

## TPS Report to the Community: Mission, Vision, Goals & Guardrails

As you know, we are at the sunset of Destination Excellence, the 2015-2020 strategic plan for Tulsa Public Schools and now are well underway in the process of building and improving upon that foundation through development of our next strategic plan.

With the help of [community input](#) through listening sessions and surveys conducted earlier this year, the TPS Board of Education has identified the long term vision and mission to be our North Star along with the goals - the next steps we'll pursue over the coming 5 years toward achieving that vision - and guardrails - the non-negotiable values to be protected along the way.

### Mission, Vision, Goals, and Guardrails

The Tulsa Public Schools Board of Education is committed to changing the course for students in our system who continue to struggle academically and underperform compared to their peers here and in other cities and to ensure the success of our entire community of learners as they grow and prepare for life after graduation.

The Board's commitment to this change will also involve a change in the way we do business so that we may focus intently on improving student outcomes.

### How do we make this commitment to change real?

As a Governing Team, we have been working from a growing body of research that demonstrates bedrock principles that serve as the foundation of school board of school board leadership. The key characteristics embodied by successful school boards and used in a visionary manner include:

- **Setting Priorities.** Effective school boards commit to a vision of high expectations for student achievement and quality instruction and define clear goals toward that vision. They make sure these goals remain their district's top priorities and that nothing detracts from them.
  - The goals we've selected are the clear first destination we want to reach in the next 5 years on the longer journey toward our long term vision. We are telling Dr. Gist, and our community, exactly where we want to go and by when so that she and her team can build the strategic plan to get there. Dr. Gist and the District are driving the bus – they select the strategies, so long as they're helping our students reach the goals.

- While the goals are critical, how we get to them matters. For this reason, the Board has created clear “guardrails” that communicate the roadmap boundaries for Dr. Gist and the District. They are our nonnegotiable conditions and they represent our community’s values.
- **Tracking Progress.** Effective boards are accountability driven, spending less time on operational issues and more time focused on policies that improve student achievement. They are data savvy and embrace and monitor data, even when the information is negative, and use it to drive continuous improvement.
  - Our board is committed to narrowing its focus around our Goals & Guardrails. We will dedicate a significant amount of our time reviewing data to monitor them and to hold the district and ourselves accountable for making progress toward their achievement.
- **Communicating Results.** Effective school boards have a collaborative relationship with staff and the community and establish strong communications structures. Those efforts inform and engage both internal and external stakeholders in setting and achieving district goals.
  - Your input is what started us on this path. The vision, mission, goals, and guardrails are ours together and we not only invite but expect the community to be involved in ensuring their achievement.
  - Expect to see changes in the structure of our board meetings to maintain the focus to which we’ve committed ourselves as well as opportunities for community workshops to learn more about our Goals and Guardrails and the governance structure we’re using to drive improvement.

Our focus on student success through our Goals & Guardrails will guide our work going forward. While you will be seeing a real change in the way the Board conducts its work, we will still continue to conduct the regular business of the District as we are required to do and will continue to listen to the public and prioritize public access to the Board. However, as we make decisions, set policies, and hold the District accountable, we will focus everything through the lens of student outcomes, and specifically our Goals & Guardrails.

For further information about the process and what this means, we’ve developed this [FAQ document](#).

This shift can drive real change in our schools, but only with your partnership. To that end, we invite your feedback to help our governing team implement this important shift of focus by filling out [this form](#).

On behalf of the TPS Board of Education, Superintendent Gist, and the entire TPS family, thank you for your continued support of our students.