CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT: A GROWTH MINDSET

In the mid 1990’s, on date night with my wife, I went to see the movie “Jerry McGuire”. The movie began with a young, hot-shot sports agent (Tom Cruise) bucking the “more clients/more money” focus of the industry with his infamous client-centered “mission statement.” I can remember watching that movie and, as a young psychologist and educator, being struck by the main character’s commitment to relationships and individualized attention over anonymous bottom line excess. And not only did that concept resonate with me in that theatre all those years ago, but it continues to do so deep in my idealistic core today. Now, twenty years later, I have the honor of working in a district with a strategic plan driven by a meaningful mission statement focused on cultivating relationships, growth and attainment, and individual attention.

Formal strategic planning first evolved out of military strategy. “Strategos” literally means “general of the army” in Greek. It surfaced in the business world around 1950, and eventually flowed into the education sector in the early 1980’s. However, the nature and outcomes of educational strategic planning are substantively different from that in the business sector. In education, strategic planning follows a collaborative process that is highly influenced by stakeholder input, values, and beliefs. Priorities are identified, and resources allocated, based on the collective predilection for specific aspects of the institution’s functioning. That’s why strategic plans vary significantly across school districts.

District 29 first began to implement strategic planning in 2008. That process utilized an external facilitator to work with staff, parents, administrators, and Board of Education members to review data and develop the District’s mission, beliefs, and goals. A similar process was used in 2011, 2013, and 2016 to reaffirm the mission and beliefs, and set new goals.

During 2018, the Board of Education once again utilized an external facilitator to work with a cross-sectional group of staff, parents, administrators, and Board of Education members for the purpose of strategic planning. The team examined 21st Century educational trends (e.g., Critical Thinking, Problem Solving, STEM, Social Emotional Learning), reviewed quantitative student assessment data (e.g., State PARCC Tests, New Trier Placement Tests, NWEA MAP Tests), and analyzed independent survey data from stakeholders (e.g., parents, students, staff).

Based on a synthesis of this data, the group identified several strengths and opportunities for improvement. Five “Goal Areas” emerged; 1) High Quality Teaching & Learning, 2) Meeting the Needs of Learners, 3) Safe & Supportive Learning Environment, 4) Meaningful Stakeholder Engagement and, 5) Thriving Workforce. Specific objectives were then identified within each goal area. Once drafted, the plan was again shared with staff and parents for additional feedback and final revision. Moving forward, each spring an annual report on progress will be provided by the Board of Education and available for public viewing via the District webpage @ www.sunsetridge29.org.

The following pages provide a summary of the 2018-2021 District 29 “Continuous Improvement Plan”. I sincerely thank our District 29 staff, parents, and students for sharing their thoughts and values, completing surveys, assisting with the synthesis of data, and giving feedback on the draft plan. Only through this amazing collaboration of stakeholders could we cultivate this very special learning community and develop this meaningful articulation of our Mission, our Beliefs, our Goals, and our Objectives!

“...strategic plan driven by a meaningful mission statement focused on cultivating relationships, growth and attainment, and individual attention.”

Dr. Edward Stange
Superintendent, District 29
WE BELIEVE

• The whole child is at the heart of all decisions.
• Each child deserves an education tailored to his or her unique abilities, learning style, social, and emotional needs.
• Commitment to excellence drives continuous improvement.
• Student growth and learning thrive in communities that embrace creativity and innovation, critical thinking and problem solving, collaboration, communication, and self-advocacy.
• Exceptional educational programming fosters ethical, respectful, independent, and socially responsible citizens.

2018-2021 GOALS & OBJECTIVES

HIGH QUALITY TEACHING & LEARNING

Create consistently rich, innovative, engaging, and high-quality learning opportunities that result in growth and achievement for all students and foster collaboration, problem solving, critical thinking, and independent learning.

Objectives

• Implement the new K-8 reading curricula.
• Implement Lucy Calkins writing program in 1st-8th grades.
• Complete modifications to the foreign language curriculum.
• Implement the new K-8 social studies curriculum.
• Continue 4th-8th grade science collaboration partnership with Museum of Science and Industry.
• Document the K-8 computer science scope and sequence and make recommendations for improvements.
• Monitor the high-quality programming in all content areas while seeking opportunities for growth.

MEANINGFUL STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Cultivate and strengthen intentional and meaningful partnerships with families and community agencies to support the educational success and healthy development of all students.

Objectives

• Review and revise the District’s communication systems (e.g., website, teacher pages, newsletters) to improve the accessibility and effectiveness.
• Investigate opportunities to improve communication regarding student growth and performance.
• Explore opportunities to engage stakeholders in decision-making processes, district programs, and activities.
• Examine and address the "disconnects" as identified in the 2018 satisfaction survey.
2018-2021 GOALS & OBJECTIVES

Cultivating a learning community that engages the hearts and minds of students, one child at a time

MEETING NEEDS OF LEARNERS

Sustain a learning environment that supports the unique strengths and evolving needs of individual students.

Objectives

- Continue the commitment to differentiation as essential to meeting the needs of all learners, one child at a time.
- Review the continuum of support services provided to diverse learners, and make recommendations for improvement.
- Review athletic offerings and make recommendations for improvement.

SAFE & SUPPORTIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Ensure a positive school climate based on clear and equitable practices, where all members of the school community feel emotionally and physically safe, included, and accepted.

Objectives

- Review and revise K-8 social emotional learning curriculum and activities, including preventative measures, direct instruction, internal activities, and service learning opportunities.
- Examine “disconnects” in parent and staff perspectives regarding discipline, homework, and rigor.

THRIVING WORKFORCE

Foster a collaborative, creative, and inclusive workplace that attracts, develops, and actively supports the best talent.

Objectives

- Recruit, select, develop, and retain only the most effective, professional, compassionate, and committed personnel.
- Facilitate professional development opportunities that support the 2018-2021 strategic plan goals.
- Continue implementation of new staff mentoring program.
- Encourage innovation at all levels.
- Develop a research-based process for determining the pace of new initiatives.
www.sunsetridge29.org
Cultivating a learning community that engages
the hearts and minds of students, one child at a time

UPCOMING EVENTS
see more at www.sunsetridge29.org

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<tr>
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<td>NOV 13</td>
<td>Education Committee Meeting</td>
<td>Sunset Ridge School</td>
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Anne Peterson, Vice President
Amanda Alpert Knight
Nancy Detlefsen
Bill Hayes
Jill Mirkovic
Scott Subeck

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