidates should be considered
- Experienced school leader who really understands the world of schools
- Get input from all stakeholders
- Human relations skills — can rebuild broken relationships; someone who relates to people, like the Superintendents in Amherst County; can fix the broken relationships in central office; relates to people in the community who do not trust schools
- Ideas—allow committees and other voice—don't come in head strong
- Knowledge of all levels
- Open - provides opportunities for teachers to talk about what is important to them
- Personable
- Shared vision

- Superintendent Advisory Council must continue
- Superintendent needs to be more direct—some of the current messaging is obtuse. More vision is needed
- Teacher experience—long teaching career would be invaluable
- Understands a more rural community and can lead in a more rural community
- Visible - spends time in schools to see what is happening

### **Students Participants (4)**

#### **Strengths**

- Facilities are very clean
- High standards for everybody so everybody is successful
- More unified
- Superintendent will have an easy time—because of the closeness of the community
- Teachers and students work very well together
- Teachers are working very hard to ensure good learning during the pandemic
- Teachers have high standards

#### **Challenges**

- Communication between parents, students and staff could be improved
- Students need to be given more information about school activities
- Technology before the pandemic was great—new challenges with the pandemic because of the lack of broadband
- Transparency—students and parents need the information behind decisions so they can support them
- Update structural—Staunton River needs new awnings—maintenance could be improved

#### **Characteristics**

- Commitment to Bedford is ideal
- Community engaged—they need to understand Bedford
- Needs clear vision—prior knowledge would help
- Quarantine standards need to be enforced—governor’s school—don’t take your mask off unless your outside
- Someone from central Virginia with familiarity with Bedford

## **Support Staff Participants (4)**

### **Strengths**

- Convenient—it's not in the middle of nowhere—you can be anywhere in two hours
- Good place for students
- Great property values
- Regional airports serve the area
- Safe place to live—quiet
- Serene, calm and beautiful

### **Challenges**

- Identifying a diverse set of students for GT—this is a challenge
- Pay scales are low
- Remote learning—even employees have some of the same issues of access
- Severe limitations—broadband issues really work against education—prohibitive costs to get high speed Internet

### **Characteristics**

- Advocate for needs of all schools and zones; addresses perception of inequities
- Broad base of executive skills and leadership experiences, yet willing to learn
- Commitment to recruitment and retention of quality staff — resources will be needed
- Communication is key
- Communication skills — can improve messaging to staff and community
- Employee morale
- Inside candidate — good people in the division can do the job and keep us moving forward//
- Inspire everyone to be our best
- Know your employees
- Maintains the positives and norms established and keeps things going in a good direction; respects the norms; supports autonomy among leaders; fosters collaboration
- Recommendations
- Sensitive to racial issues
- Tap into employees for solutions
- Trust builder — can earn trust of staff and community — will be “boots on the ground” in schools and community to build trust and embody BCPS norms
- Understands the diverse needs of Bedford: each zone, each school; will learn the people, the demographics, the positives, the community

## **Local Government Officials Participants (7)**

### **Strengths**

- \$40 million new elementary schools is probably needed
- Adequate number of elementary schools in the County that keep schools small and scattered throughout the County, instead of larger, consolidated schools
- Broadband services are increasing
- Close to major places—Lynchburg, Greensboro, Roanoke are all close
- COVID-19 is making Bedford attractive
- Current superintendent is good and not swayed by intrusions
- Facilities are in pretty good shape—renovations are planned
- Geography—mountains, Smith Mountain Lake, D-Day memorial, bedroom community
- Growing community—no major issues
- Keep the ship moving forward--
- Nature of the community –very attractive—very popular
- Past when teachers were the most important feature in the classroom, with smaller classes;
- Quality of life and quality of school system
- Rural nature of county
- Super affordable place to live
- Tax rate is very low
- Taxes are half of Lynchburg

### **Challenges**

- BOS could use more background to the decision-making process
- BOS is not education friendly
- Broadband is still a challenge—but it's improving fast
- Budget requests are perceived to padded
- Capital needs — demands for new construction rather than redistricting
- Cares act funding—money did not flow to the schools without leverage of how to spend the funds
- Communications with the community - constituents feel like their voices have not been heard on issues like school closings, use of funds
- Community support on the western side for the superintendent suffers from closing the schools
- COVID-19 has not dramatically affected tax revenue
- COVID-19 learning is not adequate for student learning; no instruction causing parents to leave division for private schools and homeschooling
- Current superintendent has been quite the lightning rod
- Develop a relationship with the supervisors that is not adversarial.
- Disparity among the three zones — not the same academic or athletic opportunities at all three HS; all the money and attention go to JF, favoritism; Liberty zone students do not have equal opportunities; JF zone schools are overcrowded, but SB will not consider changing boundaries

