

Madison Metropolitan School District

**Strategic Planning 2009
Community Engagement Session Notes**

March 25 (LaFollette)

April 14 (Lincoln)

April 16 (Memorial)

April 21 (Sheraton)

Strategic Planning Public Meeting

March 25, LaFollette High School

Question 1 – Mission

Groups 1 and 2

Group 1.....

(social worker intern, detention center teacher, parent/school board candidate)

- Excellence - We are setting up for failure, need to meet students where they are and accept their individual progress. This will help get them to show up.
- At least competent (not excellence)
- Curriculum and communication, not just testing.

Suggestion

...cultivate the potential...no matter what level you are at...

- Culture of system vs. current language, students are the output, process/staff are the input. More focus in mission on staff and community.

Suggestion

...cultivate the potential in everyone to thrive as...citizen/community...love of learning for live...supporting staff and students...

- Try the word stretch

Group 2.....

(Sp. Ed. Teacher, parent, parent/media person)

- There is a fine line between challenging and supporting.
- Too fluffy – needs to be leaner and meaner.
- Requires too much thought to understand.
- Unclear intent of “full richness and diversity of our community”, likes embracing diversity.
- Academic excellence – too high, doomed to fail
- Replace achieve with a word that is not so finite, lifelong learning should never be achieved.
- Really like...love of learning, civic engagement, global citizen
- Student focus!

Suggestion

Evolving education to meet the needs of a changing society.

Notes taken by DB

Strategic Planning Public Meeting

March 25, LaFollette High School

Question 2 – Beliefs and Parameters

Group 1

Overall comments:

Belief #1 is very strong.

Beliefs 2, 5 and 8 have a similar theme with #8 ("achievement not predicated on race," etc.) being the underpinning for this trio.

Belief #5 - it's very basic but something that we (staff) should really believe in.

A good job developing the belief statements

"I love the community focus on all of these beliefs"

It comes down to a question of resources to achieve all the belief statements. We have to be creative and innovative to overcome current and future lack of resources.

Which beliefs resonate strongly with you?

#1 -

#1 - this is at the core of community

#3 and #4 -

#4 - "engaging" and "vibrant" are terms that resonate

#4 - safety is basic to a learning environment

#9 - it represents an openness to reflect on the future and what the future means to students.

Are there beliefs missing from this list which should be added?

A core body of knowledge before advancing, or students must meet minimum expectations

Students should be inspired to learn. If students are inspired to learn, they will achieve.

#5 - Group supported adding this phrase at the end of the existing statement:

"...to meet their own potential."

#9 - is too vague; difficult to know its meaning.

Staff do not have all the knowledge.

Change #9 by deleting "provides" and replacing with "...that creates meaning from the knowledge and skills..."

Notes taken by KS

Strategic Planning Public Meeting

March 25, LaFollette High School

Question 2 – Beliefs and Parameters

Group 2

Which beliefs resonate strongly with you?

#1 - it's real basic. "I guess that consensus was reached easily on this one. It's a prerequisite."

#1 and #8 - Person likes them. They are both really important.

#5 - Person likes it because it means that students need more interventions and direct student services.

Intervention options are not sufficient in number for students. We need more interventions.

#7 - it is important to education. We need to address the issues relating to resources.

We need to meet the issues in #7 before we as a district can address #9.

#8 - When consensus is reached on this belief, it will be rather defining. Person understands why there is no consensus yet, but it's the most important belief.

We need to understand how each factor (race, socio-economic status, etc.) impacts students.

#9 - likes it - it shows that we need to look at our curriculum

Person likes that "...culturally relevant education..." is in this belief. That is, we can't use "cookie cutter teaching methods."

Are there beliefs missing from this list which should be added?

Citizenship

Civic engagement

Service learning - these 3 could be connected to beliefs #1 and/or #9

Are assessments indicated in these belief statements?

#6 - assessments might be in belief #6. We need to assess our (teaching) methods and strategies.

#6 - should be changed to add "comprehensive evaluation", i.e., "...informed by critical and comprehensive evaluation..."

Notes taken by KS

Strategic Planning Public Meeting

March 25, LaFollette High School

Question 3 – Strategic Priorities

Group 1

1. Education has gotten away from the original purpose, which was furthering community. Eight periods/day, etc. doesn't allow need to reconnect to community. Madison WI is well known in education as on the cutting edge – references to community are terrific. Now, high school diploma isn't adequate. Are expectations for advanced degrees now, only wealthy can afford. Basic public education should prepare students for their part in the community.
2. Community has changed (cited changes in manufacturing jobs). Jobs student can pursue that would provide livelihood. We need to be focused K-16, and pursue partnerships with our community. It may not be that we've gotten away, but the community has changed.
3. Education needs to mirror what's needed in the world – e.g., technology. LaFollette has so little.
4. Technology should be a priority. Fits in resources/capacity. We need a sustainable fund for technology – that supports a technology plan. I have kids who could be building complicated models if we had the right technology and materials. The scientists and engineers we need for our society are our students.
5. If we had stronger partnerships with business and UW, would we get more computers, etc.? (Someone stated that we do receive these resources.)
6. In looking at community engagement, how students construct meaning, how things are taught... Would like to see more constructivist strategies shared.
7. Don't want high school to be a training ground for (university) community programs – people need to be well rounded and we should provide a broad based educational program.
8. I see so many students (special education teacher) who are not successful. From my perspective, a more focused program would help them.
9. Student priority – what did they mean when talking about eliminating the achievement gap? In one sense, may eliminate but more specific measure (than all) would be better. Rather have something like students entering college would reflect the diversity of our community.

Some debate about lowering the bar to make sure all are successful vs. high bar.

10. How are we going to do this? We are strapped every year with more and more cuts. What goes are things we value and enjoy – extra curriculum and electives. As things get tighter, what will we be left with? Need to be addressing school finances at state and federal funding.
11. What does achievement gap mean? in terms of academic achievement, but might be related to different goals and different outcomes.

Comment about disparity in achievement and other areas for some racial groups.

12. *Highest potential* is almost meaningless. Do we want to *expand potential*? Resources aren't distributed equally. Poverty is high in every school and that is a community problem and requires community partnership.

Also discussed disproportionate representation of minorities in special education.

13. Reading, writing, arithmetic used to be the basics and still are – if you don't have those skills, can't take advantage of so many options. Doors are closed to kids if they don't have skills. Referenced algebra failure at LaFollette and Board of Education goal of algebra and geometry.

Do not feel that was a good goal and needs to be reconsidered. Algebra is watered down and doesn't help kids with future work. We're just trying to meet a goal.

14. Students are hesitant to think – not sure what happens. Others saw terrific examples of constructivist education and high level, rigorous curriculum.

Some students want things spoonfed, but in a constructivist approach, students must participate. Referenced research skills.

Notes taken by KL

Strategic Planning Public Meeting

March 25, LaFollette High School

Question 3 – Strategic Priorities

Group 2

1. Have been sitting in with the curriculum – meeting after hours. Seems like they're going slow, at times, but very dynamic.
2. In #3 (staff) and #4 (curriculum) that are reflected in parameters – leadership / collaboration. "Leadership at all levels," collaboration, are not happening and is critical. There is no time for collaboration; it is critical. Barriers? (no money, no time, etc.)

Other professionals can attend area meetings outside of school/attend conferences, etc. Which is critical.
3. My position is unique (jail school). Kids come to school with no skills. No collaboration time. When district does bring us together, its their agenda, not what we're teaching. Jam packed, without time to integrate and apply. Teacher's aren't aware of resources available and no opportunity to share across schools or in them.
4. Mentoring program has fallen apart.
5. #1 – big focus, preparing students for kindergarten seems very focused and placed intentionally to get 4K – seems presumptuous and shallow.
 - ✓ Response: would be beneficial to help bridge the gap between what a student comes to school knowing and what the school expects.
 - ✓ So whose issue is that? Sending kids early... Daughter was third child, parents identified her as needing support, but it took several years to document.
 - ✓ Recommended change #1: "prepare every student for the next grade level"
6. Not sure how it applies at the high school, or the meaning of *achievement gap*. Believes other countries accept different learning rates more easily and we wouldn't be so worried that kindergarten children can't read. So see why the district wants this. There is a gap on day 1. There are different types of gaps.
7. Have to bring people along. Some countries allow kids to start kindergarten at age 7.
8. Nation-wide curriculum used in some countries – would help with kids who move. Could assume that kids had a good, consistent approach.
9. Teacher very excited about downloading books so students have "hear and read together".
10. #4 – curriculum
Rigorous learning opportunities should be emphasized. Need multiple ways to teach things because of the diversity of our learners.

These are connected –

Staff ability to get cutting edge information, bring back to the classroom and collaborate. Then, curriculum would be engaging.

There are resources in content areas. (That's the problem – they sit in their offices and don't do anything; don't get into/visit schools.)

Notes taken by KL

Strategic Planning Public Meeting

March 25, LaFollette High School

Question 3 – Strategic Priorities

Group 3

- Pr 1 Has the district evaluated the cause of the achievement gap? Why is there a gap?
One reason, vocabulary and background knowledge of lower socio-economic students – come in unprepared.
- Funding parent education birth-3. Can't do the district provide funding.
- Phraseology that assumes everyone is talking about the same thing. Achievement gap is one of them.
Assumes all things can be equal. 21st century skills is another one – what does that mean? Needs to be listed.
- Is culture reflected in the statement? Culture is reflected in achievement – role.
- Why aren't African Americans out in the....
- Culture of the school needs to change – culture groups have their ways of learning – *use the strengths of their culture to achieve academic success.*
- Priorities are too broad – not enough detail – too scary.
- See #1 and #2 – all else falls from these two.
- How is all this wonderful language applied in practice?
- Reading Recovery is a student – data driven program that is always on the chopping block.
- Lack of openness to teachers/school to the district and downtown staff. Squelches creativity, dialogue, sharing.
- Pr 2 Look at other models – like charter schools
- Pr 5 Are connected – people don't invest without accountability.
- Think outside the box on where the resources come from.
- What's a good investment? Parent involvement would be a good investment.
- Not parent involvement for raising dollars, but for furthering our educational goals.
- District should acknowledge that they can't do everything. Have more flexible leadership models.
Engage.
- Use our resources differently and revamp the way we teach so it better connects with kids.
- Why force kids to pass algebra? Not student centered. They fail, they get lost.

We should end up tracking kids who don't survive.

Losses that occur over summer – designed for one culture. Should be inclusive around more cultures.

Year around schools.

Pr 4 What does *revolutionize* mean?
What is comprehensive participatory education?

Pr 5 What we want for each of our children....
Children are different. We shouldn't try to have the same thing for all children.

Who are the stakeholders?
Anyone who has a stake in education – taxpayers.

Stakeholders – huge competing needs – and competing interests.

Equity – how can it be equitable and be accountable to each stakeholder?
Equity means getting what you need.

How can a teacher meet all needs – create equity?

Notes taken by BS

Strategic Planning Public Meeting

March 25, LaFollette High School

Question 3 – Strategic Priorities

Group 4

4-K in preparing for kindergarten – important.

What is the definition of equitable? It doesn't mean the same thing as equal. Fairly?

Pr 2 Like the word *collaborative* – for adults and as a model for kids.

Pr 2 Vigorously pursue resources – like this – should be a high priority. Need to pursue all avenues for resources.

People don't understand budget shortfalls. Hitting a downward spiral.

Pr 1 Despiriting – represents the biggest challenges we face. Student-center is huge.

Pr 4 Revolutionize the educational model is a tall order, but so important. Change.

Pr 4 Authentic assessment – move beyond WKCE measurement, cost of assessment – finally!

Pr 5 Diversity as a strength – really like it – it is not a negativity. (Likes the bullets, they provide definition.) Engaging the community is a tall order. Difficult, but so important.

Loves the community engagement. Should there be a 2 sub-priority of its own?

Engaging parents/people would move things forward. Find meaningful opportunities – welcomed. Time not wasted.

Be clear about what the limits of involvement are so people are not hurt.

How do we get the input of non-English speaking families? Its dollars and effort – seeking the engagement, connections/value.

Educating people – how do you get people to listen. Helping people understand what it takes to create.

Education – high level – is a necessity to succeed.

Recognize that each child is bright. There are other ways to be bright. Musicians, artists, kids who can't sit well in class. Revolutionize the educational model.

What does research-based or best practice mean?

Different things for different kids – there is just one best practice.

Notes taken by BS

Strategic Planning Public Meeting

March 25, LaFollette High School

Question 3 – Strategic Priorities

Groups 4 and 5 – Comments Common to Both Groups

Education before kindergarten.

Definition of certain words like equitable – phraseology.

Community partnerships – huge.

Include more culture language.

Words mean different things to different people.

Collaboration

Communication between schools and district.

Root causes of achievement gap.

Notes taken by BS

Strategic Planning Public Meeting

April 14, 2009 – Lincoln Elementary School

Question 1 – Mission

Groups 1 and 2

Group 1.....

Action verbs are great.

Missing is something about Emotional Intelligence. Teach students skills to cope with stress, anxiety, time management, dealing with emotional stress.

Missing is something about careers, self sufficient skills to live, things like personal finance, becoming a productive citizen.

“by embracing the full richness and diversity of our community” The other ‘by’s” are about students. This is about the School District. May need to clarify this.

Group 2.....

The mission should read...”Our mission is to cultivate the potential in every student to thrive as a global citizen.” It needs to be short and to the point. The rest of the mission statement is about how you do that.

Academic Excellence should be changed to read Highest Potential. Parents of special needs students do not see their child in the term academic excellence.

Happy to see civic engagement included.

Notes taken by SH

Strategic Planning Public Meeting

April 14, 2009 – Lincoln Elementary School

Question 2 – Beliefs and Parameters

Group 1

1. Want to see commitment to work with students with disabilities who can't be supported in schools (#4)
2. Barriers exist and schools may not have resources but agencies might have them (#8).
3. Commitment to working with community isn't strong enough.
4. Parameters and beliefs do not strongly enough state a commitment to working with or involving families. Not brought to the table or, if there, talked at. (What language would signal commitment? – saying parents/guardians. Families isn't strong enough – leaves out single parent.
5. Needs to be more outreach to parents to seek input. Not a lot of trust given right away. Parents feel they are doing their part by getting students to school and dressed, told to listen to the teacher. May be related to majority culture not understanding how to reach out and encourage people of other cultures. Parents are a huge resource and need to be included.
6. Sounds really nice – like that words are chosen carefully (speaker volunteers in third grade classroom). Three students needed additional resources to the extent that it took away from others. Teacher needed support.

Agrees with the beliefs, but wonders how it can all be done.

7. Parents are partners rather than one authority at home and another authority at school. If staff are “officials”, reduces the role of parents and decreases ability to partner.
8. (Back to 1st point – linked 3-4 beliefs)
Expectations are high but need support to ensure that students have the necessary supports to achieve at the level of expectations. When structure of district doesn't/can't provide supports, need to partner with community agencies to provide. Currently resources provided by community can't be accepted as part of resource for IEP goal.
9. Parents rely on staff to help them understand what a student needs to learn. When they lean on that expertise, they're not treated as partners.
10. What is meant by culturally relevant? How will that be achieved? Also 21st Century skills.

“Inclusive community which embraces underrepresented members of our community.” Like inclusive community, but not talking about folks who are already involved. Suggest underrepresented members.

Notes taken by KL

Strategic Planning Public Meeting

April 14, 2009 – Lincoln Elementary School

Question 2 – Beliefs and Parameters

Group 2

1. How are parameters enforced? How will we know if we're acting in the way the parameters are implemented?
2. Parameters 11-12: Are these contradictory? If all research-based, then practices come from big research projects and may not apply well? Re-engineering – the change in the system may require innovation. How will this guide decisions?
3. Beliefs vs. reason, conclusions. Would they be better labeled as guiding principles?
4. Beliefs 2, 5, 8 are saying similar things (3 non-consensus items). Could be linked to “student centered” principle/belief.
5. #8 Use of the term is or maybe predicated – if the intent is to say it shouldn't, that's one thing given the reality of the fact that it is the current.

Issues in #8 are interrelated with achievement and by putting it out there like this suggests it is. Maybe accepting the influence but addressing the impact. Dangerous to ignore either. Re-word this.

6. Could combine with #2 – add regardless of.....
7. Really important to combine 2 & 5. Really trying to say they are factors and they shouldn't be. The impact must be addressed. The term “regardless” suggests that racial differences, etc. are easily dismissed.

Must recognize effects and remove/refuse to accept the disparity.

Suggest – not a determinant of.

8. Parameters – add something about cultural competency as a stand alone for how we will behave. Also in parameter 2, “all individuals are treated with culturally competent dignity and respect.”
9. Will the specifics of the strategic plan come back to the community in some form?

Notes taken by KL

Strategic Planning Public Meeting

April 14, 2009 – Lincoln Elementary School

Question 3 – Strategic Priorities

Group 1

General comments

Discipline needs to be included because discipline has a greater impact on students of color

How do we treat students? Number of suspensions and expulsions.

How should we be more culturally responsive?

Restorative Justice policies and procedures

Discipline could go with SP #2 or #5

SP #1 - Student

Should also have an emphasis on staff training.

"Supports" should be more explicit in that it should mean students learn how to learn (such as, how to study, how to take notes, etc.) -- the strategies of learning

"Prepared graduates" should include a wide diversity of preparations, not just for 4-year colleges.

"Prepared" so that students can go on to a wider array of careers or post-secondary education than they are now.

"Supports" should be student-centered also. It should read "...student-centered programs and student-centered supports..."

Does this priority capture all students, including those students doing very well? It doesn't. Priority should include at end of first sentence "...graduates and achieve academic excellence."

1st sentence is backward. It should have "highest potential" first BEFORE words about eliminating the achievement gap. This way it would tie better to the Mission Statement.

The gap is identified only for the student. We need to recognize that there are systemic pressures in the organization that lead to the gap. Responsibility for closing the gap should be taken away from only the student and given to the whole organization.

Related point: the achievement gap should be addressed in other priorities than just "Student".

SP #2 - Resource/Capacity

What kind of "data" are we talking about here? Not only the academic data. The data should also capture the school climate for students, the "emotional connection", not only what's in the student's head, but also what's in his/her heart. Is school comfortable for students?

The "process" should also be "district-wide". It should be "...through a district-wide collaborative ..."

SP #4 - Curriculum

"Student-centered" should be in the first sentence. As in "...participatory student-centered educational experience..."

SP #5 - Organization/Systems

Successful programs (models) need to be replicated and duplicated from school to school, or district-wide. This replication should be the essence of this SP.

Notes taken by KS

Strategic Planning Public Meeting

April 14, 2009 – Lincoln Elementary School

Question 3 – Strategic Priorities

Group 2

General comments

Students' emotional intelligence is not represented at all in these SPs. Students need to learn strategies to deal with life's challenges and with stress. The curriculum needs to have strategies so that a student listens to and takes care of him/herself. This could be in SP #1 Student or #4 Curriculum.

Social and emotional aspects of the students need to be represented here - things such as peer pressure and bullying.

Is there a commitment to graduating all students? (Response from a 2nd participant:) Yes, via the many alternative high schools.

What is the district's commitment to do all of this? (just a question)

SP #1 - Student

Preparing every student for 9th grade or high school should be made just as clear as "prepare every student for kindergarten". The middle school to high school transition is very challenging.

SP #3 - Staff

This priority should have that the district needs to ensure that staff members have cultural competency. Cultural competency can be added at end of current SP #3.

SP #5 - Organization/Systems

This priority needs to reflect a commitment by the district to work with community organizations to raise graduation rates for all students, especially students who are not able to earn academic credit, so that a graduation is attainable for them. This should be one of the bullet points.

A bullet should be added about engaging parents in their child's education, especially under-represented groups of parents. There needs to be partnerships between home and school. Parents have to do more than just getting their children physically ready for school every day. It's also important to have parent liaisons as part of these partnerships.

Related point: there needs to be an acknowledgement that families can be very different in their structure (guardians, caretakers, etc.) What's needed is an all-encompassing definition of families.

Notes taken by KS

Strategic Planning Public Meeting

April 16, 2009 – Memorial High School

Question 1 – Mission

Group 1 (the only group that night)

End the mission statement after “citizen” This makes it shorter and clearer easier to remember. Mission statements should be short and concise.

What does global mean?

I liked the superintendents’ statement about standards of the heart. There should be a more specific reference to teaching to the whole person.

Change “love of learning” to life long learning”

“Safe” is a very important concept. Safe should be in the mission statement.

The district must get more input from families of color. Have these sessions in community centers such as the Northport Community center. They should not be held in schools.

Have engagement sessions for students at the high schools.

Notes taken by SH

Strategic Planning Public Meeting

April 16, 2009 – Memorial High School

Question 2 – Beliefs and Parameters

Group 1

1. What was discussed about #6. One #/standardized test #.
2. #9 culturally relevant – What does it mean? Saw presentation by Dane County United – was “under impressed”. Heard same from other parents. My child is making a drum in class when he should be learning to read.
3. See when 8 & 9 are combined. How to connect with all students, especially those students who we haven’t served well in the past.
4. Any discussion about parents – referenced beliefs and parameters.
5. These are subtle – have to read them carefully and think about them.
6. Pleased with #6 and #8 – after the district’s decisions about fine arts allocation, which was totally not transparent and needs to be.
7. Asked follow up question to culturally relevant question (#2 above). Spoke about needing to connect activity to standards/benchmarks. Music teacher gave example of singing culturally based songs, etc.
8. How long collecting data?
9. Beliefs – children have developmental benchmarks that are part of normal development. We lose AA boys between third-fourth grades. I believe we need to focus on developmental periods that are critical. Pre-K and fourth are examples. This should be added.
10. Need stronger emphasis on primary grades. Ramp up support at pre-K – 2.
11. Parameters 9 and alternative – Alternative is more active and original is passive. Use the active.
12. “If its not in the strategic plan, it won’t happen” per BOE members. Asked about support for fine arts.
13. #3 parameters is really important. At the high school level, its one of the things we haven’t achieved yet – little consistency from teacher to teacher in terms of grading and expectations. Comment – expectations have to be high and clear.
14. #2 parameter piggybacks on that.
15. #9 We have horizontal cultures – art, Asian, etc. – but they are also layered on top of each other – farm families, poor families, etc. Some of these families that aren’t ready for school experiences and need special programming – goes beyond cultural relevance in the traditional sense. Need to re-conceptualize education for these students. We have 14-year-old students leading their families.

Does that require/would you recommend additional language (ESL) resources? Not language, but language is a barrier.

Strategic Planning Public Meeting

April 16, 2009 – Memorial High School

Question 2 – Beliefs and Parameters

Group 2 (includes many staff members)

1. Like #1 belief – good affirmation of public education.
2. Relates back to mission statement – that we're trying to create engaged citizens.
3. Parameters #1 – each individual's potential. Not all potentials are good – may have potential to be a serial killer. Would like to see more moralized, direct language. I like #8 belief, just say it should not be predicated, but should be direct.
4. We're primarily an academic institution. When I think about education, that's what I think about. The verb missing is "maximize". When kids are ceiling out, want to maximize. When the standards are so low, doesn't help to maximize anything.
5. We encourage sports to the detriment of intellectual. Add intellectual to potential.
6. A school that doesn't recognize its about academics has lost its way. I understand you need to provide enjoyable as well as challenging experiences. So I don't want only academic/intellectual – has to be more.
7. District overall has a path students are supposed to follow. If that doesn't work, we have few options. Where are the options to choose or be guided to? Having only one direction for our population is pushing square pegs into round holes. Needs to be a belief that explains/expresses the idea of resources used to create multiple paths. Academic rigor for some students and other options for students that high level academics don't work for.
8. My question is where is this all going next? Its fine to put all this down, but how are you going to bring everyone into the fold and to put plan into action?
9. What does individual by individual mean? How can I do this with 140+ students. Impossible to do this in a quality way.
10. If you really take this seriously (also check "safe-welcoming – applies), need to totally revolutionize the model. Its not realistic – most kids know that you don't know them. Say we'd like to achieve these, but not that we will. Need to be more modest.
11. Needs to reflect parents – who are these beliefs and parameters for – us? or our students and families? If my families read this, it wouldn't be relevant to most and they wouldn't see how it reflects or applies to their children – or understand it. Need to get feedback via outreach to parents.
12. Individual by individual – maybe the relationship doesn't have to be with you, but with someone in the school. If one kid knows you, it may still be meaningful if others have connections with others.

Comment – this won't happen by "happenstance" – but with careful planning and structure. SLCs don't provide any better connections for kids.

Notes taken by KL

Strategic Planning Public Meeting

April 16, 2009 – Memorial High School

Question 3 – Strategic Priorities

Group 1

General comments

The role of the principal is not expressed explicitly. The principal should be the instructional leader and not a manager of operations. The role of the principal should be revolutionized.

What does "authentic assessment" mean? (An extended conversation about definitions took place.)

The language is too politically correct. Thus, the language is empty. For example, "revolutionize educational models" – there are so many ways to go. What do you mean?

These Strategic Priorities are so broad. And we don't know the definitions.

Does not see and would like to see the conversations that took place about the definition of some of these words/terms. Also, where are we going next?

#1 Student

How this is expressed is awkward. We won't eliminate the achievement gap. It's a set up for failure.

The achievement gap is not the most urgent matter. The most urgent matter is getting low income students to better achieve.

It's not okay to talk about closing the achievement gap. All students need to move up and progress. Not all students can achieve the same because student abilities vary quite a bit.

The achievement gap is really between U.S. students and other countries.

#4 Curriculum

"Revolutionize" is scary.

This seems to say that as long as the curriculum is "culturally relevant" then we'll be okay. That's wrong. The use of the best teaching skills is more important than cultural relevance. Too much emphasis on cultural diversity when it should be on achievement and using best practices.

However, students do need to understand cultures that aren't their own.

One thing does come at the cost of another. There will be trade-offs. For example, we can't devote all our resources to low-income students as maybe we should. Operationalization really does matter.

"Authentic assessment" would be great to be doing but there's a trade-off there. To do authentic assessments would cut into planning time. It takes time and rigor to do authentic assessments and I have 142 students. To do authentic assessments on all my students is an unbelievable task. How authentic can I be? Authentic assessment is very difficult at the high school level because we have so many students. It's a huge, huge task.

#5 Organization/Systems

I question how safe and welcoming our learning environments are.

Notes taken by KS

Strategic Planning Public Meeting

April 16, 2009 – Memorial High School

Question 3 – Strategic Priorities

Group 2

(All but one person are MMSD staff members)

#1 Student

"create meaningful student-adult relationships" I hope that current practices (class-and-a-half specials) change.

#3 Staff

If "formal system" means merit pay system, I'm on the fence about that.

Reply: National Board Certification is like a merit system.

The focus for "a formal system" should be on instructional practice.

This SP should have across-the-district and K-12 collaboration among staff in single subject areas, such as music. Physical education used to have this but it was lost due to budget cuts. Reply: some of this is done at some elementary schools.

#4 Curriculum

"Revolutionize the educational model" scares me.

The revolution should be about integrated curriculums across disciplines; these have proven to be successful.

Physical education enhances academic work.

If we're going to revolutionize, let's not keep curriculums pigeon-holed, let's keep on working together toward integrated curriculums, or it can be called "thematic education"

To do integrated curriculums, we will also need to revolutionize how we use our financial resources and how we allot staff time.

As we revolutionize, we have to bring the successes along, i.e. hold on to the things that work.

Revolutionize is scary because changes need to be only data-driven

Technology education (Industrial Arts) shouldn't have been cut. It helps middle school students learn math.

This should read "... authentic assessment and authentic educational student experiences are paired..."

Fine arts education K-12 should be important to the school district – for the cultural growth of the child.

This needs to be more obvious about the importance of learning about how students learn.

There needs to be a K-3 emphasis on the tools for students to have social skills and to be community-

involved. This is important because behavior of students can take a huge downturn when they move from 3rd grade to 4th grade.

Notes taken by KS

Strategic Planning Public Meeting

April 21, 2009 – Sheraton

Question 1 – Mission

Group 1

1. Wording – there's nothing about business, future jobs, etc. – preparing them for future employment. One of the jobs is to train the future workforce. The future is missing.
2. See lots of action words, but still too general and “pie in the sky”. Needs to be more concrete. Should be something you can measure your progress by. This is vision.
3. Liked many components, especially civic component. But all these actions and academic excellence is at the end. Don't mean everyone has to get straight A's, but at the end of the day, school district has to educate. Should start with this. The fundamental seems like an afterthought.
4. Academic excellence – that suggests we're teaching the A students. What about C students?
5. Use educating for the future.
6. The mission should express how education is being expressed/understood in a new way.
7. In fairness to the mission, it says to.... to..... by..... to make connections. Kind of long.
8. Tying into the concerns of the business community – not a reference to local community and local concerns – global.
9. Need an emphasis on student responsibility.
10. And also empowerment in their own education. Goes along with responsibility so they would go to counselor or teacher to share problems/needs.
11. This needs to be an evolving plan – will change dependent on what's happening. This is a bit stagnant.
12. Civic engagement suggests responsibility but sustainability, ecological. If we aren't building a sustainable school district, we're in trouble.
13. We can talk about these broad issues, but if you are a parent, you will do whatever you need to do for your child.
14. We're seeing this in the outflow of students and families.
15. We moved here partially because of the schools. People in Madison have myopic vision. It's a great school district and we need to share it.
16. One of the things Madison has going for it is its size – we can do a lot of things.
17. Can't ask parents to take a risk with their children. A fifty-fifty chance that your child will come out OK isn't good enough. We need to be great; a model for other school districts locally, nationally, globally. This is vision.
18. Not cutting edge because then you bleed.

19. Business community will support schools, especially if they are in the mission statement.
20. It says "community." I read that to mean ethnic community. But there are communities of learning. When you craft this mission statement, have to be sure about what you mean – to most. This use of the word doesn't mean the arts, etc.
21. Needs to stand alone. Won't have Dan guiding. Mission statements must be put/read in context.
22. Doesn't have anything anywhere that the district will look to the business community as an active partner. Maybe use "communities."
23. Need both a vision and a mission with an annotated section that provides explanation.
24. Community, diversity are code words for race and ethnicity so you need to use other words.
25. Does this mission statement speak to the issues that cause people to seek out other school districts. What we say at the beginning and at the end are the most important. The punch is at the beginning and the end because that's what we remember.
26. This is a good vision statement. I few send the army on a mission, we know exactly what they are expected to achieve, what they will do. Need to be more concrete and generate a vision.
27. *Love of learning* – like the generative nature, in other words – love of learning means that learning will generate interest in more learning. But need to convey that it is educational learning (not learning how to rob banks, etc.) that makes the learning special and important.
28. Needs to be a connection between students and teachers. Mission speaks to students, but not teachers.
29. When I think of love of learning – I think of responsibility for learning, not just to pass a test, but for fulfillment, for interacting with the world, for gaining information and skills. Learning is a form of involvement.
30. It also is learning how to learn.
31. Education is progressive, and a process. (Group liked these words.)
32. Capitalizing on technology and access to internet – need to have skills to get and use information.

Notes taken by KL

Strategic Planning Public Meeting

April 21, 2009 – Sheraton

Question 1 – Mission

Group 2

Like the action words - thrive, love of learning, inspiring

Mission should be short, easy to remember and repeat, find a simpler way to say it.

Is there also a Vision statement that will help clarify?

Global Citizen...what is meant by that?

Citizen of United States first then global citizen...explain what is meant by global citizen.

I want to make sure I am getting the best education for my tax dollar.

District needs to make sure the broad middle range student, B or C student, is reflected in the mission statement.

Civic engagement is huge...hard to get a volunteer base.

Should civic responsibility be the responsibility of the schools? Concern about perspective that is being used in dealing with the political part of civic engagement.

Bring the community more into the schools allowing for greater civic engagement opportunities.

Schools teach about the importance of civic engagement, not a specific perspective.

Achieve Academic Excellence is core to the school district. Hard to define. Make sure we set our standards high enough. The mission statement does show cases of academic excellence.

Notes taken by SH

Strategic Planning Public Meeting

April 21, 2009 – Sheraton

Question 1 – Mission

Group 3

What is meant by academic excellence? Not all students going to college. What about students going to jobs and the work force?

Does this support students going to technical colleges?

Like the term, supporting every student...district needs to make sure all students have the opportunity. It is up to the student to take the opportunity.

Replace Academic Excellence with:

- Ensure all students reach their potential
- Prepared for life after high school

Replace Inspire Love of Learning with:

- Life long learning
- Give Tools for Life Long Learning

5 years from now, will this still be relevant?

Where is there support for the basic core of teaching reading, writing?

Missing is language around successfully preparing students for the work world.

Diversity language is good. Worried about some companies not sending recruiters to UW because there is not enough diversity. Diversity is important.

Need more language around community, families and business. Too much academic language focusing on schools and staff.

Could there be multiple mission statements?

Notes taken by SH

Strategic Planning Public Meeting

April 21, 2009 – Sheraton

Question 2 – Beliefs and Parameters

Group 1

(Belief #7) Questions regarding what do we mean by “resources?” Families can be a resource, culture can be a resource. Resources are different from school-to-school. Too often we think of resources monetarily, but people are a big part of a school’s resources.

(Belief #3) Should be changed to “...the right (**and responsibility**) to contribute.” There needs to be language about parental responsibility and the need for more parental involvement. Children have a right to a good education even if their parents aren’t responsible. Taxpayers are responsible for payment, parents responsible for children and the need for involvement in their child’s school life. There needs to be mention of the “resources” of the community (e.g. given that an individual had personal knowledge of Native American art, but wasn’t allowed to teach a class because wasn’t “certified.” – we lose community resources this way).

(Belief #8) Shouldn’t define something with a negative (“is not predicated on race...”). Another offered, “...academic achievement (**should not**) be predicated on”

Parameters – general note: there is no mention of taxpayers’ ability to pay for programs. Yes, there are wonderful things we would like to do, but lack the resources

(Parameters #4, #8) Group talked about these two parameters in relation to district budget. Need to make the budget more understandable to the average citizen. You can be transparent, but if no one understands what you’re doing the transparency is irrelevant.

(Parameter #13) It wasn’t clear to the group if this meant “individual” or “group.” People at the table believed strongly that individual goals, responsibilities were important. The group is important, but individual goals imp., too.

Notes taken by JQ

Strategic Planning Public Meeting

April 21, 2009 – Sheraton

Question 2 – Beliefs and Parameters

Group 2

(Belief #8) Just saying this doesn't make it so. For too many in the schools and our community, a student of color has low expectations. If we set the bar low, that's as high as an individual will reach. Schools don't exist in a vacuum...teachers are part of the community and embrace many of the community's attitudes. (Individual told story about how child of color whose father was a lawyer was told where the "free coats" were, assuming she was poor.)

There was some sentiment that the beliefs were somewhat vague/ambiguous and some suggested the need for more concrete language.

Words that are missing in the belief statements: college, university, career, job, skills, sustainable.

Missing belief: teaching kids how to make independent judgments, be more self-guided and ultimately be responsible for *their* education.

Parameters

(#5) this needs to say "business." The word community is too vague for business folks to feel that this is talking to them.

(#9) AND responsibility "is expected throughout..." There needs to be a more "personal" aspect to #9. Accountability should be expected...you can't carve out select groups that can't meet standard and say, 'well, this doesn't apply to them.'

(#10) What does this mean??!!

(#11) You can do/prove anything with "research." What does this really mean?

Notes taken by JQ

Strategic Planning Public Meeting

April 21, 2009 – Sheraton

Question 2 – Beliefs and Parameters

Group 3

1. Very well done. Some that have not received consensus are very important. Document isn't as strong without that.
2. #5 are the most difficult to achieve.
3. It is important to speak with everyone – don't single out any groups.
4. The word "creativity" does not appear until the end of page 3. Should be more centrally focused. Relates to problem solving. 21st Century skills focus is creativity. Creativity is extremely broad-based.
5. Creativity can be an adjunct to the basics – reading, writing, etc. Many times we use crutches for learning (calculators, etc.). The basics need to drive the criteria (such as creativity). When you focus on creativity, you sometimes ignore the basic requirements.
6. Need to entertain more accountability within the teacher ranks. Recognize good teachers and hold on.
7. #12 – it is helpful to inhibit creativity.
8. #1 priority should be to teach. Adaptation is giving the kids the right tools.
9. Kids coming out of school sometimes have more technology expertise than business expertise. Discussion about technology in school vs. at home. Moving skills forward with difficult backgrounds.

Notes taken by EK

Strategic Planning Public Meeting

April 21, 2009 – Sheraton

Question 2 – Beliefs and Parameters

Group 4

1. #8 English Language Learners may be an issue – perhaps reword.
2. Suggest change to #8 – We will not allow should be predicated. All kids can learn and will learn, and we will make sure of that. Make the connection (I believe and therefore...). Too little of making these connections. Maybe just good ideas that are too easy to be put in a drawer.
3. #1 – what is excellent? (ambiguous) Find something more specific (nationally competitive). You can then measure yourself against that.
4. Beliefs are not very empowering. #4 only speaks to this. It doesn't get to what we can actually do. We can affect this in this school district.
5. Missing – Maybe another belief that speaks to “we can do these things”
6. Beliefs – missing the word “equality”.
7. New – Talk about the student's responsibility, and the teacher's, and the parents'. A belief around who/what – is accountable? All kids need to come to school ready to learn. Make sure they are productive members of society when they leave the MMSD.
8. Parameters – How do you decide what the best practices are?
9. Look at Kipp to see what they are doing with lower achieving schools.

Notes taken by EK

Strategic Planning Public Meeting

April 21, 2009 – Sheraton

Question 3 – Strategic Priorities

Group 1

Things that need more focus:

1. #5 - Facilities: Is this represented in #5?
2. #5 – We need real opportunity for schools to be lighthouse schools so they are accessible 24/7 for the kids and community.
3. #5 – Building meaningful partnerships means being accessible.
4. #3 – It is going to take time, so we need to have professional development to work with our current workforce to be competent.
5. Structure of the school day needs to be more visible, not just having the calendar on the web site. Can this be addressed in #5?
6. #3 – Staff accountability is needed. Can we reward the best teachers and do something with those who are not performing? The district does not do this well. They drag the issue out. Schools need to be more transparent in this process. The evaluation process needs to be more rigorous.
7. Is mentorship out there? The students need at least five adults they can connect with.
8. Parent involvement needs to be increased in a more meaningful way. Let's share the strategies of those schools that are successful.
9. How can we foster business relationships to work with our students? We need to find organizations that will support schools. What percentage of adults have children in school? How can we get those adults involved? Challenge the baby boomers with meaning and purpose in retirement for folks.
10. Engaging the community also brings in people of color. This supports the teachers in being more flexible in working with students because they get more support.
11. Civic engagement needs to be developed in students. It's happening at the college level.
12. Preparing students for real world challenges. There are many areas lacking in this area.
13. How do we prepare students for the next step in life? Whether it is work force or college or tech? Do we have a program for everyone? More of the "partnership" in the schools. This is what needs to happen.
14. Do we give credit to the partners in the community publicly? Give the community a sense of pride and ownership. Give them the recognition they need when they get involved in schools.
15. Engagement – MMSD is in a community where people can get more involved. We as businesses do not know how to get involved. Please tell us how to get involved. Use the newspaper; use the media to give us information on how to get involved. We will participate. The Foundation needs to focus more.

Positive Attributes

1. Mirror community with representatives (staff of color).
2. #1 – Student and adult relationships are necessary and good to see this. Kids have trouble learning without this component.
3. #4 – Assessment is excellent. Does the staff use the information once they know the results? What are those assessments and how can we communicate this to the public?
4. The mission statement is all inclusive. What systems are going to be put in place to make this come alive?

Notes taken by SA

Strategic Planning Public Meeting

April 21, 2009 – Sheraton

Question 3 – Strategic Priorities

Group 2

Positive Attributes:

No information from this group.

Areas to be worked on:

1. Observation: Staff needs to be a priority, and that seems to be missing in the rest of the document (beliefs – values).
2. What does revolutionize mean?
3. Cultural relevance needs to be more defined.
4. What are the outcomes for each of the goals? Are they defined and measurable?
5. Every student needs to have a place to go to when they need to go. Do we have staff who support this need?
6. Technology – Are all of our teachers trained for the future? How do we address this?
7. Is there more interactive learning to engage students in technology learning? Connect with different classrooms across the country or world. We need to teach to the next generation that multitasks. Teachers need to stop the traditional way of teaching. How do we compete with technology?
8. How do we create partnerships? There are some barriers to this. The district does not have the resources to put in place what they need (offering a wider range of courses).
9. Is there collaboration with the university? Be more transparent? Is there still a community partnership between the schools and community?
10. Teach cultural competence and sensitivity with the current work force. Embrace all ethnicity.
11. Emphasis on the national culture. Business tends to not care about color, but competence. There needs to be recognition to succeed in the reality in which they live. Emphasize literacy in the language in which they speak.
12. Elaborate more on the SAFETY of students.
13. Was there discussion on students being entrepreneurs? My daughter has been trained in how to be a good employee, not how to be a good business owner.

Notes taken by SA

Strategic Planning Public Meeting

April 21, 2009 – Sheraton

Question 3 – Strategic Priorities

Group 3

General comments

All Strategic Priorities are worded in a more ambiguous way.

"College, university, career, job" – all words not seen here and they should be included. These SPs don't address more of these career oriented phrases. Not mentioned in a tangible way.

"Citizens of the world" (sic) - not sure what it means.

U.S. in the last quarter century has lost the edge in technology and education. What are we going to do?

There are a lot of terms in here that have resonance in some groups but not in others.

"Cultural" – not sure what terms are meant to evoke. Specific methods to get there are not here. Gaseous phraseology is endemic in strategic planning. The core questions are: how do we get our kids to _____ (read, write, etc?)

There's no mention of competitiveness and there should be. Are our kids going to be competitive with other students in the U.S. and the world? I am concerned that we are underdeveloped in terms of sending kids to the best schools. We have the potential to have a strong student base here and I don't see that well-developed. Competitiveness is missing.

There should be something in here that speaks to engaging parents, or re-engaging parents.

The 5 SPs could be presented in an order top to bottom by importance.

Some things fit in but are not specifically stated, e.g. technology. These SPs don't have the specificity that we need.

SP #1 Student

Do we have the metrics to assess the gaps that come forth during each student's K-12 period? We need to continually assess these areas and develop new strategies to address the gaps.

First sentence sets the bar lower. Something about the language says that we are not trying to lift all. The sentence should be flipped. "Gap" being first categorizes that priority.

SP #2 Staff

Personal experience - I didn't sense enthusiasm for teaching among middle school staff – saw it among elementary staff. This needs to be addressed.

A study between student results with top quartile teachers and bottom quartile teachers – differences are stunning. There's an achievement gap among faculty. One ought to demand at least a level of achievement among staff as well as among students.

The quality of the teacher has strong effect on student success. Roots of the achievement gap should be "What are we not providing in the classroom, why is this student not learning what he should learn? Focus on what needs to be changed instructionally to address the actual causes of the gap. Teachers need to figure out how to teach every kid.

How children are taught is not included here. My kids didn't learn in the traditional manner. It comes down to learning styles – got to find different ways to teach kids because some kids don't connect to the one learning style.

SP #4 Curriculum

Interesting to me that there are successful learning models out there, and it's good that we are going to do *different teaching styles*. "Revolution" should come from the stakeholders – esp. the parents. Allow for the development of choices within schools, which we do not have now. Different ways for different kids so they can learn in different ways. The choice piece for the school district is to try to develop school choices that are different from one another; try to improve even if some of the schools fail at first.

SP #5 Organization/Systems

Kids learn in different settings - this needs to be built into the SPs.

Continuous improvement cycle needs to be part of the educational processes.

All parents need to feel engaged in order to help students succeed. There needs to be an open communication between schools and homes. It's important that families are involved.

Notes taken by KS

Strategic Planning Public Meeting

April 21, 2009 – Sheraton

Question 3 – Strategic Priorities

Group 4

General comments

A preliminary comment to the SPs needs to show that this is about the future, and that this is an ongoing process. Words – “sustainability” needs to be included in resources.

Also the business community needs to be represented. There needs to be an engagement with the business community. The school system ought to be reaching out more to the business community. Ought to actively engage the business community more.

Business community is a resource. It should be included here.

If people don't see themselves in these documents they're going to feel left out. Take advantage of the community we live in.

People here do reach out and think about the whole community. Take advantage of that.

If you engage those business leaders, they will feel a part of the schools. They will feel they have a stake in the community.

We're focusing on so much that we're losing our focus. The basics need to be focused on. Education has gone down because we've lost sight of the basics.

What are we teaching that we don't need to teach any more? Are we preparing students for the technology of tomorrow?

We should be doing future think. All education needs to prepare kids for what's coming FAR down the road.

There's nothing in here that says the district should bring parents in and connect to families.

Are the foundational concepts being taught? Slide rule and abacus should be used. Calculators should be banned from schools. Brain needs to be trained to think logically and use deductive reasoning.

Build to students' strengths should be in here. I'd love to see it in here. Find students' strengths and build to them. Instead of getting them to do things they will never do in life.

Community should be a 6th SP. It's important enough to be its own SP.

There needs to be an educational component in here about the district - call it marketing. Educate the community about the schools. There are a lot of misconceptions out there about the schools. Some kind of outreach needs to be done to all stakeholders.

Madison Schools have to show that if you have the affluence, it's the place to go.

Look at all the citizens in the community. The entire community should feel it has a stake in the schools. The entire community is a resource. And draw them into the process to see that they have a role.

Where does it have that we are focusing on preparing kids for all the careers? It's not represented here.

SP #1 Student

It has “prepare for kindergarten” but doesn't have “prepare for post-high school. Pre-kindergarten is important. It's consistently missed. Pre age 5 is an important time for learning.

SP #5 Organization/Systems

3rd bullet – should have a creative learning environment. We can do more if our schools are reflective of the dynamism of the community.

It's been difficult to build sustainable partnerships with the school district. My organization can build partnerships with schools and teachers. We would like to work more with the district. (He works for Madison Children's Museum). The district needs to support partnerships with the business community.

Notes taken by KS