

Preston Public Schools

Strategic Plan

2018-2023



Proud Panthers!

An Evergreen “*Living*” Document

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“Now, adults need to be able to ask great questions, critically analyze information, form independent opinions, collaborate, and communicate effectively. These are the skills essential for both career and citizenship.”

— Tony Wagner, **Most Likely to Succeed: Preparing Our Kids for the Innovation Era**

Introduction

Asking the right question; asking the right question more than once to probe for root causes, and asking the right question in the name of students and attempting to view issues from their perspective must be the driving force behind our planning! As we plan, part of our obligation as professionals is to identify and eliminate obstacles and barriers (structural, institutional, financial, and interpersonal) to student learning and growth.

The Preston Public Schools Strategic Plan reflects the tenets of a global, optimistic and growth mindset that encourages an open positive outlook leading to deep learning and personal well-being. We intend to place significant emphasis on adventure, compassion, consistency, kindness, security, and enlightenment. We are challenging ourselves to communicate well, support personalized learning, seek parent, community and student engagement, create innovative classroom and instructional design and encourage community-wide prosperity.

Our strategic plan is fundamentally a statement of intention and commitment. It will be the organizational tool, the definitive action plan that drives our decision making when creating our budget and designing our student learning experiences. We see our strategic plan as an instrument that encourages both alignment and autonomy. We will use

the plan to address performance and accountability. Our investment in our community will be defined by our commitment to family, children and community members. We will strive to offer the best of ourselves and we will encourage others to be their best selves in the name of our children and all future generations. Our first step on this journey is to understand context.

Preston, Connecticut: A Brief History

When trying to describe a school district, it is important to understand the environmental and historical context in which the district is embedded. Preston was established in 1687 by about 25 to 30 families and for the first hundred years or so included a large portion of what is now Griswold, CT. Early on, the town government was established and remains very similar today. There is a Selectman, Town Clerk, Tax Collector and Treasurer among other town employees. Records indicate that Salmon Treat was permanent minister and first teacher in the town. As the years passed and the town progressed school buildings came and went. The first school board was established in 1900, transitioning from a school committee. In 1904, Preston paid tuition for high school students. In 1940, the schools were fully consolidated into the Town of Preston. As time went by, improvements were made and the Preston Plains Middle School was established in the 1960's. Then in 2003, after much debate, the Preston Veterans Memorial School was built to house elementary school students from Poquetanuck (Pre-k - 2) and Preston City School (3-5) which were razed after completion of the Preston Veterans Memorial School.



The current 2018 population of Preston is 4,726. The small villages of Preston City, Poquetanuck and Hallville are a backdrop to scenic farmlands and roads. Although the town is rural in nature, easy access to Interstate 95 and 395 is available a short distance away. Many residents are employed in the greater Norwich-New London-Groton region, which offers commercial, industrial, entertainment and service opportunities. The Grand List value of the

town is estimated at about 400 million dollars.

Preston Veterans Memorial School holds the Pre-K to 5 students who number 321. Preston Plains Middle School has a student population of 133 in grades 6 through 8. Eighth grade students have the option of choosing from several different schools for their high school years. The predominant high school selected by students is Norwich Free Academy, a public/private high school located in Norwich, CT. Ledyard High School, a technical high school and magnet schools are also options. Our total Pre-K to 12 student population is approximately 620. Our Pre-K to 8 students are supported by a certified staff of 41, non-certified staff of 52, and 7 administrators.

Primary Source: *Preston in Review*, sponsored by The Preston Historical Society, Inc., December 1971. The Franklin Press Inc., Norwich, CT. Paraphrasing used.

Our Mission

Preston Public Schools is a high quality rural learning environment that seeks to encourage academic growth, fiscal responsibility, a positive growth mindset, and a healthy social, emotional, and physically mature student. Our true north for all of our children is academic success, a sense of excellence and the creation of a pathway to a full, rich, prosperous life.

Our Vision

At Preston Public Schools we envision a district of excellence that we promise will thoughtfully consider the future and provide a well-rounded, innovative, rigorous, learning experience for all of our students.

Our Core Values: Student Centered (The Palm!)

