



Riverside School District #96

Riverside, Illinois 60546

STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS PROPOSAL

November 5, 2025

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November 5, 2025

Dr. Martha Ryan-Toye, Superintendent
Riverside School District #96
3340 S. Harlem Ave.
Riverside, IL 60546

Dear Dr. Ryan-Toye,

Thank you for the opportunity to present Educational Leadership Solutions as the firm to facilitate your district's Strategic Planning Process. Our leadership team, consisting of high caliber, successful school leaders is excited to share with you and your Board of Education our data-based process that will facilitate a strategic planning process that will both improve your district and move your district forward for the next three to five years.

Educational Leadership Solutions uses research-based practices and data-driven processes, combined with our education-based experiences to provide a quality Strategic Plan. This process, which also incorporates input from your district's stakeholders—Board members, administrators, staff members, parents, students and community members--will provide the best data and information to determine your district's needs and aspirations for the future.

The following pages of this proposal will provide an overview of our process, as well as some additional background information about our firm. We have also included the Fee Structure to facilitate the Strategic Planning Process. We appreciate the opportunity to present the contents of this proposal to your entire Board of Education on Wednesday, November 19th.

Thank you for the opportunity to share this proposal with you. We look forward to hearing from you regarding the next steps for your process. Don't hesitate to contact us if you have any questions.

Respectfully submitted,

Richard Voltz, Ph.D.
Don White, Ph.D.
Gary Zabilka, Ed.D.



STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS OVERVIEW

A key to a successful Strategic Planning Process is identifying a Core Stakeholder Team (CST) who serves as the representative group of the district and is involved in every step of the process. The CST consists of Board members, administrators, staff members, parents, students, and community members, typically numbering about 35-50 total members. Our firm will work closely with the District's leaders to ensure that a well-represented cross-section of stakeholders are represented as a part of the Core Stakeholder Team.

The CST will review the district's current Mission, Vision, Beliefs, and Goals to determine to what extent each of these are still valid, in use, in practice and/or serving a purpose within the district. Having worked through that process, the CST will engage in either revising or recreating those vital elements of a district's fabric.

Researching and reviewing the district's "current reality" provides the opportunity to determine how the district is currently performing, typically in the areas of academics/achievement, financially, facilities, technology, communications, or other key areas the district wishes to explore. This is typically done by either utilizing data the district may have available about each of these areas, and by administering a survey or needs assessment to determine that current reality. Once the data is available and reviewed, a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) process of each of those priority areas identifies where the district is strong, as well as which areas are identified as needing to be addressed.

Goals are developed to focus on those areas identified so as to continue to meet the district's mission and vision, all while adhering to the district's beliefs. These processes, when coordinated with a committed CST and widely communicated throughout the district, provide a quality Strategic Plan that ensures alignment throughout the district's system.

As a flow chart, Phase I of the process would look like this:

(Please see the next page)

Riverside SD #96 Strategic Planning Process-Phase I

1: Identify Core Stakeholder Team (CST)

- Representative group of key stakeholders, to include Board Members, Administrators, Staff Members, Parents, Students, Community members

2: Community Input Survey

- Community survey.
- Community input on priorities.
- Development of reports with data from survey

3: Review District's Current Documents

- Mission
- Vision
- Core Beliefs

4: Revise/Recreate District's Documents

- Mission
- Vision
- Core Beliefs

5: Research/Review District's Current Reality

- How is the District performing?
- Academics / Achievement
 - Finances
 - Facilities
 - Technology
 - Communications

6: Complete SWOT Analysis

- Relating to these areas:
- Strengths
 - Weaknesses
 - Opportunities
 - Threats

7: Create District Goals Based on Needs Identified in Step 6

- Develop goals for each of the major areas identified

8: Review Final Products for Alignment

- CST reviews the District's updated mission, vision, core beliefs and goals for each area for alignment and coherence

9: Final Plan Development

- Final Plan review
- Board Approval of Plan



LIVING THE STRATEGIC PLAN (LSP) PROJECT OVERVIEW-Phase II

EdLS will assist with the facilitation of a *Living the Strategic Plan (LSP) Project*. The LSP will result in the selection of measures and the development of action steps that are aligned with the district's strategic planning goals. The following information provides a general overview of the proposed plan of activities that will be conducted as part of the *LSP Project*.

