

Sweet Home Central School District

STRATEGIC PLAN

2026-2029



OUR MISSION

EVERY STUDENT, ONE COMMUNITY, READY FOR THE FUTURE.

OUR VISION

INSPIRING STUDENTS TO BE:

INNOVATIVE

SELF-DIRECTED

CURIOUS

COMPASSIONATE

RESILIENT

PERSISTENT

LIFELONG LEARNER

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Message from the Superintendent

Dr. Michael V. Ginestre



Dear Sweet Home Community,

Thank you for your partnership and continued support as we work together to empower every student to achieve their fullest potential. As we look toward the future, we do so with a clear purpose: ensuring every student graduates from Sweet Home prepared to thrive in a rapidly evolving world. This strategic plan reflects our commitment to providing a future focused educational experience grounded in academic excellence, meaningful relationships, and real-world learning opportunities.

At the heart of this plan is an unwavering focus on teaching and learning. We believe that strong academic foundations remain the cornerstone of student success. Over the next three years, we will strengthen curriculum; refine assessment practices; enhance literacy and numeracy instruction; and ensure that every student is empowered to take ownership of their learning. Through goal setting, student voice, and authentic learning experiences, we will cultivate confident learners who are equipped with the knowledge, skills, and habits necessary to succeed in college, careers, and life.

We are committed to creating learning environments where students actively engage in critical thinking, problem-solving, collaboration, and innovation. By expanding opportunities in STEM, Career and Technical Education, inquiry-based learning, and career exploration, we will connect classroom learning to real-world experiences that inspire curiosity and purpose. This work aligns closely with the New York State Portrait of a Graduate and our belief that every student deserves pathways that honor their interests, talents, and aspirations.

We also recognize that academic success flourishes when students feel connected, supported, and valued. Through our continued investment in Leader in Me, student leadership opportunities, counseling supports, restorative practices, and community partnerships, we will foster a culture where every student develops a strong sense of agency, belonging, and responsibility.

The success of this plan will depend on the collective efforts of our students, families, staff, Board of Education, and community partners. Together, we will build on Sweet Home's proud tradition while embracing innovation and preparing students for opportunities that may not yet exist today.

The future belongs to learners who can adapt, lead, and create. At Sweet Home, we are committed to ensuring that every student is ready for that future.

Sincerely,

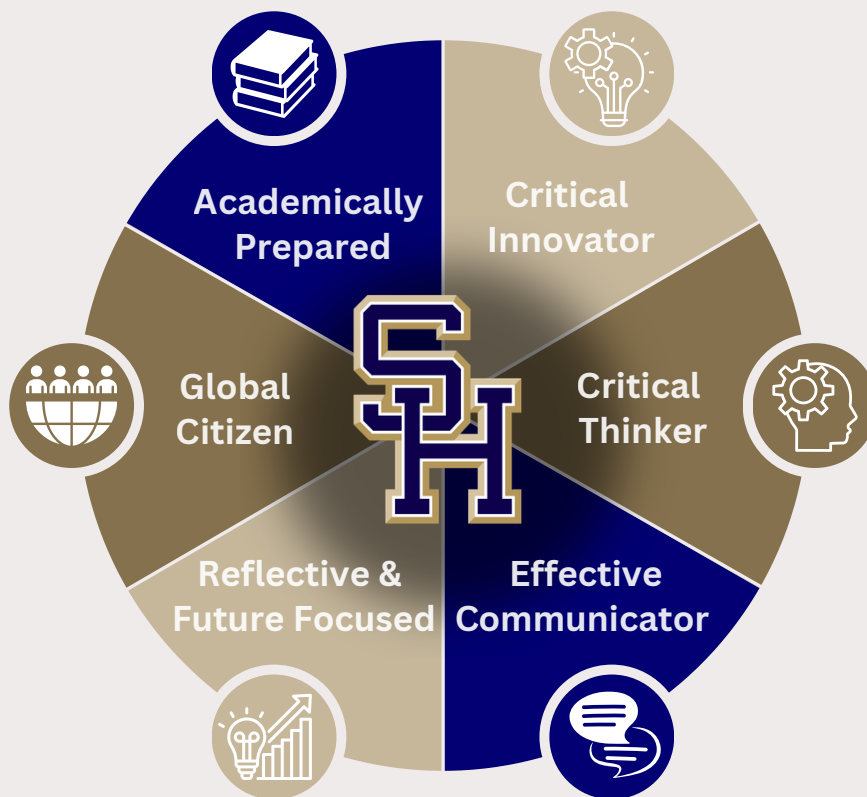
Dr. Michael Ginestre

Superintendent of Schools





Every Student, One Community, Ready for the Future.