“An overarching goal of education should be to immerse students in the beauty and inspiration of their surrounding world.” — **Tony Wagner, Most Likely to Succeed: Preparing Our Kids for the Innovation Era**



The Palm: A metaphor being used in our district to keep us focused on our core mission is shared in the following way: Hold your palm out in front of you and visualize the face of a person you love. Place that visualization in the palm of your hand and gently close your hand. Bring your closed hand close to your heart and remember this: Whenever you are making a decision about children, recall what you hold close to your heart and in the palm of your hand. If you make decisions based on the one you love and hold so dear you will never go wrong. You will always do well by the children in your care.

Panther Pride core values:

All Children Can Learn.

Safety above All Else.

Respect for All.

Acceptance and Inclusiveness for all.

Student Voice defines our purpose.

Partnerships matter.

Relationships are the building blocks of the future.

Excellence in Teaching and Learning.

Sustainability and Innovation prepare us for the future.

Effective and Efficient Operations smooth the way.

A Global perspective is a must.



Summary: Central to our core beliefs is that all children can learn. It is our responsibility to assist in fostering a community of lifelong learners with our students at its center. As educators, we know all children can achieve at high levels when provided with opportunities, sustenance, high expectations, and proper supports, both in school and at home. As a learning community culture, we strive to promote critical thinking and problem solving skills, to inspire creativity, advocate for self, and encourage risk taking among students and staff. We recognize that all children are unique and it is our responsibility to provide multiple pathways to success for our students and their families. Our staff is our most important resource and to provide for the best education of our students we are committed to developing their skill and ability.

Our Motto

“Children First!”

Our Theory of Action

IF Preston Public Schools pursue a teaching and learning design that encourages creativity, clear thinking, and academic curiosity and academic responsibility that offers meaning and purpose to the learner THEN the learner will evolve into an ethical human being with a joy of learning and a passion for contributing to the greater good.



Mission Priorities

- A. Safety and Wellbeing
- B. High Quality Learning Environments
- C. Curriculum and Instruction
- D. Community Partnerships
- E. Branding/Marketing
- F. District Operations
- G. Technology



Long-Term Strategic Objectives for Mission Priorities

A. Safety and Wellbeing:

1. Social Emotional Learning (SEL) PreK-12 competencies and curricula are the structures we will use to support our students and their well-being in schools. All schools will be safe, warm, dry, welcoming, and inclusive.

★ Safety: Assess, adjust and implement safety measures and building protocols consistent with our confidential district safety plan

★ Social Emotional Learning and Behavioral Supports

- Positive Behavior Intervention System (PBIS) implementation with fidelity
- Train all staff in Youth Mental Health First Aid (YMHFA)
- Review deployment of SEL staffing to consider a social worker or a behavior specialist

★ Fitness

- Assess/research whether students are moving enough
- ★ Nutrition
 - Assess/research whether there can be improvements in nutrition offered by the district.
- ★ Social Media: Develop student and staff management strategies
- ★ Enhance school climate and culture
 - Plan regular activities and lessons that support a positive learning environment

B. High quality learning environments:

1. Regular development and implementation of Makerspace and STEM activities
 - ★ Support Makerspace experimentation
 - ★ Support Next Gen Science standards and STEM instructional implementation
2. Cultivate teacher leadership
 - ★ Support pursuit of professional development and advance degrees

C. Curriculum and Instruction: Educational excellence is our expectation. We will acknowledge and develop an educational culture of excellence through high-quality teaching, strong systems of support and enrichment, and aligned future-oriented curricula so that the Pre-K to 8 expedition both supports student growth and prepares students for an unclear future. We will offer rigorous and relevant learning experiences that reflect the contemporary, dynamic world in which our students live.

1. Curriculum
 - ★ Develop a PreK-8 science curriculum aligned to Next Generation Science Standards
 - ★ Revise the Pre-K curriculum
 - ★ Assess all curriculum programs

- ★ Support and maintain all grade level and departmental teams
- ★ Review technology supports for instruction
- ★ Examine options of the curriculum development process described in Plan Do-Study-Act (PDSA)
- ★ Consider What's Next

2. Professional Development is an individual and systems responsibility

- ★ Review current professional development plans to assess quality and priorities to focus on create and sustain a school climate and culture that support a rich educational environment for all students and staff
- ★ Create a master district calendar for school activities and professional development days
- ★ Encourage professional growth

D. Community Partnerships:

1. Community

- ★ Participation/presence in the community
 - Superintendent Kitchen Table Talks
 - Superintendent Updates
 - School District in Pipeline once a year
 - Improved web page
 - Seek town partnerships
 - School Newsletter
 - Seek parent involvement

2. Community Conversations with Senior Involvement

- ★ Preston Legacy: A web based recognition of alumni and the community to positively reflect hope, wellbeing and long term commitment.
- ★ Recognition of staff
 - Teachers
 - Support staff
 - Administrators
 - Board members

E. Branding/Marketing:

1. Branding

- ★ Proud Panther: Standardize use of Proud Panther logo
- ★ Logo disbursement to letterhead, business cards, correspondence
- ★ Develop Community Report template

2. Seek Higher Ed and community partners

F. District Operations: Mission-Driven Organization & Operations, effective and efficient operational systems, and organizational structures to nurture a coherent, mission-driven organization that creates the conditions necessary for excellence across all schools and programs

- 1. Develop coherent, state-of-the-art operational systems that assure access to high- quality resources, including facilities, aligned to our educational vision and mission.
 - students
 - staff

○ community

2. Finance: equitably distributed, carefully monitored, and utilized efficiently

- ★ Ensure transparent budgeting and a comprehensive budget document that links fiscal resources to student
- ★ Collaborate with Town and develop partnerships to enhance efficient and effective spending

3. Human Capital:

- ★ Recruit and retain high quality staff reflective of student demographics
- ★ Utilize an evaluation system that promotes growth and accountability
- ★ Create a comprehensive Employee Handbook that includes policy, procedure, and protocols that direct the operations of human resource activities
- ★ Enhance collaboration and the sharing of promising practices; develop opportunities for teacher leaders to serve as catalysts for the advancement of teaching and learning
- ★ Develop substitute handbooks for routine daily operations
- ★ Invest in the future: As the world experiences rapid and dramatic changes in technology, the economy, and society, the traditional paradigm of teaching and learning is also changing. Our staff will need continued professional development that nurtures a flexible dynamic positive mindset.

4. Facilities:

- ★ Pursue a preventative maintenance and capital improvement plan that has a minimum 5 year outlook.
- ★ Complete the facilities master plan and educational visioning; develop facilities that not only support but also inspire widespread transformation in student learning; determine the immediate and short-term decisions, timeline, and resources needed to move forward with our long-term plan.
- ★ Improve school traffic safety signage

★ Classroom management, training and implementation based on programming and student population.

5. Technology:

★ Create a written technology plan that includes:

- Repair and Replacement
- Improvement and upgrades to physical plant and instruction tools
- Linkage of the Technology Plan to the Strategic Plan



Theory of Action

IF Preston Public Schools pursues a teaching and learning design that encourages creativity, clear thinking and academic curiosity that offers meaning and purpose to the learner, THEN we believe the learner will evolve into an ethical human being, with a joy of learning and a passion for contributing to the greater good. Please see the chart below.

Goal	Action	Who is Primarily Responsible	Milestone/ Benchmark/Deliverable (outcomes and deadlines)	Comments
A. Safety and Well Being	1. Safety	Leadership team Board of Education All staff	Full safety review	
	2. Social Emotional Learning and Behavioral Supports	Teachers Principals	Identify ways of involving students in decision making (student voice) Ongoing evaluation to reinvigorate building implementation to ensure relevance and meaning for students	At PPMS, engage Student Leaders in planning incentives and 5th grade Orientation At PVMS, create student “ambassador” type program that allows students to share their thoughts.
	3. Fitness	Teachers	Improve student performance on CT Physical Fitness Test to meet state standards	Ensure student participation in physical education classes Encourage movement breaks in all classes Encourage participation in movement-related activities outside of school

	4. Nutrition	Superintendent Director of Finance	Assess and determine potential improvement to school breakfast and lunch programs Consider meeting nutrition certification requirements with in-house staff	
	5. Social Media	Principals Teachers	Continue raising student and parent awareness	
	6. Mental Health	Principals, School Psychologists, School Social Worker	Commission School Climate survey for both schools Convene School Climate Committee to review survey results and develop action plan	
B. High Quality Learning Environments	1. Regular development and implementation of Makerspace and STEM activities	Principals Teachers Central office		
	2. Cultivate teacher leadership	Principals	Leadership Teams at both schools Develop opportunities for and celebration of teacher leadership Create professional development opportunities for teacher leadership	

Goal	Action	Who Primarily Responsible	Milestone/Benchmark/ Deliverable (outcomes and deadlines)	Comments
C.Curriculum/ Instruction	1. Develop and implement K-8 science curriculum that aligns with aligns with Next Generation Science Standards	Director of Curriculum, Principals Teachers		New construction of the science labs at PPMS will be used as a symbolic goal for all district science instruction
	2. Plan for revision of preschool curriculum (18/19 SY)	Director of Curriculum, Principals, Teachers		
	3.. On-going assessment and evaluation of curricula and programs	Director of Curriculum, Principals, Teachers		
	4.. Maintain grade level team and departmental team planning structures	Director of Curriculum, Principals, Teachers		
	5.. Consider technological supports for instruction	Director of Curriculum, Principals, Teachers		
	6. Examine option for Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA)			
	7. Review professional development plans and encourage professional growth			

Goal	Actions	Who Primarily Responsible	Milestone/Benchmark/ Deliverable (outcomes and deadlines)	Comments
	8. Consider what's next	Dir of Curriculum, Prins, Teachers		
D. Community Partnerships	1. Kitchen Table Talks	Superintendent		
	2.. Board of Education Updates	Superintendent		
	3. Preston Pipeline	Superintendent		
	4. Website	Superintendent/ Administration	Milestone/Benchmark/ Deliverable (outcomes and deadlines)	Comments
	5. Senior Citizen Center	Superintendent		
	6. School Outreach	Principals		PVMS -Senior Citizen lunches, grandparent lunches, Veterans' Day Celebration, PreK and K orientations PPMS - Memorial Day Celebration, electronic newsletter publishes each marking period, 5th gr orientation, High School Fair, fundraisers to support gr 7 and 8 activities
	7. Initiate conversations about town-school partnerships	Superintendent Principals	March 2018	Work in partnership with Town, Selectman, Board of Finance, etc.
	8. Initiate opportunities for parent involvement	Superintendent Principals	Immediately	

Goal	Actions	Who Primarily Responsible	Milestone/Benchmark/ Deliverable (outcomes and deadlines)	Comments
E. Branding Marketing	1. Standards based budget document	Superintendent Director of Finance	June 2018	ASBO: Association of School Business Officials: Pathway to a meritorious budget award. GFAO: Government Finance Officers Association: Distinguished budget award.

	2. Develop and Implement strategic plan	Superintendent School Board Leadership team Union Leadership	June 2018	
	3. Multi-page district promotional pamphlet created by June 2018	Superintendent	April/May 2018	
	4. Submit newspaper editorials	Superintendent	Ongoing	
	5. Seek Higher Education and Community Partners	Superintendent Leadership team	2018-2019 school year	
F. District Operations	1. State of the art operational systems	Superintendent, Director of Finance Supervisor of Buildings and Grounds Leadership team	Site Visits Daily routine reviews Standard work expectations	
	2. Finance	Superintendent Director of Finance	Procedural Review Transparent budgeting process	Initiate team budget construction process

Goal	Actions	Who Primarily Responsible	Milestone/Benchmark/ Deliverable (outcomes and deadlines)	Comments
	3. Human Capital	Superintendent Board Principals	Recruit and retain quality staff	Use multiple web-based recruiting platforms Create Employee Handbook Develop a rationale for coordinated human resources position (town/school partnership)
	4. Facilities	Superintendent Supervisor of Buildings and Grounds	Preventative maintenance plan Capital improvement plan School traffic safety analysis	

Goal	Actions	Who Primarily Responsible	Milestone/Benchmark/ Deliverable (outcomes and deadlines)	Comments
G. Technology	1. Technology Strategic Plan	Leadership Team Technology Support	June 2018	This Plan will be a component of the overall district strategic plan
	2. Technology Asset Protection Plan	Leadership Team Technology Support	June 2019	This plan will be embedded into the Technology Strategic Plan
	3. Technology Service Review	Leadership Team Technology Support	June 2018-2019	

Summary and Final Thoughts: A Reality Check and the Need to be Fearless

Our district will pursue the circumstances that encourage **Serious Joy!** Cicero 2100 years ago stated, “Not for ourselves alone are we born.” Part of his meaning was, in all things adults do, we should be thinking of the children, of those we care for, of those we love, and of their future. The circumstances of the next generation of children is hurtling towards us faster than any time in history. This is the generation that will have to deal with Artificial Intelligence. This will be the first time in all of history that human beings will be confronted with something that is more intelligent than themselves, an intelligence that we created but also an intelligence that will surpass us. In this coming generation jobs will disappear and be recreated, money and economy will be redefined and the meaning of what it is to be human will be confronted with the full force of cultural transition.

Why is this important to our small hamlet? For our children to live long and happy lives they must be guided to clear thinking, compassion, respect for each other. To accomplish such a weighty task we must have a living plan focused on rigorous academic discourse embedded in our hopes for the entire community. As we grow we will need additional teachers, English learner support, expert human resource management, management of insurance and liability, changes in federal and state human resource and student support requirements, and additional support staff of at all levels.

We must enact a long term vision that works for our students, their families, our staff and our community. In our small way we must always keep our palm open and our eyes on the love it contains. We must set aside ego, self-righteousness, selfishness, and irrational worry and create a world for our children that is welcoming, positive, open and accepting. These pages define the most important organizational steps to move Preston Public Schools forward in the direction of hope and joy.

Dedication: To the children of Preston and their bright futures.

Desiderata

Go Placidly Amid The Noise & Haste & Remember What Peace There May Be In Silence. As far as possible without surrender, be on good terms with all persons. Speak your truth quietly and clearly; listen to others, even the dull & the ignorant, they too have their story. ✕ Avoid loud & aggressive persons, they are vexations to the spirit. If you compare yourself to others; you may become vain & bitter, for there will always be greater & lesser persons than yourself. Enjoy your achievements as well as your plans. ✕ Keep interested in your own career; however humble, it is a real possession in the changing fortunes of time. Exercise caution in your business affairs; for the world is full of trickery. But let not this blind you to what virtue there is; many persons strive for high ideals; and everywhere life is full of heroism. ✕ Be yourself. Especially do not feign affection. Neither be cynical about love; for in the face of all aridity & disenchantment, it is as perennial as the grass. Take kindly the counsel of the years, gracefully surrendering the things of youth. Nurture strength of spirit to shield you in sudden misfortune. But do not distress yourself with dark imaginings. Many fears are born of fatigue & loneliness. Beyond a wholesome discipline, be gentle with yourself. ✕ You are a child of the universe; no less than the trees & stars, you have a right to be here. Whether or not it is clear to you, the universe is unfolding as it should. ✕ Therefore; be at peace with God, whatever you conceive him to be. Whatever your labors & aspirations; in the noisy confusion of life, keep peace with your soul. With all its sham, drudgery & broken dreams, it is still a beautiful world. Be Cheerful. Strive to Be Happy. ✕

Written by Max Ehrmann c1927

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Definition of Terms

Action Steps	Steps taken to implement the strategic initiatives.
Assessments	The expected results: what they will be, how they will be measured, when they will occur. Interim outcomes set targets for improvement during plan implementation.
Benchmarks	The planned action steps and their impact. Process benchmarks specify what will happen, who will do it, and when. Early evidence of change benchmarks identify changes you should begin to see if the plan is having its desired effect while being implemented.
Core Values	Principles that guide decision making and action of the Board and the Leadership.
Makerspace	Makespace is a term of art for a new era of classroom design and instruction that focuses on providing students an opportunity to explore the physical world through constructing different items.
Mission	The district's purpose and current level of work: why the organization exists.
Motto	A Motto is a short sentence or phrase chosen as encapsulating the beliefs or ideals guiding an individual, family, or institution.
Priorities	The focus areas that support and will achieve the strategic objectives.
Theory of Action	The beliefs and assumptions you hold about why certain actions will lead to the vision you seek. Framed as an "if...then" statement.

Strategic Objectives	The coherent group of overarching goals and key levers for improvement that will achieve the Vision.
Strategic Initiatives	Are the organizational actions that are articulated by the Strategic Plan.
Vision	The district vision describes what future success will look like.

NOTES: