Williamsburg James City County Public Schools

Initial Key Findings Summary

March 2018

The Valbrun Consulting Group

<u>Initial Key Findings Report</u>

Objective: The purpose of this report is to provide a summary of key findings to make preliminary determinations as we evaluate the districts strategic position. These findings are from the perspective of an outsider looking in with an unbiased lens.

The Valbrun Consulting Group conducted an objective review of existing district materials, strategy documents and other information that was publicly available. Documents included audits, reports, survey results, evidence of internal and external communication and engagement, student attainment data, teacher/leader observation and professional development data, and information related to academic programs. The review also included materials and information available through the district website.

We reviewed to clarify which parts of the district's current and future development are thoroughly documented. We did not specifically look for shortcomings or weaknesses.

Instead, we tried to explore 3 big questions: **WHAT? WHY? HOW?**

<u>What is the district doing?</u>

- **What** initiatives, strategies, systems are (or aren't) in place?
- **What** can we tell about the district from the outside looking in?
- **What** is important to the district? **What** priorities are revealed?

### <u>Why are you doing it?</u>

- **Why** (and to what end) is the district doing what it is currently doing?

<u>How are you doing it?</u>

- **How** is the district organized/positioned for successful implementation of initiatives currently underway?
- **How** are energies, time and resources "spent"?
- **How** is the district creating the conditions for ALL students to meet with success and realize the vision?

AND…. Is there alignment to the **Instructional Core**?

In other words, can we draw clear connections of the actions and behaviors of the district to improving the way that *students and teachers engage with content* so that Teaching and Learning is the central business of the school system.
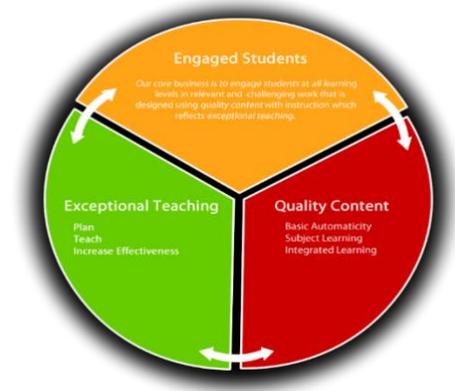
This report intentionally does not make recommendations. Further study through focus groups and stakeholder feedback collection will help us to either confirm /refute these initial findings, switching the lens to that of an internal perspective. Instead we offer **Bright Spots**, **Wonderings, Think Abouts, and Cautions** to drive our discussion and help to further inform planning.

Absence of a finding from this report, does not suggest that it does not exist, rather, that as an outsider we are being conscientious about drawing premature conclusions in areas where information was either unclear, or unavailable.

We included results of a short **survey of the senior leadership team** to explore whether differences in opinions and priorities of the future development of the district are identified and whether ideas and concepts are noted as possible additions to the strategic planning process. The individual results are presented here anonymously.

The following questions are specifically addressed:

- What can we tell about teaching and learning in WJCCPS?
- What processes are in place for families to enter the district and are they accessible and easily understood?
- What stands out regarding operational effectiveness and organizational development?
- How is the district engaging the community? What is the brand promise and how is it seen externally?
- How are quality employees attracted? What strategies are in use and are they effective?

What can we tell about teaching and learning in WJCCPS?

Bright Spots	Wonderings
• People seem pleased with success of district • Highly educated staff- nationally certified (57) and advanced degrees • Owning of equity and access to opportunity as a goal • Positive testing results and AP testing • ACT average of 24.2 v. 20.8 nationally • Recognition and a top 16 state system • Assessments professed to be aligned to curriculum • High yield strategies tracked in walkthroughs	• Inconsistent opportunities for students • Economically challenged, EL, students with disabilities- much less successful and no growth--- esp. math/science • Huge variance on survey regarding feedback, leadership, climate, and resources • No apparent instructional technology plan • AP trend enrollment down slightly • PD plan for staff not available- is it consistent with strategic needs • No 2017-18 testing calendar online • BYOD and 1:1 unclear as to impact on instruction • Hard to determine interventions, articulation success and social-emotional development • What measures of success guide the work? • What is the level of autonomy that principals and teachers expect? • Need to see more in curriculum shells, assessments, common assessments (summative and formative)
Think Abouts	**Cautions**
• What data is most important? • Defining guaranteed and viable • Intervention flowchart • Reports all go to state website • Examination of testing • Greater presence of student work, success, history, alumni, community connections • Articulation across and vertically • Better periodic measures of success and laser focus on a few key initiatives • Shared definitions of formative assessment and its usages	• Inertia • Complacency- we are already good • Autonomy v. Consistency dilemma • Too many initiatives • Equity resistance • New initiatives not supported as well as it should (lowers level on staff survey as well as important decisions made without staff input) • Variance amongst schools

NOTES:

What processes are in place for families to enter the district and are they accessible and easily understood?

Bright Spots	Wonderings
- Expansive website design - Comprehensive enrollment report (current & past information) - Program of studies (Curriculum) is clear and concise	- Inaccessible online enrollment process – no online form? - Lack of new student enrollment information - Difficult to navigate website for enrollment information
Think Abouts	**Cautions**
- Spell out proof of residency requirements - Provide an online new student registration application - Create a dedicated student enrollment section (include registration form, list of acceptable proof of residency, etc.) - Provide online registration forms in multiple language	- Decline in student enrollment and school funding - Produces barriers to entry/enrollment - Perception of poor customer service - Inadequate online information sharing (for new and current families)

NOTES:

What stands out regarding operational effectiveness and organizational development?

