

Constantine Public Schools “Strengthening Our Schools” Results

The board wishes to thank all those who participated in the Strengthening Our Schools (S.O.S.) sessions from September – December and to those who continue to work on this committee—old and new. This was the beginning of a new process that the board hopes will develop greater connectivity with all groups in Constantine. We would also like to thank Kent Roberts and Jay Newman for their dedication and direction in beginning this process.

The following information includes the results from each of the meetings—September, November, and December.

September meeting	pages 2-6
November meeting	pages 7- 8
December meeting	page 9

September 30, 2006

This was the first in a series of three meetings held with Kent Roberts in order to begin to strengthen our schools. These people were picked at random. The only criterion was to have representation from as many groups (school, student, parent, community, etc.) as possible. Participants were in small groups and Mr. Roberts posed questions in which the groups discussed and reported out on. These groups were rotated many times.

Fixing	Building
☞ Ho hum/ boring	☞ Team Oriented
☞ Why did we let it go	☞ Exciting
☞ Maintaining status quo	☞ Different understanding
☞ Reactive	☞ Proactive
☞ Unknowns	☞ Fresh
☞ Takes more of a diverse skill level (inner workings)	☞ Blueprint or plan
☞ Broken to begin with	☞ Visionary thinking
☞ More unknowns - not a clear path	☞ Making something new
☞ Band aide	☞ Adding on to something that's already there
☞ Old	☞ Building trust/ a relationship
☞ Harder to do than to build	☞ Easier to do than fix
☞ Show a weakness	☞ Inspiration
☞ Frustration	☞ Moral booster
☞ Negative	
☞ Salvaging	
☞ Never as good as new	
☞ Tradition may interfere with progress	

Skill Sets for Fixing	Skill Sets for Building
☞ Seat of the pants mindset	☞ Change in thinking
☞ Firefighting	☞ Goal-oriented
☞ Scarcity	☞ Abundance
☞ Acceptance or recognition of a problem	☞ Communication!
☞ Flexible	☞ Strict & rigid
☞ Communication?	☞ Team effort
☞ Diverse/ Creative	☞ Need more expertise
☞ Need to fix before you can build	
☞ Listening skills	
☞ Adaptive	
☞ Patience	
☞ Better problem solving skills	

Other Ideas that supported this (fixing vs. building):

- 👉 You only build on what you share
- 👉 Change is scary, there is apprehension
- 👉 Pride-defensiveness
- 👉 You just have to do it...and believe
- 👉 How do we plan for the positives?
- 👉 Create opportunities for people to give and to participate
- 👉 Everyone has the ability to be a change agent
- 👉 Human connection is the foundation of success in implementation
- 👉 Change today, is it a constant or an exception
- 👉 Are designed for change because change is a constant.
- 👉 We must create a sense of belong with our school district.
- 👉 People only hear what they understand
- 👉 The power of a circle
- 👉 If you are not a learning community, you will not last for long
- 👉 By celebrating what's right, it gives us the energy to fix the things that need to be
- 👉 Coaching should be in the appreciative instead of the negative
- 👉 Focus more on relationships that brick and mortar
- 👉 If you always do what you've always done, then you'll always get what you always got
- 👉 Toyota concept+ innovation and quality vs GM = you fail; you're in trouble. We need to create a fail-safe environment. If you are not failing then you are not striving toward innovation
- 👉 We learn through failing

When it works, why does it?

Connectivity
 Vision – not by accident
 Atmosphere
 Common goals
 Caring
 Ownership
 Volunteerism
 Sustainability
 Familiarity
 Create an opportunity to give Leadership
 (collective)
 Consistency
 Sense of security
 Ownership and pride
 Support
 Caring for each other
 Showing value
 Change in conditions
 Common goals
 Tradition
 “I can do it” attitude
 Excitement
 Collective thoughts
 Long-term commitment
 Evaluation/maintenance
 Belonging
 Positive problem solving
 Non-threatening environment Sacrifice

Hope – that we can impact kids
 Presentation/delivery of message

Continual, clear, constant
 communication
 Never-ending communication

Communication – when people are
 informed
 Face-to-face intentional communication

Caring about others and showing it
 Strong sense of investment in the
 community
 People want to be a part of something
 successful
 People being treated professionally and
 respectfully
 Identifying people’s strengths and
 weaknesses on the team
 Having a good plan – bring everyone in
 on the plan
 Making our time together in meetings a
 priority because it is good for kids

Compromise
 Intentional process
 Teamwork
 Common vision
 Leaders and equality
 Strong leadership
 Working together
 Similar goal/mission
 Open mindedness
 Diversity of age groups
 Concentrate on the positive
 Attitude of success
 People feeling valued
 No naming and blaming

What can we do to create more things that work?

- 👉 Create opportunities to meet in small groups
- 👉 Create shared ownership
- 👉 Be more forgiving
- 👉 Allow all stakeholders to voice their opinions

Things we could do right now

- 👉 Regular meetings between school and community groups
- 👉 Parent focus group
- 👉 More forums for input - small groups
- 👉 Create formal and informal networks
- 👉 Word of mouth - get the good news out!
- 👉 Communicate “plans” better between agencies/businesses
- 👉 Identify informal and formal “coffee” networks
- 👉 Basic parent & community member classes on Internet use
- 👉 Honor the heroes
- 👉 Recognize success, formally and informally
- 👉 Recognize contributions
- 👉 Journalism class participation
- 👉 Better communication before the event not a summary after the event.
- 👉 Catch people in the act - give more recognition, positive reinforcement

Things we could do soon

- 👉 Visit other communities to see what good things they are doing
- 👉 District newsletter
- 👉 Get more people involved - extend and expect the invitation
- 👉 Parenting fairs
- 👉 Community events held in each of our “communities”
- 👉 Invite more communication
- 👉 Involve all stakeholders
- 👉 Newspaper placements/articles/pictures
- 👉 Flyers
- 👉 Create a directory of committees in the community and district
- 👉 Pride day fall and spring - expand it
- 👉 Deliver newsletters to local businesses for people to pick up
- 👉 Updated WEB site
- 👉 Maintain and foster a relationship with the media
- 👉 Big Brothers Big Sister program
- 👉 Taste of Constantine set up all around the track or tied into conferences

Things we could do in the future

- ☞ Reach out to all parts of our community (boundaries)
- ☞ Academic focus
- ☞ Tech school
- ☞ Evaluate hours of operation of school and of our extra activities to ensure that it accommodates all shareholders.
- ☞ Eliminate names, financial status and social status
- ☞ Monthly bring a dish to pass outing, not a meeting but a social event
- ☞ Ask the questions - What do we need to do? What are or should we be doing to improve or Serve better?
- ☞ More Staff
- ☞ More resources
- ☞ Partnerships with village and private sector
- ☞ Expand the Excellence committee
- ☞ Local businesses advertise in newsletter
- ☞ Dedicated media person - full-time public relations “connectivity” person
- ☞ Safe haven of kids - youth center
- ☞ Incorporate all villages, have events in other towns, not always in Constantine
- ☞ Senior Citizen/Student “night out” - Reading month, Veterans Day event, ect.
- ☞ After School club with businesses and service clubs pooling their resources.
- ☞ Develop a “Saferoutestoschool.org” program in our community
- ☞ Back to school gift for all employees
- ☞ Vision statement to all buildings and that vision embedded in school improvement meetings
- ☞ Open up district once a month so senior citizens can get together - excellence committee?
- ☞ Mentoring at an earlier age
- ☞ Workshops
- ☞ Family School Days Community Picnic Day

November 16, 2006

This was the second meeting held. This session was different in that each group—students, community/village, staff, and parents—met as individual groups with Mr. Roberts. Each of these groups helped to provide invaluable information.

Student session

Why do the good things work?

- ☞ Hands on activities/ classes—arts, CTE, Science labs
- ☞ Some courses allow for escape with an emphasis on likes (band)
- ☞ Sports—fun teamwork, exercise, social, exercise, discipline
- ☞ Football—discipline (pushed to excel, practice to master our weak areas, carry over into life) & motivation (connection to coach)
- ☞ Business classes—connection to real life
- ☞ Elementary Mentoring allows us to help others/ feel valued
- ☞ Lunch—break from stress
- ☞ Leadership—working together/ student senate
- ☞ College credit
- ☞ Trimesters fewer classes per day but opportunity to earn extra credits
- ☞ Fun subjects—teacher involved, excited, and enthusiastic
- ☞ P.E. something different

<i>Learning</i>	<i>vs.</i>	<i>Education</i>
☞ Begins on day 1 of life		☞ classroom
☞ Teachers go the extra step to help us understand		☞ Teachers do
☞ Understanding		☞ Teachers get paid to do
☞ Something you do		☞ Something you get from learning
☞ Skills/ pieces		☞ Pieces all together (well rounded)
☞ Comprehension/ applies to the real world		☞ Requirements for school
☞ What you learn/ what you know		☞ Book smarts
☞ Want to		☞ Have too!

Number one priorities for school

- ☞ Hands on demonstrations
- ☞ Interesting material
- ☞ Hands on/ visual
- ☞ Discussion
- ☞ Hands on less book work
- ☞ Enthusiastic teachers
- ☞ *Relationship between teacher & student* (“if I am not cared about, why should I care about your class!”)
- ☞ Trust (mutual, respect, have faith in me, human connection, caring & rigor)
- ☞ Willingness/ open to questions and answers
- ☞ *Relevant* to the real world
- ☞ Resources

Suggestions

- 👉 More class options
- 👉 Dump unessential materials—Shakespeare
- 👉 7 periods = more electives????
- 👉 Math in the LGI—specific help from teachers Time for help
- 👉 Re-evaluated graduation requirements
 - Start with best interest of students
 - Innovative

Community/ Village Session

This session was different in format from others held this day. Mr. Roberts provided information on educational changes and research findings on education communities. A few questions were posed to the audience for input and a sheet requesting information was provided. Only 1 sheet was returned with comments.

Staff Session

- 👉 Teachers feeling threatened by actions of the board—threatens students success
- 👉 Allocation of funds—threatens student success
- 👉 Disconnect between funding allocation and what is good for kids!
- 👉 Lack of communication and trust
- 👉 Lack of respect & dignity
- 👉 Needs are ignored—classroom supplies, salary/steps, maintaining insurance
- 👉 Perception—favored projects
- 👉 WE LOVE THIS SCHOOL? KIDS? COMMUNITY our hearts are here that is why we are angry
- 👉 Staying here is hurting our family. How will constant revolving door affect our kids?
- 👉 Board needs to acknowledge effort i.e. show some humanity
- 👉 Quality of connectivity between school board & staff is very poor ~45 years ago
- 👉 School board runs the district by micromanaging
- 👉 Cannot keep good principals here

Evening Session

- 👉 Trust village, schools, etc.
- 👉 Communication (district newsletter, update website...)
- 👉 Lack of parent support

We discussed the need for

- 👉 open communication
- 👉 respect & dignity
- 👉 inclusive
- 👉 transparent
- 👉 Intentional systems

December 7, 2006

On Thursday, December 7, 2006 the final session with Kent Roberts and Jay Newman was held. There were 44 participants from the district and community in attendance. While this was the final session with the presenters, the school board wishes to continue this process in an effort to strengthen our schools. Eight of these participants expressed an interest in joining the original S.O.S. committee. In January, the S.O.S. committee will reconvene to develop an action plan and to address future meetings.

This meeting was somewhat different in format from previous meetings, but all were welcomed. Each of the participants from the September 30 meeting extended an invitation to 5 people. In addition, each building sign included invitation to the December meeting as well as announcements were placed in newspapers and on the radio.

The following information emerged.

- 👉 Thinking/problem solving vs. tests
- 👉 Establishing sustainable relationships
- 👉 Accountability at all levels
- 👉 Having a vision/ all on same page
 - Collective that we can all buy into
- 👉 Critical thinking
- 👉 The disconnect of what is said and what is actually done
- 👉 Establish trust and communication
 - Connectivity
- 👉 Need to have the right priorities
 - Alignment
- 👉 Common vision & goals
- 👉 Adapting teaching methods
- 👉 Money/ funding concerns
- 👉 Connectivity between community and schools
- 👉 Respect and trust (or the lack of)