TUCKAHOE SCHOOLS
NEEDS ASSESSMENT
AND
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE PLANNING

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Parents, Students, and various members of the larger community including Home Owner Representatives, the Pope Foundation, Community Foundations, PTA, and Union Leaders

It has been a pleasure working with all of you. I hope this report accurately reflects your contributions, ideas, comments and suggestions. I hope this report will be useful to the Tuckahoe Schools in planning your future, selecting a new Superintendent, and in helping you move Tuckahoe Schools forward in a positive direction.

Charles T. Wilson
Project Consultant and Author
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I. BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Prior to becoming an educational consultant and professor, I served for nearly thirteen years as Superintendent of the Pelham Public Schools and before that I was a Superintendent of the North Salem School district for three years. Since my retirement from Pelham three years ago, I have worked on a number of consulting projects and taught in the Stony Brook College Educational Leadership program.

Hearing of my reputation as a consultant from a board member in my former district of Pelham, I was contacted by Tuckahoe Board President Dr. Julio Urbina. The Tuckahoe schools have entered a transitional phase. The former long standing superintendent Dr. Michael Yazurlo retired last summer. Concurrently, the Tuckahoe Board has experienced a sixty percent change in its membership. Dr. Urbina is the new board president.

All of this change has come about during a period of significant change statewide as well. Tuckahoe must address a number of new state mandates. These will be implemented along with a new 2% cap on school budgets which will take effect as part of the current budget cycle.

One area that distinguishes this needs assessment format from others that are commonly used, is the inclusion of categories of discussion which serve as prompts for the open forums, interviews and focus groups that were conducted. A copy of this discussion guide has been attached. It is based upon the Effective School Research on what constitutes effective schools.

The purpose of this needs assessment is to determine district needs, areas of commendable performance, and identify recommendations for improvement. As a result it is hoped that Tuckahoe will be able to set its priorities moving forward and develop a plan of how the school system can improve based upon its priority needs. To this end, I have also included a number of recommendations.

Dr. Charles T. Wilson
Project Consultant
II. RESEARCH DESIGN

The design of this needs assessment is based on a process used in many districts. Primarily, it relies on focus groups, interviews and open forums as a way to gather perceptions of school performance. Representatives of all school community constituencies were invited to attend these sessions. These participants included board members, teachers, staff, union leaders, administrators, community leaders and elected officials, various community foundations and support groups, home owners associations, parents, students and student leaders and other individuals who came forward. The various focus groups, forums and interviews took place over a three week period with an estimated three hundred or more participating.

Concurrently, I reviewed a number of various documents on school performance and programs provided to me by the board, superintendent, principals and the assistant superintendent for business. I also received a number of emails, memoranda and letters from various individuals. These too were reviewed along with all the other documents and were also used to develop this report.

All of these sources were used to rate the Tuckahoe schools based upon a set of criteria taken from the effective schools research.
III. FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

What follows is a needs assessment with findings in ten major areas. Each area or section is divided into four component parts which may be understood as follows:

**COMMENDATIONS:** The commendation area identifies ways in which the school system excels. This is based upon multiple comments from more than one focus group. They also are backed up from findings in the document analysis and other observations. Commendations are reasons to celebrate. These are the programs and practices that should be sustained, funded and applauded.

**NEEDS:** Similar to commendations, needs reflect a major theme emerging from various focus groups and/or the document analysis. These are areas which need to be improved or corrected. Identifying what needs to be improved is the first step in knowing how to bring about positive change, setting priorities and in developing future plans.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:** These are candidate strategies that the board and district administration may or may not decide to follow in responding to district needs that have been identified. Recommendations represent ideas or next step proposals to address areas of need. As such, they can be used to start a conversation about setting priorities and how to proceed to address them, regardless of what is finally determined as part of a district long range plan. Sometimes, recommendations can be addressed expeditiously. Whether a simple fix is required or a longer term strategy, the recommendations are intended to be helpful to the board and administration in deciding what actions to take.

**ADDITIONAL COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS:** In some cases these will reinforce needs to act as explained above. In other cases, additional comments will reveal a dissenting or alternative perception. These are listed to give the board and the school community a larger view or understanding of all that was discussed in the focus groups, forums and interviews. Where conflicting perceptions exist, it is worth noting.
I. TEACHING AND LEARNING

COMMENDATIONS

Teacher availability for extra help after school
Faculty cares about students
Parents have access to teachers when issues arise
The Tuckahoe schools provide a safe and welcoming environment for students at all grade levels
Faculty and students are closely bonded and teachers want their students to succeed
Teachers plan instruction and prepare for teaching well beyond the regular school day
Teachers are committed to professional development and often finance their own training
The vast majority of faculty and staff are dedicated to teaching and learning, arrive early and stay late…they are student centered and make an effort to keep parents in the loop
Principals are hard working

NEEDS

The teacher evaluation system needs to be more consistently implemented, with gaps in annual observations and evaluations in K-5 found from previous years
Administrators and supervisors would benefit from professional development to keep their supervision skills sharp and to help them improve
The Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR), more commonly called the Performance Plan for Teachers, needs to be brought up to date to reflect present day thinking and practice in effective supervision and also the new state requirements
More emphasis needs to be placed on professional development, including an increase in budget for this critical area
Professional development and practice itself must change to reflect a more targeted purpose with respect to student performance and outcomes, along with instructional objectives linked to district goals
Currently, professional development is under resourced, not well organized or structured and insufficiently connected to district and building priorities
Professional improvement plans are not adequately sustained or targeted
Faculty and staff hiring is insufficiently rigorous and thorough
Standards for granting tenure and the process involved needs to be reviewed to ensure the highest possible standards are being applied.

The former teacher mentoring program was eliminated due to budget constraints.

Teachers need more time during the school day to work collaboratively.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

Build in systems to ensure that all faculty and staff are observed and evaluated annually as required by contract and in accordance with good practice.

Conduct a review of observation and evaluation records to determine whether they reflect good practice and key supervisor professional development to program needs to help supervisors to improve their skills.

Plan professional development programs that are specifically targeted to modify curriculum and instruction in ways that help to improve student performance.

Take a long-term approach and implement sustained activity to improve curriculum and instruction over time and in contrast to short one or two year efforts.

Review and update hiring policies and protocols to improve the teacher and staff selection process and ensure only the very best candidates are hired.

Improve or raise standards of granting tenure based upon rigorous standards and based foremost on professional evaluation with consideration given to parent, student and broader community input when appropriate.

Provide the board with reports that empower them to make well considered tenure appointment decisions with adequate time for consideration as based upon the superintendent’s recommendation.

