

RIVERSIDE PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT 96

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Strategic Plan-Mid Year Update, December 2024 Living the Plan

On Thursday, November 14, 2024, all action team leaders convened with Gary Zabilka for a “Living the Plan” session. These sessions have been held at least twice each school year to allow action team leaders to reflect and share their team’s progress. These sessions have been instrumental in ensuring that the plan’s progress does not exist in separate silos. Don White and Gary Zabilka from Educational Leadership Solutions have been working with this team as we continue to address how we live the 2021-2026 District 96 Strategic Plan.

Each action team leader was asked to identify ways in which they see the work of the strategic plan in their day-to-day work and reflections. Responses to this question included an overall sense of intentionality, prioritization, investments, and awareness across the district. The team highlighted the emphasis on diversity and inclusion in supporting student and staff growth. Key items such as the implementation of full-day Kindergarten and the addition of English Language Learner staff members were noted as prioritized and successful actions.

Each action team had time to work and plan with a focus on these key questions:

- Where are we right now, and is there where we want to be?
- Has anything happened that we did not expect?
- What are you most proud of?
- Do you have adjustments to your SMARTIE Goals?
- What are your next steps?

Team leaders shared feedback with the entire team based on these key questions. The following represents a brief summary of these key questions based on each goal area.

Goal 1-Student Growth and Achievement

Goal 1 includes the specific strategic plan strategies and the district’s work to ensure high levels of learning for all students, as measured by our Key Performance Indicators.

Our **Standards-Based Grading and Reporting committee** noted the following achievements:

- Prioritizing our K-8 mathematics standards to ensure the vertical alignment of mathematics instruction.
- Beginning to communicate standards-based learning to our families through elementary mathematics unit cover sheets
- Professional learning for staff members on standards-based assessments

The committee plans to build off the momentum of our mathematics prioritization work by prioritizing our K-8 English Language Arts standards at our February Institute Day. The committee also plans to use this school year to identify a standards-based reporting tool to communicate student growth and learning to families. The committee plans to work with building leaders and staff members to educate our families about standards-based grading and reporting.

While the committee did not adjust the team's goals, they did adjust the timeline for full implementation. The team currently plans full implementation for the 2026-2027 school year.

As our district continues to **ensure high levels of learning for all students**, District 96 elementary staff members continue to receive professional learning for implementing Amplify Core Knowledge Language Arts (CKLA). District 96 instructional coaches provide CKLA professional learning opportunities for our staff members, and Amplify coaches will also provide grade-level specific professional learning for our grade-level teams.

The Hauser English Language Arts teachers continue to receive professional learning on the updated *My Perspectives* curricular resource to support the implementation of these updated materials. The Hauser Spanish and French teachers continue to receive professional learning on their new foreign language curricular resource, *Reporteros* and *Reporters Francophones*.

The Advanced Learning Program Review Team comprises seven teachers, two building leaders, and the Director of Teaching and Learning. The review team is working with Northwestern Center for Talent Development consultants. These consultants are working with the team to administer a survey to staff, students, and families to gather their perspectives on our district's current Advanced Learning program. The survey will be open for stakeholders to complete beginning the week of the Thanksgiving Holiday through the beginning of January. The consultants will then host focus groups with the stakeholders in January.

Goal 2-Learning Environment and Culture

The Goal 2 Action Team met on September 19th and will meet again on December 4th. At our September meeting, the group reviewed progress on the goal, and the SEL Summer Work team shared a brief overview of the Scope and Sequence tool and resource folder they began during their work days in July. The Action Team agreed that the SEL portion of Goal 2 has been well-established, especially at the elementary level. In small groups, team members discussed what success for the goal would look like at the end of year 4. All groups shared a desire to continue building on the work with Dr. Ivette Dubiel and examine and improve our culturally responsive instruction and inclusive practices. Additionally, team members expressed a goal to attend to parent communication and family involvement, potentially partnering with the Goal 4 team to share some parent and family resources around the SEL themes at the school buildings. With the understanding that two after-school professional learning sessions will be coordinated by the Goal 2 Action Team this year, team members expressed an interest in ensuring that staff could walk away from those sessions with strategies or tools that would help them in their classrooms.

