

# Every Child, Every Day, Whatever it Takes

*Where are we going? How will we get there?*

*How will we monitor our progress?*



A Three-Year Strategic Plan  
for  
Evanston/Skokie School District 65  
**DRAFT**

**June 1, 2015 - May 31, 2018**

# District 65 Draft Strategic Plan

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# Letter from the Superintendent

Dear Friends and Families of District 65,

After launching the District's strategic planning process this fall, I am pleased to present the draft of the plan for your review and feedback. This draft represents the work and input of literally thousands of members of the District 65 community. I want to personally thank everyone for their time and thoughtfulness. The process of creating this plan says as much about our vision of District 65 as any individual strategy or tactic. We will do this work together and we will listen to each other, taking advantage of the collective efforts and potential of every member of our community.

District 65 exists to serve the educational needs of all Evanston and Skokie children. To ensure we are doing so, we must constantly reflect on our work, thinking both strategically and specifically about our goals and practices. In March 2009, the District adopted a strategic plan that expired this past spring. The need for a new District 65 strategic plan aligned with my arrival as superintendent this past spring. I started my new job and the District's planning process by listening, something I will continue to do throughout my tenure. Through meetings and conversations with teachers, administrators, community partners, community members, families and students, I learned a great deal about the District's strengths, opportunities and challenges.

This "listening tour" led to the development and launch of a strategic planning process undergirded by transparency and inclusiveness. The call to action from our stakeholders is very clear – create a plan that is understandable, action oriented and carries out the community's collective belief that it is District 65's job to serve the needs of every child.

This plan was created by a wide range of stakeholders and incorporates the voices of many. We asked everyone in our communities what they thought about where District 65 is now and where we need to go from here. In focus groups, school visits, a public survey, on train platforms and school playgrounds—we asked questions and gathered feedback. We listened.

And what we heard was clear—the plan should be focused, set clear priorities and be actionable. I could not agree more. Focusing on several key strategic actions provides levers to support deep and systemic improvement. As you read this draft plan, I hope you agree with me, that together, we delivered a plan that meets these criteria.

Please spend some time reviewing this draft plan. We welcome your role as a "critical friend" by letting us know what you think we got right as well as your questions, concerns and thoughts on what is missing. You can share your input by dropping your comments in a comment box at any District 65 school, by submitting your comments online via the District's website and/or by attending one of the town hall meetings we are hosting to present the plan and gather feedback.

Many thanks to all who contributed to the development of this strategic plan draft. To achieve our goals, we must work together as a whole community. I cannot thank you enough for your continued commitment and efforts to partner with District 65.

Kind Regards,

Paul Goren  
Superintendent, Evanston/Skokie School District 65

## Letter from the Board of Education

Dear District 65 Community,

We are pleased to join Dr. Goren in presenting this draft of the District 65 strategic plan for your review and feedback. Community engagement in the development of this draft has been incredibly strong. We are grateful for your participation and believe it is essential to creating a draft plan that is responsive to all stakeholders.

As a Board, we were excited to launch this strategic planning process as it aligned with the start of a new administration and a renewed sense of hope and enthusiasm. From the start, we have been deeply committed and remain committed to ensuring that this planning process is fortified by the voice and input of our entire community.

Like the community, the Board is eager to have a strategic plan that is focused, sets clear priorities and is actionable. Setting focused priorities is a challenging but necessary part of our collective work. The best way to serve our students is by concentrating our efforts and resources on a set of key action steps, tackling each with thoroughness and fidelity.

Your continued help is needed. By providing feedback to this draft, you can help ensure that we have a strong and effective strategic plan. Please share your input by dropping your comments in a comment box at any District 65 school, by submitting your comments online via the District's website and/or by attending one of the town hall meetings we are hosting to present the plan and gather feedback. We believe that community engagement and input in this process is essential to the plan and its ultimate success.

Thank you for your commitment to District 65, our schools and our students. We are grateful for your support of the strategic planning process and look forward to your response to this draft plan.

Sincerely,

*District 65 Board of Education*

Tracy Quattrocki, President  
Richard Rykhus, Vice President  
Katie Bailey  
Omar Brown  
Candance Chow  
Claudia Garrison  
Suni Kartha

## Introduction

Every child has great potential. Each year, thousands of families in the Evanston and Skokie communities make use of the educational opportunities offered by District 65 to help their children to realize this potential. Over many decades, families from diverse backgrounds have found fertile ground in District 65 schools for the intellectual growth and healthy development of their children. As the District 65 staff compiled this plan, we were humbled by what has come before and the trust placed in District 65 by its community.

Every day, District 65 educators, administrators and staff contribute their talents, energy, and passion in service to the potential of children. As this plan's collaborators worked, all were inspired by excellent work already underway in our schools, classrooms and administrative center. In this plan, we seek to honor and build on those efforts and the trust employees invest in District 65.

"Whatever it takes," is the commitment that the District 65 Board of Education and District 65 leadership team make to staff, families, and—most importantly—students in adopting and implementing this collaboratively developed plan. As you read through the plan, you will notice a commitment not only to providing high quality learning opportunities for students, but learning opportunities that are relevant to and representative of the diverse backgrounds and strengths of the students in our schools. We also commit to providing a safe and supportive school climate in which to learn—a climate marked by strong social and emotional skill development for all children.

You will also see a renewed commitment to family and community engagement, recognizing that parents, guardians, families and community members are our primary partners in education and that, indeed, some do not feel welcome. Their absence diminishes our learning community, and we are committed to find new ways to engage.

The plan also makes a commitment to providing students and families with the most talented and best trained workforce. To District 65 employees, we make a commitment to recognize excellent work and to provide the time and resources for innovation and professional learning.

The plan makes a commitment to the professional learning of our staff. As you read the plan, you will see professional learning strategies in most priority areas. By providing appropriate learning opportunities that address the specific needs and learning styles of adult learners, we will enhance the skills and knowledge of all of the adults in our learning community so that they can be better able to serve our students. Finally, to everyone, we make a commitment to safeguard the financial sustainability of the District.

This plan outlines the next chapter in the story of District 65. As you read it, 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 writing of that next chapter.

## The Plan Structure

The plan is organized around five priority areas. The first four priority areas are based on the seminal work by the University of Chicago Consortium on Chicago School Research that resulted in *The Essential Supports for School Improvement* (Bender Sebring et al., 2006). The study demonstrates that when at least three of the five supports are present, especially principal leadership, ambitious instruction, and collaborative teaching, schools will perform at a higher level.

Our priority areas capture all five of the essential supports (with supports around principal leadership and teacher collaboration combined into a single “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.

