



EVANSTON/SKOKIE  
SCHOOL DISTRICT 65



# STRATEGIC PLAN

2015-2020





**Cover artwork, clockwise from top left:**

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**As we compiled this plan, District 65 leaders listened to thousands of members of the Evanston and Skokie communities, including our students, families, neighbors, and employees. We heard your aspirations for the future of education in our communities.**

We listened as a mother dreamed about classrooms where children are challenged to develop their critical thinking, creativity, and abilities to communicate and collaborate. We heard a grandfather envision a future where schools value each student and every aspect of his or her identity. We listened as a neighbor told us about his passion for mentoring and the need for caring adults in the lives of every child. We heard educators tell us about their joy in helping young people develop a love for learning and their passion for developing the craft of teaching. We heard community members speak about the power of the arts to contribute to academic and social/emotional development. We listened to family members express their hope that if their children get “knocked down” in any way, they would have the resilience to get back up.

We heard difficult things too. We listened as a teacher told us that she did not always feel supported and was weary from many years of working hard to implement initiatives that were, at times, disconnected. We heard a father tell us about the ways some families, especially low income families and families of color, feel excluded or disengaged by the District. We heard leaders of community organizations tell us that it was difficult to partner with District 65. We listened as a mother told us about the need she felt for her academically advanced son to experience more rigor and challenge in his school work.

As we listened, we were reminded of what educational philosopher John Dewey said nearly a century ago. Dewey said, “Only through education can equality of opportunity be anything more than a phrase... Democracy has to be born anew every generation and education is its midwife” (Dewey, 1915, p. 223). In making this often quoted statement, Dewey referred to the need to transform public education to meet the needs of the 20th Century.

Currently, public education across the United States—and here in Evanston and Skokie—is again in the midst of transformation to meet the needs of another new century. As in Dewey’s day, we seek an education system that removes barriers to equality, renews our democracy, and prepares all students for successful careers and fulfilling lives. We also seek a system that academically prepares all students for a high standard and builds student capacity for critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity. We want our schools and classrooms to be spaces marked by enthusiasm, equity, and reflection. Each of these aspirations is explored in this plan.

As you read this plan, you will see that we have set an ambitious vision and clear goals for District 65 based on what we learned from members of our communities. As we move forward to implement this plan, we are mindful of what leading scholars have learned. Well-intended, complex initiatives layered on one another do not achieve results (Tyack & Cuban, 1997; Payne, 2008). This has been the case nationally, and it is the case in District 65 schools, as our months of listening to the wisdom of practice through the voices of our teachers and staff confirms. We heard again and again that our employees want time and resources to focus on the foundations of learning rather than adding to existing fatigue for new initiatives. To that end, we will renew our focus on building systems to support our staff in the quality implementation of research-proven strategies.

This we know: every child has potential. Our plan builds on and strengthens our existing foundation so that all children have opportunities to unlock that potential. The plan also lays a path for innovation in every classroom and school so that improvement comes not from complex new initiatives but from the hearts and minds of our educators.

This plan outlines the next chapter in the story of District 65. As you read the plan, we hope you will find some components that inspire in you the spirit of every child, every day, whatever it takes—a spirit that has already inspired many who contributed to this plan. We further hope that you will feel not only inspired but called to participate in the creation of that next chapter.



# MISSION STATEMENT

As part of this planning process, we developed District 65's mission with extensive stakeholder feedback and Board of Education input. Our mission states:

*Working together as a community, we will inspire creativity and prepare each student to achieve academically, grow personally, and contribute positively to a global society.*

*Every child, Every day, Whatever it takes.*



# ORGANIZING STRUCTURE OF THE PLAN

The plan is grounded in seminal research conducted at the University of Chicago Consortium on Chicago School Research (Bender Sebring et al., 2006). This research identified five essential supports for school improvement: effective leaders, collaborative teachers, family and community engagement, safe and supportive climate, and ambitious instruction. The study found that when at least three of these five essentials are present—especially principal leadership, ambitious instruction, and collaborative teaching—schools will perform at a higher level. This study resulted in the

creation of the 5Essentials surveys of teachers and students, which we administer annually in District 65 and used to inform the development of this plan.

Our priority areas capture all five of the essential supports (with supports around principal leadership and teacher collaboration represented by the “thriving workforce” dimension). In addition to the school-level supports, we included a fifth priority area around financial sustainability to ensure our long-term ability to deliver on the goals and strategies outlined in the strategic plan.

## STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

### HIGH QUALITY TEACHING & LEARNING



### THRIVING WORKFORCE



### FAMILY & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



### SAFE & SUPPORTIVE SCHOOL CLIMATE



### FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY



#### 1. High Quality Teaching and Learning

The school principal serves as the catalyst for change and as the instructional leader, setting a high bar for all. Teachers and teacher leaders provide ambitious instruction that challenges students and is coordinated within and across grades. The quality of our teaching is measured by student learning.

#### 2. Thriving Workforce

All staff have the knowledge and skills needed to perform their jobs. Everyone is committed to advancement and professional learning and growth. Teachers are engaged in continually improving their teaching practice. The key to sustaining improvement over time is the quality of people that we recruit and retain in positions across the District.

#### 3. Family and Community Engagement

All family members are seen as partners by school staff and have opportunities to volunteer and assist in decision-making at the school. Families make connections between school and home for their children, emphasizing the importance

of school. Community partners engage in the learning and development of all children.

#### 4. Safe and Supportive School Climate

School is a place where children feel safe and supported because of the structures and relationships created in each building. Schools are safe spaces, where students are engaged, understand high expectations, and are motivated to work hard. Adults provide the necessary academic and social supports for student success.

#### 5. Financial Sustainability

The District is financially strong in the areas of budgeting, forecasting, finances, and short- and long-range operating and capital planning.

Building on this framework, we have included indicators from the 5Essentials survey among our measures of success. Appendix A contains a summary of background research and information reviewed for each priority area. Appendix B contains a description of our planning process, and Appendix D contains a summary of our planning principles.

# WHAT WE HEARD: A SUMMARY

The voices of students, families, educators, community members, and other stakeholders greatly influenced the development of this strategic plan. The following themes emerged from our listening tour, focus groups, community survey, and school visits.

## FROM STUDENTS

- Create opportunities for students to have strong positive relationships with teachers and support staff
- Create opportunities for students to have strong positive relationships with other students
- Ensure that all students are known, supported and encouraged by the adults in the buildings, resulting in a caring adult in every child's life
- Provide academic challenges for all students, pushing all students towards excellence while providing the support each student needs
- Ensure that all students have access to high quality educators
- Develop discipline that is understandable and fairly applied

## FROM FAMILIES

- Set a welcoming tone and culture throughout the District—in schools, the central office and in departments and centers
- Support academic and social/emotional development through research-based school initiatives and programs
- Ensure equitable resources and supports across schools
- Provide teachers high-quality professional learning
- Provide teachers adequate time for collaborating with other teachers on instructional planning and working with students
- Ensure that all District 65 students have appropriate supports and challenges to excel and succeed
- Provide teachers and aides with more training and support for inclusion



## FROM EDUCATORS

- Provide professional learning that is driven by student and teacher needs, encouraging the sharing of best practices and expertise that exists within District 65
- Carve out the necessary time educators need to support students, to plan, to collaborate, and to learn new methods and techniques
- Build welcoming school and central office communities where trust, transparency and strong relationships are the norms
- Create a district wide learning environment where taking risks is encouraged and ample support is provided
- Develop leadership and tools to support the key transitions of students (into kindergarten, into early and upper elementary school, into middle school, into high school)

## FROM EVERYONE

- Ensure high standards and expectations for everyone with appropriate support
- Focus on the whole child
- Continue to build trust, respect and transparency throughout the system
- Build strong relationships between students and adults, students and students, and between adults and adults
- Focus and prioritize on what is important
- Be careful to avoid too many initiatives resulting in 'initiative fatigue'
- Create an actionable plan
- Recognize that teacher and administrative leadership at school and district levels matters

Appendix C contains a description of our process for ensuring community voice and input. A detailed report on community feedback on the strategic plan is available on the District's website: [www.district65.net](http://www.district65.net)

# HIGH QUALITY TEACHING & LEARNING

“ We need teachers who are motivating and that really care about us and our learning. Teachers need to set their expectations high and consistent for all students. ”

- District 65 Middle School Student



**In the area of high quality teaching and learning, District 65 will build on its existing assets. Many teachers employ innovative instructional practices, thoughtfully use formative assessment, and implement processes for identifying and supporting struggling learners. These activities are supported by excellent curricular materials across subjects and grade levels.**

Yet, data show that 43 percent of our students enter high school without attaining college ready levels in reading, and 56 percent enter high school without attaining college ready levels in math. The percent of students who meet college readiness benchmarks and make nationally normed gains in grades three through eight has decreased over the last four years in both reading and math. Further, gaps in educational attainment based on income, race, first language, and disability status persist.

These data suggest that foundational work is needed to address the needs of all students. This foundational work will be District 65's primary focus for teaching and learning over the next five years. Through this work, we intend to provide stimulating and challenging learning opportunities for all students with extra support to those who need it to meet our very high standards.

Through this plan we will focus on improvement in the following foundational areas:

- Refine our teachers' Professional Learning Communities,
- Build and consistently implement an instructional framework, a tool that catalogs in detail the elements of effective teaching,
- Ensure consistency in implementation of approaches to supporting struggling learners, and
- Improve feedback to learners and their families through improved assessments and report cards.

These improvements to the foundations of teaching and learning will be augmented by several new

approaches, including a focus on executive functioning skills, like decision making and goal setting, and the development of a district-level work group to identify and share innovative practices.

Rather than address specific content areas like mathematics, reading, or the arts, the strategies we recommend will support the development of all curricular areas in the District. For example, as staff build their capacity to implement the Disciplinary Literacy approach explained below, students will receive improved instruction in science, social studies, fine arts, reading, and math. As we refine models of professional learning in our district, our progress on all initiatives will accelerate.

By focusing on continuous improvement and innovation, we envision the district as a community of learners where change can flow from schools to the central office, from the central office to schools, and among schools and individual teachers. The strategies assume that engaged professionals across the District, in each school and in each classroom, will use the tools outlined in these strategies for guidance and direction to build on and innovate with. We seek improvement for all children through the creation of conditions that foster innovation and improvement in each classroom and school.

We also recognize that each school in District 65 has its own strengths and its own areas for improvement. Accordingly, each school will have its own staged five-year implementation plan for these strategies. The objective of these implementation plans will be to appropriately prioritize and pace the work in each school. Implementation plans will be reviewed regularly by the school and district and revised in response to emerging evidence.

## GOAL

Prepare students to be on-track for high school, college, career and life readiness in an environment of innovation and continuous improvement through high quality teaching that addresses the needs of each learner.



## STRATEGIES

Over the next five years, we will focus on the following six strategies in the area of





high quality teaching and learning.

