

RIVERSIDE PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT 96

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Strategic Plan-Mid Year Update, December 17, 2025 Living the Plan

On Friday, December 5, 2025, all action team leaders convened with Gary Zabilka and Karen Maturo from Educational Leadership Solutions 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. Educational Leadership Solutions has 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 reflect on our shared progress with the current strategic plan. Key discussion questions included those noted below. Responses to these questions included an overall sense of intentionality, prioritization, investments, and awareness across the district.

- **Share your role and time with this journey. Have you been on your Goal team since its inception in 2022? What have been the highlights along the way? The challenge**
- **What do you believe have been your goal-specific successes during this current strategic plan cycle (March through November)?**
- **What did you want to accomplish during this strategic plan cycle but did not?**
- **What action steps would you still like to pursue and/or accomplish before this Plan transitions to a new Plan?**
- **Consider the transition to a new Strategic Plan for 2026 to 2031—what would be your Goal Team’s recommendation regarding your goal moving forward in the new Plan?**
- **What action steps and/or processes would you tell the next strategic plan goal leader/team to continue, consider, and/or add?**
- **The team also continues to discuss the best ways to communicate the success of this plan with all key stakeholders.**

Goal 1: Student Growth and Achievement

Goal 1 centers on ensuring high levels of learning for all students through clear expectations, aligned instruction, and ongoing use of data to measure growth. Across this strategic plan cycle, the district has continued to build momentum in implementing standards-based practices and refining our approach to advanced learning. However, progress has been slower than staff hoped in some areas.

Standards-Based Grading and Reporting

The Goal 1 Standards-Based Grading and Reporting Committee reviewed progress from last Spring to now. We continue to see steady movement toward a consistent standards-aligned approach to assessing and reporting student learning. A brief reminder of why this work matters: standards-based reporting provides clearer information about what students know and can do, helping teachers target instruction and helping families better understand progress.

At the elementary level, staff and families are increasingly engaging with standards as the foundation for understanding learning. A partial implementation of the revised elementary reporting tool (report card) is scheduled for Fall 2026. At the middle school, teams continue to strengthen their use of common assessment data to guide instruction and discuss student achievement through a standards-based lens.

Advanced Learning Review and Redesign

A committee of teachers and administrators is continuing its review and redesign of the district's advanced learning programming. Since Spring, the team has completed a review of the consultant's report and has begun defining what Advanced Learning in District 96 should look like going forward. The committee will continue to work with consultants to develop a coherent, equity-centered identification system and service model aligned to district values and student needs.

Reflection and Preparation for the Next Strategic Plan

As Goal 1 action team leaders reflected on the progress over the past four years, they identified several areas of meaningful movement, including:

- Recommendation and Implementation of Full-Day Kindergarten
- Continued districtwide efforts to prepare teachers for standards-based instruction and assessment

At the same time, leaders acknowledged that the rollout of the elementary reporting tool has progressed more slowly than many staff members hoped. The leaders also noted that the goals for this plan seemed more aligned to the elementary level, and need flexibility to meet the needs of our middle school. This feedback will help shape priorities in the next strategic plan, ensuring we continue building momentum while attending to staff needs and implementation readiness.

Goal 2: Learning Environment and Culture

Much of the Goal 2 work so far this school year has focused on MTSS supports for Social-Emotional Learning. Our new Intervention Support Coordinator, with the help of district leadership, building teams, and our district mental health staff, has helped implement a consistent system of data-based discussion of student social-emotional needs within our existing MTSS data review process. Additionally, she has drafted a universal tool for all elementary staff to access tiered support with social-emotional and behavioral interventions, so that all staff across the district have common tools to access district supports and resources. Additionally, the district School Psychologists and Social Workers are reviewing potential new screening tools to replace our current Renaissance Screening Tool. The Renaissance was chosen more than 4 years ago, and several new tools have been introduced since that time. Team members are reviewing options to ensure that we are collecting the most meaningful and actionable data for students. The Goal 2 leadership team reflected on the progress as well as areas where we have not made desired progress this year, as we prepare for a new Strategic Plan

process. The team identified the strategies of culturally responsive teaching and creating student choice in learning as areas we would like to continue to build capacity for district-wide.

Goal 3: High Quality Staff

The Goal 3 Action Team has been reconfigured. The superintendent now facilitates the Goal 3 Action Team (previously facilitated by Don Tufano, now retired Director of Technology). The action team agreed that a current need and focus area is the interpretation and actionable use of the EAB Staff Morale Survey data. The survey is administered 3 times per year. The Goal 3 Action Team met in October and December. The team reviewed district-level survey data. The action team has identified two areas of focus for the current school year. This includes improving recognition and value and improving communication with the district office. The current KPIs have been discussed with the Board of Education and the Goal 3 Action Team. The consensus is a desire to shift the current KPIs and align new KPIs that better match the efforts in addressing the morale survey data.

Goal 4: Family and Community Partnerships

The Family and Community Partnerships met on October 30th. The action team is focused on the priorities of improving trust, communication, confidence, and capacity between school and family. This work remains focused on:

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

The action team determined that we would not administer an updated family engagement survey in November 2025 as previously determined. The action team, in communication with the Board of Education, determined that the new strategic plan process scheduled to begin in 2026 will provide ample opportunity to connect with families and gather needed feedback and insights about family perspectives about District 96. The group is scheduled to host the fourth annual family learning night on February 25, 2026.

1. FCP Accomplishments (since 2021)
 - a. Family Learning Night
 - b. One Book One School at each elementary school
 - c. Enhancing the Grade 5-6 Transition
 - d. Board Liaison-Family Engagement
 - e. Link to PLT
 - i. Parent Ambassadors
 - f. Ongoing-enhanced communication
 - i. Family Survey
 - ii. Parent Information Night
 - iii. Family Engagement Guidelines

Goal 5: Stewardship of Resources

The team remains focused on these previously identified indicators of success. Mark Kuzniewski provides leadership to the district in this area as the Interim Director of Finance and Operations for 2025-2026. One notable change is the recent hiring of Zachary Pros as the new Director of Facilities and Maintenance. In addition, the Board of Education has approved MOUs for work to replace all windows at Hauser Junior High and to continue with needed exterior masonry work. In addition, District 96 has worked closely with the Village of Riverside to finalize plans to install a new playground at Blythe Park School. It is anticipated that a new Director of Finance will be hired by March 2026, with an anticipated start date of July 1, 2026.

- 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

The 2025-2026 school year marks the 5th and final year of the current strategic plan. The District acknowledges the ongoing commitment and efforts related to living this plan in a collaborative and integrated manner. Key accomplishments have been noted throughout these updates in regard to the current plan.

The Board of Education is anticipated to approve ongoing work with Educational Leadership Solutions to facilitate the creation and iteration of a new 5-year plan linked to the current mission, vision, values, and establish new goals and direction to continue to improve District 96 as a great school district for students, families, and staff.