- divisions in political and school communities over school closings and consolidations, larger vs small schools; closing schools and then needing more spaces; too much focus on new shiny schools with all bells and whistles rather than good teachers and smaller classrooms; not taking care of maintenance issue, HVAC replacements a critical need
- Dr. S. is polarizing — either like him or hate him; M & TC not a fan
- Facilities and maintenance - need to keep schools small and scattered throughout county; Bedford Primary School on the chopping block, but not closed due to community pressure;
- Facilities—some are very old—campus style approach for two high schools
- Reversion funding was used for operations. These funds are scheduled to go away, so a major shortage funding shortage is on the way
- Funds are not given out of love but out of requirement
- Home schooling enrollment is huge—one of the largest in Virginia—this creates a large segment of the population that is skeptical and reluctant to support the public schools
- Huge consensus must be built around any fund increase
- Inequities in quality of schools — classes offered at Forest HS but not Liberty HS;
- Leadership of school division - principals feel like they are not supported by supt, told to solve problems on their own; turnover in Bedford schools because of central office; central office staff under Dr. S. control (all have worked for him for a number of years); supt changed titles in central office so that he could get rid of people and then hire his own people
- Management of schools - elementary school start times, accessibility; need for unified schedules at ES
- New things must be introduced through measured approaches that take time to chip away at “tradition”
- Next superintendent needs to build some consistency
- Older buildings--HVAC
- Pandemic
- Perception of unequal educational opportunity depending on which school the student attends
- Politics and values of the community - Bedford Co. 73% for Trump
- Power structure comes from generational traditional families
- Prevalence of homeschooling - Why so much homeschooling in Bedford rather than public schools? That needs to be investigated - to make more families comfortable with their tax paid public education
- Programs being offered - need to return to hands on, teacher led classrooms, especially at the elementary and middle grades with some online learning HS; Personalized Learning concept is the Supt’s project (Supt is writing a book); Chrome-books are not what parents want; they traditional sources of information; web-based learning is not the future for Bedford
- Redistricting is a possibility
- Redistricting lines — have— not been adjusted to meet space needs
- Run things like a business—frequent quote—but then they cling to old inefficient procedures
- School Board authority vs superintendent’s control - CARES act gave schools some funding, decisions about funding use made by Supt not SB; decisions need to be made by a robust school board empowered by the community that elected them, not an overreaching superintendent

- School Budgets and funding - distrust for school leadership; inflated budgets; blaming BOS for not meeting school needs; lack of budget transparency; State funds rendered from the local composite index from Bedford City to Town were supposed to be used to build Liberty MS;
- School spending not equal
- Superintendent knows more about education than any BOS member
- Three high school communities are very distinct and very different
- Very fiscally conservative area—additional funds are hard to find
- Virtual learning a problem — some kids do not have internet access; seat time with teachers is better than using a Chromebook
- You must excel at working within your means

### **Characteristics**

- Accessible and supportive — has an open door; creates a positive environment where principals are heard and helped with issues
- Assessable to community, open door policy
- Backbone and strong belief to cut through all the interference
- Believes that the teacher in the classroom most important factor in learning and basis of education
- Brings new perspectives
- Cares about all schools and students equally; appreciates diversity of schools; new Forest MS wanted performance space, but there were rural schools that did not have warm water in their restrooms; uses funds equitably; has heart for all schools, including those with 50% POV; has a heart for all students, those affluent and those not
- Close working relationship with the County Executive serves Bedford and the schools very well.
- Don't rock the boat—dot your i's and cross your t's
- Empathetic - stays in touch with people; can put himself into other peoples' shoes
- Good working relationship with BOS, Board and Superintendent are important
- Inspires not requires — inspires people to accept ideas, but if they do not, doesn't require
- Listens
- Not in favor of consolidation, closing schools, larger rather than smaller schools
- Patience will be a virtue for survival
- Respects SB authority — knows that he is working for SB not SB working for him
- Transparency—make realistic budget cuts