## **1. Refine implementation of school-based, professional learning models.**

In the last several years, District 65 has already begun a journey to develop collaborative professional learning structures—Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)—in each school. When they work as designed, PLCs provide adult learners a space to develop and share skills and knowledge for innovation (DuFour, DuFour & Eaker, 2008). Further, the PLCs allow for professional learning to be tailored to each teacher’s learning needs. These learning communities also provide a forum for reflection on how to apply knowledge attained through other professional learning opportunities to a particular school’s context. This will be critical to the success of the professional learning detailed throughout this plan.

Beyond professional learning, PLCs often provide other benefits such as fostering greater collaboration, reducing teacher isolation in classrooms and spreading best practices throughout a school building. Promising results have already arisen from this process in some schools. Our task over the next five years will be to improve the coherence and quality of this work district-wide.

To enact this strategy, the District will first evaluate the effectiveness of current investments in professional learning and develop a plan to better use those resources. We will also work with principals and teacher leaders to assess the quality of implementation of PLCs in each school, including the effectiveness of these PLCs for employees in other job roles. Using this information, we will develop and implement a plan to refine and improve PLCs in each building.

## **2. Improve the rigor and quality of instruction by developing and consistently implementing a framework that defines high quality curriculum and instruction.**

Through focus groups, school visits, and surveys, District 65 teachers—echoing the sentiments of their peers nationwide—expressed fatigue with disconnected initiatives related to teaching and learning. They requested that this plan provide a coherent approach to instruction rather than introduce a series of unrelated new instructional initiatives. This strategy responds to

that request while acknowledging the need to improve the rigor and challenge of instruction for all students, especially those who are academically advanced. Further, as we work to improve the consistency of instruction across classrooms, we will build on examples of high quality instruction already occurring within the District.

The first step in enacting this strategy is to develop and adopt an instructional framework that defines high quality curriculum and instruction. An instructional framework is a tool that catalogs elements of effective teaching so that teachers have a clear guide to improving instruction for all students. Our framework will set the standard for aspects of effective teaching as diverse as the use of instructional time, methods for differentiating instruction to meet individual student needs, the use of technology in the classroom, and the use of a balanced assessment system. By using this tool consistently, teachers will improve the quality of their instruction and ensure that their students are challenged to develop not only basic reading and math skills but also abilities in critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity. At the district level, the instructional framework will provide a point of focus for our efforts to build teachers’ capacity to provide high quality instruction to all students.

The framework will be customized as needed for each grade level and subject. Acknowledging the need to improve our students’ foundational literacy skills, we will begin the process of building and implementing the instructional framework for pre-kindergarten through grade two. This work in early literacy supports the joint District 65 and District 202 board goal to improve student outcomes in literacy.

In light of District 65’s decreased reading scores for students in grades three through eight over the last four years, we also plan to include an approach to literacy known as Disciplinary Literacy (McConachie & Petrosky, 2009) in our instructional framework. This approach will challenge students to read, write, speak, and reason as practitioners of various disciplines including language arts, science, social studies, and the arts. Incorporating this approach into our instructional framework will provide District 65 students a smoother transition to high school in District 202 where this approach is also used. In the first year, implementation

of the disciplinary literacy approach will begin with social studies and science classes in grades six through eight, with other subjects to follow in future years.

Finally, we recognize that excellent instruction must be supported by excellent instructional materials. There are several curriculum adoption projects currently underway that we plan to continue. These include adopting Every Day Math in grades three through five and new literacy materials in pre-kindergarten through second grade.

### 3. Ensure consistent implementation of instructional approaches for struggling learners.

Not all children learn in the same way or have the same needs. However, each child has the ability to thrive and succeed; if s/he does not, educators have a responsibility to try a different approach. Teachers work hard every day to meet the needs of our diverse students, but they do not always have the tools they need to do so efficiently. In order to improve academic outcomes for students who are struggling, this strategy supports teachers with additional techniques for their toolbox of instructional strategies.

Through this strategy, we will work to improve instruction for those students who are lagging academically and need additional support. The work described in this strategy will also be incorporated into the instructional framework described in strategy two. Our approach focuses on three groups: our lowest performing students (a group with a persistently high percentage of low income students and students of color), students with disabilities, and English learners.

District-wide data demonstrate that we urgently need to address the learning needs of the growing number of students who are not performing well academically. From 2011 to 2014, the percent of students who scored at or below the 25th national percentile increased in both reading and math on the Measures of Academic

Progress (MAP) assessment.

As a first step toward implementing this strategy, we will improve our supports to students struggling academically and clarify roles and expectations for the various professionals who work with these students. This work will involve refinement of our existing program that supports students who are struggling academically (known to educators as Response to Intervention, or RtI).

We chose to focus on our English learner population because we have seen tremendous growth in the size of that population in recent years. We plan to improve teaching and learning for these students

by adopting a new English as a Second Language (ESL) curriculum in kindergarten through grade eight. We will also assess the outcomes of our programs for English learners, including the Two-Way Immersion (TWI) program, to identify programmatic modifications that may be necessary. Finally, we plan to develop approaches to culturally relevant instruction. These approaches will benefit English learners, students from other minority subgroups, and the student body as a whole.

Students with disabilities and other special needs are our third area of concentration. In order to succeed, these students require services that are both instructional and non-instructional in nature. To meet the needs of these students, we plan to identify strengths, opportunities, and needs related to instruction for these students. This assessment will be completed in collaboration



Artwork: Sidele Anyang, Lincolnwood Elementary





with the Whole Child Council described in the Safe and Supportive Climate section of this plan. This council will also identify strengths, opportunities, and needs related to non-instructional services for the same population. Based on this work, we will create an action plan for meeting the needs of these students that leverages community partnerships and available resources.

We have selected three student groups to focus on. This work will also build a strong foundation for excellent instruction for all students. It will do so by further building teacher capability to meet the instructional needs of students at varying academic levels in the same classroom.

**4. Improve use of formative assessment data and other evidence-based feedback.**

We must ensure all students and families receive clear feedback on what students have learned and what each student should do next to continue his or her academic progress. In order for students and families to obtain the feedback they need, teachers must have tools to assess what students know and are able to do. They also need knowledge of how to interpret the evidence created from these tools. This strategy addresses these needs.

The District will implement this strategy by first developing a series of curriculum maps. Curriculum maps specify the order and pace of units and standards taught at each grade level. These curriculum maps will be part of our instructional framework and will provide a greater level of specificity than existing scope and sequence documents. Next, we will review our assessment system and report cards to determine what changes are needed

to provide students and families regular feedback aligned with the new curriculum maps. In addition, we will ensure teachers are adept and comfortable using and communicating assessment data to students and their families.



Artwork: Thomas Glew, Dewey Elementary

Beyond the ability to provide necessary feedback to students and families, this work will also lay the foundation for better use of data to inform teaching and learning. The use of data will be part of the instructional framework described in strategy two.

**5. Promote academic and personal success by building students' executive functioning skills and encouraging a growth mindset for students.**

In the classroom, children need executive functioning skills to focus on what is important and to organize their

materials. Executive functioning skills include decision-making, goal setting, planning, organizing, problem solving, and self-monitoring (Bernstein & Waber, 2007). Improved executive functioning skills will assist our students in achieving academic success.

Beyond specific skills, students' mindsets can have a tremendous impact on their academic outcomes. Work by Carol Dweck (2006) suggests that students who adopt a growth mindset have better academic outcomes than those with a fixed mindset. Dweck defines a growth mindset as one based on the belief that basic qualities like intelligence and artistic ability are not fixed but can be cultivated through effort (Dweck, 2006, p. 7). Our work on this strategy will include not only guiding students to develop specific executive functioning skills but also a growth mindset about themselves as learners.



We have identified developing teachers' and leaders' knowledge about executive functioning and their capability to integrate that understanding into the general curriculum as the first step in implementing this strategy. With this knowledge, teachers will integrate development of executive functioning into the core curriculum and work with each student to set goals related to the development of executive functioning. They will also work with students to help them adopt growth mindsets.

#### **6. Establish a work group to identify, celebrate, and share innovative practices.**

Throughout the process of developing this plan, we saw and heard about amazing work underway in individual classrooms or with small groups of teachers. We also heard from community members about their educational priorities that include using innovative instructional technology; increasing opportunities for science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM); increasing the level of challenge for advanced students; and integrating the arts into learning across content areas.

Over the five years of this plan, the vast majority of our work in the area of high quality teaching and learning will focus on the foundational strategies described above. Our achievement data and our limited financial resources require us to maintain this focus. Yet, we share the excitement of our teachers, employees, families and community members about the benefits innovation can bring.

Through this strategy, we will support innovation in District 65 while recognizing and rewarding the initiative of our most talented educators. We plan to establish an internal work group made up of educators throughout the district who will look for innovation in our schools, classrooms and community. The work group will identify, celebrate, and share innovative practices.

One of the ways the group will identify innovative practices is to select a focal area to highlight in an annual innovation showcase. Examples of possible focus areas include instructional technology, culturally relevant teaching and other methods of closing the achievement

gap, instructional approaches for academically advanced students, STEM, and the arts. In conjunction with the program to recognize and reward employee excellence described in the Thriving Workforce section of this plan, the work group will also identify other means to recognize and celebrate innovative work related to the annual area of focus. Selection criteria will be developed in advance and will include financial feasibility and applicability for use district-wide.

### **MILESTONES**

The table on the next page contains a summary of initial milestones for the six strategies.

**“The function of education is to teach one to think intensively and to think critically. Intelligence plus character - that is the goal of true education.”**

– Martin Luther King, Jr.



<p><b>Strategy 1:</b> <b>Professional Learning</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete an examination of resources (i.e., time and budget) spent on professional learning and develop a plan for improving the effectiveness of this investment, in collaboration with the Human Resources Department</li> <li>• Create and implement a plan for improving school-based professional learning in collaboration with teacher leaders that complements district wide professional learning opportunities</li> </ul>
<p><b>Strategy 2:</b> <b>Curriculum &amp; Instructional Quality</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proceed with curriculum adoption projects needed to fill in gaps in existing curricula</li> <li>• Adopt, adapt, and refine an instructional framework that defines high quality instruction in literacy and math, beginning with pre-kindergarten through grade two</li> <li>• Create and implement a plan for developing teacher and administrator knowledge of the components of the instructional framework and how the framework facilitates the learning of all students, including advanced students</li> <li>• Develop exemplary student work samples, starting in science and social studies, that model high quality disciplinary learning for grades six through eight. Use these samples to support collaboration with District 202</li> <li>• Adopt new materials in social studies for grades six through eight and in early childhood literacy for use district-wide as a first step toward incorporating literacy instruction into studies in all disciplines</li> <li>• Develop a plan for adopting the Disciplinary Literacy approach in other grades and subjects</li> </ul>
<p><b>Strategy 3:</b> <b>Instructional strategies</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve implementation quality of our program that supports students who are struggling academically (known to educators as Response to Intervention, or RtI)</li> <li>• Develop and implement a process for shared goal setting and planning with principals and teachers related to the achievement of student subgroups</li> <li>• Proceed with adoption of a new English as a Second Language (ESL) curriculum for K-8</li> <li>• Conduct an in depth analysis of assessment results for English learners regarding language development and recommend modifications to program design</li> <li>• Implement culturally relevant teaching strategies, beginning with work in three schools</li> <li>• In collaboration with the Whole Child Council described in the Safe and Supportive Climate section of this plan, identify strengths, opportunities, and needs related to instruction for students with disabilities and other special needs</li> <li>• Create an action plan for the instruction of students with disabilities and other special needs that leverages community partnerships and is feasible within available resources</li> </ul>