**ADDITIONAL COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS FROM FOCUS GROUPS**

Middle school teachers are concerned about possible class size increases due to economic constraints, along with the loss of the team structure, increase in preparations, reduction in special education staff and planning time increasingly restricted.

Faculty in every school is concerned about the loss of teacher leadership positions.

Teachers also note staff and curriculum development is not well organized or planned.

There is faculty frustration that professional memberships and participation in conferences have been curtailed due to fiscal concerns.
Cottle teachers report a drop in faculty morale due to declining resources, constant turnover of the building principal and what they regard as misinformation about the teachers and the school circulating in the community.

Professional development should be planned and organized more effectively.

There has been a decline of professional development memberships and opportunities for teachers to share best practices.

Supervision and evaluation needs to be improved to reflect best practices and in compliance with the recently announced New York supervision requirements.

There is a general sense amongst the faculty that Tuckahoe is no longer the community of teaching and learning it once was due to loss of key positions and program reductions.

The high school faculty is especially concerned about the lack of resources and focus to deal with issues of student behavior and a lack of decorum which is currently attended to in a triage manner and is a distraction from teaching and learning.
II. CURRICULUM

COMMENDATIONS

New science instruction at K-5
Annual cyclical review of curriculum under purview of Curriculum Committee
Curriculum Binders are kept up to date
Expansion of advanced placement courses at the high school
Ongoing work of the Language Arts and Math Committees
Work of Data and Assessment Committees as related to curriculum

NEEDS

Inconsistencies of what is taught both on same grade level and lack of articulation between grade levels K-12
Lack of parent access to curriculum and awareness of curricula as may exist
Curricula needs to embrace more basic skills in the view of parent focus groups such as expansion of handwriting instruction, spelling instruction in place of “inventive spelling”, teaching more grammar, and outlining skills
Students at all grade levels according to both parents and secondary students need expanded instruction and more emphasis on reading and writing, with greater focus on expository writing
There is a perceived lack of vertical articulation and with that some students may not always have prerequisite knowledge and skills required to build on from year to year
More math and science instruction is needed K-5
Textbooks are seldom used and/or are out of date and Curriculum development lacks organization and a long term vision
Parents have little to no say or input into curriculum development and the philosophy behind curriculum is not clearly understood
Library materials need to be updated and more closely linked to reading across the curriculum
More opportunities should be pursued to develop integrated instruction or interdisciplinary courses of instruction

There should be a greater emphasis on expository writing

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

Embark on a district-wide multiple year plan, with the focus on one major curriculum each year, to develop a comprehensive electronically filed consensus curriculum map on each grade level K-12 as also defined by subject area departments when appropriate on the secondary level

As they are developed, maps should be accessible on the district website for parents, students and as working documents for ongoing modification for all faculty and staff and to ensure clarity and consistency of what is taught these maps will be developed through a consensus process of all teachers involved in each case

Carefully plan teacher time to be sure that they will have the required resources, time and direction needed to develop maps that are also articulated K-12

In developing curriculum, look for opportunities to provide more rigor to the curriculum by, for example, having students do more reading and writing than currently required and expanding the summer reading lists…Focus on vocabulary building and expanded writing activities

Provide greater focus on a balanced literacy approach and blended phonics in teaching language arts

Engage parents more in curriculum by including them more where appropriate on committees for input with respect to curriculum and instruction, while the Board is encouraged to spend more of its public meetings on topics directly related to curriculum and instruction to inform its decision making, make the public aware, celebrate school program success and to keep its focus on what is happening in the classroom to help improve student performance

Schools should provide parent curriculum night programs to help explain new curricula to parents so they can help their children at home

Reorganize current faculty and administrative duties to provide a greater commitment and emphasis to district curriculum leadership
ADDITIONAL COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS FROM FOCUS GROUPS

Band, chorus, drama and the arts in general are excellent, but there should be more emphasis on the visual arts

Increased articulation between schools and grade levels is needed in developing curriculum

Not every student should go onto college…curriculum should include pre-vocational curriculum and support students who are so inclined to attend BOCES in high school

Provide reading specialist instruction on the secondary level for students who require help in reading instruction

Need to expand phonics component in reading curriculum

Social studies standards are not aligned to the curriculum

Many texts in the K-5 library are outdated and the same is true of some texts

Civics curriculum should be added (one parent)

Foreign language should be offered K-5 (one parent)
III. STUDENT EXPECTATIONS

COMMENDATIONS

Small school environment provides a caring school climate where students are unlikely to “fall between the cracks”

Various support systems and teacher extra-help is available so that students may be expected to perform up to their full potential

Students are able to accelerate and take regents science and more advanced levels of math starting in middle school

Students are able to elect advanced placement courses in high school

The diversity of students’ families with respect social, economic, and educational background, as well as ethnic and racial heritage is embraced as a positive aspect of the Tuckahoe school community

The recent goal to emphasize higher mastery achievement rates is commendable

Teachers strive to be accommodating to students’ Individual Educational Plans (IEP)

There is evidence where feasible that many teachers try to challenge their brightest students beyond the regular curriculum in heterogeneously grouped classes

NEEDS

Due to the diversity of Tuckahoe students with respect to educational preparedness and family resources, there is a tendency on the part of faculty to “teach to the middle” which may run the risk of neglecting both high needs students and those who are gifted or very advanced

There is a strong perception among parent focus group participants that some teachers may “dumb down” the curriculum…not requiring all students, for example, to read classic literature or do enough reading and writing

Some focus group members feel that the practice of sometimes lowering expectations for some students has contributed to creating an “achievement gap”

It is reputed that some less able students are not required to read or write as much as they should be challenged to do

Some parents of advanced students feel that there should be more articulation from one year’s teacher to the following year’s teacher with respect to ways of challenging very bright students as they move through the system
There are a number of suggestions from members of the Special Education Parent Teachers Association (SEPTA), and others with respect to how special education instruction and services can be improved as follows:

Students, their parents and their teachers would benefit from knowing student teacher placement well in advance of the new year for planning purposes and easy transition...when assignments are changed over the summer parents and students should be notified

More adaptive physical education is needed along with training of physical education teachers on how to best work with special needs students

There is a perceived need for “gifted and fragile” special classes

The Tuckahoe schools have been cited for disproportionately referring minority students for identification and must take action to come into compliance

Some self-contained classes may contain students with widely disparate abilities and needs which exceed reasonable expectation of an effective learning climate

The transportation vehicle for special needs students is due to be replaced

Secondary counselors need to spend more time with special needs students discussing colleges that have programs and services to meet their needs

General education teachers need to be trained on how to more effectively meet the needs of special education students who are mainstreamed

