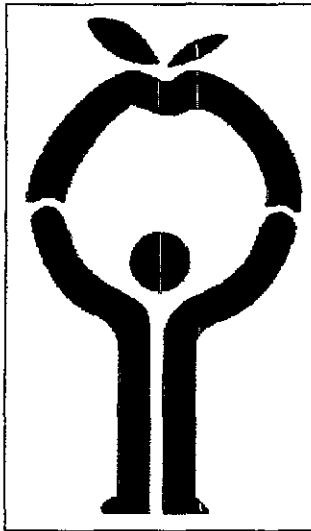


**KLA White Paper
Warsaw Education Foundation:
Researching The Need For A Strategic Plan**



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Introduction

In the words of Aristotle, “The roots of education are bitter, but the fruit is sweet.” Figuring out the best way to educate our children is certainly a struggle, but worth every ounce of effort.

The theme for our White Paper Project is “Moving the Warsaw Community Foundation for Public Education to the next level of service for its constituents.” Presently, the Foundation is comprised of a group of volunteer directors that are primarily from the business community. The School Superintendent and his secretary are also ex-officio members of the board.

We began our project by exploring funding possibilities for an Executive Director. As a KLA team, we pursued several options for funding from local businesses to other foundations. In the process of looking at options, it became clear that the Foundation needs a long-term plan that addresses its strategic approach. The end result from this group has been an analysis of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the Warsaw Community Foundation for Public Education.

We would like to challenge, you the reader, to consider how you can support education in our community. As you read this paper, look for ways you can be involved.

Main Point 1

With the original intention of helping the Education Foundation fund an Executive Director, our immediate direction was to seek potential donors for this purpose.

Time after time we were pleased to discover that most of the corporate entities in the county had budgets for funding such foundation efforts, and they would most likely be willing to assist. But time after time, we were also asked whether the Foundation had a strategic plan.

Simply put, a strategic plan determines where an organization is going over the next year or more, how it's going to get there and how it will measure its results. There are a various perspectives and approaches used in the strategic planning process itself.

Regardless of the approach, the development of the plan itself greatly helps to clarify an organization's plans and ensures the key leaders are all "on the same page."

A frequent complaint about strategic plans is that they are simply "to-do" lists of what to accomplish over the next few years. Or, others complain that strategic planning never seems to come in handy when the organization is faced with having to make a difficult decision. Such complaints arise, because organizations fail to conduct a thorough strategic analysis as part of the planning process. Planners cannot plan only from what they know at the time. That only implies guesswork and in itself is not strategic.

It is essential that an organization take stock of itself. This consists of a thorough examination of both the internal status of the organization and the external context in which it exists. An effective way of gaining insights regarding an organization's assets and liabilities, and also identifying what's happening in its environment, is to undertake a S.W.O.T. analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats).

Main Point 2

A S.W.O.T. analysis can assist in identifying areas for development and can be the basis of overall future strategic development. As a group we decided that a S.W.O.T. analysis was needed to be presented to the Foundation board for its feedback. The following are the results of our S.W.O.T. analysis:

Strengths

- The Foundation has broad representation from the community.
- There is a vested interest from the school system.
- They have fun.
- It has a stable economic base from which to draw funds and involvement.
- The Foundation provides new avenues for teachers to improve learning.
- They have a good partnership with Warsaw Community Schools.

Weaknesses

- Awareness- lack of public awareness and among end users
- Cash- no consistent flow
- No strategic plan
- Volunteers only
- The Foundation serves only one school system in the county.
- The focus is on corporate giving, when individuals fund the majority of foundation efforts.
- Lack of critical mass to be self funded

Opportunities

- Public awareness
- Different focus on funding
- Areas of overlap in educational initiatives in the area
- More support from school systems in the county that don't have foundations
- Development of strategic plan/focus
- Development of additional leadership (Executive Director)

Threats

- Kosciusko County Foundation
- Lack of community awareness
- Diminished funding
- A change in school leadership/interest
- A change in county economics
- No plan

This S.W.O.T. analysis was presented to the Foundation Board and we requested feedback from them. Some of this feed back includes:

Strengths- The Foundation enhances recognition of academic pursuit in the community by bringing a positive focus to academics.

The Foundation assists school personnel to send a positive messages of school occurrences to a segment that would otherwise not be connected to the school system.

Weaknesses- An all volunteer staff is subject to busy schedules which makes it difficult to devote the time and effort needed to be a successful Foundation.

Opportunities- The possibility of being associated with a statewide network would give more credibility and more awareness to build information and funding.

Conclusion

In conclusion, let it be said that our group would have liked to have been able to create funding for an Executive Director for the Foundation. As stated earlier, this may have been rather easy to accomplish through the corporate entities throughout the county. The bigger picture, however, was to show the Foundation the need for a strategic planning process to gain more focus of what they want to accomplish and maybe how to get there. This process requires some self analysis to see what is actually being accomplished.

To summarize our S.W.O.T. analysis, we focused on four main points:

1. The Foundation has strong community representation
2. The Foundation needs public awareness from an involvement and financial stand point
3. There is opportunity to develop a strategic planning process
4. The threat is not having a plan at all

Our challenge is to the community and the future leaders of the community is to find out more about this organization, how you can get involved and how you can support this organization financially to improve and create learning opportunities for our children. We should all have a vested interest in supporting education in our community.

Our charge to a future KLA group would be to find out the strategic plan of the Warsaw Education Foundation, see how they are using that plan to help support the Foundation financially and how effectively those funds are being distributed throughout the Warsaw community school system.