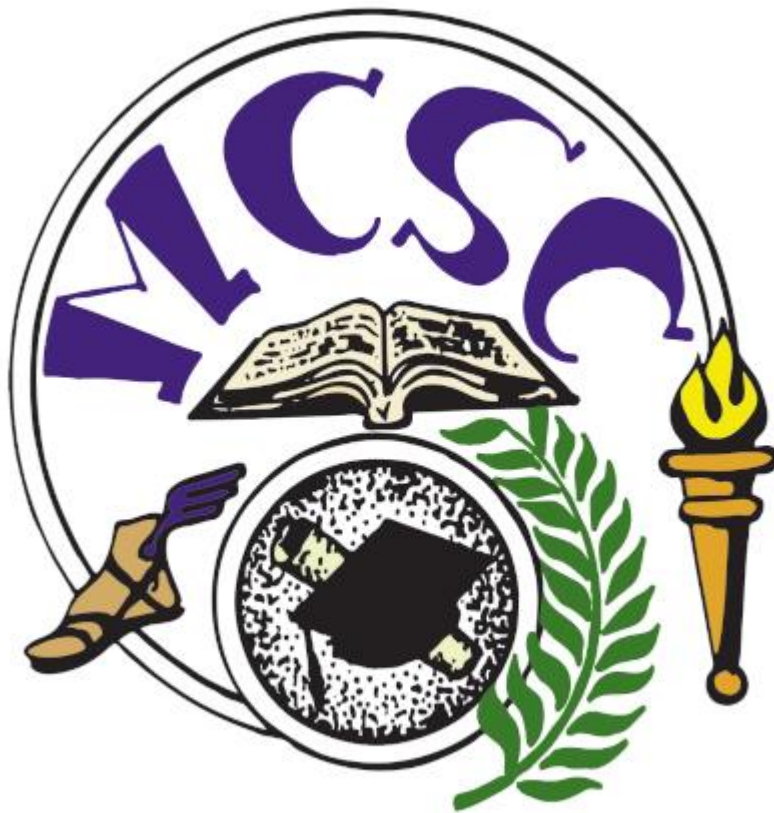


Strategic Plan

2023-2028



Merrillville Community School Corporation

Merrillville, Indiana

MESSAGE FROM SUPERINTENDENT NICK BROWN

Welcome to Our New K-12 Strategic Plan: A Vision of Inclusivity and Success for All Students!

Dear Students, Parents, Educators, and Community Members,

We are thrilled to introduce our new K-12 Strategic Plan, a culmination of dedication, collaboration, and inclusivity. This plan marks a significant milestone in our journey toward providing the finest education for all our students.

Over the past year, we embarked on a remarkable journey of reflection and growth, with one overarching goal in mind: to create a strategic plan that embraces the richness of diversity, ensures equity for every student, and paves a road to success that leaves no one behind.

The heart of this plan lies in its inclusivity. We have engaged with stakeholders from every corner of our community, valuing every perspective and listening to every voice. Parents, teachers, students, administrators, and community members have all played a vital role in shaping this vision. Through surveys, town hall meetings, and workshops, we have created our strategic plan with the collective input and insights of many key stakeholder groups.

Our new strategic plan is not just a document; it's a promise. A promise to provide a world-class education that recognizes the unique strengths and needs of each child. It's a promise to foster an environment where diversity is celebrated, and every student feels valued, respected, and included.

This plan lays out a clear roadmap to success. It outlines our goals and strategies to enhance academic achievement, promote social-emotional growth, and provide equitable access to resources and opportunities. It sets the stage for innovation in teaching and learning, ensuring that our students are prepared for the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century.

As we unveil this strategic plan, we also invite you to be an active part of its implementation. Together, we will turn this vision into reality, making our schools not just places of learning, but hubs of inspiration and empowerment.

Thank you for your unwavering support, your passion for education, and your commitment to the success of every student in our district. Together, we will achieve greatness, and together, we will forge a brighter future for our children.

Welcome to a new era of inclusivity, collaboration, and success in education.

Sincerely,

Nicholas G. Brown, Ed.S.
Superintendent of Schools

MISSION

Provide high-quality learning experiences that prepare students to be productive citizens in a global society.

VISION

We challenge our students with an inclusive, world-class education that affords exciting opportunities for growth and development. We engage our families and community through timely and accurate communications that cultivate dynamic relationships. Our commitment establishes Merrillville schools as the dominant leader of relentless success.

STRATEGIC FOCUS



Student
Achievement



Relationships



Strategic
Communications



Attract, Retain
and Develop
Staff



Community
Engagement

Process

During the 2022-2023 school year, Merrillville Community School Corporation engaged in a comprehensive Strategic Planning process. Its primary aim is to align all stakeholders on a shared mission, vision, common goals, and unified direction for our district's educational efforts for the next five years.

We believed that the burden and/or responsibility for developing the strategic plan did not rest solely with the Central Office Leadership or School Board. It required an approach that was inclusive, transparent, unbiased and involved all stakeholder voices. To reflect this shared responsibility, the process occurred in several phases and involved different teams.

Phase	Outcomes	Timeframe
Data Collection	Collected feedback from the community about ideas, suggestions, hopes and concerns in a variety of ways including 2022 Program Audit, Parent/Student/Staff Surveys, Focus Groups, Advisory Team Sessions, Individual dialogues, and other communication tools. The collection of data and feedback revealed	Aug. - Oct. 2022

	the district's strengths as well as opportunities for growth.	
Feedback and Synthesis	Incorporated all feedback collected and synthesized the data to serve as foundation for Strategic Plan.	Oct – Dec. 2022
Data Aggregation & Prioritization	Core Team and Advisory Teams aggregated themes and developed Strategic Priorities, Portrait of a Pirate Graduate formulated our shared mission & vision for the next 5 years, the objectives for students' performance, and the strategies the district is committing to in order to support students in reaching these objectives.	Dec. 2022 – Jan 2023
Action Planning & Scheduling	Working Groups created specific, concrete plans for each strategic focus area.	Jan. 2023 – Apr. 2023
Board Approval	Adoption of Full Strategic Plan, including Strategic Direction and Action Plans, shared with School Board* and Community.	June 2023

Core Team: Comprised of Central Office Leaders, School Leadership and Teachers. Responsible for process oversight and synthesized the action items. The team ensured the process is inclusive, open, transparent and supports the overall district goals. Engaged during the entire project, this team meeting bi-monthly.

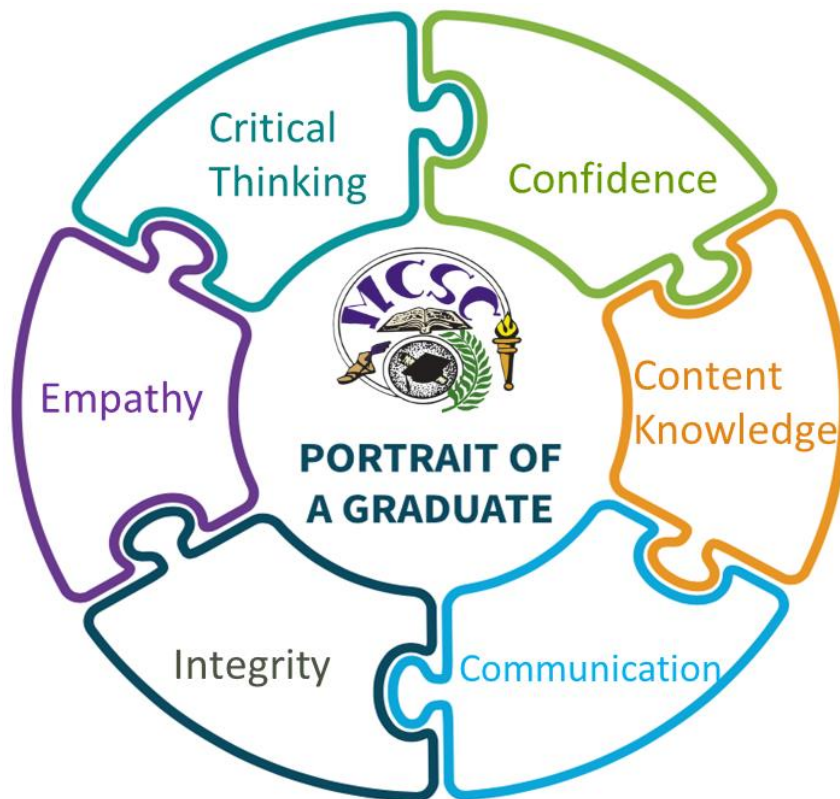
Advisory Team: The broader team comprised of central office leaders, administrators, teachers, parents, students and community members primary purpose was to provide stakeholder insight and feedback. Through their efforts the strategic focus themes emerged. The Advisory Teams participated in three (3) sessions.

Working Groups: Stakeholders who have the greatest responsibility for executing on the approved plan. They have the experience, expertise, and perspective to support the planning process of each strategic priority and initiative. Team Leads were established from Core Team members and held the responsibility of keeping them on track and facilitating the decision process.

School Board: Provides oversight, resources and governance of the approved plan.

Portrait of a Pirate Graduate

A Portrait of a Graduate¹ is a set of attributes and qualities MCSC believes every student should possess when they walk across the stage at graduation to be ready to succeed on the next path of their life. The Portrait of a Graduate reflects our vision and shared understanding of the specific skills students will need to thrive in the future. We highlight the six (6) prevailing characteristics and fourteen (14) supporting traits.



Critical Thinking	Confidence	Content Knowledge	Communication	Integrity	Empathy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Problem Solving • Resourceful 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adaptability • Courageous 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creativity • Curiosity • Financial Literacy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaboration • Conflict Resolution 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conscientious • Contributors • Civic Literacy • Leadership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Global Citizen

¹ Competency Definitions in Appendix

Strategic Focus and Goals

The strategic plan acts as a roadmap for our school system and a clear plan for where we are heading.



Student Achievement

Definition: How we will meet all course and grade level outcomes.

Goal: Establish a consistent and effective process to assess, analyze and measure student learning for continuous improvement.

Initiatives:

- Effective Use of Data
 - Financial Literacy Course
 - Culturally Responsive Curriculum
 - Increase Core Academic & Technical Diplomas
 - Academic Engagement through differentiation
 - Prioritize Indiana Academic Standards
-



Relationships

Definition: How we will regard and behave towards each other.

Goal: Create an emotionally and physically safe environment where all stakeholders feel valued.

Initiatives:

- Parent University
- Peer Mediation Program
- Mentorship Program
- Positive Behavioral Intervention & Supports (PBIS)



Strategic Communications

Definition: How we will deliberately utilize effective communication methods.

Goal: Reach stakeholders with timely and targeted messages that keep them informed and engaged.

Initiatives:

- Shared Mission & Vision
 - Decision Making Transparency
 - Refined focus across MCSC District
-



Attract, Develop and Retain Staff

Definition: How we will support and engage all MCSC personnel.

Goal: Identify, hire and retain a highly skilled, diverse staff through recruiting, training and meaningful participation in various professional development opportunities.

Initiatives:

- Expand Staff Mentorship Program
- Enhanced Staff Health and Well-being
- Stress Mediation Program
- Competitive Total Rewards/Compensation



Community Engagement

Definition: How we will reach out and engage all district stakeholders.

Goal: Increase opportunities for supportive, cooperative engagement between the school and community and improve accuracy and timeliness of communications.

Initiatives:

- Welcome to Merrillville Pirate Training
 - Successful Home/School Interactions with Purpose
 - Strengthen F.A.C.E.S.
 - Community Organization Outreach
-

Monitoring & Accountability

We will assess our progress toward our goals annually. Each spring, the board will evaluate the strategic plan goals and established goals for the following school year. We will provide ongoing updates throughout the year during school board meetings to update the school board on our progress toward achieving our key performance indicators.

Student Achievement

Goal: Establish a consistent and effective process to assess, analyze and measure student learning for continuous improvement.

Initiatives:

- **Effective Use of Data:** Create a clear and concise system for collecting formal and informal data in order for teachers to increase student achievement.

- Build a district data governance team to establish best practices for collection, monitoring and the use of data.
- Establish storage and retrieval process
- Establish standard set of matrix data points to monitor
- Track professional development data

- **Financial Literacy Course:** Introduce financial concepts to students based on various levels of understanding. Build on previous skill sets learned from grade to grade. Develop financial literacy for all students.

- Implement age-appropriate content for students at grade level.
- Set goals for each grade level to measure understanding of financial concepts.
- Partner with external organizations to develop programs and/or incentives.

- **Culturally Responsive Curriculum:** K-12 programming that reflects an integration of ethnic and cultural representation throughout all aspects of teaching and learning. Create an inclusive environment in which all student, staff and faculty are able to thrive and be able to navigate the world.

- Adopt Culturally responsive curriculum & textbooks
- Establish and deliver culturally relevant professional development for staff.
- Empower homerooms that teach customs and traditions.
- Music and art that reflect multiple cultures throughout the buildings
- Celebrate holiday, invite guest speakers and other professionals into classrooms
- Establish pen pal exchanges with students of other cultures
- Increase number of culturally focused field trips

- **Increase Core Academic & Technical Diplomas**

- Align MHS requirements with state requirements
- Analyze general diploma student data to determine deficiencies in meeting Core 40 requirements.
- Conduct an audit on Core 40 classes to determine which courses need to be capped at effective capacities
- Evaluate and align grading and reporting practices schoolwide to create consistency.

- **Increase Academic Engagement through differentiation**

- Offer professional development opportunities for teachers
- Instructional coaching will be provided for teachers
- Mentoring and peer observation program
- Implement grade level common assessments
- Conduct PLC conversation and data discussions regularly.

- **Prioritize Indiana Academic Standards**

 Not Started  In Process  Completed

Relationships

Goal: Create an emotionally and physically safe environment where all stakeholders feel values.

Initiatives:

- **Parent University:** Provide parents several opportunities throughout the year to participate in learning about the school corporation.

- Set a calendar of meetings for full year
- Create a course syllabus annually
- Identify district experts to provide information
- Leverage communication platforms ex. social media, banners/flyers, etc.
- Record presentation for posting on digital formats
- Create a parents recognitions program

- **Peer Mediation/Mentorship Program:** Provide students with the opportunity to be mentors and mediators to each other

- Develop process and guidelines for program for MIS, Pierce and High Schools
- Define specific issues to be resolved via mentorship and/or mediation
- Identify program supervisors
- Select and train students for program
- Development calendar for mentors to visit school

- **Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (P.B.I.S.):** Build consistency in the PBIS program

- Evaluate the implementation of our PBIS programs across the district
- Select student to provide feedback and support plan
- Monitor the implementation of the program
- Implement real time program adjustment according to data

 Not Started  In Process  Completed

Strategic Communications

Goal: Reach stakeholders with timely and targeted messages that keep them informed and engaged.

Initiatives:

- **Shared Mission & Vision:** Develop, introduce and rally around a shared mission and vision.
 - Develop a robust campaign to introduce and socialize our mission and vision.
 - Leverage multiple platforms including social media, banners/flyers, QR Codes, billboards, etc.
 - Develop hashtags to be used at sporting events, communications, etc.
 - Create a video explaining the vision and post to CTE programs, PNN taping, etc.

- **Decision Making Transparency:** Improve the transparency of district decisions.
 - Establish a centralized communications platform
 - Clean up websites
 - Establish a cadence for newsletters to staff and community
 - Establish communication plan and flow chart for each building
 - Establish cadence and procedure for sharing central leadership meeting notes

- **Refine focus across the school corporation:** Develop intentional and focused communication plan.
 - Clarify and communicate the focus and timelines of the strategic plan
 - Make CTE viable options for students
 - Leverage communications platforms to keep stakeholders informed of our progress.

Not Started In Process Completed

Attract, Retain and Develop Staff

Goal: Identify, hire and retain a highly skilled, diverse staff through recruiting, training and meaningful participation in various professional development opportunities.

Initiatives:

- **Expand Staff Mentorship Program:** Assign new employees a mentor/lead for onboarding supporting

- Establish mentorship/lead criteria and recruit mentors/leads for each position
- Create program expectations and processes
- Establish accountability and monitoring process
- Track pre and post mentor/lead program retention data

- **Enhance Staff Health & Well Being:** Create opportunities for staff to decompress and release stress in a healthy way, including subsidizing cost of gym memberships.

- Survey staff to determine program interest
- Establish program usage expectations
- Track program impact on health and well being

- **Stress Mediation Program:** Opportunities for staff to decompress using amygdala reset rooms.

- Survey staff to determine program interest
- Establish program usage expectations
- Track program impact on health and well being

- **Competitive Total Rewards/Compensation:** Continue to monitor salaries and total rewards to remain competitive.

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- Compose a warehouse of salaries and pay rates that will be used to compare our competitiveness with surrounding districts.

Community Engagement

Goal: Increase opportunities for supportive, cooperative engagement between the school and community and improve accuracy and timeliness of communications.

Initiatives:

- **Welcome to Merrillville Pirate Training:** This program is designed to acclimate families and new enrollees to the culture and expectations of MCSC.

- Conduct Welcome meeting for parents and/or students
- Establish ongoing check-ins
- Provide building tours
- Create welcome materials and videos.

- **Successful Home/School Interactions with Purpose (SHIP)**

- Create platform that will allow easy, quick two-way communication with parents to ask and answer questions or receive information.
- Create a FAQs document
- Leverage “push” notifications for school communications
- Establish parent resource rooms in every building
- Deploy MCSC application

- **Strengthen F.A.C.E.S. Program:** Provide information and support to parents and students that will help maintain or increase attendance rates, strengthen connection to students and families and school resources and increase engagement in school programming and activities.

- Utilize videos, brochures, websites, social media to increase program awareness
- Form committee with building level admin and other support staff to plan informational meeting
- Develop and track metrics that highlight impact of FACES program

- **Community Mentoring**

 Not Started  In Process  Completed

Appendix:

Portrait of a Graduate (Pirate) Definitions

Prevailing Characteristics

Communication:

Our students: Articulate thoughts and ideas effectively using oral, written, and nonverbal communication skills in a variety of forms and contexts. Listen effectively to decipher meaning, including knowledge, values, attitudes, and intentions. Use communication for a range of purposes and audiences (e.g. to inform, instruct, motivate, and persuade). Asking the right questions

Confidence:

Our students: Believe in one's ability to ultimately attain a defined goal. Persist to overcome adversity and obstacles to uncover alternate strategies to achieve goals. Reflect on successes and failures as a means to refine the path moving forward. Take initiative and act with purpose.

Content Knowledge:

Our students: Demonstrate proficiency in academic content such as foundational knowledge, literacy, and STEM. Have the ability to process complex information, identify problems, make informed decisions, and present creative solutions. Use content knowledge in routine, as well as innovative, ways in real-world situations.

Critical Thinking:

Our students: Consistently improve the quality of one's own thinking by skillfully analyzing, assessing, and reconstructing. Apply disciplined thinking that is clear, rational, open-minded, and informed by evidence. Have the ability to learn and adapt to different perspectives.

Empathy:

Our students: Demonstrate awareness, sensitivity, concern, and respect to connect with others' feelings, opinions, experiences, and culture. Imagine what others are thinking, feeling, or experiencing.

Integrity:

Our students: Act in a trustworthy and honest manner. Earn others' trust and respect through honest, principled behaviors.

Supporting Traits

Adaptability:

Our students: Demonstrate agility in thoughts and actions. Respond productively to feedback, praise, setbacks, and criticism. Understand, negotiate, and balance diverse views and beliefs to reach workable solutions. Demonstrate flexibility when acclimating to various roles and situations.

Civic Literacy:

Our students: Participate effectively in civic life through knowing how to stay informed and understanding governmental processes. Make meaningful contributions to society based in a strong understanding of systems of government and individual responsibility as a citizen. Exercise the rights and obligations of citizenship at local, state, and national levels.

Collaboration:

Our students: Apply skills to clearly, effectively, and convincingly express ideas and messages to others appropriate to the environment. Demonstrate the ability to build relationships with a variety of different people. Work well with others in a team.

Conflict Resolution:

Our students: Engage in appropriate communication to resolve disagreements peacefully and productively.

Conscientious:

Our students: Recognize how personal decisions and actions have an impact beyond oneself. Demonstrate a diligent work ethic and attentiveness to detail. Work responsibly by being organized, thorough, and efficient.

Contributors:

Our students: Act with integrity and empathy while demonstrating personal accountability and make positive contributions to the world. Actively pursue opportunities that make a positive difference in the lives of others.

Courageous:

Our students: Demonstrate ability to learn from mistakes. Engage when the outcome or benefit is unknown or unclear. Demonstrate mental fortitude to pursue meaningful goals, despite daunting challenges.

Creativity:

Our students: Demonstrate originality, imagination, and new ways of thinking about things. Transcend traditional ideas, rules, patterns, and relationships to create new or meaningful ideas, methods, or interpretations.

Curiosity:

Our students: Eagerly explore the world around them. Inquisitively seek answers and understanding. Are energized by new learning and insights, including those different from currently held ideas, beliefs, and values.

Financial Literacy:

Our students: Develop practical knowledge and skills that encourage financial literacy that will lead to financial security and independence. Know how to make appropriate personal economic choices. Understand the role of the economy in society.

Global Citizens:

Our students: Value and embrace diverse cultures and unique perspectives through mutual respect and open dialogue. Demonstrate personal, civic, social, local, and global responsibility through ethical and empathetic behaviors. Contribute and take action to make the world a better place.

Leadership:

Our students: Are visionary and inspire positive action in others. Recognize, invest in, and leverage strengths to build collective ownership and action. Create the environment or the conditions that empower others to grow and succeed. Build relationships with others through trust and compassion.

Problem Solving:

Our students: Identify, evaluate, and prioritize solutions to difficult or complex situations. Implement and reflect critically on a solution. Seek relevant information to create logical reasoning in the creation of a solution.

Resourceful:

Our students: Access, select, and use resources efficiently and wisely to achieve goals successfully. Transfer and adapt learnings from diverse experiences.