In the Living the Plan meeting this month, the goal leadership team noted the achievements in and evolution of Goal 2 since the inception of the strategic plan. We don't have any adjustments to our SMARTIE goals at this time. The team feels that our next step is to continue to build skills in creating

inclusive and culturally responsive classrooms, and the group highlighted ways that student voice is being encouraged in schools and classrooms at this time.

We look forward to the World Cafe opportunity for our 5th-8th grade students this December to better understand students' perceptions of their school environment. At our next professional learning session, we plan to provide staff with opportunities to share and review the SEL resources compiled and organized by their peers, highlight strategies for increasing representation in teaching, and provide opportunities for students to connect to their experiences.

Goal 3-High Quality Staff

The team has now established an annual cycle for its workflow: audit/review/revise, recommend, and implement. While our work towards goals and measuring key performance is year-round, the team has also established an annual review/renewal cycle for scheduling when key topics will be revisited and become the team's main focus:

- Employee Satisfaction & Retention (Fall)
- Recruiting & Hiring Practices (Winter)
- Onboarding/Offboarding Practices (Spring)

The data provided by the new EAB Staff Morale Survey provided new insights and direction for the team. This fall, we've honed in on two topics related to Employee Satisfaction and Retention: employee recognition and improving overall communication between administration and staff. Our time together thus far this fall has been productive, and we will have some recommendations early in the new year before switching our focus to Recruiting and hiring Practices.

This winter, we will examine how the district can better promote its vacancies and expand attendance at job fairs. Anticipated vacancies and future needs will be considered as we examine these areas.

Before the end of the school year, the team is also hoping to see some progress toward the district establishing and documenting a standardized hiring process for administration. This process would be developed for administration by the administration. A standardized process can streamline hiring, reduce the time needed to fill positions, and increase efficiency. It also helps to ensure that all candidates are evaluated against the same criteria, ensuring fairness and reducing potential bias. A standardized hiring process benefits employers and candidates by promoting efficiency, fairness, and a positive experience for all involved.

What I am most proud of is the team itself and the enthusiasm, energy, and ideas it brings to each meeting. Their passion for the topics we cover is evident in our discussions and their actions.

We do not have any adjustments to our SMARTIE Goals or Key Performance Indicators at this time. However, we are early in the review process, which could change given the new data we are now utilizing from the EAB Staff Morale Survey. Any proposed changes would likely be communicated this spring.

Goal 4-Family and Community Partnerships

The Family and Community Partnerships met on Oct. 17th. The action team is scheduled to meet again on Dec. 5. The FCP action team identified the following areas for focus during this school year:

- Parent Connections
- Two Way Communication
- Community Outreach
- Students in Leadership

These focus areas will be refined into more specific actions through the work of the action team.

In addition, the FCP action team will address a family engagement survey in February 2025. The group is also scheduled to host a family learning night on February 26, 2025.

During the Living the Plan session reflection on progress, other action team leaders noted an improvement in family engagement. This included developing and publishing the Family Engagement guidelines, an improved District 96 website, and more cohesive offerings of family events at all schools. This included the One Book One School, which is now implemented at all four elementary schools, and the successful family learning night in 2023 and 2024.

Goal 5-Stewardship of Resources

The team has met or surpassed the performance required to accomplish the original key performance indicators:

- School District Financial Profile tier rating of 4.0
- Annual operating expense budget increases within inflation
- Facility maintenance, repair, and improvement projects: on time and within budget.
- Technology infrastructure and device expense budget increases within inflation
- Response to Maintenance requests have been on target
- Response to Technology work order requests have been on target
- We continue to make progress on the Long Term Facility Plan and will work to formalize reporting in this area
- The lunch program now includes reimbursable hot meals at every school

It is anticipated that the 2025-2026 school year will be a period of living the “final year” of the 2021-2026 strategic plan while developing a new plan to guide the district over the next 5 years.

The team considered whether the current mission, vision, and values remain relevant. As a new plan is developed, new goals, strategies, and key performance indicators will likely be selected. Continuing the motto, mission, vision, and values may remain the same with only minor adjustments based on feedback from strategic plan team participants.

The Board will be involved in selecting a facilitator to guide the updated process for District 96. We anticipate community involvement, with parents and staff members supporting both reflections on the current plan and long-range future considerations to inform the new components of the plan.