

STRATEGIC CHANGE AGENDA

APPROVED BY THE BOARD OF EDUCATION IN MARCH 2025



INSPIRE. INNOVATE. ENGAGE.

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ABOUT US

North Shore School District 112, established in 1993 through the consolidation of Districts 107, 108, and 111, serves more than 3,800 students from preschool through eighth grade in Highland Park, Highwood, and Fort Sheridan, Illinois. The district includes seven elementary schools—Braeside, Indian Trail, Oak Terrace, Ravinia, Red Oak, Sherwood, and Wayne Thomas—and two middle schools, Edgewood and Northwood. District 112 also provides specialized early childhood education programs, dual language instruction, and various enrichment opportunities to meet diverse student needs.

3,800+ students from
pre-k through 8th grade

550+ employees, including more than
350 teachers

9 schools, including 2 middle schools
and 7 elementary schools

2 dual language program schools

86% of staff members who indicate they
are highly satisfied and highly engaged

30 home languages spoken

\$114.4 million referendum approved by
72% of voters in 2022, includes funds for
the modernization of elementary schools
and safety and security measures



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In the fall of 2024, North Shore School District 112 embarked on a transformative journey to improve its educational approach through a Strategic Change Agenda. Recognizing that the District's 2010 strategic plan no longer meets the evolving needs of students, staff, and the broader community, the district embarked on a student-centered, adaptive process developed in partnership with the Schlechty Center. This approach ensures that our students are not just passive recipients of education but active participants in shaping their learning experiences.

At the start of this process, participants reviewed an Images of School chart developed by founder Phil Schlechty. This served as a framework that was used to encourage open conversations about what participants see, and what we would like to see in our schools and district. The Guiding Metaphors depicted in the Images Chart represent Mental Models—deeply ingrained assumptions or generalizations that influence how we perceive schools and school districts as organizations.

The participants recognized that North Shore School District 112 operates primarily as a Professional Service Delivery Organization—a model in which schools function much like service providers, delivering educational programs and interventions to students based on prescribed standards. While this structure ensures efficiency and consistency, it often emphasizes compliance and technical execution over deep engagement and continuous learning.

Our aspiration is to evolve into a Learning Organization—a dynamic, student-centered community where teachers are not just service providers but leaders and designers of engaging academic experiences, and where students are not just recipients of instruction but active participants in their own learning. In a Learning Organization, collaboration, innovation, and intellectual leadership are embedded at every level, creating an environment where staff and students alike grow, adapt, and contribute to a shared vision of success.

This fundamental shift—moving beyond transactional education toward a culture of inquiry, engagement, and continuous improvement—serves as the foundation for our new mission, vision, values, and goal areas. It reinforces our commitment to ensuring that every student experiences meaningful, high-quality learning, supported by educators who are empowered as instructional leaders and principals who serve as leaders of leaders, driving systemic transformation.

To guide this transformation, the district engaged in a multi-phase discovery process throughout 2024. An initial Discovery Team, composed of 60 students, staff, administrators, school board members, and community partners, conducted an in-depth assessment of the district's strengths and opportunities by reviewing system capacity standards. This framework assisted in assessing our organization's capacity to focus on the future, maintain direction, and act strategically.

The Schlechty Center has developed a framework of 10 System Capacity Standards that reflect what would be going on in a school district. They illustrate where, throughout the organization, there is a clear focus on students and on improving the quality of work provided to students. The focus on transformational change is underpinned by work that students find challenging, relevant, and engaging, and that results in students learning what staff, families, and the community at large expect them to learn.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This served as the foundation for the conversations at the Discovery and Extended Discovery Process that took place throughout this process and focused on the first three key standards:

- **Standard 1: Developing a Shared Understanding of the Need for Change**
- **Standard 2: Developing Shared Beliefs and Vision**
- **Standard 3: Developing a Focus on Students and on the Quality of Work Provided to Students**
- Standard 4: Developing Structures for Participatory Leadership
- Standard 5: Developing Structures for Results-Oriented Decision-Making
- Standard 6: Developing Structures for Continuity
- Standard 7: Providing Ongoing Support
- Standard 8: Fostering Innovation and Flexibility
- Standard 9: Employing Technology
- Standard 10: Fostering Collaboration

Through an Extended Discovery process, more than 163 community members, including 69 students, participated in focus groups to help define the district's future direction. Themes of pride, communication, safety, engagement, equity, and technology emerged as key priorities.

This document reflects a shared vision for the future. A future where students are deeply engaged in meaningful learning, educators are empowered as designers of high-quality instruction, and principals serve as leaders of leaders, driving a culture of excellence and continuous improvement. The three strategic goal areas—Focus on Student Success and Well-Being; Develop Relationships and Partnerships; and Focus on Attracting, Developing, and Retaining Quality Staff by Using Resources Strategically, Responsibly, and Flexibly—align with this vision, ensuring that every student benefits from a supportive, high-impact learning environment.

This Strategic Change Agenda represents more than a plan; it is a commitment to fostering an innovative, inclusive, and student-centered learning community. With teachers as role models and principals as key operational leaders, North Shore School District 112 is poised to create a thriving educational environment where curiosity inspires minds, innovation shapes the future, and students, staff, and families build a kind and connected community that is committed to excellence.

A learning organization is characterized as being flexible and adaptable. A critical function of a change process vs a strategic plan is that each year the leadership team will determine specific goals to operationalize the Strategic Change Agenda.

As opposed to a lifeless binder on a shelf, this Strategic Change Agenda will “live” as a dynamic, authentic set of actions carried out by our staff. These goals will be archived on our website with a page dedicated to the Strategic Change Agenda's accountability.

Additionally, the Strategic Change Agenda will be reviewed annually and the opportunity to review the seven other System Capacity Standards will be part of future work. Our Future is NOW! We will inspire, innovate, and engage.

MISSION

North Shore School District 112 is a transformative learning organization where curiosity **inspires** minds, **innovation** shapes the future, and students, staff, and families **engage** to create a kind and connected community that is committed to excellence.

VISION

Our vision is to be a thriving, inclusive, learning community where each student is empowered to reach their full potential and achieve their greatest aspirations. By utilizing evidence-based practices, innovations in teaching and learning, and personalized support, we create an environment where each student learns, grows, and achieves academic excellence. We nurture resilience and foster meaningful relationships, while developing transformative leaders, engaged learners, and responsible citizens who are inspired and equipped to make a positive impact.

VALUES

In North Shore School District 112, we have identified six values that students will experience and staff will model in our learning organization.

COMPASSION

CONNECTION

EQUITY

GROWTH

INTEGRITY

SAFETY

VALUES

COMPASSION

We value cultivating a compassionate community where students actively demonstrate empathy, kindness, and understanding toward others to uphold personal growth and social responsibility.

CONNECTION

We value connection as the foundation of our thriving learning organization. By encouraging meaningful relationships and two-way communication among students, families, staff, and the broader community, we build a supportive environment where everyone feels valued and engaged.

EQUITY

We value equity in our district by creating opportunities for each student by addressing individual needs, dismantling barriers, and amplifying student voices. We provide each student with the personalized resources and support to succeed, designing culturally responsive environments to meet each student where they are.

GROWTH

We value continuous growth by setting rigorous academic standards and high expectations for each student.

INTEGRITY

We value integrity in our learning organization by upholding honesty, respect, and accountability in how we act and how we treat others, and by nurturing students who make meaningful contributions to the community and the world.

SAFETY

We value safety and well-being, both physical and emotional, by creating a secure and supportive learning environment for students, staff, and the community.

GOAL AREA 1

FOCUS ON STUDENT SUCCESS AND WELL-BEING

We are committed to empowering each student to achieve personal success, experience continuous growth, and feel valued as a unique individual in a safe, inclusive, and culturally responsive learning environment. We are dedicated to designing learning experiences that ignite curiosity, strengthen students' ability to adapt and persevere through challenges, and nurture a sense of purpose. Through innovative approaches, we personalize instruction and intentionally leverage the power of curricular resources and technology to make learning exciting, meaningful, and rigorous. Student success is defined, celebrated, and communicated.

We value student choice and student voice, encouraging each learner to take an active role in their education, follow their passions, make meaningful decisions, and shape their path. Social-emotional learning is prioritized to ensure that each student develops compassion, resilience, and connection. Together, we foster a community where each student finds inspiration, and explores new possibilities, and becomes an engaged learner.

GOAL AREA 2

DEVELOP RELATIONSHIPS AND PARTNERSHIPS

We are committed to prioritizing strong relationships and partnerships with families and the community. Through two-way communication, the district fosters an environment that values transparency and connection, aiming to be a good neighbor by engaging respectfully and collaboratively with community members. With a commitment to accessibility, the district involves its multilingual community, ensuring that outreach efforts are inclusive and effective. By empowering families with the information they need, the district helps families confidently engage with tools and resources, strengthening the home-school connection. New families are welcomed through intentional onboarding, building trust and confidence in the district's dedication to equity, safety, and community integration.

Classroom communication is a central focus, with open, timely, and meaningful updates that keep families informed about learning and classroom activities. Real-time, accessible technology supports family engagement, and the district's communication structure provides continuity and consistency.

The district encourages collaboration within the community, between schools and families, and with local agencies and organizations, fostering a support network to help each child thrive in school and beyond. Decision-making considers community input to ensure actions are aligned with the community's values and needs.

Together, these elements create a unified, thriving community where families, students and educators collaborate seamlessly, grounded in trust, mutual support and respect.

GOAL AREA 3

FOCUS ON ATTRACTING, DEVELOPING, AND RETAINING QUALITY STAFF BY USING RESOURCES STRATEGICALLY, RESPONSIBLY, AND FLEXIBLY

We are committed to establishing and maintaining a positive culture in which staff are highly engaged and highly satisfied. Attracting, developing, and retaining quality staff by using resources strategically, responsibly, and flexibly is essential to building a supportive, positive, and high-performing learning organization. We build a collaborative culture by selecting candidates who exemplify our philosophy of the human capital management system, “one more like our best” and exhibit high levels of integrity and professionalism.

We provide intentional instructional coaching, mentoring, and purposeful professional development for staff to grow and effectively perform in their roles. We are committed to building capacity for both those seeking advancement within the district and those who wish to lead from where they are, empowering all staff to contribute meaningfully.

Financial accountability enables us to invest thoughtfully in our people, facilities, and technology, ensuring staff and students have the resources to feel safe, supported, and well-equipped for success. By maintaining flexibility in our approach, we can adapt to changing needs, creating a resilient workplace that attracts and retains top talent committed to excellence.

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