

Des Plaines District 62 Public Schools

Orientation Participant Handout

The Orientation session is to answer the question, “Who are we and what are we being asked to do?” The Orientation session paints the “Big Picture” of the strategic planning process so that all strategic planning team members have a shared understanding of the process and their roles and responsibilities in helping the district set clear direction for the future.

At the Orientation, team members will meet one another and learn the stakeholder group that each member of the team represents. Stakeholder groups include community members, families, students, certified staff, non-certified staff, management, board, and union.

The Orientation session will include opportunities to learn about the current plan and the status of plan execution and results.

Common Vocabulary

Change management	A structured approach to transitioning individuals, teams, and organizations from a current state to a desired future state.
Organizational alignment	The existence of a consistently clear understanding of the district’s mission, vision, and strategy throughout the entire organization. An aligned organization is one where everyone understands how what they do contributes to the aspirations of the organization and it is clear how departments, teams and employees interact to create value for the organization’s customers and connect to the organization’s vision.
Perspective	A view of organization strategic performance viewed through a particular lens. Typical perspectives include financial stewardship, customer service, internal processes and organization capacity for learning and growth.
Strategic Goal	The specific continuous improvement activities balanced across the perspectives, that down strategy into components and make strategy actionable. The long-range goals that if accomplished will allow the district to fulfill its mission and vision. Goals must be specific, measurable, actionable, results-oriented, and timely (SMART)
Strategy	The choices made and the actions taken, from many choices and actions that are potentially available to move the organization from its current state to some desirable future state. A “game plan” to address the top priorities that if accomplished will position the district to better achieve its mission, vision and goals.
Strategic Plan	The document used to communicate throughout an organization and to its stakeholders the organization’s mission, vision, core values, goals, and strategies. The document that sets “Big Picture” direction, the focus and helps the district align its resources of people, time and money to that direction.
Strategic Planning	An organizational management activity that is used to set priorities, focus energy and resources, strengthen operations, ensure that employees and other stakeholders are working toward common goals, establish agreement around intended outcomes/results and assess and adjust the organization’s direction in response to a changing environment. Effective strategic planning articulates not only where an organization is going and the actions needed to make progress, but also how it will know if it is successful. The result of the planning process is a strategic plan.

An organization has two choices: Be intentional about the path the organization follows or turn on the organization's autopilot. If you are running your organization without a plan, you are just using the navigation system and not paying attention to how you are moving your organization to a higher level of performance. Strategic planning is not about taking on additional work; it is about taking all those numerous daily decisions and initiatives and making them part of an integrated focus system. Strategic Planning is a continuous improvement process based on key questions:

1. **Where are we now?** (How would you describe what is working and what needs attention? What are the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats as described by data, information, and perceptions?)
 - b. Mission statement
 - c. Motto statement
 - d. Data Review- perception and evidenced-based
 - e. SWOT (data analysis to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats)
2. **Where do we want to be?** (What are your best hopes for the future? What do you want to be different 5-10 years from now compared to what it is currently? What is the preferred future?)
 - a. Vision statement
 - b. Portraits (Graduate, Adult, and System)
 - c. Values statement/commitments
 - d. Sustainable competitive advantage
3. **How will you get from where you are to where you want to be?** (What will everyone do differently to get improved results? What research-based strategies will you implement with fidelity? How will what you do drive your professional development planning and implementation?)
 - a. Long-range goals
 - b. Critical strategies
4. **What are you learning?** (How will you be certain that your implementation of the research-based strategies is adding value and improving your results? How will you monitor and report your progress?)
 - a. Action plans
 - b. Progress monitoring
 - c. Short-term goals, priorities, and initiatives
 - d. Execution
 - e. Progress reporting

Surprising strategic planning stats:

- ✓ 95% of a typical workforce does not understand its organization's strategy.
- ✓ 90% of organizations fail to execute strategies successfully.
- ✓ 86% of executive teams spend less than one hour per month discussing strategy.
- ✓ 60% of organizations don't link strategy to budget.

Strategic Plans:

- Are based on the pillars of mission, vision, values/commitments, and goals.
- Reflect the values of the organization and define commitments and non-negotiables.
- Set focus and priorities and Connect initiatives to needs and requirements.
- Define the criteria for measuring success.
- Define what we ALL need to do well together.
- Inspires action to achieve a big future and guides everyone in daily decision making.

ACTIVITY ONE: Learn who is on the team and what the charge is for the team. Review the team roster, meeting schedule, and roles and responsibilities of the plan team. Ensure commitment of plan team's members.

- See Team Roster
- See Meeting Schedule

The responsibilities of the planning team members include:

- Attend all meetings of the planning team.
- Prepare for each meeting by reading materials aligned to each agenda.
- Explore educational, demographic, political, economic, social, and technological impacts on the future of the district.
- Value the feedback and opinions/perspectives of those not on the team.
- Explore research-based, effective practices of high performing districts.
- Review and revise the district's shared mission, vision, core values/commitments and goals.
- Set long-range goals and identify high leverage strategies that define what priorities need attention to move the district to a higher level of performance
- Recommend the strategic plan to the superintendent.

Notes:

ACTIVITY TWO: Understand what lies ahead for public education through four research articles selected by the district.

Article 1: Strategic Planning With Students, For Students.

Article 2: Addressing Teacher Burnout, Post-Pandemic Learning Environments, and Public Mistrust through Strategic Planning

Article 3: The Core Four of Personalized Learning.

Article 4: Future-Ready Schools

Each strategic plan team member was assigned one of the four articles to read prior to the Orientation. Part A will group participants into four rooms, one for each article. While in the room for 10 minutes those who read the same article will identify 5 key points to share with others when they return to their teams. Part B will group participants into six rooms, one for each stakeholder team to share their key points with each other.

Des Plaines District 62

Strategic Plan Orientation Homework

Read your assigned article. Record below 5 key points to share with others who will not have read the article. Record ideas of things to keep in mind as we begin the strategic planning process to set future direction for the district.

Article 1: Strategic Planning With Students, For Students. -

Education Elements

Key Point 1	Plan With Students For Students: Most adults overestimate their ability to understand and emphasize with their students' experiences at school. Nearly every school district strives to write a student-centered strategic plan, but how student-centered can your plan be without actively including student voice throughout the planning process?
Key Point 2	Amplifying Student Voice in the Process: Understanding what student data tells us leads to strategic plan than better addresses student needs. It is critical to have student voice on the strategic planning team. It is also critical to engage students not on the team to provide feedback to team thoughts and ideas. Student satisfaction data tells important stories.
Key Point 3	Generating Student-Centered Solutions: Students indicated their favorite part of the process was brainstorming possible actions and strategies in response to "How Might We" questions. During table team discussion it was critical to have small group discussions to listen and understand different perspectives. Often parents felt differently than community members. Students felt differently than teachers or other staff. Different perspectives led to generating better solutions. Together each accomplishes more.
Key Point 4	The Impact of the Process on Student Involved: The more the team began to know everyone better I started to realize that it was safe to ask questions and make mistakes. You know, we are all just there to make our school better. The students were referring to an integral element of successful teaming: psychological safety. Psychological safety is the shared belief that all ideas, questions, and feedback are welcome and that it is safe to take risks and admit mistakes. The impact of creating a psychologically safe environment goes beyond just idea generation. Students reported experiencing personal growth as a result of serving on the steering team and collaborating with others in this safe space.
Key Point 5	Selecting Students for the Team: The reality is that there are no set criteria when it comes to selecting the right students to serve on your strategic planning steering team. Select students able to fully see and understand the perspectives of others, which is vital to the strategic planning process. Select students who are involved in a wide array of activities within the school district. Select students who together can weigh in on various aspects of student needs.
Notes:	

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Article 2: Addressing Teacher Burnout, Post-Pandemic Learning Environments, and Public Mistrust through Strategic Planning **-Collin Thompson, Education Elements**

Key Point 1	Sometimes we need to pause and create new strategies when the ones we have in place are not working. This applies to school districts today who are facing very challenging circumstances with a record number of educators leaving the profession, math and reading levels at a twenty-year low, and public trust in education eroding. This plan should provide teachers with adequate support, address learners' post-pandemic needs, and rebuild community confidence. A strategic plan that is rooted in community engagement leads to stronger community buy-in and two-way trust.
Key Point 2	Addressing Teacher Burnout: Having a strategic plan that is created with teachers, and not for them, can help districts identify systemic barriers that contribute to teacher confusion and burnout and address them appropriately. More than half of teachers who responded to a recent nationwide survey indicated they were considering quitting the profession. There are alarmingly fewer students considering education as a profession. The profession is under great scrutiny when one looks at student achievement results. Educator pay and benefits are in question. A strategic plan should include responsive priorities to directly support teachers, including enhancing wellness development opportunities by implementing a professional development scope and sequence, adapting curriculum in response to Professional Learning Community data, and creating moments of connection with teachers and staff by celebrating achievements.
Key Point 3	Post Pandemic Learning Environments: Isolation during the pandemic led to an alarming increase in students' feelings of anxiety, depression, fatigue, and distress. This data becomes even more startling when you consider that kids and teens had already been facing record levels of mental health challenges prior to the onset of COVID-19. A number of districts that are working to address the emotional and social needs of their students through their strategic plan have identified some key steps to support students. These include the hiring and retention of more mental health providers, establishing a training program to equip teachers and staff with the tools they need to support students, and creating opportunities for positive student-to-student and teacher-to-student connections which cultivate respect and celebrate diversity.
Key Point 4	Public Mistrust: Yet another challenge school districts face is the erosion of public trust. In many parts of the country, tensions between parents and school officials have risen in very public ways, often documented and widely discussed online. Concerns from parents include fears that their children will fall behind academically as a result of COVID-19, safety concerns at school, and their children's acute social and emotional needs. According to one survey, 9 in 10 parents worry that their children will not be able to recover academically from the pandemic. Transparency and two-way communication are imperative for districts to assure parents that they can trust the district with their children's education and well-being. The creation of a strategic plan that responds to the concerns of parents allows districts to implement structures and systems that help foster communication, collaboration, and trust.
Key Point 5	The creation of a community-centered, responsive strategic plan: Provides districts with the roadmap they need to meet constituent needs. While strategic plans are not a panacea for teacher burnout, post-pandemic learning challenges, and public mistrust, they are a proven way to make the changes needed to achieve the results desired.
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Article 3: The Core Four of Personalized Learning. - Education Elements

Key Point 1	Student Ownership: The components that make up the Core Four of Personalizing Learning categorize the key practices that build student ownership of learning. These are the practices we have most often seen that build agency, self-actualization, and lifelong learners. Building student ownership of learning requires positive relationships with students. Teachers who know and care about their students as individuals as best able to personalize learning that builds ownership.
Key Point 2	Student Reflection and Goal Setting: Practices that can build a bridge for students between the content they are learning and why they are learning it. While these are two separate practices, they can, and should be interconnected in the classroom. Reflecting on what we know and how we learn builds self-awareness that can make goal-setting a truly meaningful experience. Setting goals empower students to dictate their own indicators of success that are important for their personal growth.
Key Point 3	Targeted Instruction: Students can articulate what instruction they are receiving and why, and students have some choice over the instruction they receive. By analyzing data and using it to tailor the learning experiences, we shift from a one-size-fits-none approach to a classroom environment grounded in students' strengths, needs, and interests. Teachers who target instruction modify instruction to better meet students where they are and provide opportunities for students to have voice and choice in their instructional experience.
Key Point 4	Collaboration and Creativity: Personalizing learning encourages students to work with one another, share ideas, create new solutions and projects, provide one another with feedback, and, in the process, learn more about themselves. A research study of top U.S. companies shared the skills students need in a post-pandemic world, and every single one named self-awareness and collaboration, comfort with ambiguity, or strategic and agile thinking to solve complex problem.
Key Point 5	Flexible Path and Pace: Students learn in different ways and to truly personalize the learning experience, there must be opportunities for students to progress towards mastery of their learning through flexible learning pathways and at different paces. Learning pathways are the teacher-curated set of learning activities and checkpoints that lead all students to a common outcome or objective (standards or competencies). Creating differentiated pathways for students allows us to honor the unique needs, talents, and strengths of each student as they progress through their learning journey.
Notes:	

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Article 4: We Are Failing the Covid Generation – All4Ed

Key Point 1	Although we are back in school, kids are not alright: On the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), math and reading scores for fourth and eighth grade students reached record lows in 2022. One-third of students in both grades can't read at even the "basic" achievement level—the lowest level on the test. • 16 million students were chronically absent (i.e., missed more than 10% of school days) during the 2021-22 school year, twice as many as in previous years, according to Attendance Works. • More than 8 in 10 public schools reported stunted behavioral and social-emotional development in their students because of the Covid-19 pandemic, according to the May 2022 IES Pulse survey. Nearly half reported an increase in threats of physical attacks among students.
Key Point 2	Of greatest concern are the older students who have the least time to catch up: ACT college admission scores are the lowest since 1991 (19.8 average). • It will take the average eighth grader 7.4 months to catch up to pre-pandemic levels in reading and 9.1 months in math, according to NWEA. • While graduation rates are up, so is grade inflation, making it likely that many students exited the system unprepared for college and careers. • 57% of teenage girls in the U.S. felt persistently sad or hopeless, and 30% seriously considered suicide, according to the CDC's 2021 Youth Risk Behavior Survey Data Summary & Trends Report. • Undergraduate enrollment at public universities and community colleges dropped 7% from 2019 to 2023, with enrollment in two-year colleges declining the most dramatically
Key Point 3	K-12 Responses have been inadequate: Only two in 100 students are receiving the kind of high-impact tutoring that makes a difference, according to researchers at USC. One in 5 students graded their schools D or F in mental health supports, individualized instruction, and feeling excited about learning, according to Gallup's Spring 2023 survey. Teachers, who have a daily presence in the lives of young people, reported rates of stress that were nearly two times prepandemic levels. A recent report from CRPE found that not only did student learning regress during the pandemic, so did the quality of teaching and the ability for the school systems studied to simultaneously hold high instructional expectations and provide strong support for all students
Key Point 4	Some bright spots: Some schools, school systems, states, and postsecondary institutions are demonstrating what's possible when leaders are willing to rethink outdated approaches and center instruction and support on what students need most. The full report profiles schools that provide competency-based education to pregnant, parenting, and underserved students, that help students explore career interests and non-college options, and that offer AI-themed curricula, more project-based learning, and dual enrollment with local colleges, among other innovations. Colleges such as Arizona State University, City University of New York (CUNY), and New York University are rethinking how to better serve their students, while states such as Colorado and Virginia have bold plans to ensure that every high school student graduates with an associate degree and an industry-recognized credential—part of a deliberate strategy to blur the lines between high school and postsecondary success.
Key Point 5	Recommendations: Offer transparency regarding the effectiveness of schools in ensuring that every child is on track to master core skills. Invest in a youth intervention strategy. • Invest in middle, high school and college mastery programs. • Support research to track the Covid

	generation's progress. • Rethink high school to career pathways. • Invest in a New American High School.
Notes:	

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Article 4: Future-Ready Schools. – All4Ed

Key Point 1	Readiness is a new important measurement of school success. Nationwide, nearly 86% of students graduate from high school within four years, but this seemingly stellar rate tells an incomplete story. Even though more students are graduating, many lack the skills to succeed in college, work, and life. Nearly 70% of beginning students at public two-year colleges must take remedial courses to master material they should have learned in high school. Meanwhile, 82% of employers report that recent high school graduates have at least some gaps in preparation for typical jobs in their companies. We are interested in Kindergarten Readiness, Grade Level Readiness, Middle School Readiness, High School Readiness, Post-secondary Readiness, College and Career Readiness, and Life Readiness.
Key Point 2	Student Learning is Changing: Future Ready Schools® (FRS) helps district leaders, principals, and teachers work together to transform their schools using collaborative, creative, and bold practices that improve learning outcomes for all students. Every student, no matter their zip code, deserves access to a robust and fulfilling technology-enabled public education that prepares them for success in work and life.
Key Point 3	What Matters Most: Focus on Instruction and the Love of Learning: Buying devices and ensuring internet access is not sufficient. Successful transition to a “future ready” school system happens when districts find a compelling blend of technology planning, collaborative leadership, and a sincere love for teaching and learning – for the betterment of each and every student. As districts across the United States make enormous investments in technology – and plan for successful deployment, it is critical to emphasize the prioritization of improvements to instructional practices. Concentrating on what matters most will ensure that schools deliver technology’s promises for improved student outcomes.
Key Point 4	Advance Exemplars of Excellence, Equity, and Innovation: The FRS network acts as a convener, collaborator, publisher, promoter, counselor, emulator, and evangelist of “best practices” in technology-enabled education.
Key Point 5	Future Ready School Resources: Future Ready School Resources: FRS’s research-based framework is the foundation of our programming, emphasizing collaborative leadership, system redesign, and continuous improvement to accomplish technology-enabled, learner-centered

	educational experiences for all students. The seven critical areas of the framework are: Curriculum, instruction & assessment; Personalized professional learning; Robust infrastructure; Budget & other resources; Community partnerships; Data & Privacy; and Use of Space & time.
Notes:	

ACTIVITY THREE: REVIEW THE STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

Take notes to help you understand the Big Picture of strategic planning:



- Readiness**
- Orientation**
- Data Retreat**
- Vision Retreat**
- Setting Direction Retreat**
- Recommendation**
- Living the Plan**

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ACTIVITY FOUR: REVIEW THE STATUS OF THE CURRENT STRATEGIC PLAN

<p>What is the status of the current plan? Has the plan been a useful document to guide the district’s action over time?</p>	
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ACTIVITY FIVE: EXAMINE A DISTRICT STRATEGIC PLAN BASED ON THIS STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

<p>One Page:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mission, Motto, and Vision • Graduate, Educator, and System Portraits • Core Values • Long-range Goals • High-Leverage Strategies 	<p>Supporting Documents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Portrait Characteristics • Core Value Descriptors • Strategy Descriptors • Strategy Action Plan Templates • Progress Monitoring & Reporting Templates • Strategic Management System • Living the Plan
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ACTIVITY SIX: PREVIEW THE DISTRICT’S STRATEGIC PLANNING WEBSITE.

Share a transparent location for the strategic plan team as well as stakeholders who want to follow the process.

ACTIVITY SEVEN: PREVIEW THE DATA RETREAT

Date: October 17

Time: 8:30 am – 3:30 pm

Purpose: To paint a picture with data and other information of “where the district is now” with its performance.

- Academic Data and Information
- Culture Data and Information
- Resources Data and Information

We will examine trend, cohort, subgroup, and comparative data.

We will develop a shared understanding of what is going well (strengths) and what needs our attention (Weaknesses, Opportunities).

We will produce a SWOT Analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats)

“Strategic planning is not about taking on additional work; it is about taking all those numerous daily decisions and initiatives and making them part of an integrated focus system. Strategic Planning is a continuous improvement process based on key questions.” - Van Clay, Soldwedel, and Many 2011

A strategic plan helps to ensure the district is a school system rather than a system of schools:

School System

- ***Aligned across the entire organization, vertically across roles, and horizontally in terms of initiatives***
- ***Uses shared decision-making based on role expertise***
- ***Sets goals and priorities that do not compete with each other for time and resources***

System of Schools

- ***Comprised of schools that are independent of—rather than aligned with—each other and with the school organization’s goals***
- ***Concerned more with individual or school initiatives***
- ***Characterized by competing initiatives***

- *Characterized by focused and efficient alignment: use of time and resources is maximized to meet organizational and school goals*

Marked by haphazard and random alignment that doesn't change the overall organization in a focused continuous way

Thanks for a great session!

