



Mingus Union High School District #4

Strategic Plan 2026-2029



A Statement from the Superintendent

Mingus Union High School District #4 is committed to educating students in a manner that will Engage Minds, Empower Students, and Elevate Communities. MUHS is the “Powerhouse in the Verde Valley” and we are excited to implement our 2026-2029 Strategic Plan, highlighting our strengths while continually measuring and celebrating our progress. Mingus Union has an exceptionally qualified, talented, continually learning, and innovative team of teachers, staff, and administrators dedicated to our students’ success. Our students graduate academically ready and grounded in the values and character traits that afford them multiple pathways to successful, rewarding futures.

Thank you to all the stakeholders who participated in the Strategic Planning process.

Melody R. Herne

Superintendent, Mingus Union High School District

Mingus Union High School District #4 Governing Board 2025-2026

Ms. Taylor Bell, President
Mr. Frank Nevarez, Vice President
Dr. Will David, Board Member
Dr. Austin Babcock, Board Member
Mr. Matthew Chavez, Board Member





Mingus Union High School District

Mingus Union High School District #4 has a rich history rooted in community collaboration and a strong commitment to student success in the Verde Valley. Serving the Cottonwood, Camp Verde, Beaver Creek, and Sedona areas as a Title I district, Mingus Union traces its origins to the mid-20th century, when three separate high schools — Jerome, Clarkdale, and Cottonwood — came together to better serve students. Jerome and Clarkdale first consolidated in 1950 to form Mingus High School, followed by the addition of Cottonwood High School in 1958, creating today's unified district. The school itself has evolved alongside the community, relocating from Clarkdale to Jerome and ultimately to its current home in Cottonwood in 1972. While district boundaries have shifted over time, Mingus Union High School District has remained focused on providing rigorous academics, a variety of extracurricular opportunities, and strong career and college pathways, all while honoring its deep ties to the communities it serves.



Mission Statement

Mingus Union High School District cultivates academically prepared students who are empowered through robust opportunities and rigorous, engaging curriculum to be citizens who elevate their communities.

Vision

Engage Minds. Empower Students. Elevate Communities.

Portrait of a Graduate Characteristics:

- Innovative
- Ethical
- Self-Sufficient
- Collaborative
- Resilient
- Engaged



Areas of Focus

Student Achievement: Increase growth and proficiency in all students.

Climate and Culture: Foster a safe and supportive learning environment through student well-being, staff development and the recruitment and retention of high-quality educators.

Engagement and Partnerships: Strengthen connections with families and community partners to create an engaging, supportive environment.

Financial Responsibility: Ensure transparent and responsible management of district finances that support and enhance student achievement, school culture and community partnerships.

Focus Area 1: Student Achievement

Goal: Increase growth and proficiency for all students.

Objective 1.1: Academic Growth and Proficiency - By 2029, Mingus UHSD will improve the percentage of students reaching ACT Benchmark scores in reading by 18% (37%), in English by 18% (46%) and in Math by 27% (38%) At least 85% of students will demonstrate one year or more of academic growth annually as measured by the NWEA.

Strategies	Tactics	Full Implementation Target Date
Strengthen Tier 1 instruction; Implement targeted interventions	1.1.1 Teacher uses classroom data to guide instruction 1.1.2 Provide teachers AVID training and strategies to implement 1.1.3 Administer NWEA 3 times per year, tracking growth of students by percentile ranking	SY 25-26
Strengthen data-driven instruction and expand intervention systems	1.1.4 Institutionalize and embed fall/winter/spring progress monitoring based on NWEA data analyzing teacher Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) 1.1.5 Provide professional development on creating targeted intervention plans 1.1.6 Create and implement targeted intervention plans for every student based on various data sources, including NWEA data	SY 26-27, SY 27-28
Refine instruction systems and incentives	1.1.7 Review and adjust curriculum and intervention plans 1.1.8 Execute comprehensive, school-wide incentive programs for students who demonstrate growth from the ACT ASPIRE test administered freshman year to the ACT, administered junior year	SY 28-29



Focus Area 1: Student Achievement

Goal: Increase growth and proficiency for all students.

Objective 1.2: Access to Advanced Opportunities - By 2029, enrollment in Career and Technical Education (CTE), Advanced Placement (AP), Honors, and Dual Enrollment courses will increase by 15%.

