

ST. ANTHONY NEW BRIGHTON MEMORANDUM

TO: ISD 282 School Board

FROM: Renee Corneille, Superintendent

SUBJECT: Success Metrics - Operational Plan Goal

DATE: Sept. 7, 2021

Overview:

St. Anthony New Brighton Schools (SANB), due to intense study and collaboration, are primed to live out their vision for success for all students. This memo to the School Board will provide a historical overview of how success has been defined nationally and locally. Included is a brief description of how SANB schools have met or not met test-determined success measures. Followed by the process used to operationalize the concept of success for SANB schools and finally recommendations to the board to consider how to measure success in the future.

How did a few tests become the single measure of success?

Since 1983 the United States system of education has been suffering from not only a narrow definition of student success but the perpetual lowering of student expectations. A Nation at Risk (1983) stated “the educational foundations of our society are presently being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our very future as a nation and a people”, and in 2008 during the 25 year anniversary of the publication of A Nation at Risk, the following statement was made:

“While the national conversation about education would never be the same, stunningly few of the (Nation at Risk) Commission's recommendations actually have been enacted. Now is not the time for more educational research or reports or commissions. We have enough common sense ideas, backed by decades of research, to significantly improve American schools. The missing ingredient isn't even educational at all. It's political. Too often, state and local leaders have tried to enact reforms of the kind recommended in A Nation at Risk only to

be stymied by organized special interests and political inertia”

In 2001, a bipartisan US Congress passed the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), which provided a federal requirement for states and districts to implement accountability testing in both reading and math in grades 3-8 and high school. These tests were to reflect state standards all districts were required to implement. Although NCLB supported a standards-based education reform, with the goal of raising academic achievement by the standardization of student expectations, the outcome were assessments built to ensure students were proficient in [basic skills](#). In effect, expectations of the tests were yet again testing to the basics with a goal of being simply proficient. Since accountability and punitive measures were enacted on school districts for not meeting proficiency standards, schools dismissed effective instructional methods to “teach to the test” - which ultimately lowered achievement expectations for students. When instruction in a classroom is built to ensure proficiency on standardized tests and schools are awarded for high levels of students meeting proficiency standards - instruction for deep and meaningful learning is no longer expected.

Historically, SANB schools have been awarded for ensuring a high percentage of students have met proficiency in the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments (MCA) in both math and reading. In addition the high school has been awarded for students taking and doing well on Advanced Placement Exams and the ACT.

As standards for some exams have increased the level of rigor, SANB schools have seen a decline in their test scores. For example, in 2013, the state of Minnesota adopted the [Common Core Reading Standards](#), which are more rigorous (text complexity, increased cognitive demand) when compared to the previous state reading standards. Since this adoption in 2013 SANB’s district proficiency scores in reading have declined, going from 84% of students proficient in 2012 with only 68% of our students proficient in 2019. SANB has seen test scores decline as the cognitive demand increased. The Minnesota Department of Education outlined the cognitive complexity required in the change of standards in their MCA III [Test Specification document](#).

During the 2016-17 school year, Superintendent Bob Laney requested that the West Metro Education Program (WMEP) conduct a district needs assessment regarding SANB’s instructional program. The outcome of that needs assessment was clear, SANB’s test scores were stagnant and/or declining and our classroom instruction was not matching the increased rigor needed to meet higher academic standards. This was true for both MCA and ACT tests. In addition, St. Anthony Village High school has seen a decline in their Minnesota ranking, issued by US News and World Report from the top 5 to the ranking of 15 in 2021. As WMEP’s report explained - due to higher cognitive expectations - classroom instruction must also change from teaching acquisition learning (gather, store bits of knowledge and information) to deep learning (think in complex ways and apply knowledge and skills they have acquired).

Our SANB students have also shared the same insights. For example a high school student indicated, “In class I often feel like students are taught materials for the test, but we aren’t really learning” and a SANB middle school student said “Oftentimes I feel like I’m just memorizing

things to prepare for a test and when the test is over I forget all of it”.

In 2014, SANB enacted an inclusive strategic planning process and the community clearly articulated a vision stating “We are committed to the success of all learners. We will engage, inspire, and support each learner through innovation and collaboration”. What was undetermined in that process was the operationalized definition of success. Since 2001, as was the case in school districts across the country as noted above, test scores have become the default measure of success. A process was created to operationally define the term success for SANB schools.

In 2018, when SANB transitioned superintendents, a [commitment was made by the newly hired superintendent Dr. Renee Corneille](#) to interview key stakeholders and to survey staff and families. Superintendent Corneille interviewed 10 stakeholders, surveyed a randomized sample of [192 families](#), and [115 staff members](#). In each interview and survey the following questions were asked:

1. When thinking about St. Anthony New Brighton Schools, what makes you the most proud?
2. What do you believe are the most significant challenges our school district will face in the future?
3. As a member of the St. Anthony New Brighton Schools community how would you define a successful education for students?
4. As your superintendent, what can I do to support you in your work?

Special consideration was given to question number three. After collecting all the data, the Teaching and Learning team (made up of district administration, school board members, teacher union leadership, and teacher leaders) thematized the data using a [Phenomenological approach](#). The Teaching and Learning team was interested in determining how the community of stakeholders would define “[success](#)” identified in the current vision for SANB schools.

From the collected data, the following definition emerged, for success: “St. Anthony New Brighton defines success as a student who has acquired both the *academic skills* and *life skills* to *positively contribute to society*. They have a *love for learning* and are able to meet the *social-emotional needs* of themselves and others. A successful student becomes a *thriving citizen*.”

Further data collection ensued during the Spring of 2020 and throughout the 2020-21 school year. Each data set collected from SANB [students](#), [\(SAMS students\) staff](#), and [families \(district issued survey\)](#) plus, [state level data](#) confirmed the desire for success to be defined by academic skills *and* life skills, a love of learning, citizenship, while being socially and emotionally healthy.

Recently staff in SANB schools were asked to describe how [success is currently measured](#) in

SANB schools - after [thematizing the data](#) - one group described SANB success in the following narrative:

“Success at SANB schools is defined by measurable, quantifiable data that is promotable to the community and beyond. This data can be graduation rates, enrollment in AP classes, MCA scores, athletic awards, etc. This success is attained by “playing school” and following the rules while making sure all work is turned in.”

SANB and Minnesota are not alone in wanting more robust measurements for success for students. The National Commission on Social, Emotional, and Academic Development published a report titled: [From a Nation at Risk to A Nation at Hope](#) after the 2015 passing of the Every Child Succeed Act. The commission’s research was clearly articulated in this one quote “Children learn best when we treat them as human beings, with social and emotional as well as academic needs”. Their research consisted of two years of data collection from students, families, educators, and business leaders - asking - what do you want from our schools - the following data emerged:

- More than nine in 10 parents think that schools have a role in reinforcing the development of what they typically call “life skills.”
- At least two-thirds of current and recent high school students agree that attending a school focused on social and emotional learning would help improve their relationships with teachers and peers, their learning of academic material, and their preparation for college, careers, and citizenship.
- Nine out of 10 teachers believe social and emotional skills can be taught and benefit students.
- Four in five teachers want more support to address students’ social and emotional development.
- Ninety-seven percent of principals believe a larger focus on social and emotional learning will improve students’ academic achievement.
- Eight in 10 employers say social and emotional skills are the most important to success and yet are also the hardest skills to find.

A large national survey conducted by Yale University regarding high school students’ feelings about school showed 75% of the feelings reported (in narrative form) by students were negative. The most often described feelings were tired, stressed, and bored. ([Moeller, Brackett, Ivcevic, White, 2020](#)). This is further supported by the Minnesota Student Survey 2019, students across the state of Minnesota reported an 18% increase, when compared to 2016 in students expressing long-term mental health and behavior or emotional problems ([MSS, 2019](#)). SANB students agree, a disconnect is felt between school work and “real” work. Specifically, in 2018 a St. Anthony Village High School 10th grader wrote “Throughout my time here classes have been very easy, just plagued with what I’d consider busy work. (My idea of busy work is an assignment that is overly complicated or time-consuming despite having very little impact on

your learning of the material)”.

Research states that most ”schoolwork is regarded largely as a series of contrived exercises necessary to earn credentials (grades, promotions) required for future success...the challenge for students is to figure out how to comply with teachers’ and tests’ requirements rather than to use their minds to solve important meaningful problems or answer interesting challenging questions” ([Newmann](#), Et. al). Compliance to school rules and test prep is not deep learning and it leaves students feeling disengaged and bored. We need to hold higher expectations for our students. When we teach and expect students to learn at high levels, students not only feel better, they learn better. As articulated in [From a Nation at Risk to A Nation at Hope](#) “it is a mistake to view social and emotional health as a ‘soft’ approach to education. Quite the opposite. An emphasis on these capacities is not the sacrifice of rigor; it is a source of rigor”.

The spring of 2020 and the COVID-19 pandemic brought monumental changes in how schools provide learning; this disruption shed a light on how essential it will be for schools to build back in stronger, more comprehensive ways. And so, it is imperative for SANB to plan for how it will structurally ensure student success, defined by the SANB community, students and research. Since the start of this school district, the goals set forth were always ambitious and multi-dimensional, centered on both the student and the community. In 1954 St. Anthony New Brighton (SANB) schools passed Policy 1.1 Philosophy of Education which articulated “We believe that the school exists for the benefit of the students and society. Consistent with the ideals of democracy, the school should provide the opportunity for each student to discover and develop his interests and abilities for a useful and happy life in our society”.

Multiple Dimensions of Success

[Muro Et al. \(2019\)](#) in their article discuss how the “future of work” has changed due to technologies like Artificial Intelligence. Changing technologies require changes in our educational system because, students no longer enter the workforce needing the skills of repetition, pattern-prediction and recognition/memorization, or any skills connected to collecting, storing information, *rather* they need the skills of creativity, curiosity, critical thinking, entrepreneurship, collaboration, and more ([Zhao, 2021](#)). Zhao is quoted in his 2019 article by saying

“For humans to thrive in the age of smart machines, it is essential that they do not compete with machines. Instead, they need to be more human. Being unique and equipped with social-emotional intelligence are distinct human qualities (Zhao 2018b, 2018c) that machines do not have (yet). In an AI world individual creativity, artistry and humanity will be important commodities that distinguish us from each other.”

Since 2001, and the impact of NCLB, students have been asked to do more repetition, recognition, and memorization to score well on tests of basic skills. In 2021, our students need to be held to not only different measures of success, but also higher measures of success.

Research out of the [MIT Teaching Systems Lab](#) challenged schools to reinvent themselves - Post-COVID. Reich and Mehta (2021) collected data from teachers and students and families - collectively all groups want schools to be “more equal and humane institutions” and “addressing healing, community and humanity is not peripheral to the academic mission of school, it is a vital part of such a mission”. Furthermore, [From a Nation at Risk to A Nation at Hope](#) states “When challenging work is coupled with high expectations and high levels of support, and when students are actively working and cognitively, socially, and emotionally engaged, this produces greater motivation, stronger identity development, and deeper learning”.

For the past twenty plus years, our educational system has limited the definition of student success in school to [two tests taken, once a year, in the subjects of math and reading](#). Research, the community of SANB, and our students want a broader more robust definition of success. Students in SANB should not only be proficient in math and reading, but also in all academic subjects, along with adding value to their community by becoming a thriving citizen all while being both socially and emotionally well.

Recommendations:

Peter Drucker, management consultant is famously quoted as saying “what gets measured gets done”. District administration recommends to the board to adopt success measures that accurately measure the SANB vision of “We are committed to the success of all learners. We will engage, inspire, and support each learner through innovation and collaboration” by measuring the following operationalized definition of success “St. Anthony New Brighton defines success as a student who has acquired both the *academic skills* and *life skills* to *positively contribute to society*. They have a *love for learning* and are able to meet the *social-emotional needs* of themselves and others. A successful student becomes a *thriving citizen*.”

Proposed Success Concepts and Measurements:

1. Academic Skills: Defined as:

- Acquisition - Students gather and store bits of knowledge and information. Students are primarily expected to remember or understand this acquired knowledge.
- Application Students use acquired knowledge to solve problems, design solutions, and complete work. The highest level of application is to apply appropriate knowledge to new and unpredictable situations.
- Absorption - Students extend and refine their acquired knowledge to be able to use that knowledge automatically and routinely to analyze and solve problems and create unique solutions.
- Adaptation Students have the competence to think in complex ways and also apply knowledge and skills they have acquired. Even when confronted with perplexing unknowns, students are able to use extensive knowledge and skill to create solutions and take action that further develops their skills and knowledge.

*[*adopted from Rigor Relevance Framework \(Daggett\)](#)*

2. Life Skills - Defined as:

1. The ability for students to develop adaptive and positive behavior that enables humans to deal effectively with the demands and challenges in life.

2. Decision-Making/Problem Solving
3. Creative/Critical Thinking
4. Communication/Interpersonal Skills
5. Self-Awareness/Empathy
6. Assertiveness/Equanimity
7. Resilience/Coping

[*Adopted from World Health Organization](#)

3. Positive Contributor to Society - Defined as:

- Combination of service to the community and student learning.
- Active participation that meets the needs of a community.
- Structured for students to reflect on the experience.

*Adopted from [1993 Trust Act: section 2 of the National Service Act of 1990](#)

4. Love of Learning; Defined as:

- Possessing the character strength *love of learning* means you are motivated to acquire new skills or knowledge or to build on existing skills or knowledge.
- Feeling good when you are learning new things, even when material is challenging.
- Research suggests that individuals who have love of learning as a developed strength are likely to do the following:
 - Have positive feelings about learning new things
 - Have the ability to self-regulate efforts to persevere, despite challenge and frustration
 - Feel autonomous
 - Feel challenged
 - Have a sense of possibility
 - Be resourceful
 - Feel supported by others in their efforts to learn

[*Adopted from 2004 Authentic Happiness Coaching. All rights reserved.](#)

5. Social and Emotional Wellness; Defined as:

- **Social and interpersonal skills and competencies** enable children and youth to read social cues and navigate social situations; communicate clearly; negotiate and resolve conflict with others; advocate for oneself with adults and peers; and cooperate and work effectively on a team.
- **Emotional skills and competencies** help children and youth recognize and manage their emotions; understand the emotions and perspectives of others; cope with frustration and stress; and demonstrate respect and empathy toward others.

[*Taken from A Nation at Risk to a Nation at Hope](#)

6. Thriving Citizen Defined as:

- Specific rights, duties, and benefits in the United States.
- Fundamental rights derived from and protected by the Constitution and laws of the United States, such as freedom of expression, due process, the rights to vote.
- Rights
 - Freedom to express yourself.
 - Freedom to worship as you wish.
 - Right to a prompt, fair trial by jury.
 - Right to vote in elections for public officials.
 - Right to apply for federal employment requiring U.S. citizenship.
 - Right to run for elected office.
 - Freedom to pursue “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.
- Responsibilities
 - Support and defend the Constitution.
 - Stay informed of the issues affecting your community.
 - Participate in the democratic process.
 - Respect and obey federal, state, and local laws.
 - Respect the rights, beliefs, and opinions of others.
 - Participate in your local community.
 - Pay income and other taxes honestly, and on time, to federal, state, and local authorities.
 - Serve on a jury when called upon.
 - Defend the country if the need should arise.

*Adopted from U.S. Government

How would we measure these concepts? (DRAFT)

Concept	Definition	Measurement Tools
Academic Skills	Acquisition Application Absorption Adaptation	<p>Acquisition - MCAs, MAP, AIMSWeb, FAST, ACT, Graduation rate</p> <p>Application - AP tests, Classroom assessments</p> <p>Absorption - Authentic Assessments (Grades 5, 8, 12)</p> <p>Adaptation - Authentic Assessments (Grades 5, 8, 12)</p>

<p>Life Skills</p>	<p>Develop adaptive and positive behavior</p> <p>Decision-Making/Problem Solving</p> <p>Creative/Critical Thinking</p> <p>Communication/Interpersonal Skills</p> <p>Self-Awareness/Empathy</p> <p>Assertiveness/Equanimity</p> <p>Resilience/Coping</p>	<p>Authentic Assessment (Grades 5, 8, 12)</p> <p>Decision making/problem solving</p> <p>Creative/critical thinking</p> <p>Communications/interpersonal skills</p> <p>Attendance Data</p> <p>Connection to engagement</p> <p>Discipline Data</p> <p>Panorama Survey:</p> <p>Growth mindset</p> <p>Self management</p> <p>Social awareness</p> <p>Self efficacy</p> <p>Emotional regulation</p>
<p>Positive Contributor to Society</p>	<p>Combination of service to the community and student learning.</p> <p>Active participation that meets the needs of a community.</p> <p>Structured for students to reflect on the experience.</p>	<p>Service Learning Hours + Reflection (Grades 3, 7, 11)</p> <p>Authentic Assessments (Grades 5, 8, 12)</p> <p>Adds value to the community</p> <p>Supports the community</p> <p>Panorama Survey:</p> <p>Cultural awareness</p> <p>Social awareness</p>
<p>Love of Learning</p>	<p>Have positive feelings about learning new things</p> <p>Have the ability to self-regulate efforts to persevere, despite challenge and frustration</p> <p>Feel autonomous</p> <p>Feel challenged</p> <p>Have a sense of possibility</p>	<p>Panorama Survey:</p> <p>Valuing of school</p> <p>Engagement</p>

	<p>Be resourceful</p> <p>Feel supported by others in their efforts to learn</p>	
Social and Emotional Wellness	<p>Social and interpersonal skills and competencies</p> <p>Emotional skills and competencies</p>	<p><u>Panorama Survey:</u></p> <p>Sense of belonging Diversity and inclusion School climate Cultural awareness and action Growth mindset Self management Social awareness Self-efficacy Emotional regulation</p>
Thriving Citizen	<p>Specific rights, duties, and benefits in the United States.</p> <p>Fundamental rights derived from and protected by the Constitution and laws of the United States, such as freedom of expression, due process, the rights to vote.</p>	<p><u>Citizenship/Civics Assessment</u> (State/Federal)</p> <p><u>Naturalization Exam</u></p> <p><u>Authentic Assessments (Grades 5, 8, 12)</u></p> <p>Stay informed of the issues affecting your community Participate in your local community</p> <p><u>Panorama Survey:</u></p> <p>Cultural awareness and action Diversity and inclusion</p>

For more specifics regarding the definitions and measurements click [here](#).

Defining Success is only the first part of the equation:

The first part of developing success metrics is operationally defining the concept of [success](#) and determining the appropriate [measurement tools](#) to measure the concept. Once the definition and the measurement tools are adopted by the school board, the next step for district administration will be to determine the key performance indicators to ensure all students can be successful in SANB schools.

Alignment between the work of the school system (teaching, resources, leadership) and success measures will determine which performance indicators enhance or detract from student success.

[Hanover research from 2013](#) describes the benefit of school districts utilizing a “balanced scorecard” to ensure clarity of linked data points between system input and student output measures. In the next few months district administrators will determine which inputs will determine the desired output (success for students).