Frequently Asked Questions: Updates to Our Strategic Plan Targets & The Launch of Our Public Data Dashboard

Some Context

In 2023-24, our community came together to create a new five-year Strategic Plan. That plan was approved by our Board of Trustees in the spring of 2024, and we began implementing it in the 2024-25 school year. For each of the five pillars of our Strategic Plan — Exceptional Instruction, Engaged Students, Purposeful Partnerships, Empowered Educators, and Equity-Centered Systems — we created a set of success measures: things we wanted to be true within five years, by the end of the 2028-29 school year.

When we first created the plan, our targets for these measures were largely illustrative. We were still improving our data systems and data accuracy, so our goals were example goals meant to communicate our aspirations, not precise, evidence-based benchmarks.

By the end of last year (2025-26), we finally had the data we needed to establish real baselines and get a clearer sense of where our students and our system were actually starting. Over the summer, we've been interrogating our original targets as we prepare to launch our public data dashboard — a tool that will let any member of our community see how our district and schools are progressing on our Strategic Plan measures.

Below are answers to some of the questions we expect our community may have about this update.

Why are you adjusting some of the targets now?

When our original targets were established in 2023-24, we were at the beginning of our five-year Strategic Plan and had more limited longitudinal data for several of our measures. Two years later, we have learned a great deal: we have stronger data systems, a clearer understanding of our current performance, and better insight into the pace of improvement across our system. That learning allows us to refine our targets so they remain ambitious, while giving us clearer and more actionable benchmarks for progress.

Does this mean you're lowering your expectations for students?

No. Our commitment to meaningfully improving experiences and outcomes for each and every one of our students has not changed. What has changed is our understanding of the rate at which meaningful, system-wide improvement occurs. With two years of implementation and learning behind us, we are better able to set ambitious annual milestones that reflect that rate of change while continuing to push us toward the outcomes we ultimately want for every student.

Here's an example: our May 2026 state assessment data showed 37% of our students meeting or exceeding standards in math. Setting a target of 80% within three years communicates where we ultimately want to be, but it doesn't provide our schools with meaningful milestones for the progress we expect to see year over year. 80%—or higher—remains where we ultimately want our students to be. What has changed is that we can now establish a more evidence-based trajectory for getting there, with annual targets that are ambitious, actionable, and allow us to recognize meaningful progress along the way.

Isn't this just what good educators do anyway?

Yes — that's exactly how we think about it! We're doing what we ask of our educators every day: studying the data honestly, reflecting on what it tells us, and making thoughtful adjustments based on evidence. Continuous improvement means holding firmly to our aspirations while remaining flexible about the path we take to reach them—using what we learn along the way to sharpen our approach, adjust our milestones, and keep moving toward better outcomes for students.

What targets are changing, and by how much?

Here are a few examples:

- **English Language Arts (ELA) Proficiency (Grades 3, 8, and 11):** Our 2025-26 Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) state assessment results show that 51% of our students in Grades 3, 8, and 11 are meeting or exceeding standards in ELA. Our original target was 80% proficiency by 2028-29, and our updated target is 63% by 2028-29, which represents a 12-percentage-point gain from our 2025-26 baseline over three years.
- **Chronic Absenteeism:** Our current chronic absenteeism rate is 18%. Our updated target is 13%, reflecting a meaningful, 20% year-over-year reduction that sets a strong expectation for continued improvement while remaining grounded in our recent progress and data.
- **Staff Engagement and Progress Monitoring:** These have been important areas of focus since the launch of our Strategic Plan, and we have continued to strengthen how we measure progress in both areas.
    - For staff engagement, we decided to utilize the Gallup Q12 Employee Engagement Survey questions, which we have incorporated into our annual California School Staff Survey (CSSS). This tool provides a snapshot of the overall employee experience, measuring four levels of employee needs from basic workplace clarity to advanced opportunities for personal growth. Ultimately, when these foundational needs are met, they help leaders cultivate an empowering workplace environment where both individuals and teams can thrive.
    - For progress monitoring, we decided to measure usage of our Open Architects data dashboard—the same platform that will house our Strategic Plan dashboard, which is launching by the end of September (more information on this below). We want to support our leaders to use this tool—and the student data therein—to measure and monitor progress.

The full, detailed list of updated targets across all five Strategic Plan Pillars will be available on our public dashboard (more on this below).

How were the new targets decided?

Cabinet worked with our district office teams over the summer to propose updated targets using actual baseline data from the 2025-26 school year. We also brought these proposed updates to our principals for review and feedback before finalizing them. The response was very affirming: principals told us the new targets feel more honest and more achievable, and district office staff described them as more realistic and appropriate.

The updated targets were shared with the Board of Trustees for review and approval on September 10.

When will I be able to see this data for myself?

We're launching a public-facing data dashboard through our Open Architects platform by the end of September. Once live, any member of our community, families, staff, and the public—will be able to see how our district and individual schools are performing against our Strategic Plan measures.

Why does the district want to be this transparent?

Because we believe our community deserves an honest, clear picture of our progress: where we started, where we are now, where we're headed, and whether we're making enough progress to get to where we want to be by 2028-2029 . Publishing a dashboard allows our community to see the same measures we are using to evaluate our progress and make decisions. It holds us accountable not only for the goals we set, but for demonstrating meaningful progress toward them. We believe transparency, reflection, and a willingness to adjust based on what we learn are signs of a strong, accountable school system.

I still have questions or feedback. Who do I contact?

We want to hear from you. If you have questions about these updated targets or the upcoming dashboard, please reach out to our Chief of Strategy & Communications Officer, Georgina Blackett (gblackett@ssfusd.org), who will ensure your question gets to the correct department and is answered promptly. Please know that we will also continue to share updates through our staff and family newsletters throughout the Fall.

Thank you!