Strategies	Tactics	Full Implementation Target Date
Increase pathway exposure	1.2.1 Expand and grow course fairs to recruit students into CTE, AP, Honors and Dual Enrollment classes, and gather baseline attendance data 1.2.2 Strengthen VACTE partnership	SY 25-26
Improve enrollment systems	1.2.3 Create parameters to identify students for suggested enrollment in advanced courses 1.2.4 Analyze and adjust master schedule as needed to maximize access to CTE, AP, Honors and Dual Enrollment courses	SY 26-27
Optimize participation for all students	1.2.5 Schedule regular progress monitoring of enrollment data in AP, Dual Enrollment, Honors and CTE courses 1.2.6 Analyze cumulative course fair attendance data to identify areas of improvement and restructure as needed 1.2.7 Continue to adjust master schedule as needed	SY 28-29



Focus Area 1: Student Achievement

Goal: Increase growth and proficiency for all students.

Objective 1.3: Graduation and On-Track Indicators - By 2029, graduation rates will rise from 85.5% to 92%.

Strategies	Tactics	Full Implementation Target Date
Strengthen intervention and early-warning systems	1.3.1 Establish a grade-level early warning and intervention system that uses attendance and credit-accrual data to identify students who are off track to graduate 1.3.2 Improve tracking of students who leave Mingus before graduation to decrease dropout rates 1.3.3 Expand and strengthen Freshman Houses framework	SY 26-27
Evaluate impact	1.3.4 Review graduation trends & refine pathways	SY 28-29

Focus Area 1: Student Achievement

Goal: Increase growth and proficiency for all students.

Objective 1.4: English Learner (EL) Success - By 2029, the percentage of Mingus UHSD English Learner (EL) students scoring proficient (on AZELLA) will be 10% higher than the state average, with all EL students showing one year of language proficiency growth.

Strategies	Tactics	Full Implementation Target Date
Build data systems	1.4.1 Create baseline data for students entering the EL program as freshman	SY 25-26
Strengthen EL support	1.4.2 Create and implement incentive program to motivate students to test out of EL 1.4.3 Provide targeted EL professional development for certified staff	SY 26-27
Strengthen support and expand family engagement	1.4.4 Establish partnerships to help EL families bridge the gap between home and school (advocacy) 1.4.5 Analyze and refine EL professional development for certified staff	SY 27-28
Evaluate Language Programs	1.4.6 Review, assess and report 4-year EL trends 1.4.7 Refine EL professional development	SY 28-29

Focus Area 2: Climate and Culture

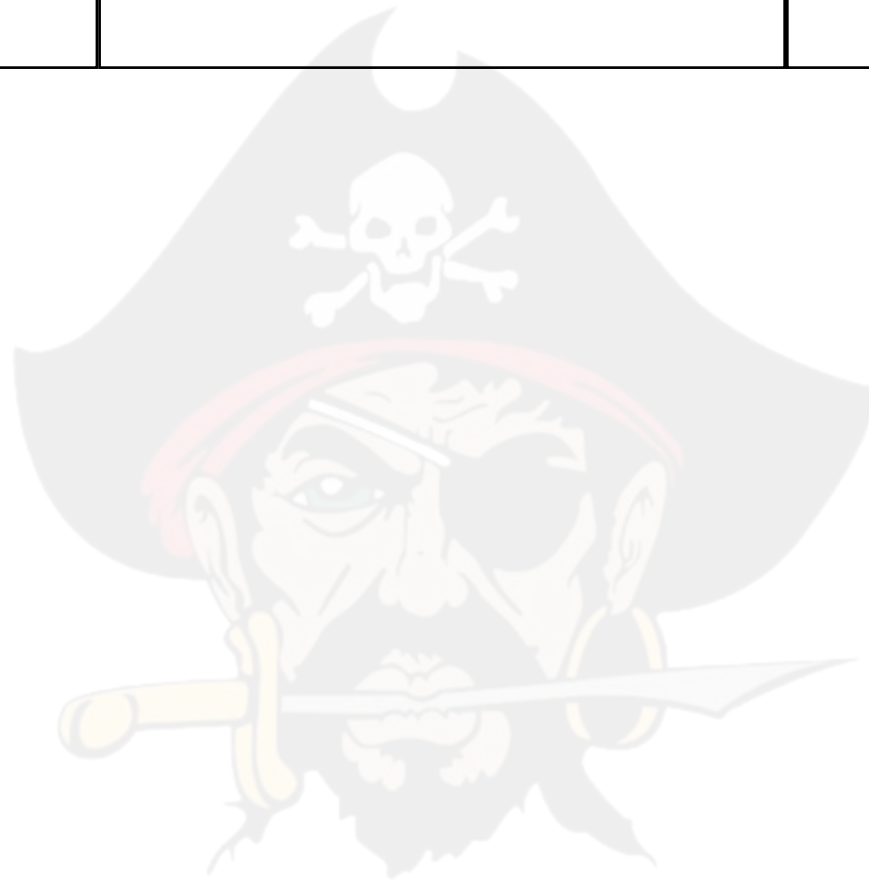
Goal: Foster a safe and supportive learning environment through student well-being, staff development and the recruitment and retention of highly qualified educators.

Objective 2.1: Student Safety and Climate Improvement - By 2029, student-reported sense of safety will increase by 20% based on data from a research-based survey.

Strategies	Tactics	Full Implementation Target Date
Improve climate data systems	2.1.1 Administer Youth Risk Behavior Survey/AZ Youth Survey and other surveys, as appropriate 2.1.2 Complete annual safety audits	SY 25-26
Strengthen consistency	2.1.3 Create and administer professional development on discipline matrix and train staff on consistent documentation and reporting of disciplinary incidents 2.1.4 Formalize and implement supervision plan ensuring staff are assigned to high-traffic areas before and after school, during lunch and passing periods 2.1.5 Analyze data from office referrals to ensure consistent implementation of discipline matrix	SY 26-27
Refine safety practices	2.1.6 Review annual survey data 2.1.7 Refine professional development plan and create and implement a plan to address concerns 2.1.8 Continue to analyze data from office referrals and training on discipline matrix/reporting practices and refine best practices based on results	SY 27-28



Evaluate impact	2.1.9 Continue to analyze office referrals and training on discipline matrix based on results 2.1.10 Review and refine supervision plan 2.1.11 Ensure consistent use of Student Information System (SIS) to log incidents	SY 28-29
-----------------	--	----------



Focus Area 2: Climate and Culture

Goal: Foster a safe and supportive learning environment through student well-being, staff development and the recruitment and retention of highly qualified educators.

Objective 2.2: Professionalism - All staff will model professionalism, reinforce trust-building practices and be accountable to workplace standards and organizational effectiveness, and by 2029, 100% of certified staff will engage in appropriate professional development aligned to instructional needs.

Strategies	Tactics	Full Implementation Target Date
Identify professional development needs	2.2.1 Utilize self-assessment tools and feedback from evaluators and instructional coaches to help identify individual staff professional development needs 2.2.2 Develop a systematic schoolwide professional development plan to address the professional needs of teachers	SY 25-26
Build school-based professional development systems	2.2.3 Finalize schoolwide professional development plan and implement school-based professional development 2.2.4 Improve work climate by strengthening communication and trust among staff 2.2.5 Create and sustain a positive, respectful and collaborative work climate which supports employee well-being and retention	SY 26-27
Implement professional development pathways	2.2.6 Launch professional development pathways, including internal and external opportunities	SY 27-28
Evaluate impact	2.2.7 Review professional development outcomes and adjust to staff needs as necessary	SY 28-29



Focus Area 2: Climate and Culture

Goal: Foster a safe and supportive learning environment through student well-being, staff development and the recruitment and retention of highly qualified educators.

Objective 2.3: Increase Student Participation - By 2029, student participation in arts, athletics, and activities will increase by 10%.

Strategies	Tactics	Full Implementation Target Date
Establish baseline	2.3.1 Conduct participation audit 2.3.2 Analyze master schedule to optimize students' ability to participate in elective courses and extra-curricular activities without disrupting ability to participate in AP, Honors, Dual Enrollment and CTE courses to the greatest extent possible 2.3.3 Create plan to grow Involvement Fair 2.3.4 Develop a plan to partner with feeder schools, including music, art, athletics and extra-curriculars	SY 25-26
Establish baseline	2.3.5 Implement partnership with feeder schools 2.3.6 Adjust master schedule to optimize students' ability to participate in elective courses and extra-curricular activities 2.3.7 Continue participation audit – identify groups of students with low-participation in extra-curricular/elective courses 2.3.8 Develop plans to reach low-participation groups of students	SY 26-27



Continuous expansion	2.3.9 Adjust clubs and programs based on data 2.3.10 Implement outreach plan to low-participation groups	SY 27-29
----------------------	---	----------



Focus Area 3: Engagement and Partnerships

Goal: Strengthen connections with families and community partners to create an engaging, supportive environment.

Objective 3.1: Family Engagement - By June 2029, the district will ensure that at least 90% of parents and guardians have documented contact with teachers during parent-teacher conference periods through accessible, multilingual communication methods.

Strategies	Tactics	Full Implementation Target Date
Build consistent communication systems	3.1.1 Conduct parent-teacher conferences 2 times per year with contact attempts for all students' parents and guardians 3.1.2 Develop a process to document all parent and guardian contact, and train staff on the process 3.1.3 Formalize a standardized process for training staff to initiate communication and facilitate parent-teacher conferences with translation services	SY 26-27
Strengthen family engagement practices	3.1.4 Ensure certified staff use SIS to document attempted and successful parent contacts	SY 26-27
Increase outreach	3.1.5 Target outreach to under-engaged families; Partner with family liaisons; Provide targeted communications	SY 27-28
Evaluate & refine	3.1.6 Analyze contact trends; Adjust tools; Publish annual family engagement report	SY 28-29

Focus Area 3: Engagement and Partnerships

Goal: Strengthen connections with families and community partners to create an engaging, supportive environment.

Objective 3.2: Community Partnerships - By December 2029, the school will create and grow at least seven new active partnerships with organizations, businesses, or nonprofits that provide internships and/or mentoring for students.

Strategies	Tactics	Full Implementation Target Date
Build partnership foundation	3.2.1 Identify and document our existing partnerships and identify opportunities for new partnerships by October 2026	SY 26-27
Strengthen engagement	3.2.2 Create opportunities for students to engage with our new active partnerships by August 2027	SY 27-28
Expand opportunities	3.2.3 Create and invite our partners to an annual showcase to discuss goals and identify needs by 2028	SY 27-28
Evaluate impact	3.2.4 Conduct annual program evaluation; Refine criteria; Publish partnership report	SY 28-29



Focus Area 3: Engagement and Partnerships

Goal: Strengthen connections with families and community partners to create an engaging, supportive environment.

Objective 3.2: Communication with Families and Community - By 2029, the district will ensure that 100% of students, parents and guardians receive newsletters, regularly scheduled principal video updates and social media communications, and will ensure that families representing 95% of identified home languages can access newsletters, principal updates, and key district communications in their preferred/home language.

Strategies	Tactics	Full Implementation Target Date
Build multilingual infrastructure	3.3.1 Identify and record the preferred language of each student's household – record preferred language in Student Information System 3.3.2 Use translation services to translate key communications before sending them out	SY 26-27
Increase consistency	3.3.3 Continue regular video updates, monthly newsletters, information on the websites, and social media communications	SY 26-27
Expand access	3.3.4 Offer real-time interpretation at parent/guardian meetings and conferences	SY 27-28
Evaluate impact	3.3.5 Analyze communication reach; Conduct family feedback surveys; Revise translation supports	SY 28-29

Focus Area 3: Engagement and Partnerships

Goal: Strengthen connections with families and community partners to create an engaging, supportive environment.

Objective 3.4: Community Recognition - By 2029, the district will maintain a consistent community recognition plan that recognizes one community member or organization quarterly through a newsletter, a social media post and an official press release to celebrate and encourage community involvement.

Strategies	Tactics	Full Implementation Target Date
Launch recognition system	3.4.1 Develop a transparent process for criteria and nominations for recognition 3.4.2 Ensure there is a consistent coordinator/ dedicated oversight to the process	SY 25-26
Strengthen visibility	3.4.3 Recognize recipients through our communications, invite them as a distinguished guest at our graduation ceremony, and acknowledge their contributions in our monthly governing board meeting	SY 26-27
Increase engagement	3.4.4 Expand categories; Add partner-sponsored awards	SY 27-28
Evaluate and refine	3.4.5 Review engagement data; Adjust categories; Publish annual recognition summary	SY 28-29

Focus Area 4: Financial Responsibility

Goal: Ensure transparent and responsible management of district finances that supports and enhances student achievement, school culture and community partnerships.

Objective 4.1: Align Financial Resources - By July 2029, the district will audit resources to improve student outcomes.