Demonstrates a strong foundation in the NYS learning standards and is equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary to achieve success in college, careers, civic engagement, service, and life.



Utilizes imagination, curiosity, and flexible thinking to solve problems creatively, and develop new ideas and products, while adapting to evolving circumstances and challenges.



Acts responsibly and ethically within local, global, and digital communities, employing civic knowledge, skills, and mindsets to promote global sustainability and contribute positively to a culturally diverse, democratic society.



Analyzes information thoughtfully, evaluates evidence critically, and identifies patterns and connections between different pieces of information (across multiple content areas) to address complex issues and navigate the world with insight.



Engages in self-reflection to identify strengths and areas for growth, sets meaningful goals, uses social awareness to maintain supportive relationships, and demonstrates responsible decision-making that prioritizes social, emotional, and mental well-being.



Articulates ideas clearly and confidently through speaking, writing, and the use of different types of media for various purposes, while engaging with diverse audiences and actively listening to different perspectives.





Sweet Home Strategic Plan 2026-2029

GOALS

1

TEACHING & LEARNING

Sweet Home provides learning experiences that are focused on supporting students in developing strong academic skills through experiential learning while amplifying student voice.

Rationale: It is important to make connections between real world and classroom experiences that are meaningful. Experiential learning provides the hands-on experiences that are needed for developing lifelong skills that support strong critical thinking attributes.

Objective: Provide students with an intense focus on academics to support student ownership and as a result, students will develop competencies and experience a stronger sense of agency and belonging.

2

FUTURE FOCUSED

Sweet Home coursework provides real-world experiences that engage students across a series of pathways while teaching and nurturing critical life skills in everyone.

Rationale: Students are given opportunities to explore their unique talents, and these opportunities should be presented in ways that encourage the discovery and development of each student's unique aptitudes, skills, and gifts.

Objective: Provide students with choices within a series of experiences tailored to meet their interests that address clearly defined outcomes.

3

WHOLE CHILD

Sweet Home students grow and learn in an environment that is fully engaging, welcoming, accepting, and safe, where students believe their voices are heard and where they have opportunities to actively engage with each other in all subject areas through relationships and the real world.

Rationale: Schools are intended to support the development of self-aware students who can interact effectively in a global society. Students should be provided with learning opportunities and resources that help them become informed, thoughtful, and engaged citizens of the world.

Objective: Sweet Home will be the vehicle to support students in navigating the social environment and ultimately create a strong sense of community of emotionally strong individuals with healthy habits.

Measuring Success Outcomes

Using the Leader in Me Framework component of Academics, Academics includes achieving goals (individual goals, team goals and aligned school goals). This component also includes leadership portfolios, student-led conferences and empowering instruction. Results will be driven by the Measurable Results Assessment (MRA) in the following areas:

Elementary

Goal Achievement - School Goals

Schools have annual goals teachers play a meaningful role in creating and everyone is involved in achieving. Schools will progress towards schoolwide goals and are regularly tracked, reflected on, and used to make decisions. The 2026 district measure on the MRA in this area is 73.

Empowering Teachers - Instructional Efficacy

Teachers are confident in their ability to use evidence-based instructional practices to amplify students' capacity to learn. The 2026 district measure on the MRA in this area is 78.

Empowered Learners - Academic Self-efficacy

Students are able to apply personal leadership habits to plan, prioritize, and persevere in their academic pursuits. The 2026 district measure on the MRA in this area is 75.

Outcome Goal: Sweet Home elementary schools will increase the average score in the area of academics.

Secondary

The MRA was not given at the High School in 2023-2024 and only 31 students, and 5 staff engaged in completing the survey.

Outcome Goal: Sweet Home Middle School will increase the percentage of staff and student participation to 80%, with a goal to increase results in years 2 & 3.

Sweet Home High School will increase the percentage of staff and students to 60% and the results will be used to develop a goal for years 2 & 3 at the secondary level, with a goal to increase in years 2 & 3.



Teaching & Learning

Goal 1 - Action Steps & Timeline

ELEMENTARY

1.1.A. Conduct an assessment audit for English Language Arts (ELA) and numeracy to determine the effectiveness and relevance as aligned to the Next Generation Learning Standards and the NYS Portrait of a Graduate.