## **Community Participants (18)**

### **Strengths**

- Autonomy in schools and zones to provide for specific community needs; principal can staff schools and push innovation at the school level; schools have equal funding but are not the same ////
- Career Pathways Expo - a new venture
- Chamber of Commerce works well BCPS
- College and Career Center; Internships for students offered through Chamber
- Community and parent involvement and support
- Fastest growing county in the region (but still rural)
- Growth - County growth will bring different perspectives, new communities
- Innovation and forward thinking - Dr. S. did a good job of trying to move us forward to 21st Century skills; new ideas were welcomed //
- Potential for growth and innovation in BCPS
- Pride in BCPS
- School-based quality — school staffs are overall well regarded and people in schools generally fantastic //
- Strong community values: Family, Farm, Business
- Superintendent sits on Chamber Board
- Support each other /////
- Teachers - amazing; student driven; doing their best to learn to use technology as a tool;
- Whole child emphasis - BCPS offers more than basic academics, pays attention to social and emotional needs, the arts, athletics and activities

### **Challenges**

- Central office — school connection — communication channels a problem; the superintendent's office pushes out "leadership bundles", but some principals are not sharing in a timely fashion; disconnect between administration and teachers — teachers are not feeling supported; need better connection from central administration to classrooms; making sure that people promoted to leadership positions are the best quality and have credibility //
- Communication - spotty communication; need to bridge community connection; without information there is lack of understanding (the "why" of changes or decisions is not clearly communicated); talk to parents directly, not just through FB; issues are not handled transparently and honestly; central office speaks for things that happened in a school without the whole story, thus causing distrust /////
- COVID-19 communication was not always clear to parents, had to make decisions quick
- COVID-19 response — teachers did not have a lot of direction over the summer, frustrated, lack of communication; should not have gone to Canvas, a new tech platform, in pandemic;
- Differences in regions in the County that can cause inequities

- Diverse needs at schools and in zones — everything does not need to be equal in zones; use of resources should be suited to the needs of students and community; allow for differentiation among the zones, match needs; needs differ. so programs can differ; 3 zones = 3 voices
- Lack of trust — no community building in Bedford as a county, so there is distrust and resentment and a belief of unfairness among the regions and school zones; perception that one zone is given preferential treatment; divided //Lack of administrative consistency at central level and school level — at central level, over policies and enforcement of regulations; in some schools, there has been a churn of principal leadership causing inconsistencies
- Low expectations for students; students not all expected to perform at a high level
- Low teacher morale
- Opposition to change in instructional programs
- Racial issues — need to be managed in transparent and forthright way; problems have been hidden or ignored; lack of diversity on faculties and staffs
- Rural community — internet access limited — high speed internet not available everywhere
- Support for students with special needs and those identified as gifted-accommodations for students who need support; parents have to fight every year with administration for 504 plans; hard for parents to get response and support from school based and central administrators for students with legitimate needs, especially if a child is functioning at grade level; gifted ed does not exist in any way past elementary, no TAG offerings at middle school /
- Teacher support and development — some teachers feeling frustrated with the technology demands; teachers are being handcuffed by parental interference whether they are more or less traditional ; teachers become afraid do what they think is best; teachers need the autonomy to do their jobs; teacher training needed so instruction can be consistently high quality; need professional development for teachers and more administrative support; pending teacher shortages, teacher retention ////

## Characteristics

- Accountable and consistent — holds self and all employee to high standards; provides better accountability; consistent in application of rules and regs
- Addresses real issues of disparity — identifies disparities in resources such as internet access; will to do a needs assessment of all schools to determine where legitimate needs are;
- Balanced approach — knows that technology will be the future but is NOT replacing the teacher; Innovative, but realistic
- Bridge builder, empathetic — will put him or herself in shoes of parents; gets by-in
- CEO skills to run all facets of school system
- Collaborative - can work with School Board members who represent different constituents;
- Collaborative - fosters collegiality
- Committed to Bedford: not looking for the next step, the next job; dedicated to our students
- Communicator - explains the why of what is happening; provides effective, timely messaging; well-coordinated communication channels within the division; effective use of media to inform public ///

- Creative, innovative — supports innovation; thinks outside-the-box, not traditional; will build off of the COVID-19 experiences to provide access and opportunities for students; takes risks; continues to innovate //
- Experienced as a leader
- Experienced educator — experience at all levels of education k-12; knowledge and expertise in all aspects of public education
- Increases emphasis on preparing students for their futures: develops career/college pathway for each student; more access to dual enrollment
- Integrity, character — must be at the highest level
- Motivator - will address teacher morale and raise expectations for students
- Personality
- Political and relationship skills needed to bring community together — can navigate the relationships between SB and BOS and build a working, professional relationship with SB
- Student centered. — not political when it comes to instruction and services for students; does not just satisfy adults; has a genuine heart for students with diverse needs /
- Transparent, honest //
- Understands a rural community
- Unifier - can bring opposing views together
- will be sure that there is equity in funding and opportunities in all zones
- Wisdom - will find ways to build on the blended approach used in pandemic to increase access and opportunity for students in the future
- Works to resolve real, not perceived, inequities; sensitive to needs of all zones //