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 school-based Professional Learning Communities, 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. **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.
4. **Family and Community Engagement** – Parents, guardians and families are seen as partners by school staff. Parents, guardians and families are given opportunities to volunteer and assist in decision-making at the school. Parents, guardians and families make connections between school and home for their children, emphasizing the importance of school. Community partners are welcome to engage in the learning processes and social and emotional development of all children.
5. **Financial Sustainability** - High performing districts, academically and through social and emotional supports, must be financially strong in areas of budgeting, forecasting, finances and short- and long-range operating and capital planning.

Throughout the plan, you will notice that we have included indicators from the 5Essentials survey among our measures of success. This survey instrument was developed along with the research described above.

## 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. To date, 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 - 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 page 8 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, attended by 381 people. Seven were for families and community members, eight were for District 65 staff and 15 were held exclusively 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, frequently joined by Chief Strategy Officer Maria Allison, visited each District 65 school to listen to the ideas, suggestions, and concerns of teachers, support staff and school administration. Their intent was to harvest the "wisdom of practice" to inform the strategic plan. They 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 9/08/14 – 9/26/14. 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 is from 1/28/15 – 2/11/15. The public is invited to share thoughts on this draft plan before it becomes final by sending an email to [input@District65.net](mailto:input@District65.net) or completing a feedback card in the main office of any District 65 school.

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), email 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.

## **What We Heard: A Summary**

The voices of students, families, educators, community members and stakeholders drive the work of District 65 and 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 fair and understandable

### **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 and for differentiated 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 the appropriate 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

For more detailed information on community feedback, see the report at the following internet address: [http://strategicplanningd65.weebly.com/uploads/2/6/6/7/26670301/d65\\_comm\\_feedback\\_presentation\\_final\\_12\\_15\\_14.pdf](http://strategicplanningd65.weebly.com/uploads/2/6/6/7/26670301/d65_comm_feedback_presentation_final_12_15_14.pdf).

## Mission and Guiding Principles

We developed an initial draft mission statement based on stakeholder feedback collected during the superintendent search process and through Dr. Goren's initial listening tour. In addition, members of the Board of Education and the Superintendent's Leadership Team reviewed and offered input on the proposed statement.

District 65 stakeholders were invited to share their thoughts on the draft mission statement by email or by visiting any District 65 school and completing a feedback card. Based on this feedback, we revised the draft working mission and presented it at the Board of Education meeting on October 20, 2014:

***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.***

After the public comment period closes for the draft plan, we will consider whether any additional edits to the mission are needed. The final mission will be presented as part of the final plan.

## 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 terrific educators and staff*** - recognize the expertise of all educators and staff, providing them with the tools and support they need to be successful

***Leadership matters*** - Leadership by teachers, administrators and staff must be nurtured and supported in schools, the central office and across centers and departments to achieve our goals

***We cannot do it alone*** - Build strong relationships with ALL families and community partners - while maintaining a district wide commitment to "customer service"

***Transparency*** - Be transparent and honest in all we do. 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*** - Focus on what is best for children grounded by a strong belief in equity and an obligation to serve ALL students in an inclusive and supportive environment

## District 65 Board of Education Core Values

The District 65 Board of Education had previously developed a set of core values and worked together to revise them in December 2014 for inclusion in this new strategic plan. The District is committed to the following core values:

- Keeping the best interests of the students in mind when every decision is made
- A highly skilled and nurturing staff
- A welcoming, orderly and inclusive environment that respects individual differences
- Safe and well maintained schools that are conducive to learning
- Excellence in education and high expectations for all students in all schools
- Ongoing professional learning for all staff
- Neighborhood schools that support families and community
- Magnet schools and programs that offer educational options for our schools
- The cognitive, emotional, physical, social and creative development of all students
- Stakeholder feedback for continuous improvement in all areas
- Collaborative work and decision making
- The role of parents, families and guardians as partners in the education of their children
- Efficient and effective management of resources to meet educational priorities
- Maximizing our resources through active partnerships with community entities that support children from birth through young adulthood (such as Cradle to Career)
- The treatment of every individual in an open, equitable, fair and professional manner
- The carefully planned and judicious use of technology to support those teaching strategies that are known to enhance student learning

# High Quality Teaching & Learning

The demands on students and teachers have changed dramatically over just the last several years with the adoption of the Common Core State Standards and the emphasis on college, career and life readiness. These changes represent a larger shift in education to hold schools responsible for delivering very high levels of achievement for all students so that they can thrive in the globalized community of the 21st Century. To achieve this new objective, District 65 must dedicate time, energy and resources to continuously develop and improve the quality of teaching and learning. The five strategies the planning committee developed represent critical steps toward this objective. As important, they lay a strong foundation for growth not only over the next three years, but further into the future.

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.

The strategies outlined below also serve to empower teachers and principals in our schools. By focusing on continuous improvement and innovation, the planning committee envisions the district as a community of learners where change flows not only from the central office to the schools, but from the schools to the central office, and between schools and individual teachers. The strategies assume that empowered and engaged professionals across the District, in each school and in each classroom, will improve learning outcomes with their students.

## Strategies

Over the next three years, D65 will focus on the following five strategies in the area of high quality teaching and learning:

- 1. Implement differentiated professional learning models that support collaboration and innovation for all adults in the District.**

The committee concluded that an environment of continuous learning and innovation for all District 65 staff is a critical step toward preparing all students for high school and beyond. Many high performing districts have implemented collaborative professional learning models to improve not only the skills and innovative capacity of their staff but also the job satisfaction and retention of excellent teachers. Two years ago, District 65 began

## Goal

**Promote high quality teaching that prepares all students for high school by delivering effective differentiation in an environment of innovation and continuous improvement.**

## Strategies

1. Implement differentiated professional learning models that support collaboration and innovation for all adults in the District.
2. Improve curriculum quality and reinforce curriculum implementation by equipping teachers with a coherent instructional framework used to define high quality curriculum and instruction.
3. Employ additional specific research-based instructional strategies that address diverse student needs to ensure children meet their full potential.
4. Use evidence-based feedback for individuals and groups of students to improve differentiation and target instruction.
5. Build students' executive functioning skills to promote academic and personal success.

## Measures of Success

a journey to develop collaborative professional learning structures—Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)—in each school. This strategy will build on PLCs as a vehicle for the professional learning detailed throughout this plan. PLCs will also provide a forum for reflection on how to apply the knowledge and skills attained through that professional learning to a particular school’s context.

To enact this strategy, the District will evaluate and strengthen PLCs existing professional learning model. This existing model includes small groups of teachers who come together regularly to share expertise to improve their practice. Through this work, we plan to provide in depth learning opportunities on skills that require more frequent practice and reflection to achieve competence than previous professional learning methods have allowed. Beyond professional learning, this distributed leadership-based model also often provides other benefits, such as fostering greater collaboration, reducing classroom isolation and spreading best practices throughout a school building. Promising results have already arisen from this process in some schools. Our work will be to improve the coherence and quality of this work district-wide.

