



# 2019-2024 STRATEGIC PLAN

## Building Our Future by Building on Our Strengths

UPPER ARLINGTON SCHOOLS

SERVE, LEAD, SUCCEED





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## 2019-2024 STRATEGIC PLAN

### OVERVIEW

Upper Arlington Schools has been a national leader in education for generations. As we move forward in the school district's second century, we will focus even more intently on our strengths in order to ensure future generations of students will be uniquely accomplished and prepared to serve, lead and succeed.

The 2019-2024 Strategic Plan draws attention to our long-running philosophy of educating the whole child. Our staff will continue to support our students in academics, the arts and athletics as well as the development of critical life skills and social-emotional learning. This balanced approach pays off in the development of more well-rounded and higher achieving students.

Maintaining a relentless commitment to our whole child philosophy demands that we pursue equitable practices that cultivate the diverse gifts, talents, interests and identities of every child as they learn how to serve, lead and succeed. The Upper Arlington School District has been on this journey for quite some time. Our new strategic plan builds on the accomplishments of the 2015-2019 plan. **There is no finish line – just a contagious drive to make our whole-child philosophy a daily reality for every student.**

Strategic planning is about the *why* and the *what*. Strategy helps level-set *what* we do and *why* we do it. It builds on our strengths to create, ensure and align strategies, practices and processes that make a real difference in what we want to accomplish together. Our plan is guided by a clear vision of student success that reflects the shared aspirations of our students, families, staff and community. It guides all key decisions regarding learning, instruction, resource allocation, physical environment and day-to-day operations.



## APPROACH

In June 2018 the Board of Education laid out three interrelated focus areas for the next strategic plan – **academic performance and personalization, student and staff well-being** and **accountability** – with the recognition that research supports the connection between well-being and achievement. A recent global education report highlights the need for schools in the 21<sup>st</sup> century “to prepare students for an interconnected world in which students understand and appreciate different perspectives and worldviews, interact successfully and respectfully with others, and take responsible action toward sustainability and collective well-being” (Schleicher, 2018, p. 29).

For students to be successful in an interconnected world, social and emotional skills are necessary. A meta-analysis of 213 studies of school-based social and emotional learning programs shows that social-emotional learning not only improves student achievement by an average of 11 percentile points but also increases prosocial behaviors (kindness, empathy, sharing); reduces depression and stress among students; and improves student attitudes toward school (Durlak, 2011).

## PROCESS

Similar to the last strategic planning process, the 2019-2024 approach was led by a Strategic Coordination Group (SCG) composed of a diverse array of community, business, staff and administration voices. The process was designed around the following essential questions tied to the three Board-defined focus areas.

### **Academic Performance and Personalization:**

*What must Upper Arlington Schools do to advance a learner and learning-centered culture?*

### **Student and Staff Well-Being:**

*What must Upper Arlington Schools do to advance student and staff safety through well-being?*

### **Accountability:**

*What must Upper Arlington Schools do to advance a system and culture of continuous improvement?*





Each essential question was addressed by an inquiry team authorized to identify a small set of recommendations with the promise of greatest impact. The team researching student and staff well-being was composed of students, family members, community leaders and educators. It also hosted a much larger advisory committee to ensure capturing diverse perspectives and voices. The team exploring academic performance and personalization was composed of the district's existing Teaching and Learning Team (TLT) involving staff and administration from all buildings and district offices. The team exploring accountability and continuous improvement was made up of business, staff and administration representatives. The recommendations of all three teams were reviewed by the Strategic Coordination Group and the District Leadership Team. All three inquiry teams followed a similar protocol.

- What are our **operational definitions** of key ideas?
- What is the **current state**? What philosophies, policies and practices currently influence where we are?
- What does the current **research and literature** tell us about strategies and best practices for moving forward?
- What is the **desired state**? What does it look like, sound like and feel like?
- What are the **conditions and principles** that support and shape where we want to go next?
- How do we prioritize areas of improvement and **build on our strengths**?
- How will we know when we have achieved our desired states? What are the indicators, and how will/can they be **monitored and measured**?

The process was grounded in four principles.

1. Coherence – connect performance, personalization, well-being and accountability actions within our whole child philosophy
2. Ruthless prioritization – focus on a few actions that make the most difference
3. Build on our strengths – make sure we honor and grow what is working
4. Diversity, equity and inclusion – see, respect and engage all students and families

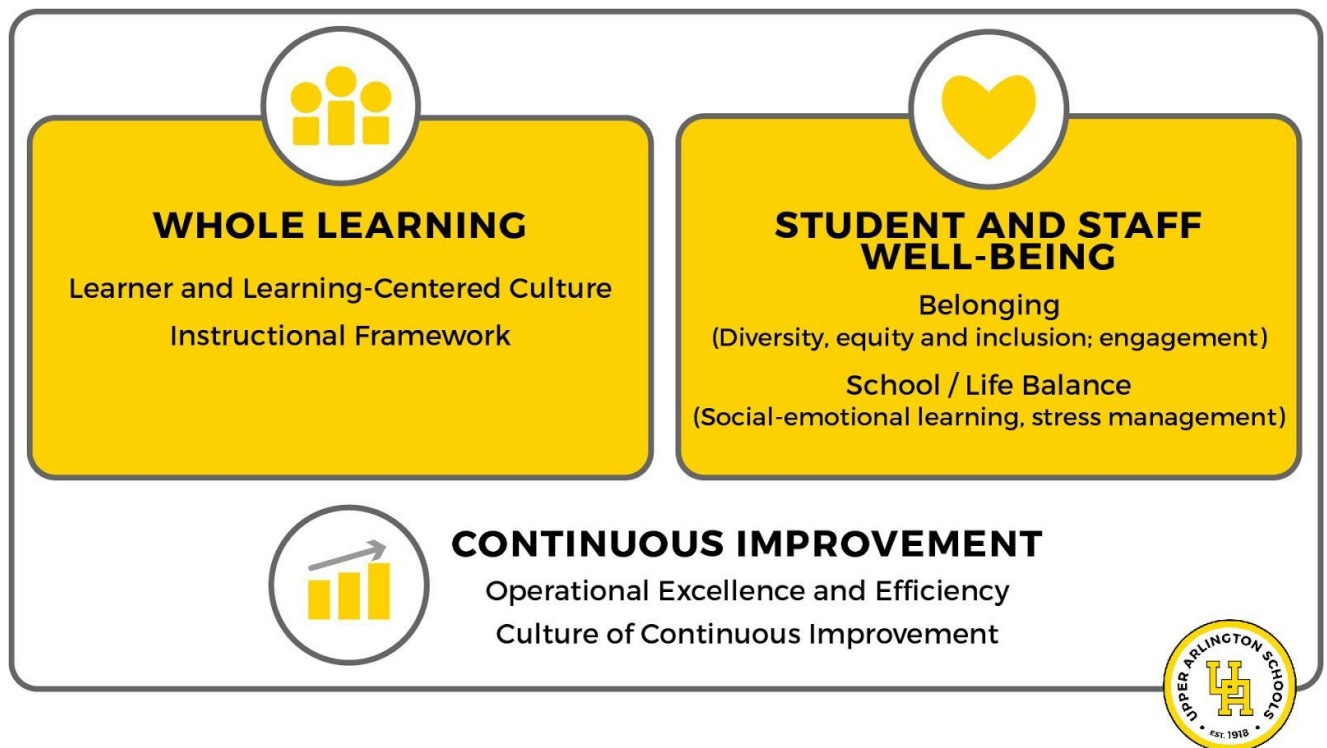
One of the district's greatest strengths is its culture. It makes our schools special places to learn and work. Strategic planning is critical, but it cannot succeed without a value-driven culture. This strategic plan is grounded in three core values – **start with heart, strength in team, and contagious drive**. Together, we build on these values to create an exceptional environment for everyone.