Year One:

- Inventory all assessments: formative, benchmark
- summative performance tasks, screening and progress monitoring tools
- Analyze: alignment to standards, data usefulness and redundancy.
- Work collaboratively with district level committees (ie. Multi-tiered Systems of Support through intervention (MTSSI), Elementary Literacy Team) to ensure alignment.
- Identify financial impact to make budgetary recommendations for year 2 and 3.

Year Two:

- Refine assessment framework.
- Create or revise assessments that:
 - measure priority standards, include authentic tasks and real-world applications, support critical thinking and problem solving.
 - Professional Development

Year Three:

- Data monitoring and review.
- Establish an ongoing review cycle.

1.1.B. Implement core instructional literacy programs for the best path for Sweet Home Elementary schools based on research and standards alignment to support:

- Portrait of a Graduate
- Student agency
- Culturally & linguistically responsiveness
- Content specific standards.

Year One, Two and Three Implementation Process

- Review current core literacy programs and supplemental materials.
- Conduct pilot trials where appropriate.
- Gather feedback from educators and stakeholders.
- Identify financial impact to make budgetary recommendations.
- Adopt and begin implementation of district core literacy program.
- Provide targeted professional development to support implementation.

1.1.C. Continue to audit current Tier II and Tier III interventions for academic needs then identify the process and programs used when students do not respond to the intervention.

Year One:

- Continue to identify intervention strategies and processes currently used.
- Identify financial impact to make budgetary recommendations for year 2 and 3.

Year Two:

- Provide equitable access across school sites.
- Provide professional development as needed.

Year Three:

- Monitor and adjust based on student need and academic outcomes.

1.1.D. Ensure every student has a learning goal and an action plan for how they can work on and achieve their goal.

Year One:

Share systems and strategies across schools (UPK - 12) to develop the specific expectation for how to implement the goal setting.

Year Two:

Implement best practices identified in year one to support equitable access across schools.

Year Three:

Monitor and adjust as needed, ensure practice.



Teaching & Learning

Goal 1 - Action Steps & Timeline

SECONDARY

1.2.A. Create a curriculum audit cycle along with an audit of the assessments used to ensure all programs support student development across all disciplines of:

- NYS Portrait of a Graduate
- Student agency
- Cultural & linguistic responsiveness
- Content specific standards

Year One & Two:

- Continue to prioritize the development of a curriculum review cycle to ensure alignment of NYS Portrait of a Graduate and the Next Generation Learning Standard.
- Engage community organizations to support the Portrait of a Graduate implementation.
- Make recommendations for new programming.
- Identify financial impact to make budgetary recommendations for year 2 and 3.

Year Three:

- Monitor and adjust the cycle review as needed.

1.2.B. Identify and establish a sustainable infrastructure to support 21st century learning in the areas of Career & Technological Education (CTE), and Science, Technology, Engineering, & Mathematics (STEM).

Year One:

- Establish a CTE-STEM committee to develop a 3-5 year strategic roadmap that aligns to the district Technology Plan and the following areas:
- Workforce development priorities;
- Graduation pathways;
- Economic development needs;
- State CTE/STEM standards and funding priorities.

Year Two:

- Investigate options for career-aligned pathways. Embed: Dual credit, BOCES programming that is available, and align middle school programming with high school offerings.
- Identify financial impact to make budgetary recommendations for year 2 and 3.

Year Three:

- Monitor and adjust implementation as needed.

1.2.C Empower students by amplifying student voices in their educational experiences.

Year One:

- Share systems and strategies across schools (UPK - 12) to help students develop the specific expectation for how to implement the goal setting process.
- Conduct an audit of what all of our student leadership groups in the district (including building level groups) are working on.

Year Two:

- Explore opportunities for students to provide input on their school experiences.
- Extend/ increase opportunities for student leadership through student led practices.

Year Three:

- Monitor and adjust as needed.

1.2.D. Build capacity with all stakeholders by providing professional learning that is differentiated to meet the needs of staff members.

Year One:

- Use the data from professional learning tools such as Professional Learning Management (PLM) and exit tickets from professional learning surveys to continue the assessment, identification and alignment of resources to support the professional learning plan.
- Access staff usage and comfort level with AI.
- Make recommendations for Professional Development in the area of AI.
- Identify financial impact to make budgetary recommendations for year 2 and 3.

Year Two:

- Collaboratively develop the district's STEPS plan.
- Offer Professional Development in AI.

Year Three:

- Implement the district's STEPS plan.
- Continue to adjust based on the number of staff who identify as novice and experienced.



Future Focused

Goal 2 - Action Steps & Timeline

ELEMENTARY

2.1.A. Monitor vertical alignment of the counseling plan at the elementary level.

Year One:

- Continue with Advisory Council and develop a plan to implement recommendations
- Emphasis on the use of the family support center and our partnership with the Northwest Amherst Community Center (NWACC).

Years Two & Three:

Monitor and assess needs of the counseling program.

2.1.B. Leader in Me support across all four schools - the habits will be embedded into subject areas/aspects of a child's day.

Year One:

Develop a plan to implement districtwide:

- student led conferences;
- Digital notebooks;
- Systems to support shifting all 4 elementary schools to legacy status;
- Take MRA once a year and identify window.

Year Two:

Continue the year one Work.

Year Three:

Monitor and assess needs of the program.

2.1.C. Increase and develop consistent communication to all families about the Leader in Me program and celebration opportunities.

Year One:

- Develop a plan to implement parent lighthouse teams districtwide.
- Ensure information is across multiple platforms, families are involved in activities.

Year Two:

Increase family lighthouse teams involvement to 60% or higher across all our schools.

Year Three:

Monitor and assess needs of the program.

2.1.D. Provide more opportunities for students to engage in critical thinking and inquiry-based learning.

Year One:

Explore opportunities for project-based learning and inquiry through grade levels.

Year Two:

Implement opportunities that align with inquiry and project-based learning at each grade level; use vertical alignment to develop 5th grade capstone projects.

Year Three:

Implement a capstone project linking and inquiry-based learning at the end of fifth grade.



Future Focused

Goal 2 - Action Steps & Timeline

SECONDARY

2.2.A. Monitor vertical alignment of the counseling plan 6-12

Year One:

- Continue with Advisory Council and develop a plan to implement recommendations;
- Emphasis on the use of the family support center and our partnership with the Northwest Amherst Community Center (NWACC).

Years Two & Three:

Monitor and assess needs of the counseling program.

2.2.B. Expand Leader in Me, the 8 Habits of Highly Successful Students, all secondary sites - Middle School, High School and Ready Academy.

Year One:

- *Increasing the use of the MRA to set annual targets.*
- *Identify a window and take the MRA once a year.*

Year Two:

Use MRA results to identify areas of focus to align to the 8 habits and address implementation needs.

Year Three:

Monitor and assess needs of the program.

2.2.C. Explore and identify instruction and areas of need as identified by NYS that supports the implementation of the NYS Portrait of a Graduate (POG).

Year One:

- Develop a team to engage in researching best practices to align Sweet Home with the emerging needs to initiate and implement the POG.
- Use state issued rubrics to determine the local decisions for POG.
- Identify financial impact to make budgetary recommendations for year 2 and 3.

Year Two:

Continue develop & implement POG pathways.

Year Three:

Monitor and assess needs of the identified program.

2.2.D. Develop a system of robust career exploration opportunities to support each level (middle, high).

Year One:

- In conjunction with NYS rubrics and based on local decisions, explore & expand career exploration through the use of a survey tool.
- Identify financial impact to make budgetary recommendations for year 2 and 3.

Year Two:

- Align to capstone projects at grades 8 and 12 to further support career development.
- Apply career exploration profiles to support course planning.

Year Three:

Monitor and assess needs of the identified program.



Whole Child

Goal 3 - Action Steps & Timeline

ELEMENTARY

3.1.A. Through Leader in Me, provide training for staff on Community Building Circles with a plan that aligns to building schedules and implementation.

Year One:

Building level review of how Community Circles are implemented; identify gaps in training and expectations.

Year Two:

Implement Building Level plans and provide restorative practice training as needed, provide training.

Year Three:

Monitor and assess where implementation gaps are and determine training needs for ongoing coaching and new teacher support.

3.1.B. Establish clear Multi-Tiered Systems and Supports through intervention (MTSSI) tiers for behavioral interventions with a trauma informed lens.

Year One:

- Audit and identify needs for building level MTSSI plans.
- Identify areas of training and need among all teachers and staff.

Year Two:

Implement training and student support plans that are aligned to the needs of the individual buildings; update interventions and supports as needed.

Year Three:

Monitor and adjust while providing support for new teachers and staff.

3.1.C. Work with community partners and explore opportunities to provide after-school activities to all students equitably.

Year One:

Explore opportunities for providing after school activities in partnership with community groups and grants.

Year Two:

Implement the programs identified with school support.