Strategies	Tactics	Full Implementation Target Date
Identify & prioritize resource needs	4.1.1 Identify all programs utilized (such as AVID) and associated costs by July 2026 4.1.2 Gather baseline data for programs to determine efficacy of each program relative to its cost by July 2027	SY 25-26 SY 26-27
Implement aligned budgeting for professional development	4.1.3 Provide professional development and training for all teachers on identified programs by August 2027	SY 26-27
Strengthen alignment	4.1.4 Evaluate program outcomes and cost-effectiveness to guide future funding priorities and strategic planning	SY 26-27



Focus Area 4: Financial Responsibility

Goal: Ensure transparent and responsible management of district finances that supports and enhances student achievement, school culture and community partnerships.

Objective 4.2: Maintain Strong Fiscal Compliance - MUHSD will annually share financial and budget updates and reports through newsletters, social media posts, and official district communications.

Strategies	Tactics	Full Implementation Target Date
Strengthen staff financial training	4.2.1 Provide annual fiscal training for staff including club sponsors and coaches to ensure all financial processes adhere to legal requirements, ongoing through 28-29	SY 25-26
Increase transparency	4.2.2 At least twice per year, update the community on budget status via board updates, newsletters, social media and various district communications	SY 26-27
Evaluate impact	4.2.3 Conduct a comprehensive review of fiscal procedures and compliance practices and implement improvements to strengthen transparency and accountability	SY 26-27



Glossary of Terms and Abbreviations

ACT – standardized test used for college admissions in the United States

ACT ASPIRE – Summative assessment that measures student readiness for college and career; a precursor to the ACT

AP – Advanced Placement – courses that offer college-level curricula and exams, allowing high school students to receive college credit based on the final exam at the end of the year

AVID – Advancement Via Individual Determination – A college and career readiness program that prepares students for higher education

CTE – Career and Technical Education – Specialized academic and technical programs that prepare students for high-skill careers through training and certifications

Dual Enrollment – A program allowing students to take college-level courses at the high school that earns them both high school and college credit

EL - English Learner – A student whose primary language is not English

Freshman Houses - Mingus Union High School organizes ninth grade students into two groups that share core teachers and focus on supporting freshman success. Teachers collaborate with administration and the Center for High School Success to monitor student progress and implement strategies that improve learning outcomes.

NWEA – Northwest Evaluation Association – The NWEA MAP (Measures of Academic Progress) assessment is a nationally normed computer adaptive assessment.

PLC – Professional Learning Communities – a collaborative group of educators who meet regularly to share expertise, analyze data, and work together in their content area toward continuous improvement

SIS – Student Information System – a centralized software platform used by districts to manage student data, including enrollment, attendance, grades, scheduling and records.



Strategic Plan Core Team Members

Kevin Murie - Commander Cottonwood PD

Beth Canedy - Owner, Rag Time

Paul Karratti - Faith Leader

Jonathan Canning - Mingus Union High School Parent

Mikel Swank - Mingus Union High School Parent

Lacey Edwards - Mingus Union High School Parent

Dean Holbrook – Yavapai College

Dave Beery - Principal, Mingus Union High School

Katherine Forbes – Dean of Students, Mingus Union High School

Ashley Gonzalez – Alumni, Class of 2025

McKenna Cook – Student, Class of 2028

Amy Badger - Science Teacher, Mingus Union High School

Klint McKean – English Teacher, Mingus Union High School

Chad Elmer – CTE Director, Mingus Union High School

Mayra Garcia Hernandez – School Counselor, Mingus Union High School

Jennifer Doerksen – Nurse, Mingus Union High School



Project Team Members

Areas 1 & 2

Student Achievement

Stephanie Selna
Shannon Anderson
Jazmine Anguiano
Megan Alexander-Druen
Amy Badger
Justin Monical
Chad Scott
Susanna Ventura

Climate and Culture

Dave Beery
Gretchen Wesbrock
Chad Elmer
Jason Teague
Trecia Taylor
Klint McKean
Paige Bodam
Erick Quesada

Areas 1 & 2

Engagement & Partnerships

Dave Beery
Katherine Forbes
Gretchen Wesbrock
Trecia Taylor
Molly Quesada
Calvin Behlow

Financial Responsibility

Lynn Leonard
Justin Monical
Jason Teague
Amy Badger
Chad Elmer
Chad Scott
Shannon Anderson