Dobbs Ferry School District
Independent Thinkers Change Worlds

2026-27 District Goals and Strategic Planning Framework

Creating the Conditions for Effective Teaching and Learning

October 27, 2026

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Background

- Our goals and strategic planning framework continue to evolve based on our thinking and learning; and on the plans, regulations, and guidance that the New York State Board of Regents and the State Education Department are putting forward. These include:
  - K-12 Academic Program Development
  - Literacy and Mathematics Initiatives
  - Graduation Measures (NY Inspires) Initiative
  - Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Education
  - Instructional Technology Access and Use

Background

- The proposed goals do not reflect the whole of the work that is being done across the district but instead identify **four** areas that will be our specific focus for the year.

- Some goals are variations on previous goals as we continue to build/revise plans, review and establish policies, and build/refine systems that more effectively (and where possible, efficiently) support the work of teaching and learning.

- Our points of focus and our goals reflect district plans that we continue to develop, refine, and operate under. These include:
  - Professional Learning Plan
  - Multi-Tiered System of Supports Plan
  - Comprehensive ELL Education Plan
  - Special Education Plan
  - Section 504 Plan
  - Physical Education Plan
  - Comprehensive School Counseling Plan (under construction)
  - Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Plan (being revised this year)
  - K-12 Literacy Plan (under construction)
  - Districtwide and Building Safety Plans (revised to include cardiac response plan)
  - Long-range Financial Plan (under construction)

Theory of Action

1. IF the primary purpose for schooling is to teach children **how to learn** across a variety of targeted domains, THEN we must make this an explicit area of focus in the recruitment and training of our faculty and staff. THIS WILL RESULT IN an increasing number of employees who will base their teaching on the principles of the science of learning, and an improvement in outcomes for all students.
2. IF the **process of learning** is based on consistent principles from cognitive science (the science of learning) related to working and long-term memory, THEN we must ensure that faculty and, staff have a deep understanding of these principles. THIS WILL RESULT IN a deeper educator understanding *of* effective instructional practices and improved outcomes for all students.
3. IF the **effectiveness and longevity of learning** relies heavily upon evidence-based instructional and assessment practices, THEN we must know and understand these practices, and establish habits of staying attuned to new evidence. THIS WILL RESULT IN more effective, efficient, and consistent instructional practices, and improved outcomes for all students.
4. IF the time that we have to provide instruction that will cause students to learn so as to meet and exceed grade-level standards is limited, THEN as educators and educational leaders we must act with urgency to find those **methods and assessments that make the most effective use of instructional time** based on consistent evidence. THIS WILL RESULT IN deeper educator understanding of effective and efficient instructional practices, improved outcomes for all students, and greater educator satisfaction.
5. IF our students require **an ever-increasing amount of content knowledge** to further their learning, THEN we must be intentional in choosing the best-known learning opportunities and experiences that systematically build knowledge and the associated skills and dispositions that our students need to succeed. THIS WILL RESULT IN more effective and efficient instructional practices, greater enjoyment for student learners, and improved outcomes for all students.
6. IF there are known instructional practices and beliefs that do not have a supporting body of evidence, but are nonetheless being used by our instructional staff, THEN we must critically evaluate these practices and prioritize those that have a **supporting body of evidence of improving teaching and learnin**g. THIS WILL RESULT IN more effective and efficient instructional strategies, improved outcomes for all students, and greater enjoyment of the teaching and learning process by students and staff.
7. IF, through our instructional practices in the delivery of curriculum, we expect to <u>increase</u> each of our students' ability to learn and achieve high-level outcomes in their academic, behavioral, and social lives so that they are more fully prepared to be excellent citizens, THEN **our work must increasingly be intentional, explicit, and systematic**.

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Initiatives Impacting Our Work and Strategic Planning

In developing our strategic planning, the district will consider, integrate where possible, and, where necessary, explicitly address policy, program, and planning initiatives at the following levels:

- ***Federal*** including changes to policy and funding;
- ***State*** including changes to policy, graduation measures, foundation aid, and school accountability measures;
- ***Local*** including property assessment updates and village planning; and
- ***District*** including transportation and demographic studies, facilities planning (e.g., project 2032) and required plan development.

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Goal 1

- **Goal 1**: Each school in the district will achieve at least a **Level 3 attendance rate*** for 90% of student subgroups by using key strategies including:
  - Monitoring and acting on instances of chronic absenteeism
  - Communicating with families to understand reasons for absences
  - Providing parents/guardians information on what constitutes an absence and why we are monitoring it
  - Providing consistent communications with parents/guardians about the importance of daily school attendance and their child(ren)'s attendance, and providing resources to assist them in getting their child to school each day
  - Utilizing our building-based MTSS teams to monitor and intervene when students have multiple absences
  - Increasing the co- and extracurricular opportunities based on student requests to incentivize attendance
  - Monitoring research and area districts to identify promising practices in improving attendance

**Level 3 = 90.1 - 95% attendance*

Level 4 = 95.1 -100% attendance

35 of 48 subgroups (73%) are currently at Level 3 or 4; of these, 21 (44%) are at Level 4.

All 9 subgroups at Level 2 are with 5 percentage points of Level 3

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Goal 2

- **Goal 2**: The district will **improve academic outcomes for all students in grades 3-8** as measured by a 5% increase in *student growth percentiles* using key strategies that include:
  - Establishing a consistent Tier 1 literacy and mathematics curriculum for all students in grades K-8
  - Identifying and enhancing evidence-based instructional practices
    - Evaluating digital vs analog tools to determine those that will better improve student learning and increase teacher time for additional support of students/student groups
    - Providing specific training to instructional staff on how to best use these tools
  - Decreasing student screen time based on the evaluation of our practices
  - Establishing consistent MTSS processes and intervention cycle between school that address specific areas of student performance based on valid and reliable assessments
  - Improving our data literacy so as to quickly analyze and apply the lessons learned from our assessments to improve teaching and learning
  - Identifying additional opportunities for learning, removing barriers to accessing those opportunities, and providing evidence-based supports for success for students
  - Improving our understanding of the requirements of CR parts 154 and 200, Section 504 and IDEA through professional learning and establishing instructional practices that best meet the needs of students

Goal 3

- **Goal 3**: The district will retain 95% of **personnel*** in all areas of operations by using key strategies including:
  - Applying lessons learned from exit interview data
  - Providing employees with feedback on performance and, where necessary, explicit expectations for improvement
  - Improving the quality and effectiveness of professional learning support
  - Providing remuneration for additional duties related to experience
  - Providing effective mentoring for new teachers and administrators
  - Monitoring the implementation of bargaining agreements to determine if changes are needed to improve working conditions
  - Including personnel in district decision making (professional learning plan, district strategic planning, district curriculum council, technical advisory group, facilities planning, etc.)
  - Collaborating with regional colleagues on strategies that they are finding success with
  - Administering staff satisfaction surveys and suggestions for improvement based on working conditions

**Excluding retirements and district-initiated separations.*

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Goal 4

- **Goal 4**: The district will increase satisfaction with **family engagement** with school activities and initiatives using key strategies including:
  - Analyzing the family survey results on their satisfaction with the level of engagement across the district in key operational areas, and developing plans and strategies to address common concerns shown in the survey data
  - Monitoring parent/guardian attendance at school and district events
  - Providing consistent communications, opportunities for workshops, and structured meetings on district planning for parents/guardians
  - Working with district partners including Spring, PTSA, Trailguides, the Dobbs Ferry Schools Foundation, and other community groups on topics related to improving student academic and behavioral performance
  - Reviewing research on promising practices for family engagement in schools

Next Steps

1. The administrative council will focus our work on implementing strategies that will help us meet our goals.
2. Principals and department leaders will align their goals to the district goals.
3. Board committees will review surveys and strategies that support the goals.
4. The superintendent will update the board on progress towards meeting the goals in January and June.

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