

DIAGNOSTIC REPORT

Presented To:
Community Foundation of St. Joseph County
South Bend, Indiana
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THOUGHTBRIDGE

Connecting Ideas for Powerful Results

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PART ONE:
INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

In April of 1999, the Community Foundation of St. Joseph County, Inc., contacted the Harvard Negotiation Project because of its concern that the dispute between the Superintendent and the school board over the renewal of her contract was splitting the community along racial lines and that negative emotions were ruling. The Foundation's initial goal was to re-establish civility and focus on common objectives and to bring commonsense to the community dialogue. The Harvard Negotiation Project referred the Foundation to THOUGHTBRIDGE, a Cambridge, Massachusetts Consulting Firm that is a spin-off of the Harvard Negotiation Project. THOUGHTBRIDGE has made school districts one of their specialties in their work with conflict management, negotiation, strategic relationship management and change management.

After several phone and e-mail discussions with the Foundation about the goals and timing of such an effort, THOUGHTBRIDGE came to South Bend to make a presentation to the school board and community members on October 4, 1999. The presentation shared the kinds of tools and processes THOUGHTBRIDGE might use to help the community heal and begin to focus on shared goals for the education of South Bend children. The presentation was generally well received, however, there were concerns expressed about the timing of the THOUGHTBRIDGE process. Some board members felt the effort should wait until the new Superintendent was hired. Others felt that the effort was an attempt to get the board to reconsider its decision not to renew the contract of Superintendent Virginia Calvin.

After many discussions with key community stakeholders and the school board, the Foundation decided that THOUGHTBRIDGE could at least begin the diagnostic phase of its proposal. THOUGHTBRIDGE and the Foundation agreed that before prescribing what should be done, THOUGHTBRIDGE should interview a representative cross-section of the South Bend Community. The interviews were designed to help the community and THOUGHTBRIDGE learn what community members saw as important goals, problems, solutions and strengths of the South Bend Community Schools Corporation (SBCSC).

Interviewees were told their interviews were confidential and that THOUGHTBRIDGE would be culling out major themes from all those interviewed and presenting those themes along with our analysis and recommendations in a report to the Foundation, the school board and the entire community. On January 10-11, 2000, three THOUGHTBRIDGE consultants interviewed over 80 individuals and conducted the following focus groups: African American Focus Group, Hispanic Focus group, Corporate Focus groups (2), PTO Focus Groups (2). THOUGHTBRIDGE interviewed parents, teachers, administrators, school board members, business leaders, community leaders, teacher union leaders, political leaders and the superintendent.

We asked each individual or group the same questions (see Appendix – pages 30-52) The report which follows synthesizes the major themes THOUGHTBRIDGE heard from individuals and focus groups, offers our analysis and diagnoses for the gap between the community's goals for its educational system and the reality that currently exists and makes specific recommendations on

how South Bend can close that gap.

One pattern this report will attempt to break that is prevalent when people talk about the South Bend Community Schools is the pattern of blame and attack. When a community is faced with major and complex problems or achieving critical goals, the least productive thing it can do is to focus its energy and time on blaming and attacking. This report is not designed to blame or to attack any individual or group. It will however address accountability. Accountability focuses on who is answerable, i.e. responsible for addressing and resolving the problems raised

While reviewing this Report, please note that it is neither an evaluation of any individual performance in the South Bend community schools or the community at large, nor is it an attempt to provide a definitive factual account of any particular incident that has occurred at South Bend Community Schools.

Instead, this Report is primarily meant to create a common picture of the perceptions that members of South Bend Community hold so that everyone can better understand the state of the schools, and also to provide specific recommendations to help the South Bend community schools move beyond some of the current difficulties it is facing.

Based on information heard and experience dealing with similar situations, **THOUGHTBRIDGE** believes South Bend Community Schools Corporation can effectively resolve many of the issues it faces—if a wide variety of critical parties, including teachers, the school board, the teachers’ union, central administrators, principals, business and community leaders, parents, and other concerned community members are willing to engage in a focused, facilitated dialogue about these issues and learn specific tools and skills to manage their differences constructively.

Caveats to This Report:

1. This report focuses on themes heard again and again, and highlights major patterns and perceptions. It is not intended to be a comprehensive analysis.
2. We did not interview everyone. We did, however, attempt to interview as representative a sample of the community as possible.
3. This Report does not provide a definitive factual account of all the incidents that have occurred at South Bend Community Schools. This Report includes the perceptions that individuals expressed. For our purposes, perceptions are defined as what people believe to be true. Even if these perceptions do not seem to reflect the facts of a given situation, people treat their perceptions as reality and allow them to govern their behavior.
4. No single group we interviewed held a monolithic view; individuals within each identifiable group expressed both shared perceptions and divergent opinions. Based on what we heard, we are able to make some broad generalizations about what certain groups advocate or desire.

5. To preserve the confidentiality of individual interviewees, no comments representing just one person's view are included in this report.

PART TWO:

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Big Themes

Student Outcomes

There is wide consensus about desired student outcomes. Regardless of race, class, role, gender or ethnicity everyone shared the same picture of what they would like to see the SBCSC do for all children: improved educational opportunities and outcomes for all students in SBCSC. There was wide divergence on how to achieve this goal and who was responsible for it not having been achieved, however, everyone wants the same end. (See pages 12-13 of this report.)

Educational Effectiveness of SBCSC

There is also broad consensus on the educational effectiveness of SBCSC. Most citizens felt the schools do a very good job of educating students who are identified as high achieving, college bound and whose parents are middle class and have the means and time to be active in the schools. Most citizens believed that the SBCSC does a poor job of educating students identified as average (regardless of race), and a poor job of educating minority students in general (some excluded Asian students), and minority males in particular. Those, who specifically mentioned it, also felt the SBCSC educates special needs and handicapped children well. (See page 18 of this report.)

Business and Education

There is not broad consensus about the role business should play in public education. Educators are divided. Many welcome the resources and ideas that business brings. Others feel that business is either trying to drive its own agenda or lacks the expertise to be real partners in the educational enterprise. The business community feels that in too many instances, it is viewed by educators with suspicion and as outsiders who don't understand how education works. Much work needs to be done if SBCSC is to be able to reap the benefits of an effective working relationship with the business community.

Leadership

Over and over, people lamented the absence of a broad base of leadership that represented all facets of the community, yet were bound together by the common good of the entire community. The perception is that current leaders represent factions or groups rather than the entire community. People were not just lamenting the absence of such leadership on the school board, or with the school administration and the teachers' union, but also its absence in the larger community. People seemed to understand that the schools are a community institution and that it is the entire community's responsibility to ensure their effectiveness. They felt that had other leaders stepped forward and taken responsibility, some of the rifts, problems and conflicts might not have grown so deep.

There was a growing sense that the old South Bend leadership structure, composed of an elite group of mostly white and male business, political and civic leaders no longer exercises the influence it once did. While some saw this as evidence of the decline of South Bend as a viable community; others saw it as an opportunity to begin to develop a more representative group of community

leaders.

The School Board

The community has some very divergent views on the school board, however, there is broad consensus that an effective board should unite the community and treat all with regard and respect. Some view the current board as pawns controlled by the teachers' union. Individuals with this view see the board's refusal to renew Supt. Calvin's contract as evidence of the teachers getting revenge for the stand Supt. Calvin took during a bitter teachers' strike.

Others see the board as a group of hard working individuals, who are under attack from irrational groups and individuals and are doing the best they can under very difficult circumstances.

Regardless of which view they held, most people feel the board has been ineffective in responding to the crises and conflicts in the community. The community sees the board as fighting internally and unable to handle their differences effectively. In particular the board's interactions with the African-American community are seen as volatile and counterproductive. As a result of these perceptions, many in the community of all races and classes have lost confidence in the board's ability to unite the community around a common vision for the future of education in South Bend.

The Current Superintendent

Given the board's decision not to renew her contract, it might seem unnecessary to comment on perceptions about Dr. Calvin. However, the community is so divided about this decision that it has and will continue to impact community response to and involvement in the SBCSC. Hence, THOUGHTBRIDGE felt the need to share some perceptions that could come back to haunt the School Corporation if they are not addressed. One perception is that the board asked Dr. Calvin to tackle a number of difficult tasks, balancing a budget in the face of a deficit and closing some very popular schools. The perception is that the board then failed to back her when she made the hard, unpopular decisions. In addition, some have the perception that Dr. Calvin was treated with less regard and respect because she was a woman and/or African American. Enough people of both races and genders raised these perceptions that they are troubling for a board that must unite the community.

The Role of Superintendent

Many educators and a few community people pointed out that few superintendents in the last 16 years have enjoyed the respect and support of the SBCSC board. The sense is that three out of the last four superintendents left involuntarily. People felt the role separations between the board and superintendent have gradually eroded over time; the board is perceived to be acting beyond its role and authority. The general consensus is that it will take a very strong superintendent to work effectively in South Bend. This is coupled with the fear that the board will never hire a strong superintendent or will get rid of him/her if they are strong. Again, THOUGHTBRIDGE makes no judgement about whether these perceptions are true. We do believe that they will be damaging to the Corporation's ability to attract and retain good administrators and teachers, if not addressed.

