

REBUILDING THE STRATEGIC PLAN FOR 21ST CENTURY LEARNING
Whitefish Public Schools – Strategic Planning Retreat
Board of Trustees, Administrative Leadership Team, Building Staff Members
April 22 and 23, 2009'

Session Summary

SESSION OBJECTIVES PART I – Board, Administrators, and Staff

1. Review essential input.
2. Identify pertinent factors in the District's current operating environment.
3. Explore opportunities and challenges facing the District.
4. Provide the Board with recommendations on rebuilding the Strategic Plan.

SESSION PARTICIPANTS

Teachers

Lisa Olson	Christy McConnell	Colleen Sullivan
Ray Boksich	Kelly Haverlandt	Cheryl Wilder

Administrators

Dave Means	Bobbie Barrett	Chris Deister
Jill Rocksund	Linda Whitright	Kerry Drown
Kent Paulson	Pat Audet	

Superintendent and District Clerk

Jerry House	Danelle Reisch
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School Board Members

Dave Fern	Pat Jarvi	Mike Ferda
Eric Hosek	Ruth Harrison	Brian McDowell
Shannon Hanson	Katie McGunagle (Student representative)	

COMPLETED AGENDA ITEMS

Discussion Ground rules

Participants agreed to the following ground rules to encourage productive and "safe" discussion in the session:

- Everyone get one "get out of jail" card just in case...
- It's okay to have strong feelings – we just encourage each other to express them in terms of issues, not persons.
- We demonstrate the same respectful behaviors we expect from students.

“4 Corners” Exercise – Large Group Discussion

Question: What are some things that need to occur to support a 21st Century Learning environment?

Answers

- Non-traditional schedule
- Technology integration at the student level
- Removal of traditional teaching tools
- Staff collaboration between buildings, across grade lines, content areas, etc.

Question: What do we need to do to implement the changes needed?

Answers

- Reprioritize (What should we quit doing...; What are the most important things to do... etc.)
- Have a system where the School Board addresses governance issues; Administration, Staff, and students address operational issues to achieve outcomes through established action plans.
- Create/support a Research and Development “Team”/department to systemize/help implement needed changes.
- Recognize that real change cannot occur within the current structure.
- Recognize that the Board’s has a responsibility to bring about change.
- Offer compensation and rewards for innovation.

Recommendations from Staff Members to the Board Regarding a Rebuilt Strategic Plan

- Give us something specific to get started – even if it’s just one thing. One idea is the concept of real cross-border collaboration – with desired results by the end of the year with benchmarks along a timeline.
- Look at a more flexible schedule (i.e., 4 day classes with 5th day for Staff work; early-outs; teacher alternative use of hours) – not just for the sake of change – but to start making some of these things happen with Staff.
- Look at the wording (i.e., time limits; attendance, etc.) in the Contract. Make breaking down barriers on both sides part of the discussion with the bargaining unit.
- Include para-professionals in the collaborative model and training.

SESSION OBJECTIVES PART II – Board and Administrators

1. Collectively describe the “big picture”
2. Map out clear, reasonable goals and methodical objectives that take advantage of strengths and positively challenge the District to implement desired change.
3. Clearly identify and commit to first year steps.

COMPLETED AGENDA ITEMS

Reviewing/”Mining”/Problem-Solving – Issues identified in the “Essential Input” Documents (Community; Students; Administration; Staff; School Board Responses)

Issue Discussion and Agreements – Facilitating Change toward 21st Century Learning

What is the District trying to do as it implements a 21st century learning experience?

The District goal is to prepare all students to be successful in a 21st century environment by developing their abilities to:

- Adapt to diversity
- Be personally confident
- Work collaboratively
- Use critical thinking skills
- Demonstrate competence in “core” academic areas as identified in the District’s Strategic Framework

What are the District’s guiding principles in support of 21st Century learning?

- We believe that technology is a critical part of our students’ future.
- We believe that collaborative skills are essential for students entering the 21st Century world.
- We believe that Staff and Administrator training, “buy-in”, job descriptions, and support are keys to success in this effort.
- We believe that real change is dependent on cultural change and that cultural change only occurs with active support and accountability.

What themes should we be concentrating on – in the next 12 months?

- Identification and emphasis on 21st Century core content.
- ITC focus
- Focus on real world application to core content, knowledge and skills

What action steps should the District take now to bring about “change”?

- We recognize that supportive structure and resources are necessary to achieving our vision. So to move ahead, we agree to, by June 1, 2009, establish a model that looks like the following:
 - Create a District “Leadership Research & Development” Team that:
 - Consists of 2 Board members, administrators, teachers, para-professionals, community members and students
 - Develops an action plan based on the District’s Strategic Framework and research, etc.
 - Involves and communicates with the Administrative Team
 - Recognizes the decision making process that is in place and understands the role of the School Board
 - Works with/gets feedback from building leadership teams
- The Leadership Research & Development Team will work first on developing supporting structure including Administrators’ job descriptions.
- The Team will meet up to 3 times during the summer 2009.
- Within its discussion about District structure and framework, the Team will identify/develop the “one thing” to work on during the 2009-2010 school year. The process repeats itself with the possibility of more than one topic studied per year.
- Bringing about the desired changes toward implementation of the Strategic Plan/21st Century learning is also supported by:
 - 4 days District/Building professional days - Administrators and Staff
 - Early outs for ongoing staff collaboration /staff development

Who should be the “Shepherd”?

- Superintendent appoints

Issue Discussion and Agreements – High School Facility

Should the district move ahead with the new High School?

Board members agreed that the District should move ahead.

If so, what action steps need to be taken?

3 Months

- Make a formal Board decision; authorizes the Study.
- Identify supporters and start the conversation.
- Start to explore project design.
- Ongoing Board discussion – What’s happening when? What’s my role as a Board member?

12 -18 Months

- Identify an independent project designer.
- Establish a Research and Development group:
 - That has “chemistry” together;
 - That demonstrates ownership in the vision and desired change;
 - To explore/identify needs based on the vision;
 - To explore budget.
- As a Board, describe what Board members agree will be a “threshold for economic recovery” in the community.
- Make a decision on the bond and complete the Secretary of State process regarding certification of the bond.
- Hire an architect and complete the plans.
- Facilitate leadership transition - accomplish the communication with the community before the new Superintendent comes to the job.
- Ongoing Board discussion – What’s happening when? What’s my role as a Board member?

4 Years

- Be in the new building
- Ongoing Board discussion – What’s happening when? What’s my role as a Board member?

Who should be involved and how can a sense of ownership be developed?

- Involve teachers/staff in “discovery” regarding a new High School.
- Involve students in the “functionality” of a new High School.
- Involve the community in the research and development and “selling” of the new High School.

Who should be the “shepherd” for the process?

- The current Superintendent

Rebuilding the Strategic Framework (Draft)

Mission

The mission of the Whitefish School district is to assure all students entrusted to the District are provided the educational opportunity to gain the knowledge, skills, and concepts necessary to function effectively in a changing global society.

Guiding Principles

1. We believe that curriculum and instructional best practices should be designed to meet the diverse educational needs of all students and staff.
2. We believe that facilities should be safe, adaptable, and environmentally conscious.
3. We believe that a positive student/teacher relationship is required to foster intellectual curiosity, motivation, and enthusiasm for life-long learning.
4. We are committed to high standards, expectations and goals for all students and staff.
5. We seek student input and feedback as an integral part of their educational process.
6. We take responsibility for assuring appropriate and accurate assessment and evaluation of individual student achievement and overall District achievement.
7. We develop appropriate policy and critically review it on a regular basis.
8. We are committed to fiscal responsibility to taxpayers.
9. We believe that the District's educational philosophy, programs, policies and strategic goals should be reflected in it governance decisions, budget, and hiring practices.
10. We believe that communication and collaboration are keys to successful working relationships, community support, and facilitating change.