Year Three:

Monitor and adjust based on funding, interest, and staff support.

3.1.D. Develop a district plan to onboard new students and their support network (e.g., parents, caregivers) across Sweet Home Elementary Schools.

Year One:

Share systems across schools to identify the best practices for identifying baseline data for entering students in the areas of academic, behavior and social emotional needs.

Year Two:

Develop a district team to meet two times a year to review data and make recommendations for adjustments.

Year Three:

Continue to review and modify plans as needed.



Whole Child

Goal 3 - Action Steps & Timeline



Glossary of Terms

Academic Pathways: Academic Pathways are a sequential list of courses in the order that you should take them. Academic pathways serve as a way to support specialized programs such as the courses that support Career and Technical Education (CTE).

Agency: In social science, agency is the capacity of individuals to have the power and resources to fulfill their potential.

Audit: a systematic evaluation of an educational program's learning materials and course content. It checks whether textbooks, syllabi, software, and activities align with state & national educational standards, school missions, and student needs.

BOCES: BOCES stands for Boards of Cooperative Educational Services. It is a system of shared educational programs and services created by the New York State Legislature in 1948. Its primary purpose is to help local school districts collaborate, reduce costs, and expand student opportunities.

Career and Technical Education (CTE): Career and Technical Education (CTE) is the practice of teaching specific tech-based and career-oriented skills to students.

Circle Assessment: The new PK assessment is the CIRCLE assessment (previously known as C-PALLS+) system developed by researchers at the Children's Learning Institute (CLI). This Pre-K assessment tool is designed to measure young children's literacy and language skills (vocabulary, letter identification, and phonological awareness).

Community Building Morning Meetings/ Circles: The power of classroom circles or morning meetings to foster emotional intelligence, improve wellbeing and create a culture of kindness is well documented. Circles are important tools for nurturing relationships and feelings of community.

Content Specific Standards: Specifications of what all learners are expected to know and be able to do within a particular field of study, discipline or subject at different grade levels, ages, or other criteria.

Culturally & Linguistically Responsiveness: Leveraging students' cultural and linguistic experiences, utilizing their background knowledge, and providing multiple ways for students to learn and demonstrate new learning.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI): Diversity, equity, and inclusion are three closely linked values held by many organizations that are working to be supportive of different groups of individuals, including people of different races, ethnicities, religions, abilities, genders, and sexual orientations.

Experiential Learning: The process of learning through experience, and is more narrowly defined as "learning through reflection on doing". Hands-on learning can be a form of experiential learning, but does not necessarily involve students reflecting on their product.

Evidence-Based Instructional Practices: Teaching strategies and methods rigorously proven to be effective through scientific research and objective data, rather than tradition or personal judgment. They ensure educators use methods consistently associated with positive student learning outcomes.

Leadership Portfolios: Dynamic, student-owned binders or digital notebooks that empower students to track their own goals, reflect on their growth, and take ownership of their learning. Instead of a traditional teacher-led report card, these portfolios celebrate holistic development and are frequently shared with families during Student-Led Conferences.

Life-Long Learning: Lifelong learning is the "ongoing, voluntary, and self-motivated " pursuit of knowledge for either personal or professional reasons. It is important for an individual's competitiveness and employability, but also enhances social inclusion, active citizenship, and personal development.

Life Skills: A skill that helps a person to function well in adult life, especially in social or emotional situations.

Literacy Skills: Literacy is the ability to read, write, speak and listen in a way that lets us communicate effectively and make sense of the world.

Literacies: Literacies refers to more than just simply reading, and writing, as it further extends to preparing our students with knowledge and skills to be well-rounded citizens who are able to participate in our society.

Measurable Results Assessment (MRA): A survey and reporting system that provides schools uncommon insight on the attitudes and behaviors of staff and students. The data informed insights were designed to align with expected outcomes common to schools implementing the paradigms and practices of Leader in Me, and seen in the Framework below.

Multi-Tiered Systems of Supports through intervention (MTSSi): A framework many schools use to give targeted support through tiered intervention to struggling students. It focuses on the "whole child." That means it supports academic growth, but many other areas, too. These include behavior, social and emotional needs, and absenteeism (not attending school).



Glossary of Terms

Next Generation Learning Standards: The Next Generation Learning Standards represent a shift in educational guidelines, most notably in New York State, where they replaced the Common Core. Developed with feedback from parents and educators, they prioritize developmental appropriateness, teacher flexibility, and reduced testing pressure while maintaining high academic expectations.

