Portsmouth School Department

CHARTING THE COURSE TO EXCELLENCE

STRATEGIC PLAN

Fall 2025 - Spring 2030



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The town of Portsmouth was founded in 1638 and is located on the north end of Aquidneck Island, north of Middletown and Newport. Prudence Island, Patience Island, Hope Island, and Hog Island are also part of the Portsmouth community. Encompassing a total area of 59.3 square miles: 23.2 square miles of land and 36.1 square miles of water, Portsmouth, RI is the home of approximately 17,000 people.

Letter From The Superintendent



Dear Members of the PSD Community,

I am pleased to present to you our district's Strategic Plan for 2025-2030. This plan will guide the work of the professionals in our district, providing the roadmap as we strive to enable every student to succeed in college, career, and life.

In the Portsmouth School District, we are determined to educate our students and produce graduates who will be conscientious and dynamic citizens in an ever-changing world. We know that we must provide all students with a robust, rigorous, and equitable education to enhance their ability to become global citizens and productive members of our society.

I am so proud to be the Superintendent of this district. All of our schools perform in the top tier of state and national benchmarks. While we currently offer our students an exceptional education, we understand that there is always room for improvement within our school system. By using this strategic plan as a guide for our district, we aim to enhance both the quality and accessibility of educational opportunities available to all our students.

This document details the process that led to the creation of our Strategic Plan. It includes our theory of action, priority areas, and the methods we will use to measure our success in each of these areas over the next five years. This plan reaffirms our commitment to ensuring that every student receives the education they deserve.

In conclusion, I would like to thank the members of our Strategic Plan Work Group as well as the staff, families, students, school committee members, and community participants who contributed to the development of this plan. Your willingness to share your experiences and feedback was crucial in developing a strong plan. Your dedication will help us ensure that we educate each of our students to achieve personal excellence in the years to come.

With gratitude and much hope for the future of our district,

Thomas W. Kenworthy

Thomas W. Kenworthy, Ed.D.

Superintendent
Portsmouth School Department

PSD Strategic Plan



Mission Statement *Our daily mission is:*

To **prepare, support, and develop** all students to achieve academic and personal success by providing rigorous, engaging learning opportunities in a safe, equitable, and inclusive learning environment.

Prepare, **S**upport, **D**evelop

Vision Statement *Our long-term vision of success is:*

All students will become lifelong learners and engaged citizens, prepared for success in college, career, and life beyond high school.

Theory of Action *the fundamental belief on what will lead to the district's success*

If school leaders...

- Are empowered as the key drivers of change and provided with targeted support, resources, and collaborative opportunities with district leadership;
- Foster a culture of high expectations, instructional excellence, and continued support for teachers and staff;
- Cultivate a student-centered approach to data-informed decision-making around educating the whole child;
- Actively engage parents, guardians, and the community to support a shared vision for student growth and citizenship.

Then...

- School leaders will be equipped to implement meaningful school-wide initiatives, foster a positive culture of learning, and effectively address the unique needs of their students and staff, ultimately driving sustainable progress and achieving district-wide educational goals;
- Staff will enhance and improve their practices to better serve the needs of all students and teachers will feel supported and empowered to meet diverse student needs;
- Students will thrive academically and socially-emotionally;
- Families and community members will feel empowered to engage in and support students' growth.



Priority Areas

1. Academic Rigor for All Students
2. Staff Growth and Development
3. Student Wellbeing
4. Family Engagement
5. Facilities

Priorities and Goals

Academic Rigor for All Students

PSD will prepare all students for life beyond high school by emphasizing literacy and numeracy as foundations for success, maintaining high academic expectations and engagement throughout their academic career, and working to ensure every student has the support they need to succeed.

How we will measure this...

- Increase the percentage of 3rd – 8th grade students meeting or exceeding expectations on the ELA and Math State Assessment.
- Increase 3rd – 8th grade student growth on the ELA and Math State Assessment.
- Increase the percentage of students with disabilities meeting or exceeding expectations on the ELA and Math State Assessment.
- Increase the percentage of students meeting or exceeding expectations on the ELA and Math SAT.
- Increase the percentage of students meeting or exceeding expectations on the Next Generation Science Assessments.
- Increase the percentage of students responding positively to survey questions measuring feeling engaged in the classroom.



Staff Wellness and Development

PSD will prioritize teacher and staff personal wellbeing and provide impactful and responsive professional development so that all feel valued and well-equipped to support our students.

How we will measure this...

- Increase the percentage of teachers/ staff responding positively to survey questions measuring relevance of professional development.
- Increase the percentage of teachers/ staff responding positively to survey questions measuring how supported they feel in their growth.
- Increase the percentage of teachers/ staff responding positively to survey questions measuring positive work environment.
- the percentage of teachers/ staff responding positively to survey questions measuring their sense of feeling valued.



Student Wellbeing

PSD will create environments where all students are welcomed and treated with respect in order to strengthen their sense of belonging and connectivity.

How we will measure this...

- Increase the percentage of students responding positively to survey questions measuring their sense of belonging at school.
- Increase the percentage of students responding positively to survey questions measuring their level of comfort and trust in approaching staff in their school for support and advice.
- Increase the percentage of students responding positively to survey questions measuring whether they feel respected by peers and adults in their school.
- Increase the percentage of students who are in attendance 90% or more school days.



Family Engagement

PSD will foster an ongoing, collaborative partnership with all families by engaging in regular and purposeful outreach so that they have the information needed to meaningfully participate in their child's education.

How we will measure this...

- Increase the percentage of families/caregivers responding positively to survey questions measuring receiving helpful communication from the school.
- Increase the percentage of families/ caregivers responding positively to survey questions measuring receiving helpful communication from their student's teacher.
- Increase the percentage of families/ caregivers responding positively to survey questions measuring how meaningfully they are able to engage in their child's education.
- Increase the percentage of families/caregivers responding positively to survey questions measuring their satisfaction of events or meetings offered at their child's school.



Facilities

PSD will prioritize the modernization and maintenance of facilities to ensure sustainable and innovative learning environments that support student achievement, well-being, and safety.

How we will measure this...

- Gain approval from Rhode Island DOE for a new 5-year capital plan.
- Complete district capital plan projects within the approved timeframe.
- Increase the percentage of teachers/staff and families reporting positively to survey questions measuring satisfaction in school facilities.
- Increase the percentage of repair requests completed on time.

Fast Facts

OUR SCHOOLS

2 Elementary Schools

Hathaway Elementary School
Melville Elementary School

1 Middle School

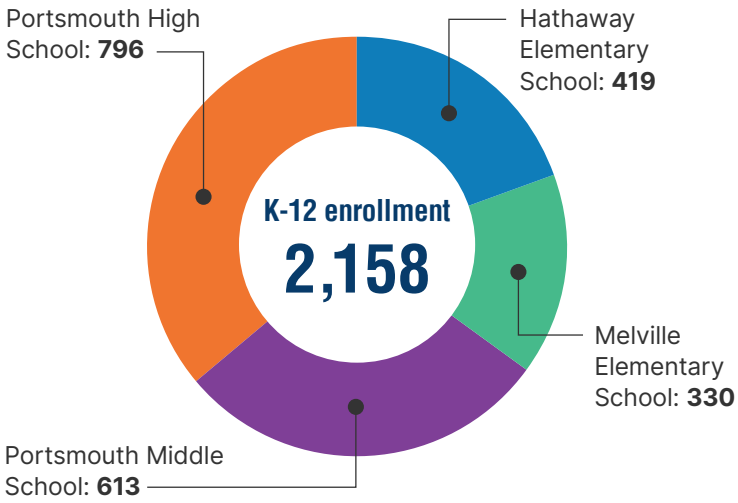
Portsmouth Middle School

1 High School

Portsmouth High School

OUR ENROLLMENT

(as of January 1, 2025)



Economically Disadvantaged 20%

Students Receiving Special Education Services 17%

OUR DATA

(as of January 1, 2025)

- Per pupil expenditure: **$22,234**
- Operating budget: **$38,177,838**
- Four-Year graduation rate: **96%**
- Educators: **246**

Source: PSD District Data, January 2025

Strategic Planning Process Overview



Overview of the Strategic Plan

The strategic planning process in Portsmouth School Department (PSD) was designed to ensure a cohesive and focused direction for the district over the next five years, defining clear priorities and goals to guide future initiatives and support student success. To achieve this, PSD collaborated with the District Management Group (DMGroup), a Boston-based education consulting firm, to create an actionable strategic plan.

