

Project Flow Chart



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Bertie 2008: STRATEGICALLY PLANNING FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

"It takes a lot of courage to release the familiar and seemingly secure, to embrace the new. But there is no real security in what is no longer meaningful. There is more security in the adventurous and exciting, for in movement there is life, and in change there is power".

Alan Cohen

This report is a culmination of determination and many hours of hard work. The citizens of Bertie County embarked on this ambitious project to prepare the county for the 21^{st} century. This report describes the goals and strategies we must pursue immediately to be the economically viable, well-educated and prosperous community we want to be in the year 2008.

To begin the process of planning for the future of Bertie County, the *Bertie County Commissioners* initiated a new project in 2001 entitled: Bertie 2008 - Strategically Planning for the 21st Century. The Board believed that in order for this project to be successful, there needed to be effective and active citizen participation. In January of 2001 the Bertie County Commissioners conducted Town Hall meetings throughout the County, which were well attended. These meetings gave citizens the opportunity to express their concerns, grievances and needs within the county. An Executive Steering Committee was formed, composed of citizens from throughout the county to oversee the development, creation, and implementation of the 2008 Project. This dedicated group of talented individuals making up the 2008 Steering Committee became the guiding force behind the Project.

The 2008 Committee employed the highly respected community-planning tool called "strategic planning". Like most planning models, strategic planning requires the analysis of a great amount of data to see the "big picture" the community. However, its strength lies in using the insight and knowledge of community residents to focus community efforts, in order to arrive at a succinct list of strategies that are most likely to be accomplished and most likely to have the highest impact within the foreseeable future.

A list of five major issues was developed as a result of community forums. The 2008 Committee took this list, established criteria for choosing which issues to explore and narrowed the list to three broad issues. These issues were selected to improve life in Bertie County. They have significant potential impact and they are areas where actions can be initiated. They are as follows:

- Education
- □ Health and Human Services
- □ Economic Development

The 2008 project created three Task Forces made up of professionals and residents who expressed interest in the project. Each task force had members that knew about the subject and a technical advisor, to develop strategies for these three areas. Over a course of six months, these task forces went through the process of studying and analyzing available data and collecting information from community groups, businesses and other agencies in an effort to develop a plan of action for getting the community where it wants to be in the year 2008.

For the purpose of this project the 2008 Steering Committee engaged the services of the NC. Division of Community Assistance (DCA) to manage and compile information about the county's population, economics, education, health and human services and other factual circumstances. DCA staff also facilitated the task force meetings.

The Bertie County 2008 Steering Committee has developed this report from the work developed by the Task forces. The Steering Committee is now charged with getting each strategy into the hands of those community members with the interest and resources to pursue it. As you read the following sections, look for those issues and strategies that are/appear important and feasible to you. Select issues that you think will have the most positive impact on the lives of your family and friends through the year 2008. Then, get in touch with someone listed in this report to offer your services! This is a working document and will be revisited periodically and updated.

Criteria Used to Narrow the Issues

- 1. Is the issue tangible, with a high probability of success?
- 2. Will the issue affect the lives of citizens in a positive manner?
- 3. Will the issue positively affect the future of Bertie County?
- 4. Will addressing the issue build goodwill in the community?
- 5. Is the issue an important one to the community?
- 6. Should the issue be addressed in the Bertie County 2008 project (as opposed to elsewhere)?
- 7. Will the issue touch many people?
- 8. Will the issue help the poorer people in the county?
- 9. Is there the possibility of regional impact and cooperation on the issue?

HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Mission: Improve the Health and Human Services System for all citizens of Bertie County, with special emphasis on youth, elderly and the disadvantaged

Findings: The Bertie County Health and Human Services (HHS) Task Force's direction and leadership, we envisioned a coordinated HHS system that ensures quality services, cost effectiveness, support, and collaboration with other agencies. Every resident of Bertie County should be able to access and utilize available health and human services provided by the county. The Task Force conducted extensive research with the related health and human service providers within the county (health, aging, social services, emergency management, CADA, child and adult day care, youth & adult probation services) representatives from each of these organizations delivered presentations at the task force meetings. However, due to the volume of potential issues the Task Force decided to focus on the critical issues it felt could be productively addressed during the time frame of this project. They identified four (4) areas of need; these are essential in the lives of many in Bertie.

Goals:

□ 1. Educate the entire community on all programs provided by County Health and Human Services

Rationale: Presently services are not being utilized to their fullest potential. Therefore, by educating the residents of Bertie County about the services provided, this would empower them to become more productive citizens. Healthy people are more productive people generally.

