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Barnesville Public Schools: Rebranding, Strategic Plan...

# A Clearer Identity, And Unified, Stronger Future

By Chandra Buck  
Staff Writer

For generations, Barnesville Public Schools have been the steady heartbeat of the community.

From Friday night games to classrooms filled with familiar faces, the district has long been a place where traditions are passed down and collective experiences shape what it means to grow up in Barnesville. Purple and white have come to represent more than school colors. The Trojan head has come to represent more than a school mascot.

It is a symbol deeply woven into the identity of both the school and the greater community.

But as with many parts of education today, that identity has gradually shifted over time. Different versions of the Trojan head have appeared across buildings and programs, and colors have expanded beyond the original purple and white to include black and gold, depending on their use. What once developed organically has become less consistent.

Now, district leaders are taking a purposeful step back to ask a broader question—not just what the district looks like, but what it represents moving forward.

That question is guiding two parallel efforts unfolding side by side. One focuses on how the district



A sign at the Barnesville Sports Arena (BSA) features one version of the Trojan head, reflecting the variety of logos currently used across the district.

presents itself. The other focuses on where it is going.

Together, they reflect a district looking toward the future.

**Rebranding a Shared Identity**

In an era shaped by personal identity and public presence, the idea of branding has expanded far beyond businesses and universities.

Today, even public institutions like school districts are expected to present a clear and consistent identity. What was once largely associated with colleges and large organizations has become increasingly relevant at the local



A gold Trojan head displayed on a hall floor highlights one of several color variations that have appeared throughout Barnesville school facilities.

level, reflecting a broader shift in how communities communicate who they are.

For Barnesville Public Schools, that realization came into focus as leaders began taking a closer look at what already existed.

“We have a lot going on here that’s really not unified,” Activities Director Aaron Schindler said. “I think that’s the ultimate thing—we want to all be on the same page.”

What they found was not a lack of identity, but a lack of consistency.

School colors had expanded beyond the original purple and white. Logos varied depending on where you looked, from gym walls to uniforms to printed materials. In some cases, multiple Trojan heads were being used at once.

“If someone came here and asked what our logo is, they’d see four different shades of purple and multiple Trojan heads,” Schindler said. “It’s just confusing.”

Over time, even small details contributed to that fragmentation, from youth program apparel to independently designed team gear. What developed naturally across years of tradition had become harder to define.

tradition.

“This logo is not going to vary too much from the original Trojan head logo,” Schindler said. “It stays true to the original roots of the Barnesville Trojan, but just modernizes it a little bit.”

**Strategic Planning for the Future**

While the rebranding effort focuses on identity, a second initiative is centered on long-term direction.

The school board has approved a comprehensive strategic planning process that will guide district priorities over the next three to five years.

“In three to five years, I hope things feel more connected across our district,” Superintendent Dr. Jon Ellerbusch said. “From our school board to our staff and students, everyone is moving in the same direction with a clear purpose. When that kind of alignment is in place, it makes a real difference for students, and that’s what this is all about.”

The process, facilitated by the Minnesota School Boards Association, will include surveys, listening sessions and structured discussions involving staff, students, board members and community representatives.

At its core, strategic planning is meant to answer a few key questions: Where are we now, where do we want to go and how will we get there?

Answering those questions requires more than setting goals. It involves examining the district’s current strengths and challenges, gathering input from across the community and defining a shared



A student jersey featuring a gold and purple Trojan head shows how different interpretations of the logo have been used in athletics.

vision for student success.

Community involvement will be central to that effort.

“Our schools are a big part of this community, and this plan shouldn’t be built without community input,” Ellerbusch said. “We want it to reflect what our students, families, staff, and community members care about.”

While the district has explored strategic planning in the past, timing has played a role.

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The middle school gym features a Trojan head in gold and yellow tones, another example of how colors have varied across the district over time.



A black and white Trojan head with a more stylized expression appears on a table, representing another variation of the district’s branding.

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