## **2. Improve curriculum quality and reinforce curriculum implementation by equipping teachers with a coherent instructional framework used to define high quality curriculum and instruction.**

District 65 teachers share instructional resources developed or adopted at the district level in many content areas. In reading and math, these resources are aligned with Common Core State Standards. This central function serves to reduce the burden of curriculum planning on individual teachers so that they can focus on the instructional needs of individual students.

Our data show that 43 percent of our students enter high school without attaining college ready test scores in reading, and 56 percent enter high school without attaining college ready test scores in math. In light of these data, the heightened expectations for career success in the 21st Century, and the challenges that many of our students face, continued and accelerated improvement in the quality and consistency of our curricula is vital for the success of our educational efforts.

The committee determined that improving the quality of our curriculum and its implementation is critical for improving student learning outcomes. A first step toward this outcome will be assessing the quality of our curricula and its implementation. As this assessment proceeds, we will move forward with several immediate curricular priorities. For example,

- % of students at or above college readiness benchmarks established by NWEA in reading and mathematics on MAP at end of second, fifth, and eighth grades
- % of students at or below the 25th percentile on MAP in reading and mathematics
- % of students meeting national growth norms on MAP in reading and mathematics
- % of students reaching proficiency targets in 2nd and 5th grade on DRA/EDL reading assessments
- % former EL students who have transitioned out of EL support programs at or above college readiness benchmarks
- District-level Teacher Influence and Principal Instructional Leadership scores on the 5Essentials survey

## **Background**

- 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).
- Complex adult 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 &

we will adopt a new curriculum for English as a Second Language (ESL) from kindergarten through eighth grade so that we can better meet the needs of our growing population of English learners and their teachers. We also plan to create curriculum maps that identify units and standards taught in each term for each grade level for math, reading, social studies and science. These maps will assist not only in implementing the curricula, but also in providing feedback and differentiated instruction to students.

District 65 will also move forward in adopting an approach to literacy instruction that will challenge students in grades 3 through 8 to read, write, speak and reason as practitioners of various disciplines like language arts, science, social studies, and the arts (McConachie & Petrosky, 2009). This approach, known as Disciplinary Literacy, will provide the District with a consistent framework to guide curricular improvements across all grades, K-8. Our students will benefit not only from exposure to challenging materials across academic disciplines during their studies in District 65 but also from a smoother transition to high school in District 202. Our approach to implementing Disciplinary Literacy will begin with two important steps. First, because Disciplinary Literacy requires a solid reading and writing foundation for all students as the critical precursor to later success, District 65 will continue to focus on building that foundation based on work already accomplished in early literacy. Second, we will begin our phased implementation by adopting a Disciplinary Literacy approach to social studies in grades six through eight.

### **3. Employ additional specific research-based instructional strategies that address diverse student needs to ensure children meet their full potential.**

Not all children learn in the same way or have the same needs. However, the committee members agreed that each child has the ability to thrive and succeed—and if s/he does not then educators must 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, the committee developed this strategy to support teachers with an ever improving toolbox of instructional strategies.

Over the three years of this plan, we will work to improve instruction for all students: both those who are academically advanced and require additional challenge and those who are lagging academically and need additional support. In this latter category, our approach focuses on three groups: our lowest performing students, students with disabilities, and English

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).

## **Community Voice**

The committee heard several messages clearly. First, our strategies must address the achievement gaps that exist in our district, gaps similar to those in other districts across the country, if we are to truly be successful. The success of students in this district must extend to all learners. We also heard the need to create a stronger and more collaborative professional climate in our schools and district. If teachers and leaders are learning and engaged, then students will be learning and engaged. In response to this, professional learning is not only a key strategy, but is also an aspect of each of the other strategies as well. Finally, we heard about the important balance between academic skills and the prerequisite social and non-cognitive skills that students need to be successful in high school and beyond. Readers will find this idea represented most clearly in the executive functioning strategy.

learners. District-wide data demonstrate that we urgently need to better address the learning needs of the growing number of low performing students. From 2011 to 2014, the percent of students who scored at or below the 25th national percentile on the Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) assessment grew four percentage points to 15.4 in reading and one percentage point to 14.7 in mathematics. We chose to focus on our English learner population because we have seen tremendous growth in the size of that population in recent years. Students with disabilities are our third area of concentration because performance has declined for these students over the past four years as well. Although 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 with differentiation (i.e., meeting the instructional needs of students at varying academic levels in the same classroom).

As a first step toward implementing this strategy, we will improve the coherence of our supports to students struggling academically and clarify roles and expectations for the various professionals who work with these students. We envision a system where all faculty and staff participate in problem solving for students who are struggling academically--a task historically reserved for special educators. We also plan to equip teachers with instructional tools to better meet the needs of students with disabilities and English learners. In the first year, we will assess the outcomes of our current programs for English learners and identify modifications necessary. We will also develop a process for shared goal setting and planning related to the achievement of all student subgroups.

#### **4. Use evidence-based feedback for individuals and groups of students to improve differentiation and target instruction.**

The committee agreed that we must ensure all students and families receive clear feedback on what students have learned and what each student can do to meet his or her potential. The committee also agreed that teachers must take action to meet the specific needs of individual students through differentiated instruction. This process helps both students who are struggling and those who need additional academic challenge to meet their potential and stay engaged. In order to effectively accomplish both of these objectives, the committee heard that teachers will need additional tools and skills. This strategy focuses on building those tools and skills.

The District will implement this strategy by developing capacity at the district, school, and grade level to use evidence and data to

target and differentiate instruction. The regular review of student performance data will help us monitor student progress and the effectiveness of our instructional interventions. In addition, we will ensure teachers are adept and comfortable using and communicating assessment data to students and their parents, guardians, and families.

**5. Build students’ executive functioning skills to promote academic and personal success**

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). The committee concluded that improved executive functioning skills will assist our students in achieving academic success.

We have identified developing teachers’ and leaders’ knowledge about executive functioning and 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. This work will be phased in over three years.

**Milestones**

The table below contains a summary of key first year milestones for the five strategies:

<p><b>Strategy 1:</b>  <b>Professional learning structures</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create an implementation plan for improved school-based professional learning in collaboration with teacher leaders that complements district wide professional learning opportunities</li> <li>• Continue and reinforce existing Professional Learning Communities that promote instructional innovation and continuous improvement</li> <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>• Convene a first annual professional learning event to encourage and celebrate the ongoing sharing and spreading of innovative practices developed in Professional Learning Communities in District 65</li> </ul>
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<p><b>Strategy 2:</b></p> <p><b>Disciplinary Literacy</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assess the quality and implementation of our curricula</li> <li>• Proceed with adoption of a new English as a Second Language (ESL) curriculum for K-8</li> <li>• Create curriculum maps that identify units and standards taught in each term for each grade level for math, reading, social studies and science</li> <li>• Develop and adopt an instructional framework that defines high quality instruction in literacy and math, beginning with PreK-2 grades.</li> <li>• Develop exemplary student work samples, starting in Science and Social Studies, that model high quality disciplinary learning for grades 6-8. Use these samples to support collaboration with District 202.</li> <li>• Adopt new materials in 6-8 social studies and early childhood literacy for use district-wide as a first step toward incorporating literacy instruction into studies in all disciplines</li> </ul>
<p><b>Strategy 3:</b></p> <p><b>Instructional strategies</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve the coherence and 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 process for shared goal setting and planning with principals and teachers related to the achievement of all student subgroups</li> <li>• Conduct an in depth analysis of assessment results for English learners regarding language development and recommend modifications to program design</li> </ul>
<p><b>Strategy 4:</b></p> <p><b>Evidence-based feedback to improve differentiation</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop and deliver professional learning to teachers and leaders on using data to determine the effectiveness of instructional practices and interventions</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 into the curriculum in one school</li> <li>• Set student-level goals for development of behavior and academics in that school</li> </ul>

# Thriving Workforce

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 employees and its students are intricately intertwined. Accordingly, this plan builds on the foundation of exceptional work already being done by these employees.

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 safe and 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 create 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 these 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 will become 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 will have employees who are eager to come to work, seek opportunities to collaborate and support their colleagues, and do the hard work necessary to achieve *“Every child, every day, by whatever it takes.”*

## Strategies

Over the next three years, District 65 will focus on the following four strategies in the area of thriving workforce:

## Goal

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

## Strategies

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.
2. Develop and implement an annual recruitment plan that addresses timing, candidate sourcing, diversity of the workplace, the hiring and interview process, and new-hire orientation and support.
3. Create a culture of collaboration, trust and support across the system.
4. Articulate career pathways that provide multiple growth opportunities for teachers, educational support personnel and administrators.

## Measures of Success

- Employee satisfaction ratings
- Diversity among new hires including demographics, licensure, and years of experience
- % of new staff hired prior to April 1st
- % of applicants being

referred through established partnerships

## **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 and comments made during school visits and survey results, the committee concluded that effective professional learning is an important tool for knowledge and skill building among District 65 employees. However, the committee also concluded that professional learning can only be effective if offerings are high-quality, delivered through an effective method, aligned with employee needs and interests, and aligned with District priorities. In fact, several important studies indicated that solely depending on workshop-based professional learning is ineffective (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009; Yoon et al., 2007).

Through this strategy, District 65 will develop a systemic approach to professional learning that incorporates a variety of professional learning models. This system will be built on the foundation of the professional learning structures described in the high quality teaching and learning section of this plan. The system will also incorporate and align the elements of professional learning included in the family and community engagement and the safe and supportive climate sections of this plan. Finally, the system will take into consideration the learning needs of all educational support staff.

As a first step in implementing this strategy, we will establish standards for the content, format, delivery method and effectiveness of professional learning opportunities, ensuring compatibility of these standards with the District's school-based learning communities model. Implementation will proceed through development of a professional learning calendar to aid 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 are well used.

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

The committee identified District 65's recruitment and induction processes as areas for improvement. By investing resources in this strategy, the committee envisioned attracting a larger

## **Background**

- Research in leading 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).

number of outstanding candidates, increasing the knowledge and skill level of candidates selected and hired, making more timely offers of employment to maximize likelihood of acceptance, and increasing the likelihood of retention through an effective onboarding process. Recent research suggests that this strategy is both feasible and promising (Odden, 2011). The committee also agreed that this strategy held 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. Implementing the new process may take several years, but initial steps will be taken during the first year of this plan. These initial steps include establishing partnerships with teacher preparation programs, training hiring managers on candidate selection, piloting methods for fast-tracking high potential candidates and experimenting with improving orientation during the summer of 2016.

### **3. Create 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). The committee concluded that 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 voices of teachers and other employees gathered through focus groups and surveys supported this conclusion.

Another key component of this culture identified through the focus groups and surveys was the value 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 their profession every year for reasons that were totally within the control of their employers (e.g., lack of feedback or recognition).

The committee agreed that the District's focus on culture must 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. Ten of 16 schools with sufficient data score at or above the Illinois average on the Teacher-Teacher trust measure, and 11 of 16 schools with sufficient data score at or above the Illinois average on the Teacher-Principal trust measure. Going forward, the committee

- Several promising models of teacher leadership pathways have been developed by school districts across the United States (Austin Independent School District, 2014; New York City Department of Education, 2014).

## **Community Voice**

Through focus groups, surveys and school visits, we heard several key themes related to a thriving workforce. Employees indicated that the District should build welcoming school and central office communities where trust, transparency and strong relationships are the norms. Within those communities, staff indicated they wanted to experience a learning environment where taking risks is encouraged and ample support is provided. Staff indicated they needed time to collaborate and learn, wanting professional learning driven by student and teacher needs and that encourages the sharing of best practices and expertise that exists within District 65.

concluded that the District should adopt additional measures of organizational 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 strategies to build trust and collaboration. We will select and implement a survey or assessment of culture and use the data from this assessment as part of a continuous improvement process related to workplace culture across the District. We will also develop and annually update a plan for employee engagement and support. We will engage in all of these activities in collaboration with employees in alignment with the vision expressed at the outset of this Chapter.

#### **4. Articulate career pathways that provide multiple growth opportunities for teachers, educational support personnel, and administrators.**

The committee affirmed a vision of District 65 not only as the best place to start a career, but the best place to develop and grow in a career. Not only do we want to attract the best talent, but we also want to honor, support and develop the teachers and educational support staff who currently work in District 65. In order to do this, we must create opportunities for staff to develop and grow professionally, in and out of traditional career pathways. These pathways must be transparent and accessible for teachers and educational support staff. For example, for teachers who want to grow professionally without having to leave their classrooms we may consider shared classrooms, which would afford teachers both teaching and coaching opportunities.

One first step toward implementation of this strategy will be to work with all managers across the district to develop growth pathways and succession plans. These pathways and plans involve identification and intentional development of high potential employees. Another initial step will be to refine and further develop pathways for teacher professional growth that does not require the teacher to give up his/her work in the classroom.

## Milestones

The table below contains a summary of key first year milestones for the four strategies:

<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 professional learning plan focused on district priorities that aligns with the current Professional Learning Community structures and considers the research on the effectiveness of traditional professional learning models</li> <li>• Develop a master professional learning calendar based on district priorities to aid employees in select learning opportunities and 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>• Design and implement at least two strategies 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>• Establish career growth pathways and a succession planning program for all district leaders and managers that identifies high potential employees and invests in their development</li> <li>• Develop and refine pathways and opportunities for teacher leadership that do not require leaving the classroom</li> </ul>

# Family and Community Engagement

Engagement starts with a welcome smile, staff that listen, and an understanding that some do not trust. 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 being more intentional in order to reach all families, including those who are not connected, 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.

When it comes to school programming, we must celebrate the contributions already being made by many families while shifting our decision making process to incorporate the voices of all. By increasing the diversity, quality and relevancy of engagement opportunities, family engagement and thus student learning and growth will be positively impacted. Because the Evanston/Skokie community is 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 both a district-level and school-based infrastructure to attract and maintain 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, or a model similar to Community Schools. Applying what has been learned thus far to other schools across the District has the potential to transform our schools so that they become hubs for support that connect families with a variety of community resources that not only address academics but a wide variety of other needs that potentially impact learning (e.g., social emotional development, nutrition, and medical).

Intentionally building staff capacity at both the local school and the district level is a key component for strengthening family and community engagement. Engagement starts with stellar customer service and building relationships. It is strengthened through 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.

## Goal

**Cultivate and strengthen intentional and meaningful partnerships with all families and community agencies to serve and benefit families and children.**

## Strategies

1. Create a variety of opportunities that connect, engage and sustain families as partners.
2. Match community resources with the highest priority needs through a district and school community engagement infrastructure.
3. Leverage lessons learned from the Community Schools model as a way to make schools a hub for resources.
4. Build school and district level staff capacity to effectively engage families.

## Measures of Success

- Parent Connectedness measure from the 5Essentials parent survey
- Parents' Assessment of Teacher Trust measure on the 5Essentials parent survey
- Parent-Student Interaction measure on the 5Essentials parent survey
- School Outreach measure on the 5Essentials parent survey
- Involved Families essential from the 5Essentials teacher survey
- Evaluation of pilots, including

## Strategies

Over the next three years, District 65 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 are partners in supporting each child's school experience. 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 to overcome these barriers and find ways to connect. A first step will be to conduct an in-depth assessment of what is happening in each school in order to fully understand current practices and status of involved families. In addition, the school infrastructure needed to create and sustain engagement pathways will be strengthened and guidelines for new and improved customer service will be implemented.

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

Evanston is rich in community organizations that can and do 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 potential partners by creating a means to make each school's priorities and needs more transparent, ultimately matching resources with need.

### 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. A "community school" is not just a place but also a set of partnerships and a strategy to involve and engage families and meet their needs. Beyond the regular school day learning environment, a Community School becomes a community center, where *coordinated* resources, programs, services and initiatives are available to support youth and families before school, after school, and on weekends. The vision and strategy to transform a traditional school into a community school is developed, owned and carried out by all stakeholders of the school community, including teachers, students, families,

## Background

- 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 using a systemic approach in which strategies are integrated and embedded into existing structures (Westmoreland et al., 2009).
- Sharing a common message and vision about engagement, intentionally linking programming to specific goals/outcomes, and addressing cultural misconceptions are key factors to consider in developing a family and community engagement strategy (Westrich & Strobel, 2013).
- Effective family and community engagement strategies need to focus on practice changes that shift and broaden our vision of engagement beyond just attending events. With this reframing, engagement becomes more focused on meaningful communication, strengthening district/staff/parent capacity, increasing efforts to invite parents into schools, forming partnerships, and high quality professional learning at the organization level (Westmoreland et al., 2009).
- In order to ensure that all of our students achieve at high

school staff, administrators, community organizations/service providers and neighbors.

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. The District will assess the current pilot and consider implications for expanding or modifying the Chute model, or expanding key practices to other District 65 schools.

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

How school staff interact 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 sessions to strengthen our “customer service” and build more meaningful relationships. The Human Resources Department will determine priority and placement of the training in the District’s new annual professional learning calendar.

levels while also addressing the opportunity gap, 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).

### **Community Voice**

Across stakeholder groups, there was a clear message that our community values meaningful relationships and inclusiveness. Families and the community at large want to partner with our schools and feel welcome in our buildings. There was also acknowledgement and expressed concern that we have not been completely successful in engaging those who have been historically disengaged. Stakeholders emphasized the importance of continuing to work toward understanding differences and biases while building staff capacity so that we can truly be an inclusive district. The committee also heard that it is important to create a robust approach to communication so that information is transparent, reciprocal, relevant and accessible to all families. In addition, building parent capacity, exploring options for

expanding the Community Schools Model, and identifying who owns this work are important priorities voiced by stakeholders. Lastly, stakeholder's raised the question, "Engagement to what end?" This question may suggest a need to clarify or define a shared understanding and/or philosophy of what is meant by engagement and how this is directly related to student success.

## Milestones

The table below contains a summary of key first year milestones for the four strategies:

<p><b>Strategy 1:</b> <b>Expand engagement opportunities</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hire or identify a senior administrator solely responsible for family and community engagement</li> <li>• Evaluate the school advisory committee structure and recommend a new or improved structure to implement across schools</li> <li>• Conduct at least two focus groups with individuals who have historically been disengaged from District 65 and document lessons learned</li> <li>• Complete a self-assessment of strengths and opportunities for improving family and community engagement and use this information to develop an action plan for the District and each school</li> <li>• Establish and convene a district-wide work group to monitor and improve family and community engagement through methods that emphasize transparency, trust, timeliness, cross-cultural interactions, customer service, respect and equal access</li> </ul>
<p><b>Strategy 2:</b> <b>Community partnerships</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <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> <b>Community Schools model</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review data from the current pilot at Chute Middle School and identify 1-2 successful strategies to leverage and immediately begin replicating at other schools beginning Fall 2015</li> <li>• Explore financially feasible options for expansion of Community Schools or similar model and make a recommendation for</li> </ul>

	<p>implementation beginning with three additional schools identified as having the highest need and readiness levels</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Update the District manual of community resources and disseminate to all schools</li> </ul>
<p><b>Strategy 4:</b> <b>Build staff capacity</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 best practices, identified needs and our district commitment to improving “customer service”</li> <li>• Provide an all-district learning experience around cultural sensitivity and valuing differences</li> <li>• Work with a small group of concerned families to build capacity. Provide intensive training to this group of families who will work with a small group of educators to build internal capacity</li> </ul>

# Safe and Supportive School Climate

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 build connections between students and the school community (Epstein & McPartland, 1976). Further, students’ feelings of safety and support are correlated with their academic achievement, effective risk prevention, and positive youth development (National School Climate Center, 2007). Creating healthy relationships between 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.

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

Students also 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. By investing effort in teaching students skills such as resilience, perseverance, self-regulation, empathy, focus and interpersonal relations with diverse classmates, we can not only contribute to positive school climate, but also equip all students—those with behavioral problems and those without—for success in life after school.

Building and sustaining strong school climates requires intentionality, focus, and continuous refinement. We will ensure these conditions persist by developing school climate teams

## 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

1. Implement Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) programs at all schools in the District.
2. Develop staff knowledge of social and emotional development in children, and its application to classroom routines, so that they can work with all students, particularly those with challenges.
3. Create school climate action teams in each school that will review data on student academic progress, student social and emotional learning, school wide disciplinary activities, and access to culturally responsive instructional and support strategies.

## Measures of Success

- Academic personalism measure on the 5Essentials survey
- High expectations (i.e., Academic press) measure on the 5Essentials survey
- PBIS recognition status
- Student-teacher trust measure on the 5Essentials survey

tasked with reviewing data on student academic progress, student social and emotional learning, school wide disciplinary activities, and access to culturally responsive instructional and support strategies. Through this work, we seek to build school climates that are welcoming, accepting and effective for our diverse student body.

## Strategies

Over the next three years, District 65 will focus on the following three strategies in the area of safe and supportive school climate.

### **1. Implement Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) programs at all schools in the District.**

The committee concluded that incorporating instruction on social and emotional competencies into the academic curriculum must be a focus for District 65. Committee members agreed that 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. Committee members discussed the array of programs already in use in District 65 that contain components of SEL: Second Step, Positive Behavior Interventions and Support (PBIS), Peace Circles and Restorative Justice. Through this strategy, we will leverage what is already in place as we work to expand the consistency and quality of 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. We will also identify individuals from schools across the District who are skilled at incorporating SEL into their work with students and are passionate about the topic. In collaboration, we will develop a framework for program selection and guidance for implementing SEL programs. We will also pilot promising strategies and gather feedback to refine 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 all students, particularly those with challenges.**

This strategy seeks to enhance school climate by addressing our staff's need to further refine their own competence with social and emotional skills to best meet the needs of their students. Committee members concluded that staff must also be knowledgeable about the social and emotional development of children. They agreed that staff need to be able to apply that

- % of students with one or more Office Discipline Referrals for major infractions
- Out of school suspensions, by race and IEP status

## Background

- 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

knowledge of social and emotional development to classroom routines so that they can work with all children. Further, the committee recommended that staff build capability to meet the social and emotional learning needs of students with particular challenges.

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. During the first year, we plan to make training available to all staff in the most critical skill areas. We also plan to pilot a more intensive coaching model in two schools and document lessons learned.

### **3. Create school climate action teams in each school that will review data on student academic progress, student social and emotional learning, school wide disciplinary activities, and access to culturally responsive instructional and support strategies.**

The committee agreed that when schools incorporate culturally responsive educational practices within the core curriculum, it promotes students' belief in themselves as effective learners, improves student motivation and increases a respectful engagement in academics. In selecting this strategy, we envision school climate action teams meeting regularly to review data and practices within their schools, coordinated with existing PBIS teams. The purpose of these meetings will be to identify improvements to policy or practice that can enhance school climate, including equal access to culturally responsive instruction and support. These teams will ensure that all elements of school climate support students in achieving their full potential. The teams will build a vision and plan for promoting school climate that is shared by the school community; oversee implementation of SEL; develop a comprehensive system to engage or re-engage students; and create an environment where all feel safe, welcome and supported. The teams 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 team will also work on the relationships, awareness and skills necessary for staff to competently extend a welcome to all types of families and students.

We also plan to create climate action teams within the central office because staff from many central office departments often serve students and families directly. The central office teams will be similarly tasked with ensuring that the prerequisites are in place to competently serve all families.

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 (Payton et al., 2008).

## **Community Voice**

Through focus groups, surveys and school visits, we hear clearly from students, families and teachers about the importance of school climate. Students told us they wanted opportunities for strong positive relationships with teachers and other students, support and encouragement

To implement this strategy, we will begin by establishing the climate teams. Each team will conduct an equity self-assessment of current programming and practices. At least two teams—one in a school, one in the central office—will participate in an in-depth equity audit. Both the self-assessment and the in-depth audit will be conducted with the goal of identifying strengths to build on and areas for improvement. During the first year, we will also provide tools and guidance that enable the climate teams to regularly review data.

from adults, high expectations, and discipline policies that are fair and understandable. Families told us that they valued social and emotional development through research-based programs. Teachers indicated that they hoped to build welcoming school and central office communities where trust, transparency and strong relationships are the norms. Staff also indicated a desire to have additional training in supportive teaching techniques for students with diverse needs in our school communities.

## Milestones

The table below contains a summary of key first year milestones for the three strategies:

<p><b>Strategy 1:</b></p> <p><b>Social emotional learning</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct an audit of current practices in each school and identify candidates (e.g., assistant principals, social workers) to serve on district-wide leadership team for Social and Emotional Learning</li> <li>• Develop a framework and guidelines for program selection and implementation based on audit results, in collaboration with district-wide leadership team</li> <li>• Pilot Morning Meetings similar to Responsive Classroom model in two schools and document results</li> <li>• Proceed with phase two of restorative justice project already in progress</li> <li>• Develop an implementation plan for Year two based on lessons learned in Year one</li> </ul>
<p><b>Strategy 2:</b></p> <p><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 development 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 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></p> <p><b>School climate teams</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure each school and department has a functioning school climate team</li> <li>• Conduct an equity self-assessment of current programming and practices in all schools and central office departments</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Conduct an in-depth equity audit in at least one school and one central office department</li><li>• Develop and implement tools and processes for school and district data review that includes data on student academic progress, student social and emotional learning, school wide disciplinary activities, and access to culturally responsive instructional and support strategies.</li></ul>
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# Financial Sustainability

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 times beyond their control. District 65 is no exception as it faces plummeting consumer index factors; decreases in state, federal, and local funding; possible dramatic increases in pension costs; 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 uncertainties, it is imperative that District 65 identify and implement strategies, such as seeking additional revenue sources including the consideration of an operating referendum, to ensure its long-term financial stability.

Financial sustainability is paramount in order to support the programs and services offered to students in safe and updated buildings. Committee members focused on several key components to ensure strong fiscal standing for the district including 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. The committee agreed that 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 the Financial Sustainability Committee is foundational to all other areas of this strategic plan.

Specifically, increasing transparency in 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 may 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

1. Increase transparency in budget documents with a common language.
2. Implement a systematic prioritization process to align District 65 programs and practices with available resources.
3. Effectively communicate to the community District 65's long-term capital needs and financing options including the consideration of a capital referendum.
4. Seek additional revenue sources including the consideration of an operating referendum.

## Measures of Success

- Budget surplus
- Structured interview results assessing stakeholder knowledge of budget priorities
- Structured interview results on communication of budgeting process
- Capital needs backlog

## Background

- Successful implementation of the strategies included in this

## Strategies

Over the next three years, District 65 will focus on the following four strategies in the area of financial sustainability.