The 2019-2024 process has resulted in a plan that takes a disciplined approach to the Board's focus areas now redefined as three strategic priorities - **whole learning, student and staff well-being, and continuous improvement**. The graphic below demonstrates the connectivity of these priorities to our vision and mission.

## STRATEGIC PRIORITIES



## RECOMMENDATIONS

Each priority has a small set of actions to create, ensure and strengthen our collective capacity to realize our mission and vision. It is essential that the plan is both desirable and doable over the next three years.



## **PRIORITY: WHOLE LEARNING**

### ***Engage the whole learner***

Together, we build on our strengths to make our whole-child philosophy a daily reality. This means greater integration of rigorous academic content with deeper learning skills through a variety of engaging experiences, environments and relationships.

#### ***Engaging learning experiences***

*Dozens of students and staff members at Greensview Elementary School spent the 2018-2019 school year writing, illustrating, editing and marketing a book called “Golden Bears A to Z.” The book celebrates the people, places and traditions that make Upper Arlington such a special community. The project immersed students in real-world learning experiences, from signing a publishing contract to marketing the book to businesses and consumers across the community. “Golden Bears A to Z” is also part of the district’s long commitment to service learning, with proceeds benefiting the Upper Arlington Education Foundation.*



## **ACHIEVEMENT**

- Create a profile of an engaged learner that spans early childhood through graduation
- Ensure a guaranteed and viable curriculum
- Strengthen the value and purpose of curriculum cycles for all grade levels, including early childhood education

## **DIFFERENTIATION**

- Create job-embedded, personalized and peer-based professional learning
- Ensure a high-quality, balanced assessment system



- c. Strengthen Multi-Tier System of Support (MTSS) expectations, structures and processes

## AGENCY

- a. Create conditions so that learning is the constant and time is the variable
- b. Ensure collaborative instructional leadership around shared expectations, homework and grading practices
- c. Strengthen student-staff relationships

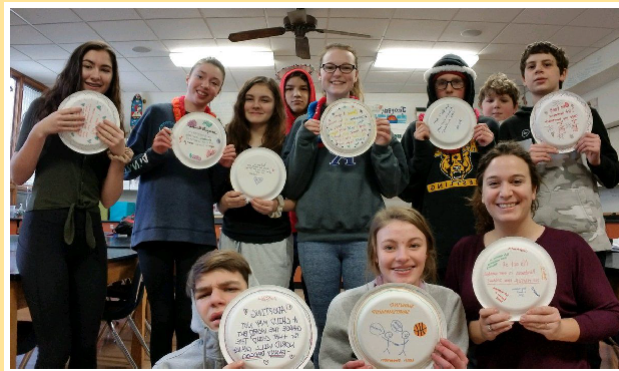
## PRIORITY: STUDENT AND STAFF WELL-BEING *Foster a safer and more inclusive environment*

Together, we build on our strengths to foster a safe and inclusive environment. This means we focus on two fundamental aspects of well-being. The first is **belonging** - a person's feeling of safety and connectedness where they can be authentic, supported by an inclusive culture that intentionally promotes relationships, builds trust and celebrates individuals. The second is **balance** - a person's feeling of harmony between school and personal time that allows for satisfaction in all areas of life. Belonging and balance both require a comprehensive approach that includes the continuous improvement of staff and student support services.

### ***Building relationships***

*Students and teachers at both middle schools look forward to their weekly advisory time. These mini-communities focus on social-emotional learning, acceptance and support of self and others, and service learning. Similar groups spanning all grade levels exist at several of the elementary schools.*

*These groups provide time for students to build important relationships with one another and with staff members.*







## **INTEGRATION**

- a. Create a culture that fosters emotional well-being, engagement and resilience
- b. Ensure system-wide, research-based Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) curricula integration
- c. Strengthen connections between life-management strategies and habits of mind with daily classroom learning experiences
- d. Strengthen systems to build developmentally appropriate student-to-student and student-to-adult relationships

## **INFRASTRUCTURE**

- a. Create a system for frequent qualitative and quantitative data collection for in-school and extracurricular experiences to continuously improve student and staff balance and belonging
- b. Ensure necessary human and operational resources to successfully implement and monitor district well-being initiatives
- c. Strengthen talent acquisition and management systems and practices to recruit, hire and retain a more diverse staff

## **CAPACITY**

- a. Create opportunities for cultivating relationships among staff through collective inquiry practices, collaboration to strengthen their professional practice, and staff mentoring and networking supports
- b. Ensure all staff engage in strategic learning experiences that increase their depth of knowledge in Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) and diversity, equity and inclusion practices and beliefs
- c. Strengthen systematic staff programming that encourages and supports the development of healthy habits for work-life balance
- d. Strengthen parent/guardian education that bridges home and school, partnering with parents/guardians as they navigate each child's journey to adulthood
- e. Strengthen a belonging and balance communications plan that includes branding, education and outreach with the primary audience being parents and guardians



## **PRIORITY: CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT**

*Get better at getting better*

Together, we build on our strengths to develop a consistent process improvement system and culture. This will serve as a foundational element of the plan and means taking a disciplined and ongoing approach to improving student and system outcomes tied to our strategic priorities and whole-child philosophy.

### ***Soliciting improvement ideas from within***

*During the 2018-2019 school year, Upper Arlington High School conducted its first Big Idea Hunt, soliciting system-improvement ideas from staff members. Approximately 75 percent of staff members took part in the process, which generated 65 ideas to support continuous improvement in the building.*



## **CONSISTENCY**

- a. Create a process-improvement framework that is consistent, cyclical and easy to use
- b. Ensure efficacy and ownership of framework through a system support team
- c. Strengthen leadership capacity to prioritize and use the improvement process

## **CAPACITY**

- a. Create better ways to solicit viable improvement ideas from students and staff



- b. Ensure the human and operational resources to support process improvement
- c. Strengthen faculty and staff capacity to use the process-improvement framework

## NEXT STEPS

- (1) Create a continuous improvement system support team that will coordinate an interactive process with internal and external stakeholders to identify key progress and performance indicators tied to strategic priorities and reflected in the Quality Profile**

Specifically, the indicator framework will focus on student achievement and agency (engaging the whole learner); belonging and balance (fostering a safe and inclusive environment); and costs avoided/benefits attained return on investment (getting better at getting better).

- (2) Align the Board-approved strategic plan recommendations with yearly action plans, budgets and operational infrastructure**

The 2019-2024 Strategic Plan must be reflected in all district, department and building planning processes, including financial forecasting, to ensure that the outlined priorities are valued and achievable.

- (3) Align human resource supports outlined in the strategic plan with the district-wide staffing plan**

Upper Arlington Schools is in a period of unprecedented enrollment growth. Student numbers have increased nearly 10 percent in the past 10 years and are projected to grow by an additional 20 percent, or 1,250 students, by 2028.

Such unprecedented growth creates wide-ranging staffing needs throughout the district, not only for certified staff but also for support and classified staff. Guided by annual updates of third-party enrollment projection reports, the district is committed to responsibly preparing for additional staffing across the district.





The district recently completed a multifaceted administrative staffing study that engaged both internal and external stakeholders to identify expectations of district administrators and the staffing that will be needed to meet or exceed those expectations during this time of growth. As a result, over the duration of the staffing plan, additional positions will be added to benefit students through the support of teaching and learning, building leadership and strategic priorities.

#### **(4) Ensure thorough communication with all stakeholders**

Communication is vital to the successful implementation of this plan. The strategic planning process has involved a diverse array of district staff members and community members, but all stakeholders must have an understanding of the positive impact the plan will have on our students, staff and the community as a whole. Upper Arlington Schools will share the vision, goals and intended impact of the plan both internally and externally utilizing all available communication tools. Our schools strive to meet or exceed the high expectations of our community. These expectations are outlined in the district's annual Quality Profile report, which will be updated to align with the goals and priorities of the 2019-2024 Strategic Plan. An executive summary is mailed to all homes in the district each year, and residents can find the full report for each academic year online at [www.uaschools.org/qualityprofile](http://www.uaschools.org/qualityprofile).

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