The NEA-South Bend

The teachers' union is viewed by all as very powerful and influential in what happens in the classroom and in the boardroom in SBCSC. Whether that influence is viewed as good or bad depends very much on the individual or group with whom you are talking. The union sees itself as seeking to be included in critical decisions that affect teachers and students. They are aware of the negative perceptions others have about their power and influence, but feel that much of it is just the old guard complaining because they no longer have all the power and clout. Many in the community see a rigid inflexible contract that has not changed to meet the changing needs of schools and students. Others see the union utilizing its power to drive its agenda regardless of what is good for the kids or the community. The perception that the union controls the board has led some to call for a return to an appointed board or at the very least a re-examination of the process of the recruitment, selection and preparation of school board candidates.

Race, Class, Gender and other Undiscussables

Race is, without question, the number one undiscussable in the South Bend community. Everyone regardless of race, ethnicity, class or gender named this as one of the most divisive emotional issues in the community. When one couples this fact with an almost universal perception that the system fails to educate minority, poor and average kids well, this inability is destructive to a major goal of the SBCSC, educating all kids well. All agreed the community has no constructive means for discussing and dealing with this and other undiscussables. For African Americans, this translates into a lack of respect. They are concerned about a lack of commitment to tackling the poor results their children often get from their education in the SBCSC. Other minorities share some of the same concerns, but are also concerned that race in South Bend only refers to black and white, while other groups fail to get the attention and support they need. For whites it means bafflement, anger, and no sense of where to begin the dialogue.

Dealing with Differences

Last and most important, there was broad consensus that the community leadership and the broader community lack tools and skills to deal with their differences. The bitter, divisive teachers' strike, the corrosive relationship between Dr. Calvin and the board, and the corrosive relationship between the board and some members of the community has severely damaged the fabric of community in South Bend. The foundation for achieving the goals everyone wants for the South Bend Community Schools, is effective working relationships among the key stakeholders.

PART TWO:
COMMONALITIES AND THEMES

STRENGTHS OF SOUTH BEND COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

During our diagnostic process, we heard many people praise South Bend Community Schools for its many strengths. We believe that including these points in this report is essential to our providing an accurate picture of how the people we talked to perceive the South Bend Community Schools. Therefore, the following are some of the critical strengths of this school district that people noted:

- Many people have good intentions and mean well (parents, administrators, teachers, staff)
- Many people want what's best for their children
- South Bend Community Schools does a good job of preparing students who are seen as bright for college
- There is a great awareness of the need for change as well as the willingness by many to go through the process of change
- There are tremendous resources available to South Bend Community Schools (resources at Notre Dame, ISU, Ivy Tech, Memorial Hospital, business community, etc.)
- Many people expressed a tremendous love for and pride in the city of South Bend
- There is great richness of diversity within the community, including peoples of many races, ethnicities, religious groups, language groups, socio-economic backgrounds, etc.
- There are many excellent teachers and administrators who care about children
- There are many people outside of the school system who care about and are committed to improved educational opportunities

SHARED PERCEPTIONS AROUND GOALS, BARRIERS, AND PRIORITIES

During the diagnostic interviews, we discovered that the divergent community members with whom we spoke shared very similar views about the goals and challenges South Bend Community Schools face. This is a partial summation of the goals, barriers, and challenges we heard by those we interviewed. The comments in italics are intended to be read as paraphrases of what we heard, and are offered here as statements shared by more than one individual.

Goals:

1. Every student in South Bend receives the best quality education possible, regardless of race, ethnicity, class, gender, etc. An education from South Bend Community Schools means that each child is challenged, excited, and enabled to excel within a diverse, tolerant, and safe learning environment. For example, interviewees told us they envisioned:
 - *A top notch educational system that meets and/or exceeds state educational standards*
 - *#1 priority of South Bend Community Schools is to improve student education for all students*
 - *Improved student achievement, including higher graduation rates, test scores, and enrollment*
 - *Community pride in South Bend Community Schools*
 - *Increased vocational and technical education*
 - *A strong school system that attracts families to live within South Bend boundaries due to educational opportunities*
 - *Increased cooperation between schools*
 - *Strong commitment from businesses and outside community to provide experiences outside of the traditional classroom*
 - *Upgraded schools facilities*
2. A strong, qualified, representative leadership guides the community through difficult issues. The leadership must be equipped with the proper skills and tools for this work, committed to the betterment of South Bend Community Schools, and representative of the larger community's interests and concerns. The interviewees told us they desired:
 - *A strategic plan for the South Bend Community Schools developed with input from the community and communicated to the community-at-large at regular intervals*
 - *More representative elected leadership*
 - *Mayor, business and community leaders to speak up and take more active leadership role*
 - *Increased accountability by each individual community member for improving the schools and ultimately, the community*
3. Improved working relationships for every member of the community. Teachers, administrators, union leaders, principals, the school board, parents, etc. must learn the necessary skills and tools

for effective communication in order to heal damaged working relationships, work towards mutually beneficial goals for the future, and help facilitate a process for lasting change. For example, those we spoke to said the community needed:

- *Increased harmony between the board, superintendent, and community*
- *A school board with redefined roles and responsibilities working together with the administration*
- *Improved working relationships amongst the school board, administrators, and teachers based on commonly developed and shared goals*
- *Improved communication channels among all constituencies*
- *Increased collaboration and team work*
- *Behavior that demonstrates respect, even during disagreements*
- *Reduced finger pointing/blaming/denial of problems*
- *Process for acknowledging failure and seeing within it another opportunity for improvement and future success*
- *Forgiveness and healing from past grievances*
- *Increased awareness of diversity at all levels of the system*
- *Divisiveness ended*
- *A process for decision-making, collaboration, and consensus*
- *Trust and confidence reaffirmed*
- *Open dialogue*
- *Willingness to accept change as a proactive and positive process rather than a reactive and emotional one*

4. The South Bend community becomes mutually accountable for the success of its children and effectively works together to ensure that this shared responsibility is met. A cross section of the community said they wanted:

- *A unified and supportive community that champions each other's successes*
- *Increased parental involvement and opportunities for involvement*
- *The ability to attract and retain new, skilled teachers, principals, superintendents*
- *The clergy to play a more active role to facilitate the healing process and help construct constructive relationships*
- *Media to play a constructive role in helping the system promote positive change*
- *Increased accountability by teachers, parents, the administration, the school board, clergy, business leaders, etc.*

Barriers:

1. Currently, there is a perceived lack of a strong, qualified leadership in South Bend Community Schools; one that is skilled in bringing divergent groups together for gaining collaboration, commitment, and consensus. We heard that presently:

- *Leadership does not model collaborative behavior*
- *Disharmony of philosophies between board and administration has been harmful*

- *School board members are not united*
 - *Decision-makers are wrapped up in cosmetic changes (such as increasing test scores and improving statistics) instead of addressing real issues (such as racism, poverty, etc.)*
 - *Goals are not clear nor are they well communicated to the larger community*
 - *Past behaviors have shown a lack of professionalism*
2. The South Bend Community Schools is divided by issues of race, ethnicity, class, gender, etc. and the community as a whole does not possess the necessary skills and tools to hold open dialogue about these differences in a constructive manner. We heard from interviewees that:
- *The community is segmented, there are few forums for discussions*
 - *There is a lack of collaboration among groups*
 - *Too much energy is spent on protecting the status quo rather than on educational and community initiatives*
 - *All issues become race issues, whether they are based on racial prejudice or not*
 - *Historical baggage from previous strike is still left unresolved*
 - *Young people are not staying, especially the ones who have choices to go elsewhere*
3. Negative perceptions obstruct honest, open dialogue between community groups for future collaborative actions together. The various subgroups that comprise South Bend Community Schools have a history of unhelpful behaviors and practices that acts as an impediment to adopting new, constructive ones. Many of those we interviewed mentioned:
- *Negative public perception of South Bend schools (reputation for guns, violence, and low quality education)*
 - *Community leaders who send their children to private/parochial schools reinforce South Bend Community Schools' negative reputation*
 - *Negative public perception that school board represent only the interests of the teachers' union*
 - *Negative public perception that the school board operates by personal or political agendas*
 - *Negative public perception that the school board acts out of power and personal hubris rather than the welfare of the students*
 - *Negative public perception that the school board lacks good will, openness for dialogue, respect for community members who offer opposing opinions, and process for receiving criticism and feedback*
 - *Negative public perception that the school board is hostile towards South Bend Community Schools*
 - *Negative perception by the school board that the superintendent and administration operate by a hidden agenda*
 - *Negative perception by the school board that superintendent is dishonest*
 - *History of unhelpful boards in the past*
 - *History of finger pointing and blaming*
 - *Historical baggage (previous strike in 1994, Superintendent Calvin); lack of resolution (have not acknowledged the past, so can't move on)*

- *Inflammatory comments made during school board meetings are picked up in the press and sensationalized*
4. Strong, individual personalities in the community serve as lightning rods for contentious issues. We heard from interviewees:
- *Board's suspicion of the superintendent/administration undermines their relationship*
 - *UniServ director and past school board president are perceived as "difficult" and "divisive"*
 - *Contentious relationship between superintendent and NEA blocks progress*
 - *Current superintendent was perceived by others as "inflexible" and her tenure/termination to be motivated by race*

Undiscussables:

We define undiscussables to mean "Issues and incidents, current or past, about which people have strong feelings, but which they avoid dealing with because discussion is likely to create conflict, tension, anger, or discomfort." Some examples may be differentials in power or status, gender, race, religion, politics, or hurtful incidents from the past. In our work, we find that when undiscussables are not dealt with, they often keep emerging in indirect ways and prevent a group from:

- developing trust
- achieving maximum potential
- communicating clearly and effectively
- building effective working relationships
- solving problems
- achieving its mission
- serving its publics
- resolving conflict

Some undiscussables we heard from interviewees that exist in South Bend Community Schools are:

Race

- *Race is out there . . . always.*
- *Race is dividing us as a society, even after desegregation.*
- *We talk about race in all the wrong ways; it's so brittle. If you say the wrong thing, it breaks.*
- *We tend to inject race into different situations too soon. Race is an issue but sometimes too convenient and emotional. We're not going to solve anything by being defensive.*
- *If African-Americans get together and act as a strong voice, this is seen as racial and negative rather than just another group in the community voicing their opinion and taking action.*
- *There is an assumption that because you're a minority, you must understand how to deal with minority problems. Hispanics don't necessarily all understand each other just because we're Hispanic. We have our own crutches to bear, our own prejudices and influences to manage.*
- *Race is reduced to a black and white issue, as if the other ethnic groups don't exist. There are 50+ different language groups in South Bend, but diversity is reduced to two*

- groups of people: blacks and whites.*
- *The real issue is diversity, not race. Differences aren't managed well, period.*
 - *Diversity does not mean black. I'd like to see diversity to mean more than race and ethnicity.*
 - *Oversimplification in this community that diversity means black or white, Hispanic or Non-Hispanic. There's a lack of awareness that diversity exists within the same ethnic group.*

Class

- *There is a strong division between the haves and the have nots and a strong interest in maintaining that status quo.*
- *There is no social mobility.*

Gender

- *Groups that talk publicly about what we need to do are primarily white men.*
- *The male voices in this community haven't recognized and included other voices.*

School board

- *We should have an appointed school board rather than an elected school board.*
- *We should have a half appointed, half elected school board.*
- *We need a new school board.*

Redistricting

- *Everyone knows we need redistricting, but no one will talk about it.*
- *Fear about upsetting the status quo motivates the silence around this issue.*

UniServ Director/The Union

- *The union is too strong.*
- *The union provides protection for ineffective teachers.*

Groups of people who must work together to achieve critical goals or resolve difficult problems need a constructive process to raise and resolve undiscussables which interfere with their productivity. Currently, South Bend Community Schools lacks a process by which these issues may be addressed.

Stakeholders:

We heard general consensus that each and every member of the South Bend community is a critical stakeholder in the success or failure of South Bend Community Schools. We also heard consensus that without a strong foundation of successful schools, the interviewees feel the larger community will suffer. Specifically, we heard mentioned as stakeholders:

- Administration
- Businesses
- Clergy
- Realtors

- Media
- Government leaders, such as the mayor, etc.
- Minority Groups
- Parents
- Community organizations
- Students
- Poor
- Wealthy
- Principals
- School board
- Superintendent
- Teachers
- Union
- Anyone who lives in South Bend

There was consensus that the school board, the school administration, teachers in general and the union in particular were absolutely critical to engaging and involving the other key stakeholders like parents, businesses, etc.

Community Priorities:

Again and again, we heard from those we interviewed that the most vital step to affecting lasting change and launching innovative initiatives in South Bend Community Schools is by repairing damaged working relationships and building a strong foundation within the community at large. We heard the desire for “harmony,” “peace,” and “healing” repeated time and again from every cross-section of the community we interviewed. We heard that once this crucial step was achieved, “The rest would fall into place.” THOUGHTBRIDGE agrees this is pivotal, but more will be needed.

Superintendent

The superintendent must have the necessary communication and leadership skills to engage the community and unify divided groups to work towards a common goal. This person must also have the freedom from the school board to do his or her job. The superintendent and school board must be committed to working with each other.

Board

The school board must have clearly defined roles and responsibilities and should also obtain leadership training. Each member of the board must understand how boards operate, how to be an effective trustee/leader, and how to be a visionary. They, along with the administration, must learn how to build consensus, improve working relationships, build trust, heal division, respect each other and the community they serve, manage conflict, hear each other’s differences, and work toward a common goal.

Other Leaders and Community Members

In order for the South Bend Community Schools to change, the other community leaders (business, civic, elected, etc.) and concerned citizens must start by being able to speak to each other

constructively and openly about differences. The community as a whole must learn skills and tools to work collaboratively to define the problems, implement solutions, and celebrate successes as a team. Efforts need to be made to learn the interests of each community group. This “grass roots level” learning should be geared to allow broader input from the community and followed by regular community meetings where groups meet to learn updates, share successes, and support each others’ initiatives to improve South Bend Community Schools.

Educational Effectiveness

We asked the community members whom we interviewed to rank South Bend Community Schools in educating all its children. On the whole, the majority of respondents ranked South Bend Community Schools as doing an average job, and gave South Bend Community Schools an average score of 2.5 out of a possible total score of 5.

Since no single number can fully explain the complexity of an individual’s or organization’s performance nor fully express the diversity of opinion we heard, we offer the following analysis to help break down and understand this score:

- Many of the respondents we interviewed pointed out that South Bend Community Schools does an excellent job meeting the needs of the high achieving children such as those in the honors and gifted programs and those on a college track.
- Many of the respondents we interviewed pointed out South Bend Community Schools does an excellent job meeting the needs of special needs children.
- Many of the respondents we interviewed pointed out South Bend Community Schools does a poor job of meeting the needs of children who are in the “middle” such as those on a non-college track, vocational, trade, poor, minorities (especially African-American males), average achievers, those who are labeled “difficult,” have behavioral problems, or those whom the system doesn’t understand or to whom it doesn’t relate.
- Many of the respondents we interviewed pointed out there exists a misalignment between the general public’s perception of how children are doing (all children who go to South Bend Community Schools are being educated poorly) versus the reality of their education (some are doing very well and going on to successful college careers and others are not doing as well).
- Many of the respondents we interviewed pointed out that South Bend Community Schools has a very high potential to educate all of its children very well and to be one of the best school districts in Indiana. While we heard that South Bend Community Schools is currently doing an “adequate job,” the difficult working relationships between the various stakeholders and in the larger community stand in the way of implementing effective change in the system. One of the negative consequences we heard is that “children seem to have gotten lost in the shuffle with all the fighting.” Many respondents told us that unless change is enacted soon, the tremendous potential in South Bend Community Schools will go

unrealized and the quality of education will ultimately suffer.

PART THREE:
DIFFERENCES

DIFFERENCES IN COMMUNITY PRIORITIES PERCEPTIONS

While we heard many similarities about shared goals, barriers, and priorities during our diagnostic process, we also heard several differences. We were struck by the fact that the majority of the differences we heard were not necessarily unbridgeable gaps in philosophies, but rather were differences regarding points of emphasis around specific goals and barriers. Some members of other community subgroups also shared many of these interests, but we attribute the point to the group who had the majority of respondents voice the same concern. In addition to the shared goals, which we describe in pages 12-13 of this Report, we heard additional priorities from different groups such as:

Principals: increased instructional time (full year kindergarten, year round education, longer school day)

Administration: reinvigorated teaching staff; reduced teacher turnover; resolve the disconnect between the teachers individually and teachers at the union level

School board: increased parental involvement in school activities and children's performance; additional new schools built; reduced bureaucracy and access to vocational, technical education for students who are not college-bound

Teachers: need a district-wide strategic plan; close/consolidate high schools; increased parental involvement

Union leaders: bottom up involvement, costs and finding qualified teachers in the face of teacher shortages as barriers; a strong interest in changing negative perception of the teachers' union

Parents: improved morale, parents being perceived as part of the process rather than part of the problem; increased teacher accountability; removal of top down leadership

African American community: diversity training for entire community; diverse, qualified school board; agree upon and institute a process for managing change (assessing state of the community, building vision and consensus, training leadership); divisions around power permeate entire community, not simply the school board

Hispanic community: address stereotypes that channel children away from succeeding and challenging themselves; increase the number of Hispanic leaders in school community (teachers, principals, administration, superintendent, etc.); increase diversity awareness; increased teacher accountability; assessment is perceived as a way that we learn and grow rather than as a judgement

Government: close/consolidate high schools; year round school; superintendent with tenure of 5-10 years; schools used as foundation of entire community

Business community: improve and increase partnership between the schools and the business community, gain greater accountability from teachers and parents; have schools act as hubs for rest of community; strong school board and administration reverse the history of the business community staying out of school issues versus expressing interest, and concern and involvement

PART FOUR:
OUR DIAGNOSES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

OUR DIAGNOSES

Many of the problems facing the South Bend Community Schools are the same problems facing urban schools around the country. Teachers and administrators need new ways of connecting with and teaching increasingly diverse student populations. Issues such as poverty, drugs and mobility are straining the support networks making it difficult for some children to come to school prepared and motivated to learn. Buildings are old and in many cases repair has been deferred or done to a minimal level to maintain safety. Migration into the urban housing stock has intensified issues of race, culture and class that strain the fabric of an educational system built around a more homogeneous population.