<p><b>Strategy 4:</b></p> <p><b>Evidence-based feedback</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create curriculum maps that identify units and standards taught in each term for each grade level for math, English language arts, social studies, science, and the arts</li> <li>• Identify and implement improvements to our assessment system and report cards to provide feedback that is aligned to curriculum maps</li> <li>• Provide guidance to teachers on using parent conferences as an opportunity to provide detailed standards-based feedback to parents</li> </ul>
<p><b>Strategy 5:</b></p> <p><b>Executive functioning</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pilot integration of executive functioning skills and growth mindsets into the curriculum in one school</li> <li>• Evaluate pilot and create a plan for scaling in future years</li> <li>• Create and implement a plan for students to set goals for development in behavior and academics</li> </ul>
<p><b>Strategy 6:</b></p> <p><b>Innovation</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Convene a work group to identify, celebrate, and share innovative practices</li> <li>• Establish and implement a process to identify innovation</li> <li>• Create and implement a means to celebrate and share innovation</li> </ul>

## MEASURES OF SUCCESS

- Percent of students at or above college readiness benchmarks established by NWEA in reading and mathematics on MAP at key transition points
- Percent of students at or below the 25th percentile on MAP in reading and mathematics at key transition points
- Percent of students meeting national growth norms on MAP in reading and mathematics at key transition points
- District-level Teacher Influence measure on the 5Essentials survey, a measure of whether teachers have influence regarding school policies and practices and a prerequisite for innovation
- District-level Principal Instructional Leadership measure on the 5Essentials survey, a measure of principals being active and skilled instructional leaders who set high standards for teaching and student learning



“

*Teaching shouldn't just be a job, it should be something teachers are passionate about.*

”

*- District 65 Middle School Student*



**Our talented employees are the heart of District 65, and a thriving workforce is the heart of this strategic plan. Without a skilled and knowledgeable workforce, we cannot successfully implement any of the strategies we have developed. District 65 has 1,121 full-time and 314 part-time employees, spending approximately 80 percent of its operating budget on human capital. The success of the District, its students, and all of its employees are intricately intertwined.**

Through the strategies that support our thriving workforce goal, we seek to provide our students and families with the finest school district workforce available. We also seek to provide our employees with an exceptionally positive work environment. We believe every employee deserves a supportive work environment. We envision our district as a community of highly skilled and knowledgeable staff who work in an environment of innovation. We aspire to build a culture where all adults and all students share the love of learning. We seek to foster a workplace where achievement by both students and staff are celebrated, where employees have opportunities to develop their careers for their own benefit and that of their students, where relationships between employees are based on trust and collaboration, and where all employees feel valued and respected. We further plan to establish an assessment or survey of employee satisfaction and engagement so that we can track our progress toward realizing this vision.

In addition to our efforts to retain, develop, and celebrate the success of our current employees, we also plan to improve the quality of our recruitment, selection, and orientation processes. This will allow us to attract, hire, and retain the best talent in all job categories. Through these improvements, we also seek to attract a workforce that is diverse in skills and experience and that reflects the demographic diversity of our student body.

By achieving these goals, District 65 can ensure we are the school district of choice not only for families, but for the best and brightest candidates looking for employment in a public school setting. We can also

ensure our employees are eager to come to work, seek opportunities to collaborate and support their colleagues, and do the hard work necessary to embrace our motto of, "Every child, every day, whatever it takes."

## GOAL

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



## STRATEGIES

Over the next five years, we will focus on the following four strategies in the area of thriving workforce.

### 1. Design an infrastructure to support and monitor high-quality professional learning for all employees that is aligned to the priorities outlined in this plan.

For our students to succeed, our workforce must be equipped with the knowledge and skills needed to perform their jobs well. Based on focus group feedback, comments made during school visits, and survey results, employees expressed the need for more effective professional learning opportunities. Several important studies indicated that solely depending on workshop-based professional learning is ineffective (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009; Yoon et al., 2007). We seek to support employees in taking greater control over their own learning and development by expanding the type of learning opportunities provided.

Through this strategy, District 65 will refine school-based professional learning so that it is of high quality and aligned with both District priorities and employee needs and interests. We envision learning opportunities that are engaging, job-embedded and led collaboratively by educators. The Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) described in the high quality teaching and learning section of this plan will serve as the primary delivery method for professional learning. These PLCs will be supplemented by other methods of professional learning as appropriate. Through these learning methods, employees will explore research and best practice-based content related to teaching and learning, family and community engagement, and





safe and supportive school climates. The professional learning system will take into consideration the learning needs of not only teachers but all employees.

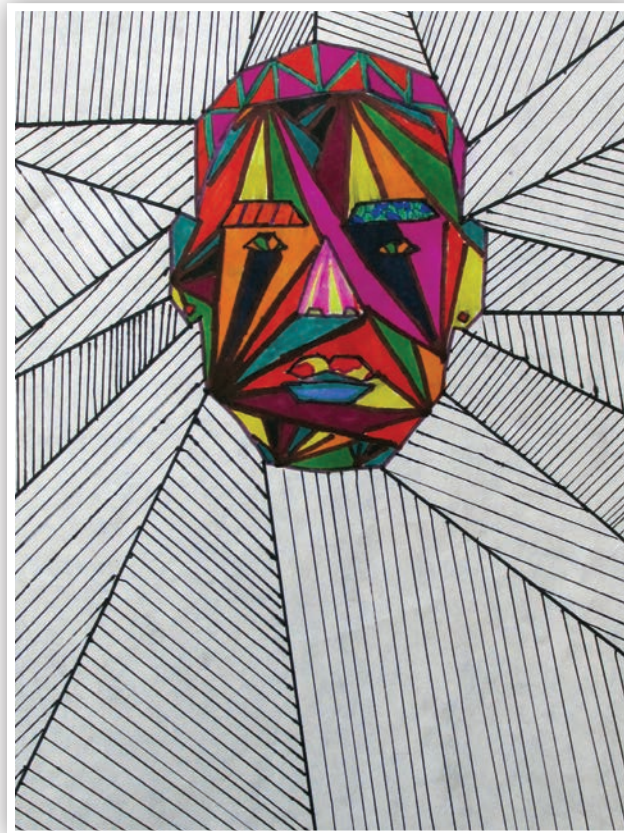
As a first step in implementing this strategy, we will establish standards for the content, format, delivery method, frequency, and effectiveness of professional learning opportunities, ensuring compatibility of these standards with the District’s school-based learning communities model. We will also develop a systemic plan for professional learning in order to maximize the effectiveness of the time and money we spend on professional learning. Implementation will proceed through development of a professional learning calendar to help employees in selecting appropriate learning opportunities and to ensure that district wide professional learning opportunities are coordinated with school-based professional learning. The development of this calendar will incorporate a priority-setting process to ensure that time and money spent on professional learning is well used.

## 2. Develop and implement an annual recruitment plan to improve timing, candidate sourcing, the diversity of the workplace, the hiring and interview process, and new-hire orientation, mentoring, and support.

We have identified District 65’s recruitment and induction processes as areas for improvement. By investing resources in this strategy, we will:

- Attract a larger number of outstanding candidates,

- Increase the knowledge and skill level of candidates selected and hired,
- Make more timely offers of employment to maximize likelihood of acceptance, and
- Increase the likelihood of retention through an effective new employee orientation process.



Artwork: Aidan O’Hare, Haven Middle School

Recent research suggests that this strategy is both feasible and promising (Odden, 2011). This strategy holds promise for increasing the diversity of the District 65 workforce in terms of skills, experience, and demographics.

To implement this strategy, we will redesign the District 65 hiring process. Initial steps include establishing partnerships with teacher preparation programs, training hiring managers (e.g., principals and assistant superintendents) on candidate selection, piloting methods for fast-tracking high potential candidates, and experimenting with improving orientation during the summer of 2016.

## 3. Foster a culture of collaboration, trust, and support across the system.

Collaboration and trust between employees are highly correlated with improved outcomes for students (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Bryk et al., 2010). Building a workplace culture that supports the development of trust and collaboration is likely to also improve the satisfaction of employees and the District’s ability to recruit and retain top candidates for all job categories. The perspectives of teachers and other employees gathered through focus groups and surveys supported this conclusion.



We also value the importance of celebrating and rewarding excellent work in all job categories. This value corresponds with an important finding in a study published by The New Teacher Project (2012). The study found that many excellent teachers leave their school or the profession every year for reasons that were totally within the control of their employers (e.g., lack of feedback or recognition).

The District's focus on culture will be intentional, fostering an environment where people feel safe to trust their colleagues, believe their opinions and the work they do are valued, and know they are respected. The 5Essentials survey data provide insight into the District's current state. Sixteen schools have sufficient data to receive scores on the 5Essentials survey. Of these sixteen, ten schools score at or above the Illinois average on the Teacher-Teacher trust measure and eleven score at or above the Illinois average on the Teacher-Principal trust measure. Going forward, the District will adopt additional measures to assess school culture to guide the continuous improvement of workplace culture. Several tools already exist for this purpose; for example, Barrett's Cultural Transformation Tools (Barrett, 2006). Adopting such a tool would allow us to determine employee satisfaction across all employee groups.

District 65 will implement this strategy in collaboration with our employees. We will develop programs to recognize and reward excellent work. We will also experiment with new strategies to build trust and collaboration. We will select and implement a survey or assessment tool of culture and use the data from this assessment as part of a continuous improvement process of workplace culture across the District. We will also develop and annually update a plan for employee engagement and support. Finally, we will analyze data and create a report on employee retention by job category, employee demographics, and reason for leaving based on exit interviews. As possible, this report will also disaggregate retention rates by employee performance.

#### 4. Explore career pathways that provide multiple growth opportunities for all employees.

We aspire for District 65 to be not only the best place to start a career, but also the best place to develop and grow in a career. We want to honor, support, and develop existing employees and also attract the best talent. We will do this by exploring opportunities for staff to grow through multiple career pathways. For example, for teachers who want to grow professionally without having to leave their classrooms, we may consider creating opportunities for them to both teach and coach other teachers.

We will develop clearly defined career pathways for our employees by implementing several promising models and developing a long-term plan that fits within the parameters of our collective bargaining agreements.

#### MILESTONES

The table on the next page contains a summary of initial milestones for the four strategies.