Parameters

1. All new programs must be consistent with the Strategic Plan.
2. No new program will be initiated unless it survives cost/benefit analysis and sets in place an evaluation procedure(s).
3. We will use technology to help students achieve through integration of technology into all curricular subjects.
4. We will maintain quality academic programs at the elementary, middle, and secondary levels.
5. We will foster connectedness between each student and his/her individual school, and between the schools and the community.
6. We will continue to value our Whitefish community by supporting adult education and use of District facilities.

Strategic Planning Goals and Directing Objectives

#1. CURRICULUM, INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES, AND ASSESSMENT

Goal Statement: Design curriculum, instructional practices, programs, assessment, and professional learning to meet the diverse needs of all students in the District.

Directing Objectives:

- 1.1. Continue to align the K-12 standards-based curriculum with the 21st Century framework and other research-based instructional strategies.
- 1.2. As teachers and administrators, analyze District and State assessment results to determine appropriate interventions and instructional strategies, curriculum, and materials to increase student achievement.
- 1.3. As teachers, implement assessment for learning principles to include sound grading and reporting practices.
- 1.4. Train teachers to implement differentiated instruction as part of a 21st Century framework.
- 1.5. Serve Gifted and Talented students through differentiated classroom instruction, 21st Century framework, on-line learning opportunities, and other specific programs.
- 1.6. In response to the 2009 Student Survey, provide opportunities for higher achieving students through 21st Century curriculum offerings and differentiated instruction. Assure that all students have opportunities to participate in challenging, motivating learning experiences and curriculum.
- 1.7. Implement interventions for all students who are not at benchmark by providing staffing, facilities, programs and instruction in each building.
- 1.8. Assess and implement technology and media literacy as appropriate for students, teachers, and administrators.
- 1.9. Research, explore and implement alternative schedules in support of a 21st Century learning environment.
- 1.10. Maintain a Five-Year cycle for ongoing curriculum materials review to involve all K-12 teachers/administrators.
- 1.11. Provide a two-day orientation to establish ongoing mentoring for new teachers.
- 1.12. Based on recommendations that are part of the Research and Development Leadership process, establish 3 to 4 additional District professional learning days.

#2. FACILITIES

Goal Statement: Provide safe, flexible, functional and environmentally conscious facilities for the 21st Century.

Directing Objectives:

- 2.1. Retain the Superintendent as the “point person” in moving ahead with improving High School facilities.
- 2.2. Establish a Whitefish High School Facilities Committee whose role as an advisory committee is to:
 - Make recommendations regarding the project designer.
 - Make recommendations that compliment the District’s educational vision and can accommodate community use.
 - Present the Board with a timeline that identifies benchmarks.
- 2.3. Develop and implement ongoing external and internal communication.

#3. COMMUNICATION AND COLLABORATION

Goal Statement: Promote District and community collaborative process.

Directing Objectives:

- 3.1. Establish the Research and Development Leadership Team/process to help facilitate a District culture of change for the future.
- 3.2. Prepare students for future success in 21st Century society and the workplace by:
 - Providing opportunities that connect students to the workplace.
 - Providing access to the community and outside resources in support of this directing objectives.
- 3.3. Refine and implement transitional plans and strategies for students moving between elementary and middle school and between middle school and high school to address academic, social, and emotional needs.
- 3.4. Engage the Whitefish community in conversation about expectations and future enhancement of Whitefish School District programs including curricular enhancements.
- 3.5. Continue to explore corporate sponsorships to provide funding for activities not fiscally affordable by the Whitefish School District.
- 3.6. Engage the community in exploration of funding mechanisms (i.e., grants; planned giving; donations, etc.) that might contribute to the Whitefish School District Foundation.