There are many reasons why the situation in the SBCSC has developed in the way that it has. Our intent is not to cast blame on any individual or group, but rather to illuminate briefly the reasons we feel are key to the condition in which SBCSC presently finds itself. The key reasons as we see them are:

1. A complete lack of trust among the critical stakeholders
2. A lack of communication for the purpose of understanding others in the community
3. A preference to blame and attack others rather than take positive actions to improve the situation in SBCSC
4. Discord among the leaders of the SBCSC that has hindered efforts to think strategically about solving problems and moving forward
5. A history of unresolved problems that create a negative lens through which every action is viewed
6. A reluctance to have the difficult conversations about the impact of race, gender and class on the issues facing the SBCSC
7. A view that the situation can be fixed by just a few simple changes

A complete lack of trust among the critical stakeholders

Parents do not trust the teachers' union. The teachers' union does not trust the superintendent. The superintendent does not trust the board of trustees. The board of trustees does not trust the media. The list goes on and on. Each individual or group seems to take the view that the worst possible interpretation of another's actions or statement is the only one that could be true. In this way, the community is basically creating a self-fulfilling prophecy as everyone's worst nightmares are believed to be played out. No one seems willing to break the cycle by giving anyone else the benefit of the doubt. The ongoing cycle drives the stakeholders in SBCSC deeper and deeper into despair as the negative results foster ever greater pessimism.

A lack of communication for the purpose of understanding others in the community

Few people in South Bend seem to be asking questions for the purpose of understanding the perspectives of the other parties. When questions are asked, they are asked in the form of statements ("don't you agree that...") or for the purpose of leading the respondent to the response the questioner is seeking (if you believe that..., don't you also have to agree that..."). The voice of reason and

moderation has been cut off so many times that it seems to have disappeared from the dialogue, leaving a dialogue that one might more appropriately identify as a shouting match. Many of those engaged in the shouting match may have forgotten what it was that they were originally seeking to understand. Even if they remember, they may have missed the answer on several occasions by not really listening for a response to their inquiry.

A preference to blame and attack others rather than take positive actions to improve the situation in SBCSC

Nearly everyone we talked with had several targets for blame regarding the current situation. Almost no one acknowledged that they played a role in creating the current situation. Individuals and groups have obviously been honing their attacks, as they were quite well established and refined. It was also apparent that everyone knew the accusations that the other parties would make about them and their group. A long history of such blame and attacks clearly has accomplished little, except to help everyone identify their enemies in this conflict and memorize the attacks that have been made on them. For the situation to improve, everyone involved is going to have to play a role in improving the situation. Some members of the community seem ready to work towards that end, but a critical mass will be necessary to make significant changes in a timely fashion.

Discord among the leaders of the SBCSC that has hindered efforts to think strategically about solving problems and moving forward

The rift between the superintendent and the board of trustees was apparent to everyone with whom we talked. Similarly, the bad feelings between the teachers' union and the superintendent were noted by many of the people we interviewed. The public nature of these conflicts has created the perception that there is a lack of leadership at the helm of the SBCSC. While efforts have been undertaken to formulate a long-term vision and strategic plan for the school district, most of the people we interviewed (including members of the board and the superintendent) felt that this work had largely been obscured by the public nature of these conflicts. While bringing in a new superintendent will provide an opportunity to change some of these dynamics among the leaders of the SBCSC, the perceptions of those leaders who remain may continue to impact their ability to engage the community in constructive conversations about the future of SBCSC.

A history of unresolved problems that create a negative lens through which every action is viewed

Many of the issues that face the SBCSC today are the same issues that have been around for several years. The questions about the district leadership seem to be rooted in a series of superintendents who did not appear to have strong support and backing from the board of trustees. The board of trustees has only recently been elected, and many people we talked with mentioned issues dealing with the representative nature of the prior appointed boards. The historic problems seem to stem primarily from the fact that many voices in the district do not feel that they have been heard in the past and certainly have not been offered a seat at the table when critical decisions were being made that affected the welfare and education of their children. These feelings were shared by many of the minority groups in the community. More recently, the white, middle class group has had similar feelings, especially around decisions to close some schools and expand others. These unresolved problems have never been addressed in a manner to allow people to vent and then also try to understand the issues from the different perspectives present in the district. That these fundamental

issues remain largely unresolved has led to strong partisan perceptions on the part of many community residents. These partisan perceptions cause people to assume the worst possible intent from even the most benign actions that others might take.

A reluctance to have the difficult conversations about the impact of race, gender and class on the issues facing the SBCSC

Virtually everyone we talked with acknowledged that race is an undiscussable issue in South Bend. Gender and class were also mentioned as important issues that no one seems to be willing or able to discuss. Our experience tells us that many issues that communities and school districts face regarding race, gender and class must be discussed openly in order for people to understand each other and work together effectively. These issues are emotionally charged for many members of the community and that emotion causes people to feel uncomfortable when these issues are raised. This discomfort leads well-intentioned people to set these issues aside and avoid the kind of public dialogue that might enable people to better understand each other and the different perspectives that people have. These issues, while sensitive, are so important to members of the South Bend community that they need to be discussed openly and constructively, if the SBCSC is to move forward on issues related to the education of minority children and those from less affluent families.

A view that the situation can be fixed by just a few simple changes

Many of the people we interviewed took the position that a few simple changes would solve the problems facing the SBCSC. Some felt strongly that a new superintendent would be able to resolve all of the past problems. Others felt that reverting to an appointed school board would allow for a return to a more unified leadership group which could more effectively guide the school district. Still others felt that constraints on the role that the teachers' union could play in school board politics would avoid what they believed was a conflict of interests that was adversely impacting the ability of the school district to function effectively. While each of these "solutions" may seem to be simple, the problems are much more complex. Substituting one person or group for another will not resolve the fundamental issues that currently face the SBCSC.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SOUTH BEND COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

The challenge for the South Bend Community Schools is a community challenge. In that sense, it is larger than just the schools or just the school board or just the teachers' union, or just the racial question, etc. The community focuses on the schools because, as in most communities, the schools are seen as the key institution to the long-term viability of the community. In numerous cases, the people we interviewed stressed the importance of the schools as the "hub" of their community.

In order for the South Bend Community Schools to move forward as aggressively as most interviewees believed was necessary, there are eight steps that THOUGHTBRIDGE believes the South Bend Community Schools must achieve.

1. Create a common sense of urgency among the key stakeholders.
2. Assemble a powerful, guiding coalition and equip them to work as a team.
3. Develop a clear vision and strategy for moving the district forward.
4. Create a process to continuously communicate the vision to the stakeholders.
5. Empower the stakeholders at all levels to make the vision a reality.
6. Create a process that will identify, generate and celebrate short-term wins.
7. Create and implement a mechanism to consolidate gains and produce on-going improvements.
8. Ensure that structures are in place to anchor new approaches in the culture of the organization and the community.

Create a common sense of urgency among the key stakeholders

Many, if not most, of the key stakeholder have a sense of urgency that something must be done to improve the situation currently facing the SBCSC. However, there is no common or shared sense of urgency as to what the problems are or what the solutions might be. If the key stakeholders could actually come together and have a facilitated conversation, we believe that they would be able to arrive at a common sense of urgency without delay. They are much closer together on this point than they have allowed themselves to realize.

Assemble a powerful, guiding coalition and equip them to work as a team

Assembling such a group will require great care, as all the parties who believe they have been shut out of such groups in the past will scrutinize any such group. However, we believe strongly that such a group should be formed as soon as the common sense of urgency is shared among the key stakeholders. Equipping this group to work as a team will require considerable effort as well. This group will ultimately be the model for how individuals and groups in the community can work together, so their actions will be observed closely. To equip them, THOUGHTBRIDGE recommends that this group be trained together in a process of collaborative decision-making. This group needs to be trained jointly to ensure that they will share the same skill set, tools, processes, and vocabulary for implementing their work together. This group should also engage neutral facilitators to help them begin the process of working together. Many of the discussions that need to take place at the community level will likely take place in this group as well. Neutral facilitators can help this

group to address sensitive issues in a straight-forward and constructive manner.

Develop a clear vision and strategy for moving the district forward

This Guiding Coalition should take the lead in helping the SBCSC formulate a clear vision and strategy to provide the highest quality education to all children in South Bend. The vision and strategy must be one into which all stakeholders can buy-in. Part of the initial training for the Guiding Coalition should focus on ways in which a community can best develop such a vision and strategy. The facilitators can also play a role in helping to organize and orchestrate this process. While this process will probably not proceed as rapidly as some in the community might desire, it is important that everyone recognize the importance of going slow enough to allow all the stakeholders to see that their voices are being heard and their interests are being incorporated into the vision and strategy for the district.

Create a process to continuously communicate the vision to the stakeholders

Another critical task for the Guiding Coalition is to design and implement a communication process that will keep all the stakeholder groups informed about their work. Failure to communicate their efforts effectively will feed in to the partisan perceptions that people already have about the intentions of the other stakeholders in SBCSC. A rigorous communication process will include different methods of communicating, ranging from the traditional media to open community discussions.

Empower the stakeholders at all levels to make the vision a reality

The Guiding Coalition will be dependent on the efforts and good intentions of a multitude of other individuals and groups in the community, including teachers, parents, administrators, school board members, principals, union leaders, the business community, etc. Through a process of cascade training these stakeholders need to be educated in the collaborative decision-making process that the Guiding Coalition is using. They also need to be empowered to work as extensions of the Guiding Coalition in bringing this approach to their local school buildings and respective stakeholder groups.

In some cases, this will require the central administration, school board, parents, etc. to allow another group or individual to exercise their expertise and judgement on behalf of the Guiding Coalition and more traditional decision-makers.

Create a process that will identify, generate and celebrate short-term wins

Given the level of scrutiny that SBCSC currently receives, it will be important that the process creating and implementing the new vision and strategy for the district include short-term wins that the community can see and celebrate. As the Guiding Coalition formulates its plan, it should identify short-term wins that can be monitored, reported and celebrated. Often the long-term vision will not be realized for several months or even years. Without short-term wins, the critics will often attack process and demand short-term actions that could be counterproductive.

Create and implement a mechanism to consolidate gains and produce on-going improvements

The ultimate goal is not just to have the adults in South Bend get along better. In fact, most would argue that they would trade strife and turmoil among the adults, if all children were getting the very best education possible. However, for the children to get the best possible education, the adults in

South Bend have to be working together to insure that the best possible educational opportunities are being provided to the children. The long-term vision and strategy must focus on educational opportunities and outcomes, but it must incorporate a process for getting the adults on the same page and working together. As these individuals and groups begin to work together, there needs to be a process to consolidate their short-term accomplishments and focus them on improving the educational opportunities and outcomes for children in South Bend.

Ensure that structures are in place to anchor new approaches in the culture of the organization and the community

As the stakeholders begin to work together and barriers between them begin to breakdown, it will be important that new structures within which this cooperation can continue to grow be installed within the SBCSC and the larger community. Examples of this might include smaller Guiding Coalitions at individual school sites, cross-functional groups designated to review things that have typically been the responsibility of only one group (i.e. curriculum, building needs, media relations, etc.) and community groups to look at issues other than education. If this process of collaborative decision-making can become the norm in South Bend, it will enable to community to grow and prosper as different issues arise and different groups come to make their homes in South Bend.

The issues surrounding public education in South Bend extend well beyond the school buildings and central offices. The larger community is concerned and clearly understands that it can only be as strong as the schools in its midst. The divisions also extend well beyond the walls of the school buildings. For that reason, THOUGHTBRIDGE also recommends that there be a series of open dialogue sessions/forums as a preliminary phase of the work of the Guiding Coalition. These could either be sponsored by the Guiding Coalition or by some outside group. Either way, the purpose would be allow a forum for people to vent some of their frustrations and provide input regarding the types of changes that the Guiding Coalition should seek. The South Bend community needs to come together and heal. Facilitated sessions would encourage an honest, open dialogue in the community to elicit underlying interests and concerns, make sure every voice is heard and respected, and model constructive behavior.

THOUGHTBRIDGE offers these recommendations in the spirit in which they were solicited. We strongly believe that the strengths underlying the SBCSC have simply been depressed under the weight of the turmoil that has been experienced recently. There is no fundamental reason we have been able to identify that suggests that the SBCSC cannot meet an objective of providing a top quality education to each and every child in South Bend. We hope that those who receive this report will act quickly to begin the process of healing the wounds that currently afflict the SBCSC.

SOME SPECIFIC NEXT STEPS FOR SOUTH BEND COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

1. The Board should begin the process of creating the leadership the community needs by engaging in a retreat to define roles, responsibilities, goals and priorities.
2. The Board, the new superintendent, and the other administrators should set aside time (e.g. a 5-day retreat) to learn skills for dealing with differences, building effective relationships, managing change, and engaging the public around tough issues like race.
3. The School Board, superintendent and administrators should invite principals, teachers, union leaders, parents, students, and political, business and community leaders to a workshop on Building Collaboration and Communication: The Foundation of a New Future for South Bend Schools. This group would not only build skills, they would begin to formulate the elements of a vision for the future of SBCSC.
4. A subgroup of the above group would plan and convene a 2-day State of Public Education Summit entitled Designing a New Vision for the South Bend Community Schools. All members of the community would be invited. At this forum, educators, parents, etc. would be asked to comment on and criticize the vision shared by the school district, address strategy and plans for achieving the vision, and publicly accept accountability for their role in achieving it.
5. Before the next school contract negotiations, the union and management would come together to learn a collaborative negotiation process and begin to lay the foundation for a very different working relationship.
6. The Board, the mayor and the business community would find resources for and convene workshops on race, class, and gender as they impact public education and the community.
7. After the final vision, strategy and plan are adopted, key stakeholders should come together to identify clear benchmarks and check-in points, and establish accountability for all stakeholders - agreeing on dates by which each will report achievements to date and challenges and barriers remaining.
8. The Board should hold a special forum for minority parents and educators to recommend what each group in the community must do to ensure higher success and achievement for minority students.
9. The Board would hold a special community forum to recommend what each group in the community must do to ensure higher success and achievement for minority students.
10. The media and the school district would work to showcase the strengths and achievements of SBCSC as well as the areas for continued improvement.

11. The business community and the school corporation would jointly work together to define a new partnership and clarify roles and responsibilities for achieving joint goals.

PART FIVE:
APPENDIX

Barb Thomas, Principal, Coquillard Elementary
Bill Hojnacki, School Board Member
Bill Lammers, Parent
Bill Roberts, Director of Human Resources, SBCSC
Bill Welling Acting Director of Instruction, SBCSC
Brenda Rayborn, Teacher, Marquette Elementary
Carl Ellison, Community Affairs, Memorial Hospital
Carol Levee, Principal, Muessel Elementary School
Carol Myers, Education Consultant
Carolyn Higgins, Principal, Greene Elementary/President, Association of Principals
Carolyn Peterson, Washington High School, NEA President
Charlotte Pfeifer, City/County Council
Chris Lauber, CPA
Conrad Damian, Teacher, LaSalle High School
David Hendrix, Chamber's Educational Initiative, CONNECT
Dick Beeching, UNISERV Director, NEA
Fred Stump, SBCSC, Exec. Dir. of Support Services
Gene Bruce, Executive Dean, Ivy Tech State College
Jack Goodman, Teacher, Adams High School
Jim Kapsa, Principal, Darden Elementary
Jim Wilson, President, South Bend Education Foundation
John Wibbens, Teacher, Riley High School
Kathy Moriarty, Teacher, Washington High School
Linda O'Leary, Teacher, Clay Middle School
Louis Feming, Union Representative – Buildings and Grounds, Muessel Elementary
Marianne West, Social Worker, Muessel Elementary School
Maritza Robles, Director of Bilingual Education, SBCSC
Mark Chambers, Former School Board Member, Memorial Health Foundation
Mark Tulchinsky, Principal, Jefferson Elementary School
Mayor and Mrs. Steve Lueke
Mendel Piser, Vice President, South Bend Education Foundation
Mike Hammes, President, KeyBank
Myrtle Wilson, Instructor & Curriculum Director, SBCSC
Nancy King, Former School Board Member, St. Joseph Capital Bank (Senior Vice President)
Lynn Coleman, Special Assistant on Youth Affairs, Mayor's Office
Pat McMahon, Project Future, Executive Director
Ralph Pieniazkiewicz, School Board Member
Richard Sheehan, School Board President
Roland Kelly, City/County Council
Sadie Jenkins, Principal, Marquette Elementary
Shirley Green, Teacher, Marquette Elementary
Tina Patton, School Board Member
Virginia Calvin, Superintendent, SBCSC
William Horsely, Director of Adult Education, SBCSC
Edwin Rosado, concerned citizen, IN Tech
Adriana Genera-Wurst, Youth Director, La Casa de Amistad
Fred Thon, concerned citizen, Thon Steel
Juan Lora, Officer, South Bend Police Department
Kathy Jackman, parent group leader, PTA Eggleston Elementary
Lois Lasater, parent group leader, Adams High School
Sandy Gray, parent group leader, Tarkington Elementary

Paula Laskowski, parent group leader, Jefferson Elementary
Janet O'Tousa, PTA President, Darden Elementary
Greg Horvath, Parent
Katie Shafer, Parent group leader, Swanoon Elementary
Kim Barnbrook, Parent group leader, Clay Middle
Gail Landuyt, PTA President, Wilson Elementary
Oletha Jones, Parent group leader, Riley High
Dick Muessel, Community Real Estate
John Phair, Real Estate Development & Management
Mark Eagan, President & CEO, Chamber of Commerce
Chuck Stultz, Executive Director, Association of Realtors
Rhonda Brown, Communications Director, Honeywell
Dan Jones, Vice President, Private Banking (Norwest)
Bill Reinke, Partner, Barnes & Thornburg
Bill Coleman, Architect, Mathews-Purucker-Anella, Inc.
Calvin Johnson, State Farm Insurance
Anthony Douglas, Assistant VP/Community Reinvestment, KeyBank
Sammy Brown, concerned citizen
Hollis Hughes, Executive Director, United Way, Former School Board Member, St. Joseph County
Ray Turner, school social worker

THE QUESTIONS WE ASKED

1. What is your current role in the community? How long have you been involved in the community and to what capacity? Ex: are you employed by the district? If you have children, do they attend a South Bend public school or private school? Etc.
2. As we understand it, some of the goals the South Bend community has for its public schools is to improve graduation rates, improve and equalize academic performance, empower local or site-based school governance, and create a community school system that works fairly and equitably for all children in the South Bend community. What are *your* goals for your community apart from the ones I've listed? (heal the divide between blacks and whites? Build consensus?)
3. What are the barriers you see to achieving those goals?
4. If your energies are successful, what would the South Bend community look like five years from now? What would be different?
5. If we were to pull together the critical stakeholders to achieve success, who would they be and why?
6. What should be the role of the board in achieving the South Bend Community Schools' vision for education?
7. If you were to list all the critical stakeholders in this community such as the Superintendent, members of the Board of Education, teachers, PTO, parents, and students, how would you assess how well these organizations work together? What are their strengths and weaknesses?
8. If the community had to prioritize where to start in its change effort, where would *you* begin?
9. What are the undiscussables in the South Bend community schools? (e. g., What issues need to be talked about but are not due to fear of repercussions?) How are undiscussables currently addressed?
10. On a scale of 1 to 5 (1 being the lowest and 5 being the highest), how would you rank South Bend community schools' ability to serve the needs of all its children in educating them well? . . . In making them productive members of society?
11. What would give you confidence that the school district is on its way to success?
12. What are your worst nightmares about this intervention, this process, or our company's involvement?

13. Is there anything else we haven't yet asked that you think might be useful for us to know?

ADDENDUM: THE DATA WE GATHERED

Principals

Goals:

- Increased graduation rate
- Meet and/or exceed state educational standards
- Top notch educational system
- Build socially prepared students
- Community pride in its schools
- Increased collaboration around educational programs
- Find ways to attract and retain new skilled teachers, principals, superintendents
- Reduced teacher turnover
- Divisiveness ended
- Collaboration between NEA and Central school board and central office
- Full year state mandated kindergarten
- Year-round education
- Vocational education
- Really look at issue of mobility
- Increased awareness of diversity at all levels of system
- Sense of trust and confidence in education and structures of society
- Increased levels of enrollment from sections of society in poverty
- Willingness to accept change
- Change is planned rather than reactive
- Improved communication channels
- Media plays role in helping system promote positive, constructive change
- Reduced finger pointing/blaming/denial
- Increased ownership/responsibility taking for their efforts (accept both the good and the bad → acknowledging failure doesn't cripple or become damning but another opportunity for improvement)
- Children's lives improved
- Trust and confidence reaffirmed
- Supportive community
- Unified community
- Increased cooperation between schools
- Community more flexible
- Schools upgraded
- Increase instructional time (longer school day, year-long school)
- Increased collaboration and team work
- Mayor, business community, and community leaders would speak up and take more active leadership role
- General sense of working together (from the top on down)
- Observable behavior that people respect each other, even when they disagree
- Increased reflection on strategic planning for the district
- More representative elected leadership
- Board and admission working together and redefining roles and responsibilities
- More business involvement
- Increased parental involvement
- Genuine honesty and openness among all key stakeholders demonstrated

Barriers:

- Leadership is not modeling collaborative behavior
- Community apathy

Political leaders stepping in for political reasons (former mayor)
Strong teacher's contract – teacher evaluation has not changed since 1981 (teachers refuse)
School board is perceived to represent only the teachers' union
Need better public relations (PR)
UniServ director and past president
Private agendas
Decision makers are wrapped up in cosmetic changes such as increasing test scores and improving test scores and improving statistics instead of getting at the root cause of the problems. Ex: The poverty level at the school is very high yet they don't receive funds commensurate with their poverty level. Each school gets the same resources whether they are wealthy or poor, kids have lots of problems or few.
Lack of collaboration
Finger pointing
Blaming
Lack of professionalism
Hubris
Lack of creativity, innovation
Status quo
Finances
Historical baggage from previous strike
Union contract inflexible
Goals not well communicated
Parties have been demonized
Inflammatory comments get made during school board meetings, these are then picked up in the press and sensationalized
School board is hostile towards the schools
Disharmony of philosophies between the board and administration

Undiscussables:

Race (if African Americans get together and act as a strong voice, this is seen as racial and negative rather than just another group in the community voicing their opinion and taking action. Racial tension continues even after the 1981 desegregation.)
Gender
Class (there is a strong division between the haves and have nots and in maintaining that status quo)
The teacher's contract
Superintendent Virginia Calvin (seen through the lenses of race, power, School Board's actions)
Selecting the new superintendent
The School Board
UniServ director
School board president doesn't send his kids to public schools
Redistricting

Stakeholders:

Everyone
Administration
Teachers
Community
Union
School board
Administration
Superintendent needs to start with the groups above and then bring in needed people like the PTA president
Parent representatives from each school, especially those who have other options, merchants, corporations
Interested Citizens

Goals:

- Increased harmony between board, superintendent, and community
- United front on critical issues that go public in the press
- Less negative press about district
- Improved student achievement
- Increased teacher morale
- Participants feel and act fully enfranchised
- Economic viability
- Foster intellectual curiosity
- Excellence, rather than equity, is everyone's priority
- Increased trust
- Improved working relationships (between teachers and district, school board and community, etc.)
- Investment in individual student's competencies rather than deficiencies
- Flexible teachers contract
- Recruiting and retaining best qualified teachers for district
- Provide best possible educational system for each and every child
- Strong commitment from building trades, health care, etc, able to provide experiences outside of traditional Classroom – Broadening horizons of what's possible
- Board focussed on students needs and programs to meet these needs rather than on personal or political agendas
- Community learns a process for decision-making, collaboration, and consensus
- Closer alignment between public perception of SBCS and reality of education in South Bend
- Improved test results
- Decreased public blaming
- Increased professionalism and respect
- Individual respected regardless of color, ethnicity, class, etc.
- A system that truly sees that each child has capacity to grow rather than forced to fit another's cubbyhole.
- Harmony
- Open dialogue
- Increased teacher accountability
- Refocus #1 priority to improved student education for all students
- Re-invigorated teaching staff
- United community that champions each other's successes
- Forgiveness of past grievances (strike, etc.)
- Community involvement in each school building
- Improved working relationship between Board and superintendent
- Community embraces redistricting
- Additional community resources input to the district
- Reduced number of school buildings to meet demographics
- Vocational/technical program within the district
- Increased involvement by business and industry (businesses would partner with or adopt schools, institute
- Mentoring programs, introduce a broader more structured plan for inclusion)
- Increased open communication
- Improved relationships
- Strategic plan for the community developed and communicated to community at large
- Deeper level discussions
- More visible signs of working relationships within community (ex: Notre Dame more actively involved

Barriers:

- Historical baggage (previous strike in 1994, SI Calvin); lack of resolution (have not acknowledged the past so can't move on)

Disconnect between teachers individually and teachers at union level (NEA – S. B.); collectively, teachers don't have same level of trust and confidence as they do individually

Lack of trust / confidence

The board (perception by public that there is a lack of good will, lack of openness for dialogue, lack of respect for all members of the community, lack of process for receiving criticism and feedback, disrespectful of African Americans who offer opposing opinions)

Too much energy spent on protecting the status quo rather than on initiatives

Racism (Recent incident where seven students were caught smoking marijuana and suspended as per policy School board then overturned the suspensions. All students were white)

Business community has not followed through on vocational training

Lack of communication

Lack of conceptual framework

Community segmented; no crossovers, no open forums of discussions

Undiscussables:

Race (There is disregard and disdain for concerns raised by African American parents. It nurtures division in the community when response is only to concerns of white parents.)

Class (maintaining the status quo)

Power, economic clout

Poverty

Redistricting

Only district in the state with union bought board

Accountability/incompetence

Stakeholders:

Everyone

Union

Mayor

Teachers

Parents

Business leaders

Goals:

SBSC the best school corporation in Indiana
SBSC a place where kids really want to learn
Strong school system where parents and children choose to live within South Bend boundaries due to educational opportunities
Service on school board would be viewed as a position desirable to be sought after
Improved graduation and performance rates
Increase state / national awards
Improved working relationships amongst Board, administration, and teachers based on commonly developed and shared goals
Community leadership interest in improving public education.
An ongoing community dialogue about critical education issues – decision making left to educators with oversight and input from school board, parents, etc.
Reengagement of community
Singular focus on kids,
Growing number of successful adults coming out of the schools.
Improved graduation rates
All children have same opportunity and resources for a quality education
Creation of a vocational career center but not expense of building a new building
Improved remediation programs
Improved academic performance (ISTEP, Graduation rates, SAT, reading level, etc).
Advance healing
Improved communication among all constituencies.
We need people to care about kids
Schools educate parents as well as children
Parents and schools are joined together
State of art facilities
3 brand new schools
Increased parental involvement in school activities and children's performance
Innovative, creative ideas to trigger re-invigorated community

Barriers:

Losing best students to suburbs, private schools
Negative public perception of South Bend schools (reputation for guns and violence)
Administrative inertia
Bureaucracy acts as barrier to instituting real change and innovative programs
Contentious relationship between superintendent and NEA blocks progress
Absence of adequate leadership in education/ politics/ business community
Growth of impoverished enrollers in public education system coupled with continue migration of wealthy to suburbs
Lack of belief that *every* student can achieve and should be expected to achieve
Lack of parental involvement
Young people are not staying, especially the ones who have choices to go anywhere
Many community leaders send their kids to private/parochial schools
History of boards who think they are a counter balance on the administration
Unhelpful boards in the past who have not worked with the superintendent
Lack of board unity
Boards suspicion of the superintendent/administration
Many discordant voices in the community with no reason
It seems like everything is set up to keep the Board in the dark

Perception of micro-managing when board asks questions
Lack of communication results in Board's perception of lack of cooperation by non Board members (A Board member wanted to know what remediation is going on and absentee rate and tardiness rate – what concern do you have was response)
Very polarized community
Perception of hidden agenda by superintendent, administration
Lack of common vision re goals and priorities
Perception by public that board is bought by union
Perception by board that Superintendent is dishonest
Resistance to change
Lack of respect
Lack of consistent sustained involvement in the education of kids by community
Tests are not an accurate reflection of students' abilities, serve more as a hindrance

Undiscussables:

Race
Class (maintaining status quo)
Historical baggage (strike, union, etc)
Lack of forgiveness
Power
Board abandoning the superintendent

Stakeholders:

Everyone
Minority groups
Chamber of commerce
Teachers
Mayor
Parents
Admin
Parents
Board
Business leaders
Community activists
Ministers
Secondary school admin
Students
Union

Goals:

- Development of a strategic plan that impact day-to-day classroom
- Goals that make people feel included rather than excluded
- Graduate kids that are prepared for the real world
- Creation of alternative programs to meet the needs of average students/below average
- Improve test scores
- Improve graduation rates
- Change perceptions about work and school and consumerism
- Community understands diversity and richness of student population, celebrate the student achievement that already exists
- Increased interest in learning by students
- Schools thriving
- Desire to have kids attend South Bend public schools
- School Board setting goals and help us reach them, uphold teachers and kids; no longer reactionary but partner and progressive
- All students at all levels well prepared for college, work, life
- Buildings renovated
- Better working relationship (among high schools, within industries/business communities, school board and Superintendent)
- Close 2 high schools – have 3 high schools that offer quality education, fewer middle and elementary schools.
- All schools would be more cost effective and offer better quality education. Their financial structure would be revisited.
- A qualified school board with well defined roles and responsibilities.
- Leadership that builds on the strengths of South Bend rather than one that criticizes the city
- Well prepared students for the 21st century (to be responsible citizens and have employable skills)
- Common vision for the future
- Leadership that guides the community
- Two large parochial high schools merged
- Continued growth of our student body
- Improve morale
- Clear, strong direction from the leadership
- A sense that everyone is working together
- Less blaming
- More support
- Divisiveness ended
- Teachers would be proud to be teaching in South Bend
- More recognition for teachers, students, everyone

Barriers:

- Right hand doesn't always know what the left hand is doing
- Not cognizant of message behavior is sending. Ex: President of schoolboard sends kids to Catholic school, some teachers bad mouth schools
- The press promotes negative image of SBCS by giving negative coverage a lot of play
- Administration emphasizes difficulties and doesn't emphasize enough the positives → where's the balance?
- Diversity does not mean black. I'd like to see diversity to mean more than race and ethnicity. Students know great diverse cross-section of young people (rich, poor, farmers, city folks, African American, white, public housing, etc → every type of student attends our schools but diverse = black here). Would like have public understand and recognize how truly diverse the community is.
- Everyone has their own little agenda. Playing politics with issues.
- Racial tensions in the community are an ongoing problem.

Erosion of ability and narrowing of focus among the central administration staff in the past four or five years
Disconnect between perception (schools terrible/ teachers terrible) of what's going on reality
Low morale
Lack of leadership
Low parental involvement
Historical Baggage
Lack of strategic plan
Divisive attitude of "us" versus "them" rather than working together

Undiscussables:

Race

We talk about it in all the wrong ways → brittle → if you say the wrong thing, it breaks

Blacks are as guilty as whites

The real issues get lost because everything is mixed messages or race, race, race

Silence at school board meetings → people are intimidated. Point of view by blacks that there will be no one to look after their interests. Their silence is deafening. Professional middle class blacks have not supported Dr. Calvin for her retention or spoken up. Lost teachers and admin because there was no plan. It wasn't personal but Dr. Calvin makes it personal when it is not.

Race pervades everything.

People are intimidated. Silence by community.

We can have another black superintendent but that superintendent needs to address needs of all students, not just blacks

Elected versus appointed school board Power struggle between union and superintendent

Suburban hatred of the city based on fear

Redistricting (Hasn't been done since 1981, but has been proposed and shot down before)
class

Stakeholders:

Everyone

Goals:

- Increased achievement rates
 - Employee groups (administration, custodians, kitchen workers) no longer feel oppressed; no longer survive by keeping head in sand.
 - All working together
 - Common mission / vision
 - Have moved from compliance to commitment
 - Bottom-up involvement
 - Shared governance – was top down mandate
 - See the public schools strong and effective
 - See the schools get the recognition they deserve
 - Absence of public dissent and public dissarray
 - Improved Public perception
 - Get community to view South Bend to be a community where they want to send their kids
 - Re-instate prime time small class size
 - Increased accountability (parents, teachers, kids)
 - Increased vocational educational opportunities offered to kids not on college track
 - Early career assessment
 - Ability to disagree
- People would be judged by their merits and qualifications rather than color. People are respected, treated equally, and given same opportunities. Kids no longer labeled or stereotyped. Education is customized for individual needs.
- 100% graduation rate
 - People feel free to speak their minds
 - More people believe in their own convictions
 - People admit their mistakes
 - Willingness to hear different viewpoints

Barriers:

- Focus on blame
- Not enough recognition of student achievement
- Lack of focus on common interests
- Perception of teachers union is negative
- Lack of communication
- Lack of trust, open dialogue, communication
- Cost
- Understanding differences (especially cultural)
- Finding qualified help (superintendent) due to chaos
- Groups being excluded, disrespected
- School board: doesn't tolerate opposition
- Perception of teachers union is negative

Undiscussables:

- Race
- Distrust of monied class who don't have their kids in schools
- Long history of superintendents with short tenures ex: 3 regular superintendents (all white males were fired) Because they failed to understand the subtleties of politics. Dates back to 1980.
- Redistricting because it means redistributing wealth

Stakeholders:

Everybody

Goals:

- Improved communication amongst administration, teachers, students, parents
- Sense of togetherness in community
- No overcrowded or undercrowded schools.
- Redistricting
- Neighborhood schools
- School buildings and facilities modernized and refurbished.
- All schools receive equal treatment in funding, quality teachers, access to resources, etc.
- Same curriculum taught across schools
- Teacher pay commensurate with neighboring schools
- Increased teacher accountability
- Increased attendance rates
- Equal access to resources for all students regardless of race, ethnicity, class, etc.
- Sports, arts, extracurricular activities promoted by schools and families
- Parents perceived as part of the process instead of part of the problem
- Exciting community that attracts top notch teachers
- School district has lacked leadership in the past couple of years. Superintendents for several years have been so-so leaders
- Goals seem to take a back seat to the controversies that continually surface
- Strategic planning process seemed good, but results have not followed
- Increased trust of administration by teachers.
- Board support of administration (especially the superintendent)
- Businesses perceive SB as a good place to grow/move
- Improved motivation of all staff
- Building administration would support central administration and speak positively

Barriers to Achieving These Goals:

- Lack of parental involvement (due to socioeconomic issues, lack of knowledge, etc.)
- Lack of communication between school administration and parents.
- Lack of accountability by various community groups.
- Perception of some schools that parents don't want to be involved.
- Community divided due to differences in race, class, school politics, etc.
- Acrimony between the superintendent's office, the board and the union and the lack of trust between these groups
- Constantly raising issues about credibility
- William L. Wilson, Crochisic & Co., former board member

Undiscussables:

- Race/ Diversity (Superintendents non-renewal has been made a racial issue)
- Necessity for redistricting due to changing demographics
- Poor performing teachers

Stakeholders Who Will Need to be Involved in Order to Overcome Barriers and Realize Goals:

Everyone

Parents' Worst Nightmare for SBCSC:

- Children will be ill-prepared for college.
- Not all children treated equally; some will be underserved or not well educated.
- Gangs will increase in numbers and activity.
- Children will continue to be educated in inadequate school facilities.

Affluent families will move away to the suburbs due to fear of inner cities, and take funding and diversity out of the system with them.

Increased indifference/lack of community support for changes in the school system

Needs of the students and community will continue to be ignored and no real action will be taken.

African American Community

Goals:

- Board positions filled based on an applicant's qualifications rather than personal agenda or political connections
- Equitable teaching staff
- All members of the community involved (parents, clergy, etc.)
- Trained for diversity
- Quality education for **all** students, regardless of race, ethnicity, class, gender, etc.
- Concerns and needs of all groups are met, no one feels "cast away"
- A school board concerned with programs to help African American students succeed
- Restoration of South Bend school to former levels of academic achievement and community support
- Diverse, qualified school board that represents the needs and voices of larger community
- Diverse, qualified

Barriers:

- Divisions around power permeate entire community, not simply the school board
- Lack of community unity re goals, vision, implementation
- Lack of communication re goals, vision, implementation
- Lack of understanding of students' needs
- Previous focus has been on power rather than on what's in the best interest of the students
- Lack of strong, qualified leadership
- Lack of support by business community
- Lack of consensus
- Lack of community support, everyone working as individuals
- Lack of process for managing change: assessing state of the community, building vision and consensus, training leadership, etc.