**“The essence of teaching is to make learning contagious, to have one idea spark another.”**

– Marva Collins



<p><b>Strategy 1:</b> <b>Professional Learning</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish standards and effective delivery models for high-quality professional learning</li> <li>• Develop a systemic plan for professional learning on district priorities that builds on existing Professional Learning Communities and the research on the effectiveness of traditional professional learning models to maximize the effectiveness of our investments of time and money in professional learning</li> <li>• Develop a master professional learning calendar based on district priorities to help employees in selecting learning opportunities and to coordinate district wide professional learning opportunities with school-based professional learning</li> </ul>
<p><b>Strategy 2:</b> <b>Recruitment</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Redesign District 65 hiring practices to maximize likelihood of attracting the best candidates for all job classifications and establish a multi-year implementation plan</li> <li>• Establish partnerships with universities and other organizations to help identify high-quality applicants with focus on recruiting from institutions with diverse student bodies</li> <li>• Pilot new methods to quickly identify outstanding candidates from diverse backgrounds and offer them employment weeks ahead of current practice</li> <li>• Improve selection by providing training for administrators, supervisors, and directors on screening and interviewing applicants</li> <li>• Design a new employee orientation process for implementation in summer 2016</li> </ul>
<p><b>Strategy 3:</b> <b>Culture</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create an annual human resources plan for employee engagement and support</li> <li>• Select and implement a cultural assessment or employee satisfaction survey; for example Barrett's Cultural Transformation Tools (Barrett, 2006)</li> <li>• Develop a report on employee retention</li> <li>• Implement at least two activities to strengthen collaboration and trust among staff</li> <li>• Develop and enact a program for recognizing and rewarding excellence across all employee groups, and document lessons learned</li> </ul>
<p><b>Strategy 4:</b> <b>Career pathways</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify and implement at least three promising career pathways opportunities for different types of employees</li> <li>• Document lessons learned from career pathways pilot and develop long-term career pathways plan</li> <li>• Establish a process for identifying and supporting high potential employees</li> <li>• Create opportunities for principals to further develop their instructional leadership skills</li> </ul>

## MEASURES OF SUCCESS

- Employee satisfaction ratings
- Retention rate of teachers rated in the highest two appraisal categories
- Percent of new hires from under-represented employee groups (e.g., teachers with endorsements in high needs areas, bilingual employees, employees of color)
- Percent of new staff hired prior to July 1st
- Percent of applicants referred through established partnerships



Artwork: Jazmine Morrow, Chute Middle School



“

*Parents and teachers need to work together to help students be the best they can be in life.*

”

*- District 65 Elementary School Student*



**Engagement starts with a welcome smile, staff that listen and care, and a deep commitment to partner with families and the community in educating children. District 65 is committed to creating a variety of ways to engage and welcome families into our schools.**

This includes strengthening our existing relationships with families and community organizations and reaching out to all families, including those who are not connected, who have historically been disengaged, or who simply do not feel welcome, heard, or comfortable in our schools. Building trust and a genuine rapport with all families will be foundational for creating new and stronger relationships for the benefit of children.

We must celebrate the contributions already being made by many families while ensuring our decision making process incorporates the voices of all. By increasing the diversity, quality, and relevance of engagement opportunities, family engagement and student learning will improve. Because the Evanston and Skokie communities are both diverse and rich in resources, there are many opportunities for collaboration with local businesses, agencies, community organizations, recreation centers, faith-based organizations, and institutions of higher learning. Creating processes at the district and school levels to attract and maintain relationships with community partners will help maximize the number and quality of District partnerships.

In addition, there is an opportunity to consider expansion of the Community Schools model currently being piloted at Chute Middle School. Applying what has been learned thus far at Chute to other schools across the District has the potential to transform our schools into supportive hubs that connect families with a variety of community resources. Chute's experience shows that these resource hubs would provide support for academics and a wide variety of other needs that potentially affect learning (e.g., social/emotional development, nutrition, and medical). As importantly, the process of creating community schools can transform the relationships between families, community members, and their schools.

A key component for strengthening family and community engagement is building staff capacity at both the school and the District level to engage in respectful and sensitive interactions that help establish trust. Providing all district staff with the right tools will help maintain or create strong school and organizational cultures that support collaborative relationships, promote a philosophy of shared responsibility and decision-making, and ensure that all families feel valued and welcome. Training on diversity and inclusion will be among the tools we provide our staff.

## GOAL

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



## STRATEGIES

Over the next five years, we will focus on the following four strategies in the area of family and community engagement.

### 1. Create a variety of opportunities that connect, engage, and sustain families as partners.

Families and school staff should be partners in supporting each child's school experience, but a variety of barriers to family involvement during and after the school day exist. The District is committed to modifying and expanding the number and type of engagement opportunities in order to help more families overcome these barriers and find ways to connect and actively partner.

We will begin by evaluating the effectiveness of the school advisory committee/principal advisory committee structure and recommending modifications. Over five years, these modifications will be made in all schools. As schools prepare to implement these modifications, they will also complete an in-depth assessment of what is happening in each school in order to fully understand current practices and families' current level of involvement. Based on this assessment, the planning needed to create, improve, and sustain



school-level partnerships with families will begin.

In partnership with one or more school communities, we will conduct focus groups with members of historically disengaged populations. The goal of these focus groups will be to learn from their perspectives and experiences. We will also convene a small group of family members and educators from one or more school communities to focus on all aspects of diversity, inclusion, and shared decision-making. This group will identify the organizational and personal barriers that keep many families and community members from participating in their school communities. They will also identify strategies for reducing those barriers.

## **2. Match community resources with the highest priority needs through a district and school community engagement system and infrastructure.**

Evanston and Skokie are rich in community organizations that provide programs and services to students in and out of the school building. Programming at and around each school varies and is not always driven by need or connected to specific outcomes. In addition, some community organizations report difficulty in understanding how to partner with schools.

In response, the District will clarify and simplify the process for engaging potential partners by creating a means to make each school's priorities and needs more transparent, ultimately matching resources with need. As we do this work, we will catalog and assess existing partnerships. For each partnership, we will also set clear expectations and identify responsibilities for both the District and the partner organization. This expectation setting will be a part of all new partnership agreements.

Our initial work at the district level will also focus on three key partnerships: our partnership with School District 202 (Evanston Township High School), our partnership with the Cradle to Career Initiative, and our partnership with Northwestern University. Our work with District 202 includes creation of a Joint Accountability Report that documents the outcomes of the collective work of both districts and their community partners. It also includes the joint work on Disciplinary Literacy described in the

High Quality Teaching and Learning section of this plan.

Our work with the Cradle to Career initiative will focus on early childhood education, early literacy, and wrap around service needs identified by the Whole Child Council described in the Safe and Supportive Climate section of this plan. One important step in our work on early childhood education will be exploring the feasibility of developing and implementing a measure of kindergarten readiness.

Northwestern University currently serves as an excellent community partner, especially with time given by undergraduate and graduate students to tutoring, mentoring, coaching, and other volunteer activities. We envision working closely with Northwestern faculty and staff on projects of mutual interest, including but not limited to the advanced analysis of district data and/or STEM learning.

## **3. Leverage lessons learned from the Community Schools model as a way to make schools a hub for resources.**

District 65 is piloting the Community Schools model at Chute Middle School. This model provides a structure for families to take co-ownership of their schools and structure the resources, programs, and services available at the school around their needs. The process of building a "community school" begins with an authentic and sincere invitation for community members to participate as equal partners in envisioning and implementing a plan for the school's future. The process continues through ongoing dialogue and relationship building. One intended result is strong relationships between families, school staff, students, community organizations, and neighbors. The other intended result is the transformation of a school into a community hub where coordinated resources, programs, and services are available to support youth and families before school, after school, and on weekends. These resources, programs, and services are designed with—not for—the community.

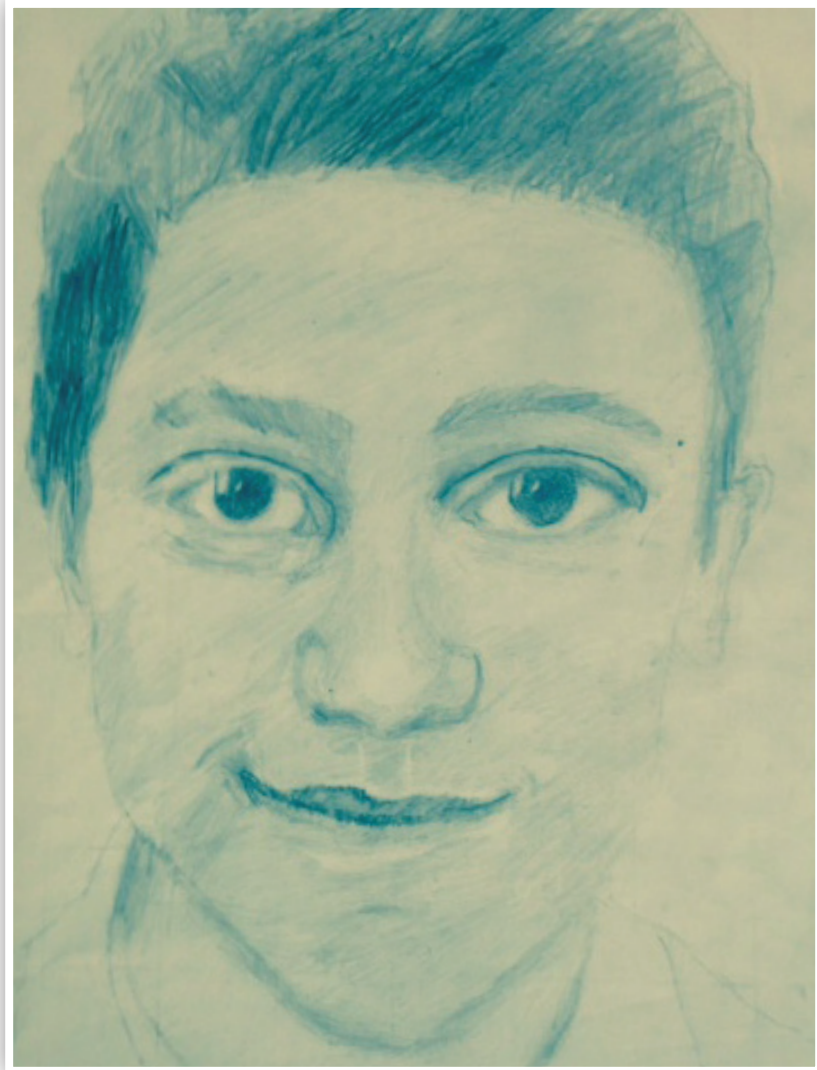
At Chute, as in other community schools, staff report an increase in the level and frequency of family involvement and programs offered by community partners. We are



excited about the promise of the Community Schools model, and, at the same time, we are cautious about its expansion because of the District's resource constraints. We are aware that this strategy can only be successful through continued partnership, especially with the organizations currently funding and working on the pilot at Chute. A first step will be to jointly review evidence about the pilot outcomes at Chute Middle School. Depending on the outcome of this evidence review, we will work with partners to outline opportunities for improving and expanding the implementation of the Community Schools model. We will work together to identify potential funding sources for this expansion. If funding is secured, we will proceed with expansion of the Community Schools model as feasible.

#### **4. Build school and district level staff capacity to effectively engage families.**

How school staff interacts with families is a key factor to attaining and maintaining high levels of family engagement. Ensuring families feel welcome starts with the staff at the front desk and includes all adults who work in our buildings. Once a menu of best practices for community engagement is identified, the District will develop specific professional learning opportunities to strengthen our family engagement and family partnerships, leading to more meaningful relationships. The Human Resources Department will determine priority and placement of this training in the District's new annual professional learning calendar.



Artwork: Ethan Wernikoff, Haven Middle School

## **MILESTONES**

The table on the next page contains a summary of initial milestones for the four strategies.



<p><b>Strategy 1:</b></p> <p><b>Expand engagement opportunities</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evaluate the school advisory committee/principal advisory committee structure and recommend a new or improved structure to implement across schools</li> <li>• Complete a school-level self-assessment of strengths and opportunities for improving family and community engagement and use this information to develop an action plan for each school</li> <li>• In collaboration with one or more schools, conduct at least two focus groups with individuals who have historically been disengaged from District 65 and document and share lessons learned</li> <li>• In collaboration with one or more schools, identify a small group of family members and educators to facilitate a discussion that explores a variety of ways to embrace inclusion, diversity and shared decision-making at the school level</li> </ul>
<p><b>Strategy 2:</b></p> <p><b>Community partnerships</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue development of partnerships through the Cradle to Career Initiative with focus on early childhood education, early literacy, and wrap around service needs identified by the Whole Child Council as described in the Safe and Supportive Climate section of this plan</li> <li>• Collaborate with District 202 to produce a Joint Accountability Report that documents the outcomes of the collective work of both districts and their community partners and continue work on our joint literacy goal</li> <li>• Work jointly with Northwestern University faculty on projects of mutual interest that may include advanced analysis of District 65 student data and/or STEM learning</li> <li>• Identify specific challenges, through interviews with current partners, to forming and sustaining partnerships</li> <li>• Create a district framework, including guidelines and criteria, for developing and maintaining partnerships</li> <li>• Create and launch a partner communication strategy that may include an annual district-wide meeting, regular focus groups, email updates and other mechanisms for regular, two-way communication</li> </ul>
<p><b>Strategy 3:</b></p> <p><b>Community Schools model</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In collaboration with community partners, review evidence from the pilot at Chute Middle School to determine what lessons about family and community engagement can and should be applied to other schools</li> <li>• Based on an evidence review, outline opportunities for improving and expanding the Community Schools model, including identification of potential funding sources for expansion</li> <li>• If funding is secured, proceed with expansion of the Community Schools model as feasible</li> <li>• Update the District manual of community resources and disseminate to all schools</li> </ul>

**Strategy 4:****Build  
capacity for  
engagement**

- In collaboration with the Human Resources Department, create a scope and sequence for professional learning based on best practices and identified needs
- Provide a district-wide learning experience around cultural sensitivity and valuing differences

**MEASURES OF SUCCESS**

For this section, we wanted to measure family and community engagement from the perspective of the families of District 65 students. Our parent survey has a response rate of lower than 20 percent and its respondents are not representative of the diversity of our district. Consequently, we will use focus groups and other qualitative research methods to assess our progress on this goal in addition to the measures listed below.

- Percent of partnerships assessed as high quality by both school and partner
- Percent of entering kindergarten students with pre-kindergarten experience
- Parent Involvement in School measure from the 5Essentials teacher survey, a measure of the extent to which families are active participants in their child's schooling
- Outreach to Parents measure from the 5Essentials survey, a measure of the extent to which schools create a welcoming and communicative environment for all parents
- Teacher-Parent trust measure from the 5Essentials survey, a measure of the extent to which teachers and parents are partners in improving student learning

**“Alone we can do  
so little. Together we  
can do so much.”**

– Helen Keller



# SAFE & SUPPORTIVE SCHOOL CLIMATE

“ *School contributes to our success by teaching us to make better decisions. It also helps us meet people we maybe wouldn't and to hear and respect other voices and learn how to disagree.* ”

*- District 65 Elementary School Student*



**A positive school climate—consisting, in part, of the web of relationships between a school’s staff, students, families, and community members—provides a strong foundation for engaging families, ensuring collaboration between adults, and delivering high quality instruction to children (Bryk et al., 2010).**

High quality school climates foster connections between students and the school community (Epstein & McPartland, 1976). Further, students’ feelings of safety and support are correlated with academic achievement, effectiveness of risk prevention, and positive youth development in their schools (National School Climate Center, 2007). Creating healthy relationships among members of the school community creates an environment where all children can learn and grow. Everyone in a school building contributes to creating and maintaining a safe and positive school climate.

Students play a critical role in maintaining a positive school climate. To do so, they must develop strong social and emotional competencies. Students need to know how to interact well with others, and they need to understand how to handle their emotions appropriately in relationships. They also need to know how to empathize with others, cooperate, problem solve, and when to seek help. As they develop skills such as resilience, perseverance, self-regulation, empathy, focus, and healthy interpersonal relations with diverse classmates, all students—those with behavioral challenges and those without—equip themselves for success in life after school.

School leaders and staff play an important role in establishing a positive school climate. They set expectations for student behavior, demonstrate caring, and model appropriate interactions. Building a positive school climate requires that staff have strong social and emotional skills themselves and are able to teach social and emotional skills to their students. Staff must also have knowledge of social and emotional development and be able to apply that knowledge to classroom routines when working with all students, and particularly students with challenges (CASEL, 2013). Further, a culture of collaboration, trust, and support between employees—something we seek

to foster through the Thriving Workforce section of the plan—helps build a positive school climate.

District 65 uses a variety of programs and practices that build strong school climates. Six District 65 schools have sufficient data on the 5Essentials survey to receive a score on the Supportive Environment Essential. Of these six, four score at or above the Illinois average on the Supportive Environment Essential. Through the strategies outlined below, we will further build on this foundation.

## GOAL

Ensure all District 65 Schools have positive school climates built upon clear and equitable policies and practices where all members of the school community feel emotionally and physically safe, included, and accepted.



## STRATEGIES

Over the next five years, we will focus on the following three strategies in the area of safe and supportive school climate.

### 1. Develop Academic and Social/Emotional Learning (A+SEL) programs.

District 65 will incorporate instruction on social and emotional competencies into the academic curriculum. Social and emotional skill instruction need not come at the expense of academic subjects; rather, it can enhance students’ ability to participate well in academic areas. District 65 already uses several programs that contain components of A+SEL, including Second Step, Positive Behavior Interventions and Support (PBIS), Peace Circles, and Restorative Justice. We are also piloting Making Meaning. Through this strategy, we will leverage what is already in place, as we work to expand the consistency and quality of A+SEL across the District. The social and emotional development of our students will not only better prepare them for college, careers, and life, but also have an impact on positive climate in District 65 schools.

We will implement this strategy by first conducting an audit of programs and practices already in place. In collaboration with the Whole Child Council, described below, we will develop a framework to select and implement A+SEL programs. We will also





pilot promising strategies and gather feedback to improve implementation from one year to the next.

## 2. Develop staff knowledge of social and emotional development in children and its application to classroom routines, so that they can work with and understand all students.

This strategy seeks to enhance school climate by addressing our staff's need to further refine their own social and emotional skills so they can better meet the needs of their students. Staff must be knowledgeable about the social and emotional development of children and able to apply that knowledge to classroom routines. Further, all staff need to build their capability to meet the social and emotional learning needs of students with particular challenges and think of students' needs holistically.

In implementing this strategy, we will align our efforts with both the systemic approach to professional development described in the Thriving Workforce section of this plan and the learning communities approach described in the High Quality Teaching and Learning section of this plan. We will make training available to all staff in the most critical skill areas. We will also pilot a more intensive coaching model in two schools and document lessons learned.

## 3. Focus on the holistic needs of individual students and groups of students and foster positive school climates through district- and school-level teams

A focus on the holistic needs of individual students and

groups of students will contribute to healthy child and adolescent development, lower barriers to students' academic success, and contribute to positive school climates. Creating this focus requires development of strong relationships between students and adults. It also demands attention to academic progress, social/emotional development, and cognitive and physical development. It requires a commitment to valuing each child and each aspect of his or her identity.



Artwork: Kim Jolie, Nichols Middle School

Further, it requires careful consideration of equity in the design and implementation of policies and practices within the school, such as discipline policies.

To enact this strategy, we will build on work already undertaken by staff across the District, including special educators, social workers, and special services



staff. We undertake this work knowing that schools cannot be all things to all students, especially in difficult financial times. Yet, we are optimistic that our approach, which pairs continuous improvement with community partnerships, will contribute to improved school climates and student outcomes.

We will begin implementation by creating a district-level Whole Child Council. This council will meet on a bi-monthly basis and include school-based and central office leaders and employees as well as community representation. The Whole Child Council will be charged with continuous improvement of services related to whole child development including academic progress, social and emotional learning, disciplinary strategies, cultural responsiveness, and other wrap around services.

The Whole Child Council will identify strengths, opportunities, and needs related to the non-instructional needs of students with disabilities and other needs be they cognitive, physical, emotional, or related to their home environments. In parallel, we will complete a process to identify needs for the same population of students as detailed in the High Quality Teaching & Learning section of this plan. Based on this information, we will create an action plan for meeting the needs of these students that leverages community partnerships and available resources.

Over the course of the next five years, we also plan to build continuous improvement processes related to holistic student needs in each school. We envision school-based teams meeting regularly to review evidence and discuss policies, practices, and services. From these discussions, supported by the work of the Whole Child Council, the teams will identify actions within available resources to better meet the holistic needs of individual students and groups of students.

Beyond continuous improvement, the school teams will promote a vision for school climate to the school community; oversee implementation of A+SEL; develop a comprehensive system to engage or re-engage students; and create an environment where all feel safe, welcome, and supported. They will attend to the details—small and large—that make the difference in whether a student feels

connected to his/her school or not. The teams will also coordinate with those in the school working on family and community engagement. Together, they will build the relationships, awareness, and skills necessary for staff to extend a welcome to all types of families and students.

To realize this vision, we will work intensively with three schools to revise their existing team structures (such as Instructional Leadership Teams and Positive Behavioral Interventions & Support teams) through rapid prototyping, implementation, and refinement. This process will allow us to develop a districtwide implementation plan to evolve team structures at each school in a manner that is not disruptive to schools' existing working teams.

Over the five years of this plan, we will also use the prototyping, implementation, and refinement process to develop or refine the tools teams use to do the work of continuous improvement. These tools could range from reports on student academic outcomes to self-assessments of equity in the administration of disciplinary policies.

## MILESTONES

The table on the next page contains a summary of initial milestones for the three strategies.



<p><b>Strategy 1:</b> <b>Academic and social/emotional learning</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Conduct an audit of current practices in each school</li><li>• Develop a framework and guidelines for program selection and implementation based on audit results</li><li>• Pilot Morning Meetings similar to the Responsive Classroom model in two schools and document results</li><li>• Expand the Restorative Justice Pilot to 10 schools</li></ul>
<p><b>Strategy 2:</b> <b>Professional development</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• In collaboration with the Human Resources Department, create a scope and sequence for professional learning based on critical gaps in skills and knowledge related to school climate and social and emotional learning</li><li>• Incorporate learning about high-priority interventions and strategies into the work of Professional Learning Communities across the District</li><li>• Provide intensive coaching to support a pilot of the Responsive Classroom Approach to Teaching in two schools and document results</li></ul>
<p><b>Strategy 3:</b> <b>Whole child Focus</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Convene the Whole Child Council, which will meet bi-monthly to oversee district-wide continuous improvement of services to students with disabilities and other needs, including those related to cognitive, physical, and emotional development</li><li>• Identify strengths, opportunities, and needs related to non-instructional needs of students with disabilities and other special needs</li><li>• Seek community partner support for wrap around services through the Cradle to Career Initiative</li><li>• Prototype, implement, and refine team structures in three schools to focus on continuous improvement of services related to holistic student needs</li><li>• Prototype, implement, and refine tools that support school and district continuous improvement related to student academic progress, student social/emotional learning, disciplinary activities, issues that may affect students' functioning, and access to culturally responsive instructional and support strategies</li></ul>

## MEASURES OF SUCCESS

- Academic personalism measure on the 5Essentials survey, a measure of the extent to which teachers connect with students in the classroom and support them in achieving goals
- Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) recognition status
- Student-teacher trust measure on the 5Essentials survey, a measure of the extent to which students and teachers share a high level of mutual trust and respect
- Percent of students with one or more Office Discipline Referrals for major infractions, by income, race, and IEP status
- Average number of out of school suspension days per student, by income, race, and IEP status

**“I’ve learned that  
people will forget what  
you said, people will forget  
what you did, but people  
will never forget how  
you made them feel.”**

– Maya Angelou



“

*Support the teachers so  
they can support us.*

”

*- District 65 Elementary School Student*



**School districts across the nation face an unclear financial future due to a number of factors that are both hard to predict and are often beyond their control. District 65 is no exception. We face plummeting consumer price index factors; decreases in state, federal, and local funding; possible dramatic changes in pension costs to the district; and annual increases in expenditures such as salaries, benefits (including health care), special education services, and energy.**

District 65 is facing projected operating budget deficits and a backlog of capital needs that include roofing, masonry, secure entrances, accessibility, site improvement, life safety and other legal requirements, and technology. Given these circumstances, it is imperative that we identify and implement strategies to ensure District 65's long-term financial stability. These include reducing expenditures that do not support strategic priorities, seeking additional revenue sources, and considering capital and operating referenda, to ensure the District's long-term financial stability.

Financial sustainability is paramount to support the programs and services offered to students in safe and updated buildings. Ensuring strong fiscal standing for the district requires making district financial documents understandable to broad audiences, ensuring priority-based budget decisions, proactively addressing capital needs and financing options including the consideration of a capital referendum, and seeking additional revenue sources including the possibility of an operating referendum. A strong financial position is necessary to support teaching and learning, a thriving workforce, family and community engagement, and safe and supportive school climate. Thus, the work of financial sustainability is foundational to all other areas of this strategic plan.

Specifically, increasing the clarity of budget documents with a common language will enable stakeholders in District 65 to have a better understanding of the budget process, expenditure types, revenue sources, and their limitations. Developing a priority-based budgeting process will help enlighten stakeholders about how

budgetary decisions are made. Effectively communicating District 65's long-term capital needs and financing options to the community, including the consideration of a capital referendum, will inform District 65 stakeholders of the extent of the capital needs and available funding options. Taking steps to research and advocate for additional revenues, including the consideration of an operating referendum, indicates to stakeholders that the District is being proactive about securing the additional revenues that are needed in order to fund programs and services offered to District 65 students.

## GOAL

Ensure long-term financial stability of the District with resources aligned to priorities.



## STRATEGIES

Over the next five years, we will focus on the following four strategies in the area of financial sustainability.

### 1. Increase stakeholder awareness of budget challenges and trade-offs.

In light of difficult decisions to come, increased clarity and communication related to the budget will allow stakeholders to better understand trade-offs in decision making. Our continued commitment to budget transparency combined with efforts to improve clarity and communication means there is full disclosure of all relevant fiscal information in a clear, timely, and systematic manner. This is a precondition for effective decision-making, as it allows stakeholders to understand where funding comes from and where the funds go. We will make plain the intended outcome of spending as well as constraints, uncertainties, and assumptions included in the budget.

We are committed to revising our budget and financial reporting documents to ensure that they are easy to understand. In describing recommendations for budget decisions, we also intend to improve our clarity in describing the trade-offs we must consider. We will also make these budget documents more accessible and build stakeholder knowledge about budget decision-making.

The first deliverables for this strategy include a budget



at-a-glance document for FY16 and a facilities at-a-glance document for FY17. We intend to gather feedback on the documents we produce to further refine their clarity and accessibility. We also plan to identify key communication channels and communication methods to make sure the documents produced result in increased stakeholder awareness of budget challenges and trade-offs.

## 2. Implement a systematic prioritization process to align District 65 programs and practices with available resources.

Challenging financial times call for difficult decisions to be made. District 65 faces projected budget deficits in future years. This strategy will provide a framework for making these difficult budget decisions by prioritizing expenditures that are tied to District goals. We anticipate that this decision making process will allow us to make necessary budget reductions while minimizing the impact on our students.

District 65 will make its first move toward priority-based budgeting during the development of the FY16 budget. We will treat the development of the FY16 budget as a learning opportunity by using a modified zero-based budgeting model, identifying possibilities for inserting more prioritization into budget decision making, and redoubling our efforts to use funds efficiently. During FY16, we will research existing priority-based budgeting models from other organizations. We will build a priority-based budgeting model for District 65 that incorporates features identified through research and the FY16 budget development process. For the FY17 budget, we will launch a formal priority-based budgeting process. We will evaluate and improve the process for future budget development as business office staff and those who manage budgets gain expertise.

**“An investment in knowledge always pays the best interest.”**

– Benjamin Franklin

The process will be transparent and involve multiple stakeholders. Implementation will be an iterative process, taking several years to finalize. The model will be

developed, adopted and assessed, then adapted on an annual basis, as needed.

## 3. Effectively communicate District 65’s long-term capital needs and financing options to the community.

Like most districts around the state, District 65 has a backlog of unmet capital needs. Some projects have been on the Capital Project List for more than ten years. The cost of the capital project backlog exceeds \$100 million. Projects are funded based on a series of criteria, including building condition, emergencies, life-safety or other legal requirements, and current technology needs. However, some stakeholders report that they are not aware of our capital needs backlog and its implications for operating excellent schools.

Through this strategy, we will develop reports and communications that make the trade-offs between various capital projects clearer. We will provide a strategic vision for the school buildings and the technology infrastructure needed to support modern teaching and learning. We will start by developing tools to improve communication of capital needs (e.g., a facilities at-a-glance report). As with our budget transparency tools, we will identify key communication channels and methods to make sure the documents produced result in increased stakeholder awareness of capital needs and project trade-offs.

## 4. Seek additional revenue sources for operations.

Additional revenues are those outside of typical sources such as tax-capped property taxes limited by consumer price index factors, general state aid, state categorical and federal funding. Alternative revenues may include payments from TIF agreements, TIF surplus payments, new or increased fees, special or competitive state or federal grants, public-private partnerships, or payments in lieu of taxes. District staff will research feasible additional revenue sources including an operating referendum and apply for appropriate grants in order to diversify and expand its revenue sources.



## MILESTONES

The table below contains a summary of initial milestones for the four strategies.

<p><b>Strategy 1:</b> <b>Budget transparency</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Produce model templates for District 65’s budget development</li> <li>• Present new budget at-a-glance (for FY16) and post on the District 65 website</li> <li>• Articulate assumptions, tradeoffs and recommendations for any potential reductions in proposed FY16 budget (June 2015) and post on the District 65 website</li> <li>• Identify and pursue opportunities to improve stakeholder awareness of budget challenges and trade-offs</li> </ul>
<p><b>Strategy 2:</b> <b>Priority-based budgeting</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use modified zero-based budget model for FY16 budget development</li> <li>• Research models for revising District 65 budget documents for FY17</li> <li>• Develop a timeline for implementation</li> <li>• Use a new process for FY17 budget development (March 2016)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Strategy 3:</b> <b>Capital needs</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build a strategic vision and supporting communication tools related to capital needs</li> <li>• Produce reports (e.g., facilities at-a-glance), post on the District 65 website, and implement a communications plan related to the reports</li> <li>• Explore referenda and other options to fund capital project backlog</li> <li>• Complete a new 10-year life safety survey</li> </ul>
<p><b>Strategy 4:</b> <b>Additional revenue</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explore referenda options to fund operating budget</li> <li>• Outreach to local governments/institutions regarding possible new revenue sources</li> <li>• Pursue multiple revenue streams</li> </ul>

## MEASURES OF SUCCESS

- Size of budget surplus or deficit
- Size of fund balance
- Financial rating from the Illinois State Board of Education
- Assessment of stakeholder knowledge of budget challenges and funding trade-offs
- Assessment of stakeholder perception of budget-related communications
- Size of capital needs backlog

Transparency in all we do is what you asked for and what we are committed to. You now know what we plan to do and how we developed the plan. Going forward, we are committed to honest and transparent communication about our progress in implementing this plan—both our successes and challenges. We will also be transparent about the impact this plan has on the learning outcomes of District 65 students.

Upon the plan's adoption, we will begin monitoring progress on implementation and its impacts immediately. We will ensure timely implementation and improve quality of our implementation based on tracking the following:

- Completion of activities, tactics, and milestones in our work plans
- Evidence of implementation quality
- Metrics established for goals in each of the five priority areas

## STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION

A cabinet level staff member was deeply involved as the leader for developing the strategies, success measures and milestones for each priority area. As this plan was released for public comment, each leader developed a detailed work plan that specified how each strategy will be accomplished in five years. The work plans will be updated monthly. Progress will be reviewed monthly with the superintendent and summarized biannually for the Board.

## EVIDENCE OF IMPLEMENTATION QUALITY

Based on the work plans completed, priority area leaders will develop management tools that will enable them to evaluate the extent and quality of implementation through both quantitative and qualitative means. Findings will be shared at the quarterly cabinet meetings.

The cabinet level staff members who led the work planning described above also developed success indicators for each goal. These indicators provide evidence of improvement in the priority area as a leading

indicator for improvements in student outcomes. These indicators are listed in each chapter, as well as in the Strategic Plan Scorecard template included in Appendix F.

## STUDENT OUTCOME MEASURES

In parallel with the adoption of this strategic plan, the Board will select several student outcome measures to serve as the ultimate measures of the District's success. Draft outcome measures are included in the Strategic Plan Scorecard template included in Appendix F.

## REPORTING OUR PROGRESS

### 1. Evanston/Skokie Communities

We will provide periodic updates on our progress using the District's existing communication channels. We will also publish an Annual District 65 Strategic Plan Update each August that will update the community on our progress towards milestones, results on leading indicators, and changes in student outcomes.

### 2. Board of Education

Each January and August, we will update the Board of Education on our progress on each goal using the Board Progress Report. Appendix E contains a template for this progress report. Each August, we will present the Strategic Plan Scorecard, which reports on student outcomes and the goal-level measures of success identified throughout this plan. A copy of this template is available in Appendix F. In addition, we will provide more detailed information about the implementation of various strategies, lessons learned, and changes in approach through ongoing conversation at regular Board meetings.

### 3. Two-Way Communication

The process we used to develop this plan involved more than 2,000 members of the Evanston and Skokie communities, and the plan is richer for their contributions. We want to keep that spirit of collaboration alive as the plan is implemented. Over the next five years, we commit to providing forums for ongoing, two-way communication with administrators,

teachers, staff, families, and students about the implementation of this plan. We are certain that this process of on-going engagement will strengthen the effectiveness of this plan's implementation.

## CONCLUSION

We are grateful to the thousands of people in Evanston and Skokie who have stepped forward to make their voices heard by participating in the planning process. When creating this plan we started by listening to you. We took into account what you told us, what opportunities and challenges we have, and what the research tells us. We also took into account the current context in which all school districts operate, a context in which funding streams are inconsistent and where staff are stretched thin due to the constantly changing landscape. With all that in mind, we created a plan that includes an ambitious and realistic set of priorities and implementation strategies. We believe that by implementing the 21 strategies listed in the plan, we will improve outcomes for all students.

In order to be successful, we need to stay focused on our priorities and seek sufficient funding to cover our costs. It will be tempting to add new programs or initiatives to the list, but we need to stand firm. We must remember the District has a finite set of resources and that this plan was developed with that and the best interest of all students in mind. When we stay true to that course with the communities of Evanston and Skokie by our side, we will be successful.

The drafting of the plan is just the beginning of our journey together. As we

move towards implementation, we invite you to continue to be our partner. Review our progress on line, respond to parent surveys, and ask your teachers and principals how you can help.

**Every child, every day, whatever it takes.**



Artwork: Anonymous Student, Rice Education Center



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## APPENDIX A: BACKGROUND RESEARCH & INFORMATION

The background research and information outlined below informed the development of this strategic plan.

### 1. High Quality Teaching & Learning

- Creating learning communities can accelerate student learning and improve teacher retention. Putting the tools of collaboration and innovation into the hands of teachers is a key driver of educational improvement in schools (DuFour, DuFour & Eaker, 2008).
- Professional culture is a predictor and driver of student learning (Bryk et al., 2010).
- Professional learning for educators is more effective when it takes place in the context of the school community (Hord & Hirsch, 2008).
- By learning to problem solve as practitioners of various disciplines, students become better prepared for the rigors of high school (Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008).
- Providing teachers with the tools and training needed to give students feedback about their growth towards, and beyond, high standards will accelerate student learning (William, 2011).

### 2. Thriving Workforce

- Research in high performing districts demonstrates that restructuring human resource systems (e.g., changing recruitment, selection, induction, and retention practices) in schools can lead to enhancements in instructional practice and student learning (Odden, 2011).
- Nationwide, 90 percent of teachers report participating in professional development, but the majority of those same teachers did not find the professional development useful (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009).
- Professional development workshops as a sole

strategy for professional learning have a poor track record for changing teacher practice and student achievement (Yoon et al., 2007).

- Trust and collaboration between teachers and trust between teachers and administrators is highly correlated with improved student outcomes (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Bryk et al., 2010).
- Positive school culture, recognition, and feedback are among the factors that contribute to teacher retention (The New Teacher Project, 2012).

### 3. Family and Community Engagement

- Students tend to do better in school on a number of different indicators when parents are involved, connected, and feel welcome (Bryk et al., 2010).
- Family and community engagement should be addressed by using a systemic approach in which strategies are integrated and embedded into existing structures (Westmoreland et al., 2009).
- Key factors to consider in developing a family and community engagement strategy include sharing a common message and vision about engagement, intentionally linking programming to specific goals/outcomes, and addressing cultural misconceptions (Westrich & Strobel, 2013).
- Effective family and community engagement strategies focus not only on increasing the attendance at events but also on engaging in meaningful communication, strengthening district/staff/parent capacity, increasing efforts to invite parents into schools, and forming partnerships (Westmoreland et al., 2009).
- We must adopt a mindset of continuous learning, understanding that learning must also occur outside of the school day and even outside of the school building. The Harvard Family Research Project termed this “anywhere, anytime learning.” These researchers suggest that students must have opportunities to learn across different settings, broadening the view of learning, and increasing the value of

community partnerships (Lopez & Caspe, 2014).

#### 4. Safe and Supportive School Climate

- Educators from John Dewey onward have addressed the importance of a positive school climate for healthy development, along with aspects of the relationship between social and emotional development, school climate, and student academic success.
- A growing body of research emphasizes the importance of positive school climate for positive youth development and improved academic outcomes (Bryk et al., 2010; Bryk & Schneider, 2002).
- Research-based definitions of school climate include elements as diverse as the size of the school; the noise levels in hallways and cafeterias; the physical structure of the building; physical comfort levels from heating, cooling, and lighting; feelings of physical and emotional safety; the quality of student-teacher interactions; the quality of interactions between teachers; and a range of interpersonal aspects of school life (National School Climate Center, 2015).
- Social and emotional intelligence involves the ability to perceive, appraise, express, and reason with emotion. It also describes the ability to recognize emotion in others, to demonstrate empathy, and to manage relationships. Both children and adults are capable of developing social and emotional intelligence competencies (Salovey and Mayer, 1990; Bar-On, 2006; Goleman, 1995).
- Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) programs for both elementary and middle school aged students promote social and emotional skills and result in improvements in attitudes about self and others, connections to school, positive social behavior, and improved academic performance (Payton et al., 2008; Durlak et al., 2011). These programs benefit students both with and without behavioral or emotional problems (Patyon et al., 2008).

#### 5. Financial Sustainability

- Successful implementation of the strategies included in this plan will be evidenced by the financial ratings the district receives from the Illinois State Board of Education and rating agencies such as Moody's.
- The District can reference several past studies (The Citizens Ad Hoc Budget Committee of Evanston/Skokie District 65, 2011; McGuire et al., 2012; McGuire et al., 2014) when considering potential solution strategies to financial difficulties.
- There are numerous approaches to the transparent and understandable presentation of financial data to the general public that the district can use as models for its efforts to make materials accessible to stakeholders, including budget at-a-glance reports used in some school districts.
- Realigning district budgets to strategic priorities help to support student success (Levenson et al., 2014).

### APPENDIX B: PLANNING PROCESS OVERVIEW

The planning process was divided into four phases:

1. Setting the stage
2. Recommending goals and strategies
3. Creating milestones and indicators of success
4. Vetting and editing the draft plan

#### 1. Setting the stage

The goal of Phase 1 was to set the stage for a successful planning process. Key activities included the following.

- A summary of the findings from Superintendent Paul Goren's listening tour
- A process and schedule for the strategic planning process



- Selecting the priority areas for the plan
- Defining who and how stakeholders would be involved in the planning process
- Developing and implementing a communications plan

Each of the elements listed above was shared with board members, the planning committee and the External Advisory Committee, to elicit their feedback. Based on their feedback, documents and processes were revised and then finalized.

During his initial listening tour, Paul Goren repeatedly heard from community members about the need for improved communication and collaboration. In response, we created a transparent process that included numerous opportunities for public input.

## 2. Recommending goals and strategies

The goal of this phase was to have working committees draft one goal and three to five strategies for each of the five priority areas: 1) high quality teaching and learning, 2) thriving workforce, 3) safe and supportive school climate, 4) family and community engagement, and 5) financial sustainability.

Each committee was comprised of 13 to 16 members (including two co-chairs) and had at least one family member, teacher, principal, district administrator, and community member. Committees also included subject matter experts in each area of focus and reflected the diversity of our community. Committee members were selected by the superintendent through an open nomination process.

Prior to their first meeting, committee members received a “tool kit” which included the committee’s charge, the challenge they were trying to address, information on the planning process, links to relevant research, and background information on how the District is currently addressing the topic. Committees met four times between October and December 2014. During those meetings, committees engaged in the

following process to decide on a recommended goal.

- During a brainstorming session, all committee members were encouraged to contribute ideas to the development of possible goals. After thoughtful discussion, the list of possible goals was narrowed down to a manageable number.
- Committee members worked together between meetings to research and further explore the draft goals. They looked at research, data, and stakeholder input. At the next meeting(s), committee members presented their findings and advocated for a particular goal.
- After presentations were made on all the draft goals, the committee members engaged in discussion until the committees agreed on one goal or worked together to draft a final revised goal.

The groups used the same process to identify and select a set of strategies that would help the District achieve the stated goal.

## 3. Creating milestones and success indicators

The goal of this phase was to develop draft milestones for each strategy and metrics for each goal. Milestones indicate the completion of a major deliverable or phase of a project. The superintendent’s leadership team led the development of the milestones and metrics. The success indicators presented in this plan are the high-level metrics that we will review regularly to let us know if we are making progress on our goals.

## 4. Vetting and editing the plan

The goal of the final phase was to disseminate the draft plan to the public and obtain additional input. Once the comment period closed, Paul Goren and his cabinet reviewed all the feedback. While considering the new ideas, concerns, and praise voiced during the comment period, they kept in mind the need to maintain and honor the planning process and the thoughtful, hard work of the committees to develop goals and strategies and gain consensus. Edits were subsequently made, resulting in this final plan.

## APPENDIX C: ENSURING COMMUNITY VOICE AND INPUT

Integral to the development of the strategic plan has been our commitment to listen to the stakeholders of District 65. The planning process provided multiple ways for educators, students and their families, and members of the community at large to have their voices heard. The contributions from these key stakeholder groups have been critical to the development of a strong and effective plan that reflects the issues and concerns of Evanston and Skokie residents.

The following seven outreach and engagement activities helped maximize the number of people who were able to voice their opinions so the plan could capture the diverse perspectives of Evanston and Skokie residents. More than 2,000 individuals participated in one or more opportunities.

### 1. Listening Tour

When Superintendent Paul Goren began working at District 65 this summer, he launched an extensive listening tour. During his first 100 days, he spoke with more than 100 community members and met with District 65 school stakeholders including administrators, teachers, staff, families, students and board members. This initial listening tour resulted in a set of planning principles for the District and for this plan (see Appendix D of this plan).

### 2. Committees

District 65 assembled five working committees: an External Advisory Committee and one for each of the strategic priority areas (High Quality Teaching and Learning, Thriving Workforce, Family and Community Engagement, Safe and Supportive School Climate, and Financial Sustainability).

Working committee members applied for membership through an open nomination process. Committee chairs, the superintendent's cabinet, and the board liaison to the planning process reviewed applications. The superintendent ultimately appointed committee

members. Committees were designed to ensure content expertise and representation of the diversity of Evanston and Skokie. More than 300 talented, qualified people were nominated to fill 65 slots.

District 65 also convened an External Advisory Committee, consisting of 47 civic leaders and citizens representing multiple perspectives and areas of expertise. The group met several times during the development of the plan to provide feedback and guidance on the overall planning process and draft documents.

### 3. Focus groups

The District held 30 focus groups throughout the community. Seven were for families and community members, eight were for District 65 staff and 15 were for students.

### 4. Individual interviews

Individual interviews were held with each Board member and several key stakeholders in the community.

### 5. Survey

With input from the five planning committees, the District designed and posted an online survey open to public input from November 11 through November 26, 2014. It included 28 questions, soliciting opinions on a wide range of topics, including citizen perceptions on the quality of the education provided, classroom management, communication, teacher support, and expectations for students. 1,297 people responded to the survey.

### 6. School Visits

Paul Goren visited each District 65 school to listen to the ideas, suggestions, and concerns of teachers, support staff, and school administration. The intent was to harvest the "wisdom of practice" to inform the strategic plan. He visited all 17 schools during the development of the plan.

### 7. Public Comment Period

District 65 scheduled two public comment periods during the planning process: The first public comment period was held from September 8,

2014 through September 26, 2014. During this comment period, District 65 stakeholders shared their thoughts on a draft mission statement that was subsequently adapted to respond to their feedback.

The second public comment period was held from January 28, 2015 through February 11, 2015. The public was invited to share thoughts on the draft plan before it became final. The draft plan was presented by Paul Goren for discussion at three town hall meetings, one held at each District 65 middle school between February 3 and February 7, 2015.

District 65 used a variety of strategies to notify and encourage stakeholders to review and provide their feedback during the public comment periods, including an announcement on the District 65 website, mass dissemination of flyers and posters, packets in all school offices, social media (Facebook, Twitter), e-mail blasts, direct mailing to faith-based organizations, press releases sent to local newspapers, editorials and articles, and staff interacting with the public at train stations and in front of schools.

## APPENDIX D: PLANNING PRINCIPLES

The District used the following planning principles to guide its strategic planning work. Each goal and strategy outlined in this plan was drafted in accordance with one or more of these principles:

### **Support District 65's educators and staff.**

We recognize the expertise of all educators and staff, providing them with the tools and support they need to be successful.

**Leadership matters.** We must nurture and support leadership by teachers, administrators, and staff in schools, the central office, and across centers and departments to achieve our goals.

**We cannot do it alone.** We must build strong relationships with all families and community partners.

**Be Transparent.** We must demonstrate transparency and honesty in all we do. We must

share information on programs, processes, decisions, financial issues, and student outcomes to build trust, make proactive decisions based on facts, and to do all that is necessary to achieve our goals.

**Every child, every day, whatever it takes.** We must focus on what is best for children grounded in a strong belief in equity and an obligation to serve all students in an inclusive and supportive environment.



## APPENDIX E: BOARD PROGRESS REPORT TEMPLATE

Evanston/Skokie School District 65  
Strategic Plan Board Progress Report

Reporting Period: July - December 2017

	2015-16		2016-17		2017-18		2018-19		2019-20		Status Update
	Jan	Aug	Jan	Aug	Jan	Aug	Jan	Aug	Jan	Aug	
<b>High quality teaching &amp; learning</b>	Green	Yellow	Orange	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Green		In this cell a short status update (1-2 paragraphs) will summarize progress during the most recent quarter and note which strategy/strategies are off track if any.
<b>Thriving workforce</b>	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green		In this cell a short status update (1-2 paragraphs) will summarize progress during the most recent quarter and note which strategy/strategies are off track if any.
<b>Family &amp; community engagement</b>	Green	Green	Yellow	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green		In this cell a short status update (1-2 paragraphs) will summarize progress during the most recent quarter and note which strategy/strategies are off track if any.
<b>Safe &amp; supportive school climate</b>	Green	Green	Green	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow		In this cell a short status update (1-2 paragraphs) will summarize progress during the most recent quarter and note which strategy/strategies are off track if any.
<b>Financial health</b>	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green		In this cell a short status update (1-2 paragraphs) will summarize progress during the most recent quarter and note which strategy/strategies are off track if any.

**Status Key**

Green = Milestones established to meet goal are all on track.

Yellow = One or two milestones may be off track, but sufficient progress to ensure timely completion of all the strategies established to meet the goal has been made.

Orange = One or more strategies are in danger of not being completed as planned. Immediate actions is needed to address the off-track strategy/strategies.

Red = One more more strategies cannot be completed as originally planned and an alternative plan must be devised.

# APPENDIX F: STRATEGIC PLAN SCORECARD TEMPLATE

Evanston/Skokie School District 65  
Strategic Plan Scorecard: Student Outcomes

Reporting Period: August 2018

Outcome Indicators		Baseline	SP Y1	SP Y2	SP Y3	SP Y4	SP Y5	Change from Previous Year	Change from Baseline
		2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20		
Early Literacy (Gr. K-2)	% on pace with early literacy skills								
		X%	X%	X%	X%			X%	X%
Academic Outcomes (Gr. 3-8)	% meeting college readiness benchmarks in reading	X%	X%	X%	X%			X%	X%
	% meeting college readiness benchmarks in math	X%	X%	X%	X%			X%	X%
	% at or below the 25th percentile in reading	X%	X%	X%	X%			X%	-X%
	% at or below the 25th percentile in math	X%	X%	X%	X%			-X%	-X%
	% making expected gains in reading								
	All students	X%	X%	X%	X%			X%	X%
	Students meeting college readiness benchmarks in reading	X%	X%	X%	X%			X%	X%
	Students not meeting college readiness benchmarks in reading	X%	X%	X%	X%			X%	X%
	% making expected gains in math								
	All students	X%	X%	X%	X%			X%	X%
Achievement Gaps by Income, Race, Disability Status, and English Learner Status (Gr. 3-8)	% meeting college readiness benchmarks in reading:								
	Students who qualify for free/reduced lunch	X%	X%	X%	X%			X%	X%
	Students who do not qualify for free/reduced lunch	X%	X%	X%	X%			X%	X%
	African American/Black	X%	X%	X%	X%			X%	X%
	Asian	X%	X%	X%	X%			-X%	X%
	Hispanic/Latino	X%	X%	X%	X%			-X%	X%
	Multi-Racial	X%	X%	X%	X%			X%	X%
	White	X%	X%	X%	X%			X%	X%
	Students of color who do not qualify for free/reduced lunch	X%	X%	X%	X%				
	Students with disabilities (IEP)	X%	X%	X%	X%			X%	X%
Students formerly identified as needing English Learner supports		X%	X%	X%					
Academic Challenge (Gr. 6-8)	% meeting college readiness benchmarks in math:								
	Students who qualify for free/reduced lunch	X%	X%	X%	X%			X%	X%
	Students who do not qualify for free/reduced lunch	X%	X%	X%	X%			-X%	X%
	African American/Black	X%	X%	X%	X%			X%	X%
	Asian	X%	X%	X%	X%			X%	X%
	Hispanic/Latino	X%	X%	X%	X%			X%	X%
	Multi-Racial	X%	X%	X%	X%			X%	X%
	White	X%	X%	X%	X%			X%	X%
	Students of color who do not qualify for free/reduced lunch	X%	X%	X%	X%			X%	X%
	Students with disabilities (IEP)	X%	X%	X%	X%			X%	X%
Students formerly identified as needing English Learner supports		X%	X%	X%			X%	X%	
Academic challenge/rigor measure from the 5Essentials survey									
	X	X	X	X			-X	X	

Evanston/Skokie School District 65  
Strategic Plan Scorecard: Strategy Indicators

Reporting Period: August 2018

Strategy Indicators		Baseline	SP Y1	SP Y2	SP Y3	SP Y4	SP Y5	Change from Previous Year	Change from Baseline
		2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20		
High quality teaching & learning	% meeting college readiness benchmarks at transition points in reading	X%	X%	X%	X%			X%	X%
	% meeting college readiness benchmarks at transition points in math	X%	X%	X%	X%			X%	X%
	% at or below the 25th percentile at transition points in reading	X%	X%	X%	X%			-X%	-X%
	% at or below the 25th percentile at transition points in math	X%	X%	X%	X%			X%	-X%
	% making expected gains at transition points in reading	X%	X%	X%	X%			X%	X%
	% making expected gains at transition points in math	X%	X%	X%	X%			X%	X%
	Teacher Influence measure on the 5Essentials survey	X	X	X	X			X	X
Principal Instructional Leadership measure on the 5Essentials survey	X	X	X	X			-X	X	
Thriving workforce	% employees reporting high job satisfaction		X%	X%	X%			X%	X%
	Retention rate for teachers in the highest two appraisal categories			X%	X%			X%	X%
	% new hires from under-represented employee groups	X%	X%	X%	X%			X%	X%
	% new staff hired prior to July 1st	X%	X%	X%	X%			X%	X%
	% applicants referred through partnerships	X%	X%	X%	X%			X%	X%
Family & community engagement	Percent of partnerships assessed as high quality	X%	X%	X%	X%			X%	X%
	% entering kindergarten students with pre-kindergarten experience	X%	X%	X%	X%			X%	X%
	% entering kindergarten students ready for kindergarten			X%	X%			X%	X%
	Parent Involvement in School measure on the 5Essentials survey	X	X	X	X			X	X
	Outreach to Parents measure from the 5Essentials survey	X	X	X	X			-X	X
Safe & supportive school climate	Teacher-Parent trust measure from the 5Essentials survey	X	X	X	X			X	X
	Academic Personalism measure on the 5Essentials survey	X	X	X	X			X	X
	% schools with top PBIS recognitions status	X%	X%	X%	X%			X%	X%
	Student-Teacher Trust measure on the 5Essentials survey	X	X	X	X			X	X
	% students with 1+ Office Discipline Referral for major infraction								
	All students	X%	X%	X%	X%			X%	X%
	Students who qualify for free/reduced lunch								
	African American/Black	X%	X%	X%	X%			X%	X%
	Asian	X%	X%	X%	X%			X%	X%
	Hispanic/Latino	X%	X%	X%	X%			X%	X%
	Multi-Racial	X%	X%	X%	X%			X%	X%
	White	X%	X%	X%	X%			X%	X%
	Students with disabilities	X%	X%	X%	X%			X%	X%
	Avg number of out of school suspension days per student								
	All students	X	X	X	X			X	X
Students who qualify for free/reduced lunch									
African American/Black	X	X	X	X			X	X	
Asian	X	X	X	X			X	X	
Hispanic/Latino	X	X	X	X			X	X	
Multi-Racial	X	X	X	X			X	X	
White	X	X	X	X			X	X	
Students with disabilities	X	X	X	X			X	X	
Financial Health	Surplus/deficit (\$)	\$X	\$X	\$X	\$X			\$X	\$X
	Fund balance (\$)	\$X	\$X	\$X	\$X			\$X	\$X
	Financial rating from the Illinois State Board of Education	X	X	X	X			X	X
	% stakeholders reporting sufficient knowledge of budget challenges and funding trade-offs	X%	X%	X%	X%			X%	X%
	% stakeholders reporting positive perception of budget-related communications	X%	X%	X%	X%			X%	X%
	Capital needs backlog (\$)	\$X	\$X	\$X	\$X			\$X	\$X









**EVANSTON/SKOKIE**  
SCHOOL DISTRICT 65

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