More early reading intervention is needed for both special needs students and the general student population

Pull-out programs should be replaced where appropriate by more push-in instruction so that students do not fall behind in their mainstream classes when pulled out

Penmanship and effective cursive writing should be taught more extensively for some identified students who need to improve in this area

Learning disabled students would benefit from being required to do more expository writing

Expanded summer school and extended time programs are urged

IEP goals should be developed in reference to a child’s actual annual progress

Greater collaboration between special and general education teachers is needed

School principals need to take more ownership and interest in the special education programs housed in their buildings

Expand the number of in-house inclusionary classes by looking to bring more Tuckahoe students back to district where feasible

Preparation is needed to implement the newly required Response to Intervention (RTI) program required by New York State
Establish updated criteria and referral procedures for students to be considered for identification which will address concerns that there may be a problem of over referring students

Integrate more technology designed to meet the needs of special education students

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Director of Special Education needs to develop a comprehensive report including a strategic plan of how the many needs of the special education program may be most effectively addressed, and present this plan to the Board of Education for its urgent attention, review and approval as may be determined to ensure follow up with respect to this critical area of need

Professional development in how to more effectively “differentiate instruction” is very much needed. Technology can play an important role by enabling teachers and support staff to provide flexible groupings within the classroom for both special needs and advanced students while also meeting the needs of students who are in the “middle”

Besides greater differentiation of instruction within the classroom, each school should explore enrichment projects and activities which supplement the core curriculum… the current high school summer program, for example, could add enrichment programs at minimal increase of cost. Similarly, a variety of new academic clubs and programs should be considered along with after-school programs as may be sponsored by the PTA or other community organizations with teacher support

The board and administration in partnership with the appropriate faculty need to meet through standing committees such as the Curriculum Committee and/or ad hoc task forces to address concerns that there is a lack of rigor in terms of general expectations such as not requiring enough reading and writing and the charge that instruction is being dumbed down as in the example that classic literature for reading is not required of all students

The board should review its current homework policy and ensure that it challenges students to use higher order thinking skills

The APPR should include criteria to check against in doing observations and evaluations to encourage teachers to differentiate instruction and have appropriate but high expectations of all students

Encourage more students to take the regents science course in eighth grade and look to add more challenging science courses such as Intel Research and/or a robotics program

Look to provide more distance learning through technology

Explore model programs in neighboring districts to address the concern that an “achievement gap” may exist in Tuckahoe

Continue to add more advanced placement courses at the high school
ADDITIONAL COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS FROM FOCUS GROUPS

The academic environment is rather soft and not that challenging

There is too much focus on state testing

There is too much (volume) of homework expected of students in advanced placement

Too much teaching to the middle…without regard to advanced students and students with special needs

Take your pick---do you want to be a “Tiger Mom” or on a “Race to Nowhere”

Parents are now expected to do too much teaching of their children at home

There is too much release time and should be a greater focus on student instructional time as “prime time”

Not all students are meant to go to college…some need vocational training or pre-vocational skills
IV. STUDENT LIFE

COMMENDATIONS

Students at all levels generally get along with one another and there is a strong sense of school community

Students new to Tuckahoe are made to feel welcome

Cottle Elementary School provides a safe and orderly learning environment

Student and teacher bonds are strong and mutually respectful

Middle school students feel that their teachers are always there to help them

There is a variety of extra-curricular activities

The sports program at the high school provides access to a broad number of offerings

Each of the schools provides a small and caring environment

The campus and buildings are generally safe and secure

NEEDS

Sixth grade students report a lack of extra-activities and sports at their grade level

While secondary students are generally well behaved, there are a number of behavioral issues amongst students that reflect the tenor of the times which need to be addressed on an ongoing basis such as inappropriate language, drug and alcohol concerns, bullying (cyber and otherwise) and other issues related to low self-esteem and disrespectful attitudes of some members of the student body which can set a tone for all and an especially bad example for the middle school students

The secondary schools have no dean of students or other assistance to address disciplinary issues…which results in a triage approach to student misbehavior rather than the real attention and intervention it requires for every student

The middle and high school cafeteria is too small to house all of its students at lunch which results in a large displacement of high school students who end up scattered throughout the building which causes distraction in the hallways and for the middle school…along with health and safety issues…the high school students themselves are unhappy about this and would prefer to all be able to have room in the high school cafeteria

While there is a robust sports program and many other extra-activities in the secondary schools, there is a lack of academically related programs such as a school newspaper,
debating team or community service requirement to name a few examples of what most excellent high schools offer that Tuckahoe does not

There has been little to no recent professional development to assist faculty and staff in learning how to deal with student social issues and other contemporary problems

The loss of the Wise Program and 5th year foreign language are missed by the high school students

The Cottle school has also lost a number of enrichment and other activities for its students along with the after school bus which prevents many of its students from attending after school events and activities…the same applies to the secondary level

Students complain about receiving their schedules late in the fall with conflicts and disparity in class size and the quality of emergency lesson plans left for substitute teachers is lacking

RECOMMENDATIONS

Where it is feasible to add or restore extra-activities as mentioned above, it would be very important to do so

It would be especially valuable to add programs at the high school such as school newspaper or debate team which are linked to students developing important academic skills beyond the classroom and these activities are commonly provided in all schools of excellence, along with honor societies associated with various curricula which are in addition to the National Honor Society

Reorganize the secondary administration in such a way as to be able to provide additional help or focus on student behavior…such as a Dean of Students

An ISS or In School Suspension Room would also be helpful and important to have in the middle and high schools

Provide professional development for the faculty and staff as a whole to help the larger faculty and staff develop skills to better assist students deal with discipline, decorum and social growth issues

Update the student handbook

Add a second period high school lunch and monitors to facilitate lunch for all students in the cafeteria…or alternatively, explore cafeteria expansion or satellite options for a future capital project

Explore options to restore a fifth grade language option such as scheduling it as a combination course with fourth year and differentiating instruction

Update anti-bullying policy and referral protocol - train staff on how to intervene
Step up the high school scheduling process to ensure adequate time to resolve conflicts in order to better balance class size and begin each new year in a smoother and more timely manner.

Alternative approaches to the traditional program such as college affiliations, taking courses at neighboring schools and distance learning have been successful in the past and should be promoted again as a strategy to enrich student learning.

Review the district drug and alcohol policy and intervention protocol to see if it can be improved and review policy of seniors going out to lunch and what can be done about addressing students who may return to school on some occasions under the influence.

Improve the quality of substitute lesson planning and instructions.

Provide more extra activities and enrichment programs K-5 and sports options in 6th.