### **1. Increase transparency in budget documents with a common language.**

Budget transparency means there is full disclosure of all relevant fiscal information in a clear, timely and systematic manner. It is a pre-condition for effective decision making. Budget transparency also allows stakeholders to understand where funding comes from, where the funds go, the intended outcome of spending, constraints and uncertainties, assumptions, as well as trade-offs and recommendations for budget decisions. The District is committed to revising its budget documents to ensure that they are easy to understand and easily accessible.

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

Structural budget deficits, uncertain revenues and evolving strategic goals require a flexible method of prioritizing spending within available revenue. Creating a new budgeting process will ensure resources are allocated to priorities that align with district goals. The process will be transparent and involve multiple stakeholders. The District will spend the first year researching models. 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 to the community District 65's long-term capital needs and financing options including the consideration of a capital referendum.**

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 priorities, including building condition, emergencies, life-safety or other legal requirements, or current technology needs. In order to ensure transparency and foster community understanding surrounding the capital needs, District 65 will post the master building work summary, the annual approved capital projects, and the facilities at a glance report on the District 65 website in an easy to understand format.

### **4. Seek additional revenue sources including the consideration of an operating referendum.**

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 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 all, 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).

## Community Voice

Community members expressed to Superintendent Paul Goren the importance of transparency and communication with regard to finances during his initial listening tour. Financial sustainability committee members felt so strongly about increasing the transparency of budget documents using a common language that this strategy is listed first. Many community members also voiced concern about pending legislation that would redistribute state funds and have a significant impact on the District 65 budget. Community members on the committee

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, payments in lieu of taxes, or additional revenue that could be secured through a successful operating referendum. 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.

expressed their strong desire to communicate clearly to the public the financial challenges the district is facing. This is especially the case given the lack of available Debt Service Extension BASE (DSEB) bond revenues that would help support the expanding capital needs of the district, possible reductions in state funding that might include shifting the burden of pension costs to the district, and the potential need to consider both an operating and a capital referendum.

## Milestones

The table below contains a summary of key first year 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> </ul>
<p><b>Strategy 2:</b> <b>Priority-based budgeting</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research models for revising District 65 budget documents for FY17</li> <li>• Develop a timeline for implementation</li> <li>• Use a version 1.0 of 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>• Explore referenda options to fund capital project backlog</li> <li>• Complete a new 10-year life safety survey</li> <li>• Produce reports (master building summary and annual approved capital projects) and post on the District 65 website</li> </ul>
<p><b>Strategy 4:</b> <b>Additional revenue</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hire a grants manager</li> <li>• Explore referenda options to fund operating budget</li> <li>• Outreach to local governments/institutions regarding possible new revenue sources</li> </ul>

## Holding Ourselves Accountable

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 that 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 is released for public comment, each leader is in the process of developing a detailed work plan that specifies how each strategy will be accomplished in three years. The work plans will be updated monthly and progress will be reviewed monthly with the superintendent and summarized bi-annually for the Board.

Priority Area	Leader
High Quality Teaching and Instruction	John Price
Thriving Workforce	Beatrice Davis
Family and Community Engagement	Tricia Murray (interim)
Safe and Supportive School Climate	Joyce Bartz
Financial Sustainability	Mary Brown

## Evidence of Implementation Quality

Once work plans are complete, 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 monthly cabinet meetings.

The cabinet level staff members who led the work planning described above also developed success indicators were developed by the cabinet 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, found in **Appendix C**.

## 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 measure of the District's success. These measures will be discussed at public Board meetings in March, and approved at the same time as the strategic plan.

## Reporting Our Progress

### Evanston Community

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 Report each August that will update the community on our progress towards milestones, results on leading indicators, and changes on student outcomes.

### 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. (See **Appendix D**). 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. 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.

## 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 much the richer for their contributions. We want to keep that spirit of collaboration alive as the plan is implemented. Over the next three 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.

## Now What? Tell us what you think

District 65 wants to hear what you think about the draft plan. Please tell us what you think during the public comment period, which runs from 1/28/15 through 2/11/15. Send us your feedback in writing or in person. Fill out a comment card at any District 65 school, submit your comments via email at [input@district65.net](mailto:input@district65.net) or attend a town hall meeting.

Town hall meetings are scheduled for:

- February 3 from 7pm-9pm at Chute Middle School
- February 5 from 7pm-9pm at Nichols Middle School
- February 7 from 9am-11am at Haven Middle School

All feedback will be compiled and sent to the planning team for consideration. The plan will be revised and presented to the Board of Education for consideration on 3/02/15. The Board of Education will vote on a final version of the plan on 3/23/15.

## 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 20 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 refine this draft plan and move towards implementation, we invite you to continue to be our partner. Attend a town hall meeting, 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.**

## Appendix A: Acknowledgements

We sincerely appreciate the valuable contributions of each individual who generously gave their time, insights and expertise to the development of our strategic plan by participating in the focus groups and responding to the online survey.

We specifically thank the following committee members for their hard work and commitment to the process.

<b><u>High Quality Teaching and Learning</u></b>	<b><u>Thriving Workforce</u></b>	<b><u>Family and Community Engagement</u></b>
John Price (co-chair) Shalema Francois-Blue (co-chair) Stacy Beardsley Kirby Callum Simone Larson Lauren Leitao Erika Martinez Anne McKenna Jerry Michel Jennifer Phillips Jamilla Pitts Nicole Woodard Iliev Tracy Quattrocki Paula Zelinski	Beatrice Davis (co-chair) Toya Campbell (co-chair) Kristen Anderson Demetra Disotuar Kevin Dorken Cathy Doyle Erik Friedman Claudia Garrison Heather Gustafson Eva Martin Jordan Ryan Bonnie Schindler Madaliene Shalet	Tricia Murray (co-chair) Pam Weir (co-chair) Laura Antolin Missy Carpenter Candance Chow Aimee Crowe Patricia Efiom Allie Hannan Betsy Jenkins Angela Johnson Tony Lawry Rosa McAndrew Jim McHolland Rebecca Mendoza Dorothy Williams
<b><u>Safe and Supportive School Climate</u></b>	<b><u>Financial Sustainability</u></b>	
Joyce Bartz (co-chair) Kathy Lyons (co-chair) Jennifer Bergner Michelle Bournes Kevin Brown Kourtney Cockrell Pamela Cytrynbaum Andy Friedman Fred Hunter Suni Kartha Susan Kolian Elisabeth "Biz" Lindsay-Ryan Ismalis Nunez Patrice Quehl Diana Salinas Elizabeth Webster	Mary Brown (co-chair) Diane Lequar (co-chair) Olga Bernick Jeff Brown Omar Brown Janet Ferguson Jean Fies Elliot Frolichstein-Appel Lee Kulman Andrea Mainelli Marci Mies John Mitchell Jim Myers Kathy Zalewski	