Bright Spots	Wonderings
- Clear efforts to gather information to guide decision making and planning- many (third party) audits and surveys rich with data and recommendations - Programs are defined and documented - Professional development calendar/offerings/themes exist - Leaders consistently recognize a demographic shift and identify it as a district challenge. - Teacher Observation tool in use - Leaders agree the people in the district are among its greatest assets - There is consistency in what people believe are the points of pride	- How are audits being used and recommendations being implemented if at all? If so, how is progress being measured/monitored? - Programs over Process- the "what" is clearer than the "how" - How is impact of PD measured for change in practice? - How do you know you are offering the right professional development opportunities tied to the needs of the district? - How is the district planning to address Equity issues? Where is this documented and communicated to outside stakeholders? What steps are being taken to address the equity challenges? - Teacher observation tool does not measure culturally proficient classroom practices - How does the teacher observation data inform professional development planning and offerings? - There is uneven clarity about the districts purpose and vision - How is disproportional representation (disciplinary practices, special education identification, etc.) monitored and addressed?
Think Abouts	**Cautions**
- Professional development tied to strategic plan- build capacity to advance the district through rich and meaningful growth opportunities tied directly to goals - Develop an Equity Plan to be very intentional of planning - Focus, coherence, synergy of initiatives currently underway - Hard to tell who owns what work- ownership and enactment throughout the system - Processes to move the leadership team through the development phases from Forming to High Performing - Intentionally create learning opportunities for teachers and leaders to address the changing district demographics so they can respond to the change rather than just identify it as a challenge	- Audit overload - Positioning demographic data shift using deficit model thinking- socio-economics, deficit language - Silos- work done in isolation

NOTES:

How is the district engaging the community? What is the brand promise and how is it seen externally?

Bright Spots	Wonderings
- WJCCPS' overall brand image 100% accreditation (across all schools) - Jamestown High School named one of top 30 high schools by *U.S. News & World Report* - Personalized learning options to meet a variety of student needs i.e. elementary International Baccalaureate school (one of only seven in Virginia), Bright Beginnings; online courses, blended instruction, dual enrollment, Early College and project- and community-based learning - School and teacher communications (especially in the areas of understanding, accuracy, timeliness, openness, transparency and trustworthiness) - Opportunities for parent/family engagement in division/school committees, task forces & other events - Scope of communications tools to engage families and community - Consistency of design/features of division and school websites (unified look) - Crisis communications leadership and support	- Inconsistent brand identity & footprint (i.e. WJCC vs WJCCPS, inconsistent hyphenation and use of colors, no common template for ppts, etc.) - Lack of an organized and comprehensive internal communication strategy and system to ensure employees are well informed about the priorities, programs and successes of the school division - Clear need for more consistent and frequent two-way communication with both internal and external audiences to gain and value input/feedback - Perceived lack of openness, transparency, trustworthiness and timeliness of division-level parent communications - Sparse communications about district finances, goals and plans - Difficulty finding information on the division and school websites - Inconsistency among teachers in using ParentVue and keeping it up-to-date as a dependable communication tool - Availability of key WJCC information and documents in languages other than English - Inconsistent reliability of translation support services - Perceived lack of responsiveness by central office staff to school administration - Perceived lack of responsiveness on the part of teachers and school administrators to individual parent requests - Inconsistent employee awareness and understanding of current strategic plan, how it impacts their work and their role in its success
Think Abouts	**Cautions**
- More strategic and holistic connections between WJCC and community members - Greater engagement with current and potential volunteer pools	- Perceived negative and neutral coverage of WJCC by local news media relative to positive coverage - Financial and other resources not keeping pace with growing communication needs of ESL students and families

NOTES:

How are quality employees attracted? What strategies are in use and are they effective?

Bright Spots	Wonderings

• Twitter feed for WJCC Schools is active
• Social media (external) presence
	• Limited information on the HR web page
	  o Contact information for the department is not listed ("feel free to contact us with any questions, concerns, suggestions or other feedback")
	  o Recruitment focus is not apparent
	  o Accomplishments are not cited
	  o Visuals to attract candidates

Think Abouts	**Cautions**

• Update website to include:
  o Photographs of current staff and staff you are hoping to recruit.
  o Include testimonials from employees.
  o Highlight why WJCC is a great place to work.
  o Limit 'clicks' to finding information
• Include information on the city of Williamsburg and attractions
• Expand social media followings (i.e. Twitter) to include targeted recruitment partners i.e. college, school, department, of education at institutions of higher education
• Include online survey to gather input on level of customer service.
• Develop a recruitment and retention strategy
• Develop scorecard or dashboard to manage data including time to fill, retention, exit data, recruitment sources, etc.
• Consider Professional Development Schools with local institutions of higher education.
• Track digital footprint (Google analytics?) i.e. number of hits and length of time on sites, etc.
	• Competitive districts (i.e. Newport News Public Schools, Hampton City Schools) have information readily accessible on the website in 1 click
	• WJCCJobs has limited Twitter tweets, followers and followings (Tweets = 393; Following = 202; Followers = 597)
	• Focus of HR efforts, accomplishments, needs, data is unclear.

NOTES: