



Fox Chapel Area School District

Strategic Plan Executive Summary

2022-2023 School Year

Fox Chapel Area School District

611 Field Club Road

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 15238

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Overview

The Fox Chapel Area School District completed a strategic plan during the 2022-2023 school year. The process was designed to foster reflection, collaboration, and imagination. Elevating voices from multiple representatives helped provide a more extensive picture of the desired culture and goals of the community so that the charted path is as representative as possible of what the community values for its school district.

Pennsylvania public school districts are required to complete a comprehensive plan every three years for the state Department of Education. The comprehensive plan is dictated by a consistent planning framework for all entities that focuses on continuous improvement. The strategic plan informed the district's comprehensive plan.

The teams involved in the strategic/comprehensive plan process were varied and included multiple representatives from the school community. Teams embraced nine characteristics that are strongly correlated to consistently high performing educational institutions. These nine characteristics are Clear and Shared Focus; High Standards and Expectations; Effective Leadership; High Levels of Collaboration and Communication; Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment Aligned with Standards; Frequent Monitoring of Teaching and Learning; Focused Professional Development; Supportive Learning Environment; and High Levels of Community and Parent Involvement.

Structure

The Fox Chapel Area School District's Strategic/Comprehensive Plan included the following committees:

- [Steering Committee](#)
- [Learning and Teaching Committee](#)
- [Supports for Students Committee](#)
- [Community Engagement Committee](#)
- [Superintendent's Student Cabinet](#)

Committee Members

The Strategic Plan is stronger when representatives from many different school community groups lend their voices and efforts to the process. The Fox Chapel Area School District completed its Strategic Plan with some of its design structured to meet the requirements of the Pennsylvania Department of Education’s Comprehensive Planning process for school districts. For Comprehensive Plans, The Pennsylvania Department of Education requires categories of memberships appointed by specific groups. As a result, the School Board appointed board members, parents, community members, and business members for the committees. The Fox Chapel Area Educators Association appointed educators and the Fox Chapel Area Education Support Personnel appointed support personnel to participate. Members of the district’s Service Employees International Union 32BJ and Fox Chapel Area students were also invited and participated in sub-committees or provided feedback.

Steering Committee:

The Fox Chapel Area School District Comprehensive/Strategic Plan Steering Committee met on January 18, 2023, and January 30, 2023, to review the district's current Mission, Vision, Beliefs, and Values. Members of the committee examined the district’s Mission, Vision, Beliefs, and Values and shared opinions on the strengths and areas of enhancements for each. Below is a summary of the feedback received from the Steering Committee meetings:

Current Mission Statement ~ The Fox Chapel Area School District exists to maximize student learning, achievement, and development.
<i>What are the strengths of the current Mission Statement?</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Focus on students● Concise with broad application● “Maximize” emphasizes individualization● Encompasses multiple areas of education● Addresses the whole student
<i>What enhancements could be made to the current Mission statement?</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Social emotional well-being● Incorporation of mental health● Promoting inclusiveness and embracing diversity through the incorporation of the “Whole Student”● “Growth” speaks to a whole student perspective more than achievement

Current Vision Statement ~ The Fox Chapel Area School District will be recognized as one of the top performing public school districts in the nation. Toward that end we will: <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Challenge each student to reach their maximum potential level of achievement;● Provide scholarly experiences that deepen understanding, creativity, critical thinking, problem-solving, innovation, and collaboration;

- Provide an environment that promotes inclusiveness and embraces diversity;
- Foster a culture that encourages student involvement in the community and raises awareness of civic responsibilities.
- Build relationships with post-secondary institutions, businesses, and industry to create and sustain programs that prepare students to excel beyond high school.

What are the strengths of the current Vision Statement?

- The word potential speaks to individualization
- Post high school preparation
- Community involvement
- Inclusiveness and diversity
- Meaningful learning experiences
- Importance of civic engagement
- Focus on the whole student
- Maximizing potential/individualization

What enhancements could be made to the current Vision Statement?

- Reconsider the word “challenge”
- What does “top performing” mean?
- Is recognition solely related to testing?
- As a community we strive for excellence
- How is success measured?
- How do we honor students’ backgrounds, skills, and specialties?
- Consider student experience/teacher experience.

Current Values

- People: Diversity of thought, background, and beliefs
- Habits for Success: Persistence and resilience
- Learning Skills: Communication and collaboration; creativity and innovation; critical thinking; and problem-solving

Current Core Values

- Respect: Valuing self and others, caring for one’s environment, and pride in positive actions
- Responsibility: Accountability, taking ownership of what you do, and listening and following through
- Integrity: Doing the right thing (even when no one is watching); being honest with self and others; and trustworthiness in thoughts, words, and actions

What are the strengths of the current Values & Core Values?

- Values and Core values are strong
- Values are representative of everyone (all stakeholders)
- Excellent message
- “Values” are more overall for the district – not things that teachers go over with students
- “Core Values” are things that are discussed with kids, discuss examples specifically in each school

What enhancements could be made to the current values & core values?

- Consider including language for inclusivity (cultural, learning, etc.)
- Consideration for including social and emotional growth/mental health?
- Do Values and Core Values need to be separated?
- Maybe change the order of how Values are presented. Start with Core Values, see them as overarching and then add from there if we choose to keep the “Values.” Suggest plugging other values in other places.

Current Beliefs

We believe that:

- All students want to learn, are capable of learning, and share in the responsibility for their education.
- Contributing partners in the educational process include all district staff, students, families, and the community.
- Schools of excellence have effective educational leaders.
- Educators must be knowledgeable and current in their profession, discipline, and pedagogy.
- It is important for each member of the educational community to recognize and respect all forms of diversity.
- Effective schools are built upon integrity and foster respectful, inclusive, and dynamic environments.
- Responsive schools take a leading role in promoting safety and wellness.
- Fiscal decisions must effectively balance the educational needs of the students and resources of the community.

What are the strengths of the Beliefs?

- Beliefs are empowering
- Demonstrates inclusion for all stakeholders

What enhancements could be made to the current Beliefs?

- Some Beliefs contain action words, but others do not. Should this be more consistent?
- What does "schools of excellence" mean?
- Is recognizing and respecting enough for diversity?
- Embrace equity and inclusivity more with the Beliefs.

Learning and Teaching Committee:

The Fox Chapel Area School District Learning and Teaching Committee met on January 18, 2023, and January 24, 2023, to discuss the district's New Staff Induction Program and professional development offerings. The committee members shared opinions on the essential elements for each. Below is a summary of the feedback received from the Learning and Teaching Committee meetings:

New Staff Induction Program

What are the essential elements of a new staff induction program?

- Fox Chapel Area philosophy
- Mentoring
- Positive learning environment
- Differentiation and personalization
- Ongoing assessment to drive instruction
- School and district safety
- Social and emotional well-being and mental health supports for students and staff



Professional Development Plan
<i>What essential topics and techniques should staff be trained in as an ongoing professional development plan in the Fox Chapel Area School District?</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Modern teaching practices ● Learn, apply, reflect, refine cycle of professional development ● Teachers teaching teachers ● Relationships, mental health, classroom environment ● Supports for ALL students ● Teacher choice and voice
<i>What future professional development do teachers need to ensure equitable access to learning for all students?</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Partnering with outside organizations ● Using technology to enhance access ● Ensuring students see themselves in materials and learning experiences ● Equitable grading practices ● Equitable access to advanced courses

Supports for Students Committee:

The Fox Chapel Area School District Supports for Students Committee met on January 24, February 22, and March 14, 2023, to review the district’s support services. Members of the committee examined special education services, academic supports, and counseling supports and shared opinions on the strengths and areas of enhancements for each. Below is a summary of the feedback received from the Student Supports Committee meetings:

Special Education Supports – A full range of services, K-12, provided by the district to meet students’ individual needs.
<i>What are the essential elements of a district’s special education support plan for students?</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● All foundational programs come from a universal framework ● Programming is fluid and built to accommodate individualized supports and needs ● Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) ● Collaboration with parents and parent support groups ● Innovative programs to meet the needs of all students
<i>Areas for Enhancement</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Support and educate families about K-12 services and evaluation process ● Plan vertically for student transitions ● Focus on college and career readiness through community partnerships

Academic Supports – Tiers of supports, academic services, and enrichment opportunities for students in grades K-12.
<i>What are the essential elements of a district’s academic intervention support plan for students?</i>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Flexibility of supports ● Collaboration between parents and the school
<i>Areas for Enhancement</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Supporting age-appropriate executive functioning skills to all students ● Higher levels of individualization at Tier III ● Communication with parents regarding the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Support and enrichment services and how they will be delivered ○ Curricular expectations ○ Transitions between tiers

<p>School Counseling Supports – Pennsylvania requires all school districts to have a K-12 guidance plan that includes input from multiple stakeholders and addresses areas associated with Chapter 339 and the PA Career and Technical Education Standards.</p>
<i>What are the essential elements of a district's counseling support plan for students?</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Student-focused services ● Building and maintaining strong partnerships with families ● Collaborative teams across tiers of support ● Skills building for prosocial behavior ● Normalizing help-seeking for mental health supports: #standtogether ● Care Solace builds connections outside the district
<i>Areas for Enhancements</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Communicating the available supports, pathways to support, and external resources with families ● Embedding/infusing Tier I elements into teacher professional development ● Exposure to multiple career pathways K-12 ● Shared vision statement for school counseling program

Community Engagement Committee:

The Fox Chapel Area School District Community Engagement Committee met on January 23 and February 21, 2023, to review elements of effective school district communication, communication methods and modalities, and opportunities to support students and families with accessing informational and educational resources. Below is a summary of the feedback received from the Student Supports Committee meetings:

Current Modes of Communication
<i>What are the strengths of Fox Chapel Area School District's communication strategy?</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Variety of platforms and methods ● Information comes directly to audience (people do not have to seek it) ● Increased awareness of providing resources for families in need ● Student-created publications (especially at the secondary level) ● Evidence of good faith changes in response to feedback ● Weekly superintendent's message has great readability and updates ● Communication is timely and transparent ● Strong sense of what is happening both in the district and at school



<i>What enhancements would assist with school district communication?</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Logos that are associated with different groups that could attract attention to the parents to show relevance• Communication as relationship building• Communication with residents without kids in our schools• Organization of communication to avoid communication overload• Tutorials for guardians
<i>How might the district support stakeholders in communicating necessary information and notable happenings in the district, but also understand that too much correspondence may cause parents/guardians to overlook the most important information or feel overwhelmed?</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Organizing and labeling information as essential or nonessential• Organizing and labeling information into other categories• Identifying intended recipients• Onboarding communication guide for transfer students
<i>What communication methods have you found most impactful (either with FCASD or other organizations) that the district could consider utilizing or utilizing more?</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Newsletter with clickable links in case someone wants more information about a specific item mentioned• Weekly emails from leaders• Current newsletter format• Visuals• Social media
<i>When looking for information, what sources (weekly updates, district website, school building website, email archives, social media, principal's Schoology page, PTO resources, etc.) do you use and for what purposes?</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Emails• Archived emails• Social media for "fun" topics• Layers of communication• Schoology & Google Classroom• Elementary - handouts• PTO Facebook pages

Superintendent's Student Cabinet:

The Superintendent's Student Cabinet, composed of students from Dorseyville Middle School and Fox Chapel Area High School, provided feedback on core elements of the district's strategic plan. Students provided feedback on two main topics: student well-being and the academic program. Students also charted how they may be involved in future work to support the efforts of implementing the strategic plan.

FCASD Comprehensive & Strategic Plan Survey Results

In January 2023, the district asked parents, guardians, and staff members to provide input to help shape future conversations and decisions regarding the plan. The information gathered from the survey was then used in committee and focus group discussions, as well as to inform the planning process. The survey response rate was 10% (514 out of 5,093 possible participants). None of the survey questions required a response to continue with the survey, so the number of responses vary from question to question. You can view the results of the survey by clicking [here](#).

FCASD Focus Groups and Response Themes

Throughout March of 2023, the Fox Chapel Area School District hosted focus groups to assist in writing a new Comprehensive/Strategic Plan. Eight focus group meetings were held on a variety of days and times with a total of 66 participants (parents, community members, business representatives, and staff members) joining the meetings to provide input on six overarching questions that were derived from January's Comprehensive & Strategic Plan Survey.

- **Question 1:** *What are the elements of a well-rounded education for students?*
- **Question 2:** *What does it look like for the district to support students' social and emotional well-being?*
- **Question 3:** *What skills and learning will students need in the future?*
- **Question 4:** *A current value of the district's strategic plan is "Diversity of thought, background, and beliefs." What does this mean to you for our school district?*
- **Question 5:** *The district's core values are currently "Respect, Responsibility, and Integrity." What do these look like to you?*
- **Question 6:** *Are there any other items that you would like to share for consideration as the district completes its strategic plan?*

The responses from the six questions posed during the focus group meetings were then analyzed to determine overarching themes. These themes have been graphed based on the number of comments relating to each and can be found [here](#).

Recommendations

The following recommendations and considerations are based on the information gathered from the district-wide survey, committee meetings, and focus groups.

Steering Committee
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consider an updated Mission Statement including the “growth” and the “whole student.”• Consider changing the Vision Statement. “Top Performing” could be worded differently to reflect all the work that we do as a district.• Consider only including Core Values, since they are most widely used and recognizable.• Major themes presented include: whole-child learning, inclusion, diversity, community/stakeholder involvement, importance of academics/rigor.
Learning & Teaching Committee
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Revise or add to current Induction workshops to include topics identified by the committees and focus groups including student emotional well-being and district safety practices and plans.• Maintain a strong mentorship model with new hires including long-term leave positions and long-term substitute positions.• Continue to focus professional development of new and current staff on effective, “modern” teaching techniques, including differentiation and personalized learning.• Promote “voice and choice” with professional development offerings.• Maintain a focus on supporting student needs, including, but not limited to academic needs.
Supports for Students Committee
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consider developing K-12 parent and community learning opportunities focused on support and enrichment services, educational pathways, and external resources.• Consider refining systems to ensure exposure to multiple career pathways and community partnerships.• Develop a shared vision statement for the K-12 school counseling program.• Consider refining Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) to include tier I elements into teacher professional development, vertical articulation of interventions K-12, review of tier III systems, and executive functioning skills embedded across tiers.
Community Engagement Committee
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consider clarifying intended recipients and/or improving subject wording to aid readers in digesting content via email.• Consider creating a system to delineate between building and district communication.• Consider adding clickable links to weekly update emails for stakeholders who want to learn more about certain subjects.• Consider creating a communication onboarding tutorial and document.• Consider extending Digital Student Dialogue for next year at the high school to gather student input.• Consider creating more guardian tutorials and offering Digital Dialogue sessions to guardians to gather additional input.

Committee Representatives

Steering Committee		Learning and Teaching Committee	
Dr. Mary Catherine Reljac	Superintendent of Schools	Dr. Mary Catherine Reljac	Superintendent of Schools
Dr. David McCommons	Deputy Superintendent	Dr. David McCommons	Deputy Superintendent
Dr. Stephen Edwards	Director of Student Achievement and Instructional Verification	Dr. Ashley Constantine	Executive Director of Elementary Education and Instruction
Dr. Michael Hower	Lead Principal, Fox Chapel Area High School	Dr. Matthew Harris	Executive Director of Secondary Education and Instruction
Mr. Jon Nauhaus	Principal, Dorseyville Middle School	Dr. Daniel Lentz	Program Principal, Fox Chapel Area High School
Dr. Paul Noro	Principal, Kerr Elementary School	Dr. Laura Miller	Program Principal, Dorseyville Middle School
Ms. Amy Cooper Ms. Marybeth Dadd	School Board Members	Ms. Susan Kreit	Principal, Fairview Elementary School
Patrick Brigitte Deborah Desjardins David Turner	Parents	Mr. Adam Goode Mr. Eric Hamilton	School Board Members
Adam Bright Jessie Handron Katie Kenyon	Community Members	Jessica Haselkorn Maisha Johnson Zelha Tunc Pekkan	Parents
Warner Macklin David Geibel	Business Representatives	Rachael Link Vanessa Torres Lautenbach	Community Members
Kristen Bost John Anderson Mimi Loeffler Lesley Cowles	Fox Chapel Area Educators Association	Kelli Schneider Stephanie Reilly	Fox Chapel Area Educators Association
Megan Jarrett	The Fox Chapel Area Education Support Personnel Association	Colleen Kozak	The Fox Chapel Area Education Support Personnel Association

Supports for Students		Community Engagement Committee	
Dr. Mary Catherine Reljac	Superintendent of Schools	Dr. Mary Catherine Reljac	Superintendent of Schools
Dr. David McCommons	Deputy Superintendent	Dr. David McCommons	Deputy Superintendent
Dr. Timothy Mahoney	Director of Special Education and Pupil Services	Dr. Megan Collett	Executive Director of Instructional and Innovative Leadership
Ms. Dana Simile	Director of Literacy	Ms. Katelyn Toth	Program Principal, O'Hara Elementary School
Dr. John McGee	Program Principal, Fox Chapel Area High School	Mr. Michael O'Brien	Athletic Director
Dr. Rachel Fischbaugh	Principal, Hartwood Elementary School	Mr. Ron Frank Ms. Ariel Zych	School Board Members
Dr. Kristy Batis	Principal, O'Hara Elementary School	Terri Ahern Melinda Guinn Tina Tuminella	Parents
Ms. Katie Findley Ms. Vanessa Lynch	School Board Members	Ahmed Elshahat Elizabeth Foster-Shaner Beth Vukmir	Community Members
Elizabeth (Betsy) Levine-Brown Jessica Panza Lauren Sufrin	Parents	James Mitnick	Business Representatives
Anjali Lichtenstein Katie McIntyre Kate Sheridan	Community Members	Rachel Machen Nanci Goldberg Erin Butkovic	Fox Chapel Area Educators Association
Felix Matathias	Business Representatives	Melissa Wiest	The Fox Chapel Area Education Support Personnel Association
Craig Reinhard Stacie Dojonovic Shannon Finley	Fox Chapel Area Educators Association	Peyton Shema	Student
Rosanne Wiest	The Fox Chapel Area Education Support Personnel Association		