<b><u>External Advisory Committee</u></b>		
Paul Goren (co-chair) Candance Chow (co-chair) Frank Baicchi Patty Barbato Josh Bernstein Alderman Peter Braithwaite Bill Campbell Lindsay Chase Lansdale Lina Cramer Mark Dennis Andrea Densham Mary Finnegan Elena Garcia Ansani John Gasko Bill Geiger Seth Green	Alderman Jane Grover Alderman Delores Holmes Kristin James Lise Jinno Kemi Jona Elaine Kemna-Irish Chief Greg Klaiber Lucile Krasnow Karen Larson Neal Levin Cari Levin Casey Lewis Varela Bill Logan David Marzahl Joe McCrae Amy Morton	Steve Newman Maureen Palchak Monique Parsons Keith Robinson Sylvia Rodriguez Ken Rolling Sara Schastok Penny Sebring Terri Shepard Bonnie Silverman Karen Singer Mayor Elizabeth Tisdahl Karen Tollenaar Demorest Michelle Tompkins Eric Witherspoon

In addition, we would like to thank the District 65 Internal Planning Committee, charged with leading the staff and committee work, developing action plans and metrics, and producing the strategic plan. John Price, Beatrice Davis, Tricia Murray, Joyce Bartz, Mary Brown, Maria Allison, Jeff Brown, Kate Ellison, Andalib Khelghati and Barbara Hiller.

We also acknowledge the contributions of three partners who worked tirelessly on this effort. Patricia Maunsell and Eva Moon from m2 communications assisted with the development and execution of the communications and community engagement plan to support this planning process. Lisa Schneider Fabes from Schneider Fabes Consulting assisted with the development and execution of the overall strategic planning process.

Maria Allison served as executive project leader for this plan with editorial and writing assistance from Peter Godard and additional assistance from Melissa Messinger as designer. Special thanks also go to Sheila Burke and Adeela Qureshi for additional assistance.

## Appendix B: The 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 Dr. Goren's and Dr. Allison'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, Dr. Goren repeatedly heard from community members the need for improved communication and collaboration. In response, D65 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 13-16 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.

- Brainstorming session - all committee members were encouraged to brainstorm 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, discussion ensued 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. Dr. Goren's leadership team led the development of the milestones and metrics. The success indicators presented in this draft 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 this final phase is to disseminate the draft plan to the public and obtain additional input. Once the comment period closes, District 65 staff will consolidate all the feedback and consider edits to the plan. The plan will be finalized and presented to the Board of Education and the public for consideration on 3/02/15 and presented again for adoption on 03/16/15.

Appendix C: Strategic Plan Scorecard Sample

Evanston/Skokie School District 65  
Strategic Plan Scorecard

Reporting Period: August 2018

Outcome Indicators		Baseline	SP Y1	SP Y2	SP Y3	
		2014-15	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	
<b>Overall Student Outcomes</b>	% students meeting college readiness benchmarks in reading on MAP	X%	X%	X%		
	% students meeting college readiness benchmarks in math on MAP	X%	X%	X%		
	% students scoring at or below the 25th percentile in reading on MAP	X%	X%	X%		
	% students scoring at or below the 25th percentile in math on MAP	X%	X%	X%		
<b>High quality teaching &amp; learning</b>	% of students making expected gains (i.e., national norm growth) in reading on MAP	X%	X%	X%		
	% of students making expected gains (i.e., national norm growth) in math on MAP	X%	X%	X%		
	% students meeting college readiness benchmarks in reading on MAP at end of grade 2	X%	X%	X%		
	% students meeting college readiness benchmarks in reading on MAP at end of grade 5	X%	X%	X%		
	% students meeting college readiness benchmarks in reading on MAP at end of grade 8	X%	X%	X%		
	% students meeting college readiness benchmarks in math on MAP at end of grade 2	X%	X%	X%		
	% students meeting college readiness benchmarks in math on MAP at end of grade 5	X%	X%	X%		
	% students meeting college readiness benchmarks in math on MAP at end of grade 8	X%	X%	X%		
	% students scoring at or below the 25th percentile in reading on MAP	X%	X%	X%		
	% students scoring at or below the 25th percentile in math on MAP	X%	X%	X%		
	% of students making expected gains (i.e., national norm growth) in reading on MAP	X%	X%	X%		
	% of students making expected gains (i.e., national norm growth) in math on MAP	X%	X%	X%		
	% students reaching proficiency targets in grade 2 on DRA/EDL reading assessments	X%	X%	X%		
	% students reaching proficiency targets in grade 5 on DRA/EDL reading assessments	X%	X%	X%		
	% former EL students who have transitioned out of EL support programs at or above college readiness benchmarks in reading	X%	X%	X%		
	District level teacher influence scores on the 5Essentials survey	X%	X%	X%		
	Principal Instructional leadership scores on the 5Essentials survey	X%	X%	X%		
	<b>Thriving workforce</b>	Employee satisfaction ratings	X%	X%	X%	
		Diversity among new hires including demographics, licensure and years of experience	X%	X%	X%	
		% of new staff hired prior to April 1	X%	X%	X%	
% applicants being referred through established partnerships		X%	X%	X%		

Evanston/Skokie School District 65  
Strategic Plan Scorecard

Reporting Period: August 2018

Outcome Indicators		Baseline	SP Y1	SP Y2	SP Y3
		2014-15	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
<b>Family &amp; community engagement</b>	Parent Connectedness measure from the 5Essentials parent survey	X%	X%	X%	
	Parent's Assessment of Teacher Trust measure from the 5Essentials parent survey	X%	X%	X%	
	Parent-Student Interaction measure from the 5Essentials parent survey	X%	X%	X%	
	School Outreach measure on the 5Essentials parent survey	X%	X%	X%	
	Involved Families essential from the 5Essentials teacher survey	X%	X%	X%	
	Evaluation of pilots, including community schools model	X%	X%	X%	
<b>Safe and supportive climate</b>	Academic Personalism measure on the 5Essentials survey	X%	X%	X%	
	High Expectations (Academic Press) measure on the 5Essentials survey	X%	X%	X%	
	PBIS recognition status	X%	X%	X%	
	Student-Teacher Trust measure on the 5Essentials Survey	X%	X%	X%	
	% students with one or more Office Discipline Referrals for major infractions	X%	X%	X%	
	Out of school suspensions, by race and IEP status	X%	X%	X%	
<b>Financial Health</b>	Budget surplus	X%	X%	X%	
	Structured interview results assessing stakeholder knowledge of budget priorities	X%	X%	X%	
	Structured interview results on communication of budgeting process	X%	X%	X%	
	Capital needs backlog	X%	X%	X%	

**Appendix D: Board Progress Report Sample**

**Evanston/Skokie School District 65  
Strategic Plan Status Report**

**Reporting Period: July - December 2017**

	2015-16		2016-17		2017-18		Status Update
	Jan	Aug	Jan	Aug	Jan	Aug	
<b>High quality teaching &amp; learning</b>	Green	Yellow	Orange	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		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		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		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		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.

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