Strategies Responsible Person

1.1: Establish an oversight committee of HHS

professionals Commissioners

1.2: Compile a list of services offered and distribute

to community HHS Committee

1.3: Develop innovative ways to have town Churches & HHS Committee

meetings Schools

1.4: Involve faith community in process HHS Agencies/Schools

1.5: Sponsor Health fairs at schools

Leaders and Public Officials

1.6: Shadow day - schools.

2. Improve the effectiveness of the county transportation service within the County

Rationale: The existing transportation service does not fully meet needs of residents on the County. Policies and procedures relating to public and private cost share need to be articulated

Strategies	Responsible Person
2.1: Educate public on existing CPTA routes	HHS Agencies
2.2: Coordinate with CPTA to improve service area and	
frequency of busses	HHS Committee/CPTA
2.3: Develop transportation services to serve people that	
work 2 nd & 3 rd shifts	CPTA
2.4: Pursue grant opportunities to enhance existing	HHS Committee/CPTA
service	

□ 3. Seek alternative means of financing goals and strategies

Rationale: The relatively low tax base and high tax rate limits county funds; thus programs cannot be fully funded to meet goals

Strategies	Responsible Person
3.1: Hire a full time grant writer/manager	Commissioners
3.2: Contact churches/civic organizations for in-kind	
contributions.	HHS Committee/Commissioners

□ 4. Improve response time of Sheriff department

Rationale: By improving response time, citizens will have a greater sense of security, knowing their call will be responded to in a timely fashion.

Strategies	Responsible Person
4.1: Upgrade communication system	County Commissioners/
4.2: Recruit additional officers, including minority and	Emergency services
bilingual/Spanish speaking	Sheriff
4.3: Increase staff for the purpose of allowing officers to	
attend training	County Commissioners/Sheriff
4.4: Provide competitive salaries.	County Commissioners

□ 5. Develop and adopt a long range plan for Emergency Services

Rationale: County needs a long-range plan for future emergencies and unforeseen disaster

Strategies	Responsible Person
5.1: Improve communication capabilities	Emergency Services/ County Commissioners/Sheriff
5.2: Conduct a comprehensive review of fire, volunteer rescue & emergency management capabilities to	EMC/County Manager's Office
determine future needs, requirements and abilities	
5.3: Develop and adopt a hazard mitigation plan	Emergency services/County Commissioners/Sheriff
5.4: Create fire marshal position for fire code enforcement of public buildings	County Commissioners/Fire Chief/EM director
5.5: Based on findings in 5.2, continue County volunteer rescue program	County Commissioners
5.6: Terrorism	Emergency Management/County Commissioners
5.7: Develop relationship with HOSA to gear students towards fire & rescue service occupations	Board of Education

Bertie 2008 Health and Human services Task Force

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ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Mission: Create an environment that supports new and existing businesses by upgrading and improving the infrastructure to promote tourism, entrepreneurism, and the integration of technology by utilizing existing community values and natural resources.

Findings:

→ Strengths

- o The County has a number of vacant industrial buildings.
- o The proximity of US 17 and US 13 provides good roads for transportation.
- Bertie County has access to the Tri-County Airport and the Pitt-Greenville Airport.
- The area possesses tremendous tourism assets.
- o The County has a railroad system with potential for expansion.
- o Bertie County has a state-of-the-art medical facility.
- o County leadership has established a Center for Community Technology.

→ Weaknesses

- o The County needs improvement in workforce preparedness.
- The County needs better telecommunications infrastructure to recruit industry.
- The educational system suffers from a limited number of programs and low per capita expenditures per student.
- o Racial relations in the County need improvement.

→ Opportunities

- o The County has market potential as a retirement community.
- o Bertie County needs to increase its political influence at the State and Federal levels.
- The County is a member of the Northeast Economic Development Region and can take advantage of regional initiatives.
- o Bertie County has a number of heritage tourism sites that can be marketed.
- The proximity to Greenville is an advantage that the County possesses over neighboring counties.
- Utilize the region's business and technology center's education and development programs.
- Bertie County is currently undergoing natural gas infrastructure improvements. These improvements will encourage development throughout the county.

→ Threats

- The County is under pressure from regional environmental groups and these efforts can act as a barrier to economic development.
- o Bertie County is primarily dependent on a forest production economy and agricultural economy.
- o Existing industries in the County cannot get the same incentives to expand as new industries can to locate in the County.
- The County has no limited access roadways and improvements are needed for the County's transportation system.
- Out migration of youth

Goals:

□ 1. Develop a program to raise our educational accomplishments to attract industrial prospects

Rationale: The County needs to improve the educational environment, prepare students to work in knowledge and service industry, and develop good life skills.

Strategies	Responsible Person
1.1: Develop a program to promote parental	Board of Education / County Parents
1.2: Recruit and retain qualified teachers	Board of Education
1.3: Reduce class size	Board of Education/ State legislators
1.4: Lobby to strengthen school discipline	Board of Education/County Parents
1.5: Expand tutorial program (after hour mentors)	Board of Education
1.6: Promote SAT improvement programs to increase test scores among all test takers	Board of Education
1.7: Utilize Faith Based Community for development programs	Churches

□ 2. Develop a plan to promote Bertie County as a retirement community

Rationale: Retirees contribute to the tax base without requiring many County services.

Strategies	Responsible Person
2.1: Work with the Northeast Partnership's Retirement Task Force	EDC Director
2.2: Locate potential sites	EDC Director, ED Commission
2.3: Find investors	EDC Director

□ 3. Develop database to track why businesses locate here and why they do not.

Rationale: It is important to determine why Bertie County loses industry to neighboring counties.

Strategies	Responsible Person
3.1: Utilize the Technology Work C	enter NC Rural Center / EDC Director
3.2: Research and collect existing da	EDC Director / NE Commission
3.3: Maintain a log of successes / far	EDC Director / NE Commission
3.4: Informally interview potential c chose not to locate Bertie County	lients who EDC Director / NE Commission
3.5: Disseminate the information	EDC Director

□ 4. Develop a plan to market Bertie County as a tourist destination

Rationale: The tourism industry is a good, clean industry that does not require large investments in infrastructure and takes advantage of existing resources.

Strategies	Responsible Person		
4.1: Take an inventory of tourist sites	Chamber of Commerce		
4.2: Coordinate County tourism efforts	EDC Director		
4.3: Determine the target population	COG / Travel & Tourism		
4.4: Market the County	Chamber of Commerce / EDC Director		
4.5: Research possible revitalization efforts	Northeast Partnership		
4.6: Improve the appearance of the County	County Commissioners		
4.7: Recruit and locate a hotel	EDC Director		

□ 5. Improve Highway 13 and Highway 11 to four-lane roads

Rationale: Better access to interstate highways and ports would make Bertie County more attractive to industry.

Strategies	Responsible Person
5.1: Establish firm dates for planning, design, and construction in the North Carolina Department of Transportation's Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)	County & Towns
5.2: Recommend County and towns move forward with the Rural Planning Organization (RPO)	County & Towns
5.3: Lobby elected officials	Mayors & Commissioners Association

Bertie 2008 Economic Development Task Force

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Tonza Ruffin, Vivian Saunders

EDUCATION

MISSION: Bertie County will have an education system that prepares its citizens to live worthwhile and productive lives in an ever-changing world. Bertie County will develop a system of education that utilizes technology to enhance teaching and learning, promotes positive, wholesome interactions between students, parents, schools and the community, and eliminate the achievement gap that exists between students.

FINDINGS: Education impacts upon all segments of our county. In order to assess the impact of education, and gather ideas from all segments of the county, the task force facilitated an open discussion with students and parents from across the county. The task force analyzed ideas from the participants, then studied three (3) major areas for possible intervention, technology, Pre-K readiness, low-achieving students, and community/parent involvement. The appendix contains a detailed report of the facts associated with the major areas for intervention. However, the task force feels that (1) Technology can be a support tool to reinvent schools so that all students achieve more and are better prepared (2) Pre-K Readiness programs can be used to prepare every child for success throughout his/her schooling, (3) Students and adults must be taught how to interact with each other and work together.

Technology

FINDINGS: Currently, all Bertie County School offices and campuses have LANS and T-1 Internet access. At present, NCDPI maintains statewide low speed SNA connectivity for mainframe and midrange systems to support financial services, human resource systems, and bus garage applications. The Bertie County Schools financial systems are housed on the AS/400 and the bus garage systems are housed on the state ITS mainframe. All schools have integrated IP networks for all connectivity, instructional and administrative applications. The Bertie County Schools Local Area Networks use Novell for directory, file, and print services. Novell 4.11 and 8 are the primary network operating systems used for directory, file, and printing. A variety of server platforms are used to deploy applications. Compaq is the primary hardware platform for all servers for instruction. The RISC AS/400 is the primary platform for Human Resources and Financial systems. The wiring infrastructure for each LAN consists of Category 5 cabling with fiber-optic backbone support when required. The LAN topology is Ethernet and consists of patch panels, switches, hubs, servers, and PC's. One fileserver resides at each school site for instructional applications and a second server is utilized for SIMS at one middle school and the high school.

The classroom is the focal point for teaching and learning and although all classes are wired for Internet connectivity, some classes do not have computers. One computer in the classroom is no longer adequate or appropriate. There is a lack of printing devices and other peripherals, i.e. scanners, digital cameras, video cameras, assertive/adaptive devices for children with special needs. In the schools, the media centers and most classrooms are connected to the Internet via routers. In addition, teleconferencing capabilities are in place at the Central Office and Serendipity Alternative School. Progress is being made to have it available to all schools by the end of the 2001-2002 school year. Local communication devices are absent within the classrooms.

Some of the resources purchased at the local and school levels include Catalog Plus and Circulation Plus, Online Follet at the high school and middle schools. Students at all schools learn to use CD-ROM programs through instruction in the media centers and classrooms. Elementary and middle schools use Accelerated Reader and Computer Curriculum Corporation to enhance reading and math skills. All schools have word processing, spreadsheet, and database software. Most

computers have either Microsoft Office, Word Perfect, and/or Microsoft Works; however, some computers to not have enough memory to run word processing programs and the school's file server does not have enough hard drive space to add more programs. All elementary and middle schools have Test magic software (test items geared to the North Carolina Standard Course of Study for reading and math). The high school (test items for Algebra I, Algebra II, Physical Science, Biology, Geometry, and Computer Skills) and alternative school have access to it through the Central Office Instructional Department.

All schools have access to the Internet and all students are required to have an Acceptable Users Policy (signed by parent/guardian) on file at the school before using the Internet at the school. Each employee of the school system has access to an e-mail account through the Bertie County Schools domain and Web access. Public data and contact information about Bertie County Schools are available at all times on the school website.

GOALS

- To provide technology that will enable students to interact with and explore the world, bringing a wealth of information and experiences into the classroom thus potentially overcoming geographical isolation, physical barriers, and economic hardships.
- To provide technology which encourages student creativity and self-direction and preparation for responsible citizenship within the community, nation, and world.
- To provide technology that will assist every teacher, parent and student to be successful, foster mastery of basic skills and develop of critical thinking and problem-solving abilities.

RATIONALE: Technology can be a support tool to reinvent schools so that all students achieve more and are better prepared for the workplace. Teachers will integrate technology into the teaching and learning process to allow students to solve problems, improve productivity, and gain skills to prepare them for future education and a highly competitive global workforce.

Strategies	Responsible Person
1.1: Utilize available funds by pooling resources	County Commissioners, Board of Education, and Manager of Fiscal Services, Bertie County Public Schools
1.2: Continue and cultivate private/public partnerships	Businesses and Board of Education
1.3: Obtain additional funds from County and State governments, Utilize grant writers	County Commissioners, Board of Education and State Legislature
1.4: House technology facilitator in every school to offer support for equipment and teachers' questions and concerns for hardware, software and curriculum integration	Office of Human Resources, Bertie County Public Schools
1.5: Continue focus of technology integration in staff development offerings	Director of Professional Growth, Bertie County Public Schools

Strategies

- 1.6: Provide up-to-date hardware that supports available software and peripherals that will allow teachers to teach effectively
- 1.7: Provide software which will prepare teachers to teach and plan effectively using latest technology and software

Responsible Person

Director of Technology and Manager of Fiscal Services, Bertie County Public Schools

Director of Technology and Manager of Fiscal Services, Bertie County Public Schools

Pre-K Readiness

FINDINGS: An examination of information gathered indicates that programs operated by the public school system under the guidelines set by the North Carolina State Department of Public Instruction, to programs operating in private homes has little or no structure. Few outside of the school system follow standard courses of study prescribed for preschool children.

Currently there are three primary factors on the national level that support the need for preschool education for every child:

- There is strong evidence to support the argument that high-quality, early education programs are critical in boosting at-risk children's readiness.
- ❖ In numerous surveys, teachers report that a substantial number of children who lack Pre-K readiness, experience significant problems in transition to kindergarten.
- ❖ The failure of many children to learn to read and write, the wide achievement gap between white and minority students, who come from low-income families have resulted in new attention on early childhood education.

Thus, the task force committee concluded that Pre-K readiness programs offer the best means of preparing every child who enters kindergarten in Bertie County for success in achieving at or above grade level throughout his/her schooling.

GOAL: To enroll every Pre-K child in an approved program that operated under state standards.

To implement the principles and definition of school readiness which are recommended by the North Carolina Ready for School Improvement Panel.

RATIONALE: According to information available, present child care centers operating within Bertie County number thirty-two. The centers report 101 four-year old children enrolled. There are four centers operated by Bertie County Schools. Twenty-eight are privately owned and operated.