- The district will assign a *Goal Leader* for each of the goals that are approved as part of the district's new strategic plan.
- EdLS will work with each *Goal Leader* to develop necessary action steps and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) or tasks necessary to accomplish each strategic goal.
- The final list of action steps and measures will be prepared by EdLS and the administrative team.
- EdLS and the district will consider current measures/tools in place (e.g., NWEA MAP, IAR, surveys, etc.), but there may be a need for EdLS and/or the district to develop additional tools as a result of this work. This could include but may not be limited to measures/tools for analyzing success on the action steps and/or KPIs. Both quantitative and qualitative data will be considered as part of this project.
- The following timeline and format of activities are recommended as part of this proposal:
 - Late Winter or Spring 2026 Administrative Team Meeting (on-site)
 - This will be a three-hour session with the district's *Goal Leaders* that is facilitated by EdLS.
 - The goals of this session include, but may not be limited to:
 - a general overview of the strategic plan and current KPIs/tools/measures that are being used in the district,
 - the determination if any of the current KPIs/tools/measures need to be updated and/or removed based on the reasonableness of using current measures/tools, the feasibility of developing necessary measures/tools, or other available data sets,
 - the development of a preliminary list of possible action steps, measures/tools and data sets that will be included in the draft report,

- discussion about next steps and the timeline for completing the *LSP Project*.
 - Spring '26 “Goal Leaders” Virtual Discussions
 - These will be up to three one-hour individual discussions with each *Goal Leader*.
 - The goal of these individual *Goal Leader* discussions is to finalize the draft list of action steps, KPIs, measures/tools, and possible data sets needed for each of the strategic plan goals.
 - Late Spring 2026 Administrative Team Meeting (virtual or on-site)
 - This will be a three-hour session with the district’s *Goal Leaders* that is facilitated by EdLS.
 - The goals of this session include, but may not be limited to *Goal Leader* presentations of the:
 - proposed action steps and KPIs for each of the strategic plan goals,
 - proposed measures/tools and timelines for completing each action step,
 - the necessary data collection processes (e.g., timeline and reporting) for each strategic plan goal action step, and
 - the data sets that are available, needing to be developed, and/or needing to be collected.
- The EdLS facilitation process will result in a final *Administrative Action Steps Document* that includes but may not be limited to the following:
 - the identification of desired action steps, available measures/tools and data sets to measure each of the action steps for each strategic plan goal,
 - measures/tools that are currently available or need to be developed, and
 - a proposed process and timeline for possible next steps (with the possibility of a second EdLS proposal for additional facilitation, measure(s)/tool(s) development, data collection, and data analysis).

It is further proposed that Dr. Ryan-Toye and the EdLS Team will meet at the completion of the work included in this proposal to determine possible next steps regarding additional support that EdLS can provide the district. This discussion should include but may not be limited to discussion about measure(s)/tool(s) that EdLS may help develop and the final implementation of the LSP report.



STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS DELIVERABLES

We believe that the Superintendent and the Board of Education should know exactly what they can expect and will receive as a result of working with Educational Leadership Solutions. Following is a list of deliverables which will provide an overview of our Solutions-based Strategic Planning process:

- A pre-Process planning meeting with the Superintendent and/or Board of Education, where members of our firm will meet to establish a timeline for the Process, discuss the make-up of the Core Stakeholder Team (CST), and layout the entire Strategic Planning process.
- A comprehensive process and timeline document.
- Data Analysis Documents Being Utilized (Provided by District):
 - Academic/Achievement data
 - Financial documents (Budget, Audit, etc.)
 - Communication artifacts currently used
 - Technology Plan
 - Ten-Year Life Safety Plan
- Comprehensive Strategic Plan, consisting of:
 - Mission Statement
 - Vision Statement
 - District Core Values/Belief Statements
 - District Goals for 2026 and Beyond



PROFILE OF OUR FIRM'S PARTNERS

Dr. Richard Voltz has 48 years of educational experience, starting out as a high school teacher/coach, high school principal, unit district superintendent and Associate Director of the Illinois Association of School Administrators in charge of professional development and mentoring and coaching of Illinois superintendents. In addition, Dr. Voltz taught educational administration courses at Eastern Illinois University for 17 years as an Adjunct Professor. Dr. Voltz has been a determined advocate for the improvement of services for all students and he has provided professional development on timely topics to thousands of administrators and teachers. He has also been a member of numerous state level committees that have been responsible for the formation of education policy and practices. This extensive experience in the public education arena has resulted in Dr. Voltz being widely respected and known in all areas of Illinois.

Dr. Don White worked as a public school educator for thirty-three years. His positions included classroom teacher, principal, district office administrator, and superintendent. Prior to entering the field of education, Don served as an Assistant Manager for Walgreen's Drug Stores in Champaign, IL. In addition to serving as a superintendent for nineteen years, Don has been involved in many state and national projects. His work includes serving as a Co-Chair for the Illinois Association of School Administrators (IASA) School for Advanced Leadership. As one of the three lead designers and trainers for the Illinois Leadership and Technology for Change (ITLC) out of Illinois State University, Don provided training for administrators that focused on best practices in school leadership, systems leadership, and data driven decision making. His efforts have resulted in two IASA Exemplary Service to Education Awards and he was recognized by IASA as a 2020 Superintendent of Distinction. Recently retired, Dr. White's focus continues to be providing professional development for all levels of school leadership, serving as a Partner for Educational Leadership Solutions, and working as a consultant with Forecast 5 Analytics.

Dr. Gary Zabilka is a seasoned educator with 45 years of experience as a teacher, assistant principal, principal and superintendent. He retired from the superintendency of Morton Grove School District 70 (IL) and also served as superintendent of Puffer-Hefty School District 69 in Downers Grove (IL), for a combined total of 13 years as a superintendent. He is currently a Field Service Director for the Illinois Association of School Administrators, responsible for coaching and mentoring new superintendents, as well as providing Professional Development in leadership for district administrators. He also taught educational administration courses for Loyola University, specializing in the areas of leadership and school finance. In 2012, Dr. Zabilka was named an Illinois Distinguished Superintendent. He has led or participated in over 50 executive searches. He holds degrees from Western Illinois University, Northern Illinois University, and a Doctorate from Loyola University. As one of the primary mentors of superintendents in the northern part of the state, Dr. Zabilka recognizes those key qualities and characteristics that make superintendents successful in their respective districts, and has a deep understanding of administrative structures and district organization.



FEE STRUCTURE

1. General Fee

The General Fee for the comprehensive Strategic Planning process (Phase I AND Phase II) which includes a follow-up process to Phase I which provides support for Living the Strategic Plan whereby Action Plans, Timelines and Key Performance Indicators are facilitated by our firm is available for a cost of \$19,500.

2. Regular Expenses

The Regular Expense Fee is the administrative cost of the process, and is provided as a “not to exceed” amount. Regular expenses include things such as copying costs, limited materials, travel reimbursements and other outside costs related to this process. For this Strategic Planning process the regular expenses will not exceed \$1,200.

3. Miscellaneous Costs

If, by mutual agreement, the process is expanded to include more data collection and/or meeting with more groups than initially agreed upon, EdLS will work closely with the Superintendent to ensure up front that there will be no surprises in the final billing.



SATISFACTION STATEMENT

Educational Leadership Solutions is a firm that is committed to excellence, and it is for that reason that we will continue to work for the district until they are satisfied with the Solution(s) we have recommended.

Once the Strategic Planning process is completed, EdLS will be glad to discuss annual updates or revisions to the process in subsequent years.

DISTRICT REFERENCES FOR STRATEGIC PLANNING

Gower School District 62, Willowbrook, IL; Dr. Victor Simon, Superintendent
<https://www.gower62.com/district/our-vision-mission>

Crystal Lake School District 47, Crystal Lake, IL; Dr. Kathy Hinz, Superintendent
<https://www.d47.org/about-us/strategic-plan>

East Maine School District 63, Des Plaines, IL; Dr. Shawn Schleizer, Superintendent
<https://www.emsd63.org/about-us/strategic-plan-2024-2029-vs-2>

Lansing School District 158, Lansing, IL; Dr. Nathan Schilling, Superintendent

Lincolnwood School District 74, Lincolnwood, IL; Dr. David Russo, Superintendent

McHenry School District 15, McHenry, IL; Dr. Josh Reitz, Superintendent

Antioch School District 34; Mr. Aron Borowiak, Superintendent

East Prairie School District 73, Skokie, IL; Dr. Paul Goldberg, Superintendent