Undiscussables:

- Race
- Leadership
- An appointed versus an elected school board
- Fear of repercussions to speaking out and taking risks

Stakeholders:

- Everyone
- Clergy
- Parents
- Teachers
- Mayor
- Elected officials

Goals:

- Address stereotypes that channel children away from succeeding and challenging themselves
- Increase students awareness of their educational rights
- Improve student academic performance
- Increase number of Hispanic principals/superintendents/administration
- Timely and adequate address of parents' concerns
- Increased parental involvement
- Institution of program that recognizes models, achievers, volunteers
- Creation of a system that strongly encourages parent volunteers
- Provide students equal access to resources such as science institutions, grants, consulting firms
- Emphasize qualifications rather than ethnicity/race
- Increase local business commitment to drive initiatives in community
- 100% graduation rate for Hispanics and for every child who wants to go to college
- Each community member accepts accountability to demonstrate leadership
- Scholarships started by alums

Barriers:

- Existence of stereotypes based on race, ethnicity, class, gender, etc. leads to pigeonholing student capabilities
- Students bored at school
- Wide gap created by divergent class issues has not been explicitly addressed in the community
- Oversimplification that diversity means black or white, hispanic or non-hispanic. Lack of awareness that diversity exists within the same ethnic group. For example, big differences between Hispanic students from California from those from Puerto Rico, Mexico, Texas, Mexico, etc. (there are 67 different languages in SBCSC)
- Condescending attitude: because you're a minority, you must understand how to deal with minority problems.
- Why are these kids also not participating in sports?
- No support system for diversity
- Increased awareness
- Celebration: community values work more than education → need to change these attitudes if we want kids to compete as well as counterparts
- Modeling needed
- Generation gaps
- We have our own crutches to bear, our own prejudices and influence to manage
- Hispanics don't necessarily all understand each other, either
- People are uninformed (financial aid, classes they can take)

Undiscussables:

Race

- Promotions, career opportunities
- Stereotyping
- Relinquishing power → fear of change threatens white community
- Reverse discrimination
- Event may not be racial, but made racial (fired due to incompetence, but turned into because he was black)

Teacher Accountability

- "Sacred cow;" don't ever question the right of a teacher
- Currently addressed: don't worry about it, we'll take care of it, cover it up. How do you get rid of a bad teacher?

Political nature of building

Closing perfectly good buildings/ plants instead of renovating.
Money doesn't go to inner cities.
Football school.
La Salle first ones to ask for funds but last to receive
Sponsors move out → people move out of city and take money elsewhere
Due to lack of education, Hispanics remain in lowest rung of economic ladder, status quo maintained.
No change, things remain the same
People move to "safe" communities
We will continue to point fingers until we get some results from somewhere

Stakeholders:
Everyone

Goals:

- New Superintendent, someone who has experience with diversity (class, race, ethnicity, religion, etc.) and has experience working with marginal, poor students—not only top 20%. Doesn't want someone who comes to South Bend because they have no where else to go, because they're copping out.
- Four high schools, not five
- A vocation center
- Expansion of northwest part of the city (largest population group) and west (second largest population growth and largest Latino population)
- School teachers well versed in diversity
- There would be more bilingual teachers (esp Spanish speaking)
- Disability students would get more attention
- More social workers
- Year-round school.
- Neighborhoods would embrace schools
- School system supported by community.
- Increase student achievement scores
- Increase graduation rates
- Decrease in drop out rate
- Working relationships of the parties would be improved to allow for innovation
- Roles would be clearly identified and people would stay within their functions
- South Bend education competitive with national and state levels
- Students are competent/well skilled and competitive in the marketplace
- Schools are used as foundation of the entire community
- School board: look at the way members are elected (mixture of elected and appointed), their qualifications.
- Currently, the board has personal agendas.
- Superintendent who's here for 5-10 years
- New board
- Strategic planning
- A school corporation that is respected
- A model
- Educates all to their potential
- A sense of unity of purpose and people pulling together
- Appropriate facilities
- More people of color in a lot of positions

Barriers:

- School Board (Concern it will micromanage and put barriers in front of new SI. They have been elected on single issues. Don't integrate platform with needs of the community at large. There should be a combination of elected and appointed members.
- Personalities
- Race (lack of equal representation on the board). The board is white and the current superintendent is black. This distinction drew a line in the community between whites and blacks.
- Union. Currently, it is running the school corporation. There are four union officials on the board who were put there to get rid of the superintendent because of the strike.
- Absence of strong, inclusive leadership (parents not welcomed by board, by administration)
- No strong urban league or NAACP
- Short on Hispanic leadership
- Talented ones move up or get attracted to private sector

Undiscussables:

Race
Class prejudice
Redistricting
Ethnicity
West Side Polish still a tight social group
Gender - respect women leaders even among women
Strike, etc.
Disrespect toward her

Stakeholders:
All

Goals:

- Bring the work world into the classroom, make the class work relevant
- Greater accountability (parents, teachers)
- Increased parental involvement
- A diverse student body
- Greater student achievement (standards, scores)
- Vocational/technical education programs
- Increased cooperation and collaboration between Ivy Tech and the school district
- Community and organizations that are open to differences, to honoring, listening, and solving problems
- South Bend Community Schools to be ranked as the finest integrated school system in the state
- Businesses assist the schools
- Facilities operated at greater use of the entire community
- A career center
- More joint programs
- School facility near by or adjacent to the Ivy Tech site
- A visionary school board
- A united school board that trusts each other, looks at the long term needs of the community and the consequences of their actions, and recognizes difference between policy making and managing
- Increased administrative harmony (between school board and superintendent)
- School board that supports administration
- A qualifications board trained in process
- Improved working relationships and communications
- Consensus around strategic planning.
- Well constructed, appointed school board that works as a team with the superintendent and staff. A staff that supports the superintendent, not interferes with his or her job
- Process for evaluating teacher performance. No more life time entitlement, better management of evaluating teacher performance, pay teachers commensurately, professional development (education and training) for middle/struggling teachers, exit the bad, reward the good, incentives for those in the middle, differentiation of teachers.
- Strong schools to attract new employees
- Strong schools that act as hubs for the rest of the community
- Upgrade of older schools
- Connection between schools and training of employees
- Strong leadership
- Community pride of schools

Barriers:

- Politics
- The battle between the Superintendent and School Board
- Bussing/redistricting
- Leadership not willing to listen in a politically diverse role
- Organizations hunker down in their positions rather than collaborate
- The Board's micromanagement
- Board members feeling devalued
- Low morale/no morale
- Members of the school board distrust each other
- Don't know the processes or proper channels to do their jobs correctly. These end up interfering instead of doing their jobs.
- Teachers' Union: one of the strongest state unions in nation but has one of the worst student performance records

Lack of accountability (especially of teachers)
An elected school board (opposed to an appointed one by mayor, city council)
People resistant to change (fear of negative impact)
Teachers resistant to differentiation
Desire to maintain status quo
Dispute with the superintendent and board has distracted everyone
Blaming
Union bought board
Lack of outreach to business community by superintendent
History of business community staying out of school issues versus interest and concern for involvement

Undiscussables:

Race issue is out there ... always
Diversity. This is going to be the future and this community needs to address this.
Community needs to learn to deal with differences.
Stripping of authority of school corporation
Union is poorly run, selfish, and unprofessional.
UniServ Director
Board (Elected v. Appointed)
Review of teachers (teacher evaluation/performance)

Stakeholders:

Everyone

Goals:

Consensus of schools' goals, issues, etc. (e.g., desegregation, rebuilding schools, deploying funds, etc)
Strategic plan is well communicated
Greater accountability of teachers (ex: grading African Americans 30% of kids → less than 5% get on gifted and talented track something happens at elementary level)
Broader measures to include all, including at-risk and poor
Number of students in school crop would increase → leakage to private school would decrease because number of people opting out would decrease
Schools more connected to neighborhoods they serve (end busing)
Standards would be equal to neighborhood schools
Larger number of students graduating to pursue higher education
Fewer drop outs
Shared responsibility for student learners
Tie learning to life outside of school.
Increase in student voice
Leadership development
People affected by decisions are involved in those decisions at all levels
System of consistent, authentic, open communication that goes in all directions
Communication whose focus is on the issue or concern, not personalities
Differences perceived as valuable
Culture of continuous learning.
Regular dialogue and communication.
Assessment is perceived as a way that we learn and grow rather than as a judgement.
Celebration that is pervasive, honoring and sharing what has been learned.
Greater alignment between goals and concerns of central administration and individual
Communication is about internal community and the external community is aware of how decisions get made and who makes them.
Students are seen as resources and are engaged as resources along with parents and staff.
Students and parents are engaged with the District, invited in as genuine collaborators.
Pervasive issues of race are brought forth, dialogues going on, the elephants in room are being discussed and wrestled with
Community-based schools (Full service schools that offer health clinic, adult education, social services, etc.)
outreach programs for parents and students
Less racial polarization
Safer neighborhoods for families, children
Increased collaboration/cooperation
Police department and prosecutors get along; less territorial
Effective youth and senior citizen programming
What we say would matter

Barriers

Race
Class
Lack of understanding between groups and of differences (cultural diversity, etc.). Intolerance for other peoples' lifestyles, way of thinking
We focus on the symptoms rather than the real issues. Unless strong Superintendent who is willing to challenge real issues, won't be able to articulate real vision for community with strategy and time table.
Mistrust

Fear (of retribution, that asking questions we'll lose resources, be talked about by powers that be, perception that it's not good to be noticed or speak out; of being hurt, of disappointment; to believe that things can be different)

Sense of isolation

The past

Lack of leadership to get people involved

Lack of encouragement to do the work we're doing by the board or by anyone

Lack of leaders on the board

Lack of accountability (We've approached several people and they are too busy)

Lack of commitment by entire community to reach goals

Cost

Undiscussables:

Race

Racial polarization

Student tests, buildings, etc. are symptoms of deeper issues (such as race)

Availability and access to jobs is tied to race and culture

Diversity (bigger than race)

There is a real discomfort with diversity

Gender – sexual humor, say lifestyle

Gender preference

Hispanic community

Equation of African community with impoverishment and lesser intelligence.

Class

Gender

Groups that talk about what we need to do are primarily white men

Male- they haven't recognized and included other voices

Administration /NEA relationship

Bitter strike in 94

Public don't see consensus or agreement

No evidence of trust or working relationship

Site based management

Stakeholders:

Everyone