Numeracy: Numeracy is the ability to understand, reason with, and to apply simple numerical concepts. Panorama Assessment: Research proven survey for social-emotional learning survey, intervention tracking, and versatile check-in tools.

Restorative Practices: A field within the social sciences that studies how to strengthen relationships between individuals as well as social connections within communities. Regular classroom practices like check-in circles develop relationships and help community members get to know and care for each other. Restorative justice practices repair harm, rebuild relationships, and re-establish trust when conflicts and issues arise within a community.

Stakeholders: A stakeholder is a person, group or organization with a vested interest, or stake, in the decision-making and activities of a business, organization or project. In Sweet Home our stakeholders are students, parents, families, educators, and community members.

Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM): An umbrella term used to group together the distinct but related technical disciplines of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. The term is typically used in the context of education policy or curriculum choices in schools.

Strategic Plan: An organization's process of defining its strategy or direction, and making decisions on allocating its resources to attain strategic goals.

Student Agency: The capacity of students to take ownership of their own learning. It shifts students from being passive recipients of information to active participants who can set personal goals, make meaningful decisions, and reflect on their progress.

Student-Led Conferences: A meeting where the student, rather than the teacher, takes the lead in discussing their academic progress, challenges, and goals with their parents. It is a powerful mechanism designed to give students a voice and teach them to take full responsibility for their educational journey.

Student Voice: Refers to the values, opinions, beliefs, perspectives, and cultural backgrounds of individual students and groups of students in a school, and to instructional approaches and techniques that are based on student choices, interests, passions, and ambitions.

Tiered Interventions: A systematic, data-driven approach to providing varying levels of academic, behavioral, and social-emotional support to students based on their individual needs. This structure is most commonly applied through frameworks like Multi-Tiered System of Supports through intervention (MTSSi). The three standard tiers include:

- Tier I: Universal Support, designed to support all students, target 80% to 90%.
- Tier II: Targeted Interventions to support some students, target 10% to 15%.
- Tier III: Intensive Support to support a few students, target 1%-5%.

Vertical Alignment: A strategy for improving how a school system's standards, curriculum, assessments, and instruction connect to one another to produce a balanced and comprehensive education where concepts and skills build off of one another.

Wildly Important Goals (WIGs): A Leader in Me (LiM) component which is a goal that can make all the difference. LiM community members commit to apply a disproportionate amount of energy to WIGs. Community members are asked "If every other area of our operation remained at its current level of performance, what is the one area where change would have the greatest impact?"

21st Century Skills: A broad set of knowledge, skills, work habits, and character traits that are believed—by educators, school reformers, college professors, employers, and others—to be critically important to success in today's world and beyond.

21st Century Literacy Skills: a broad vision of literacy, which includes the need to be "creative, independent thinkers.



Stakeholders Involved: The Strategic Plan was developed with a team of stakeholders. The district appreciates the time, energy, and effort that went into the development of the plan to ensure the academic and social success of each student.

Name	Role
Nagham ArRawi	Family & Community Liason
Katie Barillari	Director of Special Programs
Dean Bavisotto	Teacher
Jaevon Coleman	Student
Juliana Coleman	Student
Dawn Cwierley	Parent
Karen DeLaPlante	Principal, Glendale Elementary
Muhamed Diedhiou	Student
Donald Feldmann	Assistant Superintendent for Finance & Plant Services
Leanne Fischer-Zlotek	Teacher
Dr. Michael Ginestre	Superintendent of Schools
Lindsay Harrington	Director of Instructional Technology & Data
Sam Hill	Parent
Chandra Jagielo	Adminstrator for Culture and Climate
Scott Johnson	Board of Education
Lynn Kawa	Teacher
Kristen Kelly	Community Member
Dr. Elizabeth Kosakowski	Director for Curriculum & Instruction
Heather Kramer	Adminstrative Assistant
Jesse Mack	Parent
Summer Mack	Student
Jonathan Makeley	Community Member
Jamie Mancine	Parent
Lindsey Marcinelli	Assistant Director for Special Programs
Antonio Perry	Principal, Heritage Heights Elementary
Robert Polino	Principal, Willow Ridge Elementary
Natasa Popovic	Assistant Principal, Middle School
James Ryan	Principal, Maplemere Elementary
Stephen Shepherd	Assistant Principal, Ready Academy
Lekya Slaughter	Parent
Kastie Smyser	Parent
Tiffany Trabold	Parent
Dr. Toyia Wilson	Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum & Instruction
Icaria Wright	Student

THANK YOU!