**ADDITIONAL FOCUS GROUP COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS**

- Loss of intramurals at K-5 is missed—also character education.
- Summer programs K-5 are very much needed.
- PTA sponsored programs at Cottle are a real plus.
V.  STUDENT OUTCOMES

COMMENDATIONS

Passing rates on high stakes state tests are high

Graduation rates, even with the current challenging regents test requirements of every student, remain very high

Tuckahoe graduates have qualified for substantial sums of scholarship money

Many graduates attend top rated colleges and universities

Using an EETT grant, the Tuckahoe Data Committee has trained a critical mass of faculty and staff on how to access the BOCES Data Warehouse, and how to utilize data analysis as a tool to modify curriculum and instruction to improve student performance outcomes

Student results on the most recent advanced placement tests, including those most recently introduced, reflect respectable results although many courses are new

The district’s new initiative to promote and support mastery level performance on high stakes tests is commendable

The annual student report card this year was given the appropriate level of interest and discussion by the board that it requires

NEEDS

Curriculum, instruction and assessment are not always in alignment or consistently taught by all faculty across grade levels or the same subject area

Data analysis to improve student outcomes, while mastered as a skill by most faculty, has yet to be widely applied to reach its full potential as a tool to modify instruction and curriculum to help students improve their performance

The Board of Education needs to spend more of its time hearing and discussing public input and professional analysis of student performance and efforts to help improve it

Teacher observation and evaluation tools need to be used to encourage and enforce greater consistency of curriculum and instructional delivery so that all students have the opportunity to do well on required tests regardless of their teachers curriculum preferences

The college advisement program needs to be improved with a greater emphasis on college planning
RECOMMENDATIONS

Using the current Data and Curriculum Committees, in combination with a curriculum task force, the Board and superintendent, the district needs to ensure more consistent curriculum, instruction and assessment alignment so as to maximize student performance results.

Applying data analysis skills which many teachers have mastered, form data analysis teams by grade level and/or subject matter clusters and as overseen by the Data and Curriculum committees, to undertake data analysis of student test performance on an ongoing basis to identify what needs to be modified to improve curriculum, instruction and assessment. This process needs to become systemic and ongoing.

The appropriate committees and personnel should investigate whether perceptions of an “achievement gap” are valid in the Tuckahoe schools and subject to findings review best practices in other districts that Tuckahoe may care to adopt to address this area.

Monitor and evaluate these activities and report progress to the board.

Counselors at the high school level need to spend more time on college advisement, get to know their students in their early high school years and start college and career planning well before junior year as is currently practiced...help students to diversify college application strategy, and differentiate advisement to meet the individual needs, talents, and goals of each student.

ADDITIONAL FOCUS GROUP COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS

Restore after school bus so that all students have access to extra help and other programs.

Consider best practices like academic boot camps for disadvantaged students provided in some other districts.

Summer enrichment programs at Cottle should be restored and added at the secondary.

Research/survey alumni performance after leaving Tuckahoe schools.
VI. TECHNOLOGY TOOLS

COMMUNICATIONS

Many faculty and staff are commended for their technology skills and literacy in general.

Technology is used effectively by faculty, staff and administration throughout the district to enhance instruction, do research, communicate and perform various other teaching and administrative duties.

The integration and use of smart boards throughout all district classrooms has enlivened instruction by making it more engaging for students.

Schools have dedicated technology spaces.

The recently added instant emergency notification system has been very effective.

The high school guidance department has begun to make successful use of Naviance software to support the college exploration and application process.

The new science labs in the secondary building contain excellent equipment.

NEEDS

The district website and many teacher websites need to be updated and better maintained with new information and expanded information which should be kept current.

Curriculum maps should be posted on the website.

Faculty use of technology as a classroom teaching tool remains inconsistent with some teachers rarely using it.

BOCES technology support services are not always in the building and lack of immediate access every day is frustrating.

The buildings do not have wifi.

Some teachers are not responsive to their email inbox in a timely manner.

More teacher, teacher assistant, administrator and staff technology training is needed.

Classroom applications of teaching technology beyond smart boards is inconsistent.

Technology expectations or benchmarks with respect to what skills should be required at different levels for all students and teachers has not been clearly defined.
RECOMMENDATIONS

A district technology committee should develop benchmarks for all faculty, staff and students to clarify technology teaching and learning skills which should be reasonably expected and implemented at various levels.

Provide ongoing staff development and course work to ensure faculty and staff benchmarks are implemented in each case.

The Board should develop, adopt and have the administration implement a policy with respect to what all faculty and staff are expected to know and do to maintain websites, use email and apply technology to instruction.

The APPR should contain a component that requires comment on the effective use of technology as a teaching and learning component of teacher performance.

Wifi should be installed.

Adopt a communications platform such as the e-chalk or other software which can be used for district communications.

Acquire more software packages to be integrated and enrich classroom learning.

Expand use of technology to help differentiate instruction.

Expand the use of technology for the purpose of distance learning.

ADDITIONAL FOCUS GROUP COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS

Some students do not have home access to technology.

Use of technology in the classroom varies from teacher to teacher with some hardly using at all.

To achieve technology goals, increase training and utilize faculty to help their colleagues improve their skills.

Provide Kindle access through school libraries to expand student access to more reading options, including more age-appropriate options.

Integrate technology more in the classroom.

Add technology courses for students at every level.

Evaluate the effectiveness of the middle school technology courses.
VII. FACILITIES

COMMENDATIONS

The renovations at the Tuckahoe schools in recent years have brought about many improvements and have managed to expand building capacity sufficiently to keep pace with growing enrollment.

All three schools are housed in beautiful buildings designed to meet the developmental needs of students housed at each level.

The school and larger community take special pride in the original high school building known for its historic design and designated as a landmark building.

The turf playing field adjacent to the high school merits special praise for its versatility of function, durability and its practical utilization as a shared facility by the school and community, along with the K-5 playground which also receives special praise.

The availability of dedicated space where it continues to exist in the system is also very desirable for flexibility of schedule and teaching preparation.

The science labs in the secondary building provide state-of-the-art equipment.

The ongoing installation of new technology has enabled the district to keep pace with changes in instructional practice.

The community foundation, the Pope Foundation and the town government of Eastchester have made contributions to offset the costs of capital projects.

The Tuckahoe school campus is beautifully located in a convenient and safe setting, generally free from heavy traffic and designed to be safe for play and other student activities.

Basic security systems are in place in both major buildings.

NEEDS

It is important to monitor any long term shifts in demographic projections which could have an impact on building capacity…at the K-5 building there is the perception that space is already becoming tight with concerns over the smallness of the auditorium and parking lot in particular.

Carefully monitor the capacity in the secondary buildings where there are concerns over the size of both the cafeteria and gymnasium being too small.

It was mentioned in one focus group that the fitness machines in the secondary building are in need of some repair.
The high school/middle school would benefit from the subdivision and creation of additional conference space for meetings.

There is inconsistency of air conditioning installation in the newly renovated secondary building and also many water fountains do not supply cool water.

There is inadequate professional work space for teachers in the middle/high schools (Note: an area just off the second floor library would be available for such a use as has been suggested by the librarian there).

Bathroom renovations in both buildings would be highly desirable.

Installation of wifi is needed.

Soundproofing is needed between rooms 206 and 208 in the secondary buildings.

Install hand cleaning dispensers which are inconsistently provided in classrooms.

There are lapses in security coverage during the early a.m. and late p.m. in the secondary buildings and problems of coverage at times throughout the day.

Parking lots need improved lighting in some areas.

The district should be sure to lower and take in the American flag each day or alternatively ensure that lights are kept on it throughout the evening in accordance with national protocol.

There are safety concerns for the student tech crews who work on scaffolds in the ceiling area of the high school auditorium during theatrical productions and other events (Note: Alternative access on sound footing would be available from the second floor from which students could work without danger).

Check to see if outdoor security cameras are efficiently and correctly set to cover access points surrounding the secondary buildings.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

Many of these items could be covered as part of the annual budget and simply need to be addressed.

Some of these items would be candidates pending feasibility studies for future capital project bonds.

Some of these items are simply reminders of what needs to be repaired or better maintained on an ongoing basis.

These findings would also suggest that demographic studies be continuously updated and enrollment monitored in the event that there might ever be a future concern with respect to current capacity becoming inadequate in years ahead.
Some of these items have already been identified as candidate projects for a grant currently under consideration by the board.

Some of these items are simply reminders of what needs to be repaired or better maintained on an ongoing basis.

Some of these items would be candidates for inclusion in a future capital bonds project.

These findings would also suggest that demographic studies be continuously updated and enrollment monitored in the event that there might be a future concern that current capacity becomes inadequate in future years.

**ADDITIONAL FOCUS GROUP COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS**

The Cottle school bathrooms are not well maintained or kept clean as they should be.

Cottle school desperately needs to be placed on a regular painting schedule a.s.a.p…according to some focus group members there are classrooms and other spaces that have not been painted in anyone’s memory or well more than one or two decades at least.

More monitors are needed at Cottle during bus drop off and pick up which is a safety concern.

Add “scroll back” option to security cameras so security personnel can more effectively monitor who is entering or leaving the building at all times…especially a concern at Cottle.

The high school kitchen cooking area is reportedly very unclean and the caterer needs to address it…special concerns with regard to the use and reuse of cooking fat was expressed.

Extend the required time for the secondary nurse to stay after school as a health and safety concern.

Add electrical dryers to school bathrooms to reduce pipe blockages and cut back on paper expense.
VIII. COMMUNITY RELATIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS

COMMENDATIONS

The Tuckahoe school community is small and close nit

There are a number of community resources that are very supportive and engaged in the Tuckahoe schools…these include but are not limited to The Pope Foundation, The Community Educational Foundation, the various homeowners organizations, the town governments of Eastchester and Tuckahoe, the Parent Teachers along with a number of other support groups

In general, members of the larger school community have high regard for the Tuckahoe schools which are a source of community pride

The Tuckahoe schools are a selling point with respect to property values and home purchases according to local realtors

Parents appreciate the new emergency notification system

New technology and media are starting to be used to keep the parents and larger community informed about what is happening in the Tuckahoe schools

The schools have a reputation as caring places where students are less likely to “fall between the cracks” than in larger schools

School facilities, especially the playing fields are shared between the town and the school system for recreational and sports activities and in this way the schools serve as a gathering place for the larger community

NEEDS

Communications from the schools may sometimes need to be more clear and accurately written according to some focus group participants who noted that some correspondence coming from the schools contained spelling and grammatical errors and/or they used too much educational jargon and unexplained acronyms that parents would not necessarily know the meaning of

The district needs to improve its website and ensure that emails and phone calls are returned by teachers and others in a reasonably timely fashion, with some parent message responses being delayed or not being returned at all

It is perceived that expanded student involvement in the larger community should be encouraged such as a student community service program other schools provide
Guidelines and reasonable expectations for home/school communications have not been made clear.

Community knowledge about the schools is often informed by informal means of communications including rumors.

It is felt that there is a great deal of misinformation and misunderstanding about the schools in the larger community with information about the schools too often relying on word-of-mouth.

Special events and other programs are sometimes canceled or postponed without clear notice or any explanation.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

Designate a representative parent teacher task force to establish guidelines for home/school communications, including email and web page…implement distribution of consistent standards for parents and teachers to follow and with the Board’s review and approval adopt a consistent policy based on these guidelines.

Improve information posted and access to information on district and school websites.

Enhance use of local access cable television by increasing student produced programming and established video links.

Explore expanded use of school facilities by surveying the senior citizen community to identify activities they may be of interest to them.

Develop new ways to showcase student achievement at board meetings and throughout the larger school community using the website and local access television.

Principals should work with faculty and staff to ensure that information sent home from their buildings is clearly and accurately expressed.

Schools should rely on formal communications such as newsletters to also keep parents and other community members well informed with respect to what is going on in their schools.

A parent/teacher conference program should be established at the secondary level that facilitates individual teacher parent meetings on student progress following the open house early in the fall but prior to the new year. …many excellent public and private schools follow this model and the district should explore best practices in neighboring schools to develop its own model to follow in Tuckahoe.

A new student community service requirement for students is encouraged similar to what so many other excellent schools in the area provide.
ADDITIONAL FOCUS GROUP COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS

- Report cards should be standards based
- Need more timely progress reports
- The district needs a better image
- Some phone calls and emails for teachers and administrators are not returned in a timely manner if at all
- Communications from the schools sometimes contain mistakes
- Tenor of the times in Tuckahoe promotes misunderstanding which leads to teacher bashing
- All of us have a stake in putting out accurate information about what is really going on in our schools
- The school system must be prepared to accept constructive criticism when it is valid and embrace it to generate improvement
- Some parents complain that student work is not always sent home and they don’t get to see it
- Some parent expectations with respect to school communications seems to be unreasonable considering everything else teachers are required to do
- Utilize the new student alert system to remind parents of important programs and events
IX. FINANCE

COMMENDATIONS

The Tuckahoe schools are in compliance with state auditing requirements
The budget is managed to make sure that codes match actual expenditure needs
The budget for next year is being developed with the new state cap requirements in mind
The district finances have been managed in a prudent manner with respect to anticipating unanticipated costs such as maintaining a substantial certiorari fund balance reserve
Budget management is conducted in a transparent manner
The district looks for ways to be cost efficient such as shared costs programs including but not limited to shared summer school, transportation services, professional development with other districts and a number of BOCES services
Residency concerns have been addressed through new registration procedures
The district works closely with local governments to share costs when appropriate
The district works closely with local foundations
The district takes advantage of state grants and federal funding where it is available

NEEDS

All school and community stake holders need to be made fully aware of the implications of the state cap and voting procedures
The district needs to avoid any mixed signals with respect to its current financial limitations and find ways to be even more transparent moving forward
A sense of shared sacrifice needs to be promoted while also finding alternative ways to keep critical instructional areas alive during the forthcoming period of financial constraint
More than ever the district will need to find the best balance between spending what the educational program needs and what taxpayers can be asked to pay in this challenging economic period
The faculty and staff, administrators, the unions and board in consultation with the general public need to work together to develop new ways of addressing educational needs in a time of fiscal austerity
RECOMMENDATIONS

Promote greater awareness of the new state budget cap among all stake holder groups to ensure that there is general understanding…by embarking on public information presentations and any other activities as may be deemed useful to this purpose

Identify any additional ways that may be found to make budget information materials even more transparent and detailed in support of more thorough understanding in the larger school community

Identify any new ways as may be available to find long-term savings…with everything on the table

Continue to work with local governments, foundations and other support groups to find additional sources of revenue in support of sustaining or enhancing priority school services and programs

Sustain and look to expand cost sharing agreements with neighboring school districts and the BOCES programs

The budget building process should be extremely thorough and aimed at finding cost efficiencies and savings...with operations reviewed from a cost benefit analysis perspective

Develop internal projections of long term future costs and budgets as a guide to annual financial planning

ADDITIONAL FOCUS GROUP COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS

There is concern over the loss of students to private schools …make students and parents aware of the value of attending Tuckahoe schools

In response to financial limits, and a spirit of shared sacrifice…the school and community will have to work closely together during the upcoming period of fiscal constraints

When I retire from Tuckahoe, I will have to sell my home and move elsewhere since I will not be able to pay the taxes on my home - stated one participant

As property assessments continue to decline, it will be necessary to reduce the numbers of employees working in the public sector

Find ways to keep excellent teachers despite the fiscal crunch

Transparency and a consistent and accurate message of school financial status is needed
X. DISTRICT LEADERSHIP

COMMENDATIONS

New board members and board leadership is taking a long range view of the Tuckahoe schools with a focus on improving teaching and learning where feasible, notwithstanding the fiscal constraints confronting the district at the present time.

The three new board members elected this past year, comprising a 60% change in the composition of the board; along with the retirement of the longstanding recently retired former superintendent, has prompted members of the school community to take a fresh look at how the Tuckahoe schools can be improved as they move into the future.

This desire to examine ways to improve the Tuckahoe schools builds on the shoulders of the former administration, past board members and continuing efforts of an outstanding faculty and staff whose collective efforts are reflected throughout this report under the heading of commendations in each section.

NEEDS

Members of various focus groups expressed concern over the perceived tension that seem to exist at times between the board and teachers union, such that parents sometimes feel caught in the middle.

It was also brought up in various focus groups that toward the end of last year and the start of this year board public discourse was at times disrespectful at public meetings, although it has improved as of late.

The board could spend more time at its public meetings discussing educational issues—the discussion on student test performance held earlier this year, for example, was a welcome session and frequently mentioned as an improvement with respect to board priorities.

Concern was expressed in a number of different focus groups with respect to the loss of teacher leadership roles and loss of some administrative positions as well.

The need for a long range or strategic improvement plan was identified.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In the context of so much recent change, the board members would likely benefit from a self-assessment and operational review such as those provided by the New York State School Boards Association to establish operational ground rules and help to improve their performance.
The district needs to mobilize for a series of new state mandates which will require administrative and faculty leadership which the board will need to monitor and approve to ensure these required changes are carried out in ways that will benefit the school districts in the following ways:

- **RESPONSE TO INTERVENTION (RTI)** needs to be in place to facilitate early identification and response to students struggling in reading and/or math in the general education classroom.

- Units of study must be developed to align with the new national and state COMMON CORE STANDARDS which are going to be required that will be more rigorous, focused and designed to ensure all students in New York State are ready for college and careers.

- The new state ANNUAL PROFESSIONAL PERFORMANCE REVIEW (APPR) as required in consultation with the teachers union, will need to be reviewed and adopted and the faculty and staff prepared to work with them as an integral part of future observations and evaluations…this will also be an opportunity to ensure that the plan will be aligned with current thinking and best practice in the field of supervision.

The current role of Site Based Teams as they have evolved in Tuckahoe is inconsistent with respect to the roles they play…which needs to be reviewed and clarified moving forward.

The criteria and methodology of how administrators are reviewed and evaluated needs to be addressed and implemented this year in further compliance of the new state mandate.

Review the current organization chart and administrative titles for the purpose of clarifying roles and clearly defining who does what and to whom do they report which needs to be updated.

Take this opportunity to reshuffle the administrative deck in that some positions need to be more clearly defined and in some cases administrative functions are too splintered to be effective.

Several important areas of administrative responsibility are not adequately addressed or realistic with respect to job description overload such as special education, athletic director, secondary dean of students or discipline and curriculum over sight, with the result that these areas frequently are mentioned in focus groups as areas that need focus and improvement (Note: In some cases administrators are not certified or otherwise do not have the experience in areas they are supervising even though that would seem to be a prerequisite for the appointment to these roles).
The district is currently served by an interim superintendent. With this in mind, focus groups were asked what traits should be sought in selecting the next permanent superintendent with this resulting list of what to look for in a new superintendent:

- Visionary and strategic thinker
- Outgoing personality who reaches out to all stakeholders
- Visible and supportive
- Can hold people accountable
- Has all the required experience
- Has energy and enthusiasm
- Is an instructional and curriculum leader
- An excellent communicator
- Cares about students
- Is a motivator
- Skilled in professional development
- Knows finance and can deal with financial challenges
- Comes from outside the Tuckahoe district and is not connected with anyone in it in any way (stated as an absolute requirement by many!)
- Skilled in technology and supports its use in teaching and learning
- Has new ideas
- Listens respectfully and responsively to all
- Knows how to negotiate fairly and effectively
- Is fair, ethical and honest
- A community builder
- Supports faculty and staff
The board asked to elicit from focus groups their opinions on whether two new board member positions should be added to the Tuckahoe board so that it would increase from five to seven members. When this was discussed in focus groups there were an equal number of positive and negative responses. Those who liked the idea thought that it would generate more diversity of opinion which would be a healthy development. They also thought it would prevent concerns that the board might otherwise be given to “inside decision making” and a sort of club atmosphere being so small. On the other hand, there were strong views that being as small as Tuckahoe, five representatives should be more than sufficient to represent community views. Also, quite often it may be difficult to find a 6th or 7th candidate who would be qualified or have sufficient interest and dedication to serve. I can say that in the groups where this was discussed that the opinions were about evenly divided. There was also a view that the board itself would be best to decide as they are in a better position to determine what they need to do operationally.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS

What is the district doing to prepare for the new state mandates?

We need to offer more challenging courses for the high school such as expanded advanced placement courses

The board should spend more time examining academic programs in its public sessions

The board should expand its membership from 5 to 7 members

The board should keep its membership at 5

The new board brings energy and is off to a good start!
XII. SUMMARY

The Tuckahoe schools enjoy many advantages other schools do not have. Chief among these is that Tuckahoe is a small school district situated in a very caring community. Teachers care about their students, arriving early to school and staying late and keeping parents in the loop about their children. There is a friendly school climate and Tuckahoe provides a wonderful setting for teaching and learning. Teachers are also accessible for extra help, as mentioned repeatedly by students themselves. Bonds between faculty, staff and the students are very strong and positive.

Where the system excels as it relates to a positive and caring school climate, it is also found to be lacking in terms of fundamental systems that are not in place and/or are inconsistently implemented. Examples of these failed or dysfunctional systems include the faculty supervision or evaluation program, where there are gaps in K-5 observation and evaluation records. In a number of cases these observations were simply not completed as the contract and good practice would require. Professional development has not been properly planned or targeted to address school priorities. Recruitment and hiring practices and protocols have not always been adequately thorough or have been insufficiently extensive. Examples of hiring based on familiarity rather than merit was mentioned many times. There is a lack of mentoring and questions about procedures in granting tenure were raised in many focus groups. These fundamental policies, practices and protocols are critical to school success and improvement.

With respect to curriculum, it is noted there are number of successful systems are in place and commendable initiatives to expand curriculum and update it as we have identified. The greatest concern with respect to curriculum is a lack of consistency in what is taught when comparing different teachers even on the same grade level and subject matter. This lack of consistency of what curriculum is covered is enabled by the aforementioned failures of the supervision system and the failures of professional and curriculum development. There needs to be more articulation K-12 too. In addition, many of the focus group members expressed their concerns about what is a perceived lack of rigor and insufficient challenge for students. There were also complaints that text books are dated or not used at all. Parents also felt that they did not have access to existing curricula which they would like to help their students and they also were not given opportunities for input. They also lacked understanding of the philosophy behind the curriculum changes. Focus group participants, including students themselves, felt there should be a greater emphasis on reading and writing. There should be greater emphasis on the classics rather than dumbing down the core curriculum. It was also felt that library collections should be more closely linked to curriculum and need to be updated.
Members of more than one focus group felt that expectations of students should be higher. A positive aspect of the Tuckahoe school system is that it embraces student diversity. As a practical matter, however, many focus group members felt that diversity of the student body contributed to the teaching strategy of “teaching to the middle” while neglecting high need students and gifted students who were to be found outside the lines of the “middle”. More needs to be done, instead, to differentiate instruction. Staff development in this area would be very important. Greater use of technology, for example, would provide flexible groupings within the classroom to meet various student needs. Extended time scheduling would also be important.

There were many concerns expressed with respect to special needs students from the Special Education Parent Teachers Association (SEPTA). A lengthy list of needs is included in this report. Since there are so many formidable challenges to meet in improving special education, it is recommended that the director develop a plan to address these issues and that a report be made to the board with progress reports to follow. For advanced or gifted students, as well as special needs students, the district should seek opportunities to provide more enrichment and supplemental programs where fiscally feasible beyond the regular school day and school year, while also emphasizing more differentiation of instruction in all classrooms. All students should be challenged and supported to be the best students they can be.

With respect to student life, the district does provide an outstanding athletic program. There is a high level of student participation in extra-activities in general. The program would be enhanced by increasing activities to include extensions of the academic program such as restoring a school newspaper, a debate team and adding a student service requirement at the high school. While Tuckahoe students are no more badly behaved than other schools, behavioral issues such as use of inappropriate language, drug and alcohol use, bullying (cyber and otherwise) do exist on the secondary level. Discipline is administered in a triage fashion and not given the full time and attention that is required. This needs to be addressed by adding a dean of student role and taking other steps to reinforce higher behavior standards. The high school cafeteria should also be expanded or additional lunch periods and monitors added to address the issue of student displacement. Mingling of high school and middle schools was also bought up as a concern. Efforts need to be continued along with separate programs expanded to maintain a separate identity for the middle school students who are housed in the same building as the high school.

Student outcomes do reflect well in general on Tuckahoe compared with other schools, but need to be improved in some areas. To achieve the district’s now stated goals of helping more students to achieve performance at mastery level on state tests, the faculty will need to make greater use of data analysis. This can be used to identify areas
of performance weakness and then modifying curriculum and instruction accordingly. Many teachers have been trained on how to use data analysis, but the district must take the next step by applying these skills to actually help student performance improve. Suggestions to improve college advisement services will help students to enhance application strategies. The board should pay more time and attention to these and other academic issues.

With respect to technology, the recent integration of smartboards though out the district has helped to dramatically improve instruction. Technology in general is effectively used by faculty and administrators as a communication tool and to perform a wide range of other teaching tasks. The guidance program is currently starting to use the naviance system. Technology is being used effectively as a research tool as well across the curriculum.

Still, expanded application of technology needs to be promoted. Inconsistent use with respect to websites, communications functions, and as a teaching tool is an issue. The buildings lack wi-fi capacity, and there are no benchmarks or common standards for students or staff with respect to technology use. It is important that a functioning technology committee become more active in moving technology use and plans forward and expand applications in the classroom.

There is a lot to praise about the district’s facilities. The many recent renovations have been cause of celebration. Moving forward, space needs will have to be monitored closely as some spaces are becoming more crowded. This report also identifies a number of health, safety and security issues which need to be addressed as part of regular maintenance and/or a future capital bond project. The Tuckahoe community is very supportive of its schools. Parents are also very much involved in the schools. A variety of support organizations, including the Pope Foundation and the Community Foundation have generously given much needed financial support to enhance the annual budget.

A number of ways to improve communications and community relations were brought up in focus groups. The need to improve the content on both the district and classroom websites was frequently mentioned. The recently added use of an emergency alarm system was mentioned as a great addition to the communications system. Like the website, it was felt more could be done with the local public access cable channel. It was fondly recalled that there used to be more student programming including a student news show in the past. Some clarification is needed as to the appropriate level of communications to be expected between the parents and the schools. Some teachers expressed concerns that demands from parents to be kept in the loop can at times become too much to expect. On the other hand parent involvement is important to student success and many parents would like more information from the school rather than less. It has been suggested that a parent teacher task force be established to review these positions
and then develop a communications standards report to be used as a future guide with respect to reasonable communications practices that can be expected to be consistently followed in response to both teacher and parent needs.

With respect to finance, the Tuckahoe schools continue to take steps to ensure that they are in full compliance with all the new state auditing requirements. They prudently have established an ample certiorari fund balance reserve. The biggest challenge facing the schools will now be to comply with the state budget cap. The district is preparing to meet this challenge in the current budget cycle. The central administration is urged to go to extra lengths to explain to all faculty, staff and the larger school community what the implications are for Tuckahoe with respect to the cap. It will require a shared sense of sacrifice and an understanding that everything must be put on the table as part of the budget process to deal with this major fiscal restraint requirement. It is also recommended that the school finances become even more transparent to make all stakeholders more aware of the school’s budget practices.

In this period of fiscal constraint, the largely new board and administration is facing a set of serious challenges. This comes at a time when the state has also set forth a number of new mandates that are discussed in the report. With all this happening, the board and administration are encouraged to examine its current organizational chart and rearrange the deck so that responsibilities are more clearly defined and staffed appropriately with administrators who have background in areas they oversee. It is important that areas such as curriculum leadership, special education, and student management are adequately resourced.

The focus groups were very clear about what to look for in a new superintendent as described in the report. The combination of new board members and new board leadership along with new district leadership is an opportunity to take a fresh look at Tuckahoe’s challenges and desire to improve. The mutually supportive efforts of the board and administration, teachers, parents, community leaders and even the students themselves will be critical to the district’s success and future improvement. It is hoped this report will also be helpful to all concerned in moving the district forward and providing future success for the Tuckahoe schools.
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**December 2011**

As of December 15, 2011
TUCKAHOE NEEDS ASSESSMENT

December 3, 2011

There will be three questions that will be applied to each category of school performance as follows:

1. What do you like?
2. What would like improved?
3. What if anything would you like to be done to improve?

TUCKAHOE SCHOOLS CATEGORIES OF PERFORMANCE FOR DISCUSSION PURPOSES


b. CURRICULUM: How do you like the curriculum in the Tuckahoe schools? Sample indicators: The alignment of curriculum, instruction and assessment? Scope of course offerings? Covers what every student should be expected to know in today’s world? The curriculum is current and relevant? Is it rigorous? The sequence is based on building blocks which enable student growth toward mastery? Other?

c. STUDENT EXPECTATIONS: How do you like the expectations of students as set forth by the school? Sample indicators: The school expects each student to perform at the highest standards that may be required? Special education students are given the supports they need to learn and grow and achieve academic goals? Support systems are in place to assist all students to be successful in school? Students have access to extra help? The brightest academic students are challenged and held to higher standards? Other?

d. STUDENT LIFE: How do you like the quality of student life in the Tuckahoe schools? Sample Indicators: The school system provides a safe and caring place
where students respect one another and behave well? Positive and respectful student behavior is the norm in Tuckahoe schools which is encouraged and enforced as needed? There are a number of clubs, sports, arts and other activities that make it possible for all students to develop and pursue their interests and talents? The Tuckahoe schools are friendly places where it is easy for students to make friends and connect with their peers and teachers? Other?

e. STUDENT OUTCOMES: How well do students achieve their goals and objectives? Sample Indicators: Students perform well on required high stakes testing and compare well with or better than similar school districts? The graduation rates are high? Student career and college placement rates match well with student goals and community expectations? Other?

f. TEACHING TOOLS & TECHNOLOGIES: How do you like the use and application of technology and other new learning tools in the Tuckahoe schools? Sample Indicators: Technology teaching tools are used in classrooms at all levels to help improve the quality of instruction? All students have access to computers and other technologies for research tools and to do assignments? There is consistent integration of computers in classrooms? Teachers have access to computers and other technology teaching tools and receive required training? Student and teacher benchmarks are clearly defined? Other?

g. FACILITIES: How do you like the facilities in the Tuckahoe schools? Sample Indicators: Facilities are adequate to house student enrollment? The buildings and grounds meet student developmental needs at each level? There is adequate technology infrastructure? Appropriate security systems are in place? All facilities are well maintained and healthy? Facilities at all levels include adequate library and technology center space? Other?

h. COMMUNITY RELATIONS: How do you like the schools’ communications practices? Sample Indicators: The schools keep parents and the larger school community well informed with respect to plans, achievements, student performance, problems, emergencies and other important information? Parents and students are kept well informed of student progress and are effectively engaged in constructive ways to support improvement? The schools make effective utilization of community resources in terms of supporting educational programs? Students are given opportunities to be contributing members of the larger school community? New media are used as part of the home and school communications? Other?
i. **FINANCE:** How do you like the way school finances are managed? Sample Indicators: School finances are managed efficiently and effectively? Total school costs are consistent with both what the educational system requires and the community can be reasonably expected to pay in taxes? Budgets are well planned and based upon sufficient school and community input? School finance is handled in a transparent way? There is adequate involvement in the budget development process by members of the school system and larger community? There is long range budget planning? All alternative sources of revenue such as foundations, grants, etc are tapped to supplement taxes? Other?

j. **SCHOOL LEADERSHIP & GOVERNANCE:** How do you like the leadership and governance of the Tuckahoe schools? Sample Indicators: Parents and community leaders are appropriately engaged in the Tuckahoe schools? There are opportunities for teacher leadership and teachers are involved in management decisions? Principals and other school administrators play key leadership roles? School leaders and the school board have strategic or long range vision of how to improve the Tuckahoe schools? The school board maintains its focus on the schools and how to improve the educational program of the students? Students have an appropriate role in school governance? Other?

k. **ROLE OF THE SUPERINENDENT:** What qualities, experience, skills and any other pertinent traits do you think are most important to find in selecting a new superintendent? What kind of leader are we looking for?

l. **OTHER:** Are there any other observations you have about the Tuckahoe school system that you like? Dislike? Or want to see improved?