Curriculum used range from state mandated to the unwritten or undefined. Staff educational requirements range from Early Childhood Certification too less than a high school diploma. There are extremely wide disparages in types and levels of support services provided in different centers, services from such agencies as the Health Department; Exceptional Children Services;

language specialists; media specialists; technology; career education; social services and physical education.

Having certified staff persons to assess the needs of all children and trained personnel to develop individual prescriptions based upon data collected is crucial in the operation of more efficient Pre-K readiness programs.

Strategies

Responsible Person

2.1: Request funding for full-time Pre-K Readiness Coordinator to bring all existing programs under same guidelines, within two years. Board of Education and Board of County Commissioners

2.2: Formulate local task force on closing achievement gap. (Using state format)

Board of Education and Board of County Commissioners

Disruptive Students

FINDINGS: Problems that begin in early childhood fester and escalate; thus reducing the ability of an underachieving student's matriculation through the school system. Undiagnosed and untreated, the problems manifest themselves in communities, on school buses and especially within the school environment. The following statistics for the 1999-2000 year in Bertie County, illustrates the magnitude of dysfunctions,

- ❖ 40 youths were admitted to juvenile crime prevention programs
- ❖ 64 youths were committed to support programs such as Support Our Students
- ❖ 1 youth was admitted to camp or Guided Growth Program
- ❖ 2 youths were admitted to multi-purpose juvenile homes
- ❖ 18 youths were admitted to detention centers
- ❖ 44 students enrolled in the local alternative school
- ❖ 3 youths were admitted to youth development centers

Student suspension information for 1999-2000 and 2000-2001 school terms. Data includes Elementary and High Schools.

	1999-2000 Elementary/High School		2000-2001 Elementary/High School	
Number of students out on school suspensions	96	940	290	992
Number of days lost due to school suspensions	419	3,996	772	3,632

Note: Elementary school

Comparative data prior to the year 1999, not available

For 2000-2001, there was an increase of 52 suspensions over the year 1999-2000, at the High school level. In elementary schools there was an increase of 194 suspensions during the same time period. Resulting in

A decrease of 364 days lost due to suspension was recorded in 2000-2001 when compared to the year 1999-2000.

Compared to school year 1999-2000 to 2000-2001 from the six public elementary schools in the county there was a significant increase in the number school days lost (353).

The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction provided the following information on "Factors Associated with the Minority Achievement Gap".

- Low-income minority students may interpret the differences they perceive between themselves and the culture of the school as evidence that academic success is actually undesirable.
- * "Skin color" determines what adults expect from thousands of children and what those children ultimately expect of themselves.
- ❖ When socio-economic status is defined in strictly social and economic terms, it accounts for about a third of the Black-White test score gap. The poverty factor is exacerbated by the tendency of high poverty schools to have high turnover rates, which slows down the curriculum.
- ❖ Disproportionately fewer Black and Hispanic students take challenging academic courses than White students enroll in.
- Black students might form peer groups that disengage from academic competition due to shared stereotype anxiety.
- ❖ The qualifications of teachers, affects student achievement and are major variables in improving student learning and achievement.
- ❖ In 1998, only about 63% of all African-American children and only 37% of all Latino children were enrolled in center-based pre-school programs led by early childhood.
- Students tend to perform according to their perceptions of how their teachers expect them to perform.
- The damaging efforts of poverty on student achievement can be reduced with smaller class sizes.

GOALS:

- To assist teachers in recognizing the symptoms which characterize low and underachieving students who often become disruptive.
- To provide more at-risk student opportunities to improve self-esteem in a structured environment outside of school hours.
- To diminish some of the factors contributing to student confrontations in class, on school grounds and on school buses.

RATIONALE: Student must be taught alternatives to improper behavior under the guidance of well-trained teaching staff. Due to the many adverse experiences a child faces early in life at home, survival becomes the number one priority. Many of the low performing students are taught to fend for themselves at

any cost. Strategic interventions at an early age will help in eradicating many of the symptoms before they become ingrained.

Strategies

Responsible Person

- 3.1: Request funding to train a cadre of teachers and staff from each K-6 school dealing with Sensitivity to Differences
- **Board of Education**
- 3.2: Write a grant to fund summer camp for 100 K-6 students who exhibit severe behavior problems, absentee problems, disengaged, etc.
- Board of Education and County Commissioners
- 3.3: Establish year-round tutorial programs for K-6 students in community centers, churches. Use grant funds to provide transportation and snacks after school
- Board of Education, churches, concerned citizen groups, parents & County Commissioners
- 3.4: Employ two full-time social workers to work with K-6 students. Funding to come from grants.
- Board of Commissioners and Board of Education

Bertie 2008 Education Task Force

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