

Needs Assessment: Buckingham County High School

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Introduction

Buckingham County High School is located in the heart of the state of Virginia. Buckingham County High School library serves 574 students in grades nine through twelve. There is currently one librarian that serves all four grade levels. While there is no vision or mission statement for the library specifically, the mission statement of the county for all of its schools states: "This mission of Buckingham County Public Schools is to cultivate successful citizen by creating a safe, positive learning environment where all students and staff and can adapt, create, collaborate, think critically and meet the challenges of an ever-changing society (Buckingham County High School, n.d.).

Community/User Information

Buckingham County, Virginia is a rural county located about an hour from Richmond, Virginia with 579.6 square miles and has a population of 17,059 (Census Reporter, n.d.). There are about 5,826 households in Buckingham. The average age is 43.5 with 62% of the population being in the 18 to 64 category (Census Reporter, n.d.). The county is 55% male, 45% female. Regarding race and ethnicity there is 61% white, 34% black 2% hispanic and 1% two or more races and native (Census Reporter, n.d.). Median household income in Buckingham is \$49,025, 51% of households in the county make under \$50,000 while 35% of households make \$50,000 to \$100,000 (Census Reporter, n.d.). As far as poverty goes, 15.8% of people in the county are below the poverty line and it is interesting to note that the statistic increases for children under 18 to 22% (Census Reporter, n.d.). Regarding education 79.8% of people in the county have graduated high school and 12.5% have a bachelor's degree (Census Reporter, n.d.).

In regards to the high school itself, as aforementioned there are approximately 574 students across four grade levels. According to the VDOE school quality profile racial and ethnic groups can be broken down by 52.8% white, 36.1% african american, 6.3% two races, and 4.4% hispanic (Virginia School Quality Profiles. n.d.). About 12.7% of the school population is economically disadvantaged which almost mirrors the county poverty percentage (Virginia School Quality Profiles. n.d.). Additionally, 14.5% of the student population has a disability (Virginia School Quality Profiles. n.d.). Only 1.6% of the student population are classified as English learners (Virginia School Quality Profiles. n.d.). Lastly, in reading, writing, and math the high school ranks at least ten percent below the statewide average in assessment scores (Virginia School Quality Profiles. n.d.). Having worked at the school, I can certainly feel the stress around low academic achievement in all subject areas. However, aside from an afterschool program that operates three days a week there is not much additional support. The daily attendance average for the program is always around eight to ten students which is very low coinciding how many learners are behind or could use extra help.

Being that this is such a rural county there really are not many community centers, libraries, parks or programs for students and families in Buckingham. The county website for parks and recreation is only offering youth soccer at the moment and no other programs for school aged youth (Welcome to Buckingham County, VA. n.d.). When looking at the library website all programs are still canceled due to COVID and they are currently not accepting any volunteers for their teen volunteer program. While I feel that this outlook for teen programs and activities in the county is rather grim, it does leave much room for improvement and program implementation. Seeing as there are

not very many programs for teens in the community already, there could be some backlash from the community as these programs would be very new.

Additional Information I would like to find out and strategies to obtain that information

1. Are there any programs and services that are currently being offered to teen students that are not being advertised? I will ask the administrators at my school, as well as call the county administration office.
2. What non-academic programs and services are the students aged 14-19 at the school most interested in specifically and what would generate the most attendance? I will survey all students at the high school and solicit their feedback. I would ask all homeroom teachers to post this survey in their google classroom and administer it to make sure that students are completing it.
3. What academic programs and services are the students most interested in and feel that they would benefit from. I will survey all students at the high school and solicit their feedback.
4. I would ask the school board and stakeholders what they would be willing to contribute financially to help make the proposed programs a success after presenting them with the survey results and proposed academic and community programs for students.

Future Focus for Program/Service Development

I feel that there is a need for an academic program and a more community or recreational based program here at the high school. As aforementioned, there is a huge

strain on academics in this county and specifically at the high school level where students are expected to pass assessments for verified credits before graduating. Also, there are no activities offered to students outside of the students who play sports or participate in club activities. There is a need for activities and programs that encourage social and emotional skills, fellowship, and with less commitment than a typical school sport or club.

Regarding academics, there are numerous articles and studies that point to the fact that a well staffed and well budgeted library can lead to better student achievement. While I am a firm believer that all core subjects are important, math and english would be the focus of the proposed academic program from the start, but hopefully later it would grow to include all core subjects. This initial program would have three parts: a writing center, a virtual book club, and peer to peer math tutoring. I would hope that students who are in AP and DE courses here could really help and also benefit from teaching and tutoring their peers who need extra support. These academic programs are certainly within the libraries scope of interest.

Regarding community I would like to introduce a program that mixes in school activities with after school activities. Not all students will be eligible to participate after school, so it is important to me to offer something during school hours so that all students will have the opportunity to participate. The second Tuesday of every month at Buckingham High School is an 'activity day,' this would afford students who are interested the opportunity to participate without disrupting their instructional time. Aside from this the after school portion of the program would be offered one Thursday a month, likely the last Thursday.

Seeing as the local public library offers nothing for teens, I would hope that this part of the program would mimic some of the more traditional public library programs. Each month would offer something fresh like a seasonal craft, game tournament, escape room, food or book tastings, and more. The students here who cannot frequent these programs elsewhere would likely enjoy having the opportunity to attend.

With both proposed programs I would solicit student opinions and feedback. I would not want students to be disinterested in the proposed services. I believe these programs would easily align with the county's mission statement that mentions a "safe, positive learning environment where all students and staff and can adapt, create, collaborate" (Buckingham County High School). Overall, I think there is a clear need for academic and social programs here at Buckingham County High School and students would benefit greatly from both.

References

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