## **Parents Participants (10)**

### **Strengths**

- 5<sup>th</sup> largest county in VA by geographic size
- A place where you don't have to look over your shoulder
- Academic excellence
- Beautiful drive to school—not far from the bigger cities
- Beautiful—Blue Ridge Mountains, Lakes and a safe place to raise children
- Bedford is a small county and small community feel
- Good support system for families
- Kelly Jennings is a good Special Education Leader
- Low cost of living
- On the right track with one to one ChromeBook
- Remote learning program is very strong and ahead of other counties
- Safe
- Schools are great—all have their own personality

### **Challenges**

- 30-40 years of denying FAPE
- 504's, evaluations and IEP's are very hard to get in Bedford
- Autistic student needs are not being addressed
- Broadband access—many students and families
- Child find—referrals go to committees RTI and School Consultation Teams for reviews—delays to getting services for the original referral
- Community of Bedford has trauma and distrust of the superintendent
- Divide between people who like the superintendent—and those
- Dr. Schuch is not a good fit, he's bright and good, but people don't trust him—he's from Northern Virginia
- Eighty-three children identified as autistic—seems low for the number of students in special education
- Facilities, especially Elementary Schools, HVAC is outdated, paint is horrible shape
- Generational issues of special education—Bedford parent had to move to Botetourt—they struggled to get services as a child in Bedford and then struggled with her own children to get services.
- IEP teams are not truly a team process
- Last superintendent selection process didn't have much transparency—this is a vast improvement
- Liberty and Staunton have huge FAA programs but students can't take an advanced physics class. Schools should not be pigeonholed—everyone should have access to the curriculum they need.
- Redistricting—growth is making this a necessity—this is the ultimate challenge
- School system struggles with transparency

- Special education is a sore spot in Bedford—SPED Advisory Council is just now adding parents.
- Special education is the elephant in the room in Bedford—the staff won't talk about the lack of services.
- Staffing for remote classes has grown to 300—staffing adjustments needed for remote learning
- Teachers are afraid, parents are afraid, when parents have advocated reports are made to social services.

### **Characteristics**

- Bring the community together
- Communities within Bedford are very different
- Divides in the community—i.e., Forest Elementary renovation
- Don't change everything—take an appreciation for the good things we're doing
- Hands on leader—know what's going on in the building
- Similar community—someone who can relate to the tight knit culture of the Bedford Community
- Someone who can bring us all together
- Study the county and be a listener
- Superintendent should attend at least one school PTA meeting—it would go a long way!!
- Transparent

## **Bedford County Public Schools Superintendent of Schools Desired Characteristics**

After seeking input from its Board members, parents, staff, students, and community via focus groups, interviews, and an online survey, the Board of Education of the Bedford County Public Schools (BCPS) seeks a strong educational leader who possesses the following characteristics:

- Ability to utilize and implement an instructional program that values technology as a tool and component of teaching, but can balance technology with direct teacher instruction.
- Accessibility to staff, County government, community groups and organizations that is transparent and welcoming.
- Adaptability in developing a professional presence that is demonstrated through high visibility.
- Inclusive style of leadership that engages and collaborates with Board Members, staff and community in a transparent style of leadership.
- Rural/suburban teaching and administrative experience that serves as a foundation for understanding differentiation of instruction, meeting individual student needs, and providing a curriculum and strategies for high academic achievement for all students

With regard to leadership experiences and accomplishments, the successful candidate will:

- Demonstrate community engagement and transparency built upon trust, honesty and integrity.
- Demonstrate proven skills in building a governance model that is inclusive of excellent working relationships with the Board, staff, parents, the governmental agencies of the County and especially the community
- Demonstrate skilled leadership in curriculum and program development that is research based, evidence based, and is supported by well-planned and sequenced implementation and professional development.
- Demonstrate division wide achievement results that have raised the bar of accomplishment while reducing achievement gaps between and among all student groups.
- Demonstrate creativity in the development of an educational working environment that is effectively, well managed, fairly evaluated, inclusive and holds all employees accountable.
- Demonstrate human resource(s) skills that attract outstanding, diverse candidates for all positions and decrease turnover.
- Be able to be certified as a Virginia superintendent
- Demonstrates a solid track record of increasing responsibilities and success
- Have experience as a teacher/administrator in a medium size school division and/or experience as a superintendent
- Possess a doctorate (strongly preferred)