The initial step in this process involved gaining an in-depth understanding of the district through extensive data collection efforts, such as surveys, focus groups, interviews, and community meetings. This inclusive approach ensured that the perspectives of all stakeholders were considered. The next step was to develop a mission and vision statement, along with a theory of action, that captured the district's identity and set a clear course for the future. Building on this foundation, PSD identified strategic priorities for the next five years, concentrating on critical areas like academic rigor for all students, staff growth and development, student well-being, family engagement, and facilities.

Strategic Planning Process Overview



Strategic Planning Working Committee

PSD established a working committee to guide the strategic planning process in collaboration with DMGroup. This committee ensured stakeholder input and played a key role in shaping the strategic plan. The 15-member working committee comprised the following individuals:

- **Dr. Emily Copeland** - School Committee Chair
- **Karen McDaid** - School Committee Member
- **Dr. Thomas Kenworthy** - Superintendent
- **Dr. Elizabeth Vivieros** - Deputy Superintendent
- **Charity Shea** - Director of Student Services
- **Kimberly Aguiar** - Director of Human Resources
- **Christopher Diluro** - Director of Finances
- **Lisa Little** - Principal, Howard Hathway Elementary School
- **Danielle Laurie** - Principal, Melville Elementary School
- **Dr. Jason Masterson** - Principal, Portsmouth Middle School
- **Dr. Jeffrey Heath** - Principal, Portsmouth High School
- **James Betres** - NEA Teachers Union Vice President
- **Michelle Silva** - Council 94 Union President
- **Dr. Deanna Conley** - Parent
- **Jillian May** - Parent

Strategic Planning Process Overview



PSD Strategic Planning Process

The development of the strategic plan was divided into four distinct phases, enabling a thorough review of existing data, integration of stakeholder feedback and community input, and iterative refinement of the draft plan.

Phase I: Conduct Needs Assessment.....*August 2024 - October 2024*

- Form and convene the Strategic Planning Design Working Committee
- Conduct needs assessment
  - Gather quantitative data (examples include: enrollment data, standardized testing data, attendance data, etc...)
  - Understand the progress made towards the current strategic plan goals
  - Conduct stakeholder focus groups and interviews to better understand the root causes of district challenges
  - Collect community and stakeholder input
  - Analyze data and share findings from needs assessment

Phase II: Develop Strategic Plan.....*October 2024 - January 2025*

- Work with the Working Committee to:
  - Develop mission and vision statements
  - Codify a theory of action
  - Develop district priorities in line with the theory of action
  - Identify measurable goals related to district priorities
  - Create an initial draft of the strategic plan
- Gather community and stakeholder feedback again and incorporate feedback into the drafted plan

Phase III: Develop Final Plan.....*January 2025 - February 2025*

- Review stakeholder feedback and finalize the 2025-2030 PSD Strategic Plan

Phase IV: Implementation.....*March 2025 and Beyond*

- Implement the 2025-2030 PSD Strategic Plan

Strategic Planning Process Overview



Phase I: Needs Assessment and Initial Community Engagement

To gain a comprehensive understanding of the conditions within PSD, DMGroup conducted a thorough analysis that focused on student achievement data, staff performance, and overall district operations. This analysis employed a mixed-methods approach, integrating both quantitative and qualitative data through community surveys, meetings, focus groups, and individual interviews. Stakeholders included district leaders, principals, classroom teachers, support staff, and families. Below is a summary of all stakeholder engagements from this phase of the project.

Fall 2024 Stakeholder Engagements

1:1 Interviews
8 Interviews
September 2024

Focus Groups
16 Groups
September 2024

Community and Family Survey
215 Respondents
Sept. - Oct. 2024

Community Meetings
~30 Attendees
October 2024

These engagements marked the first phase of a two-part community involvement process. The feedback collected during these sessions informed the development of the strategic plan prior to drafting. Based on this input, DMGroup and the working committee identified five key themes that formed the foundation of the final strategic plan.

Strategic Planning Process Overview

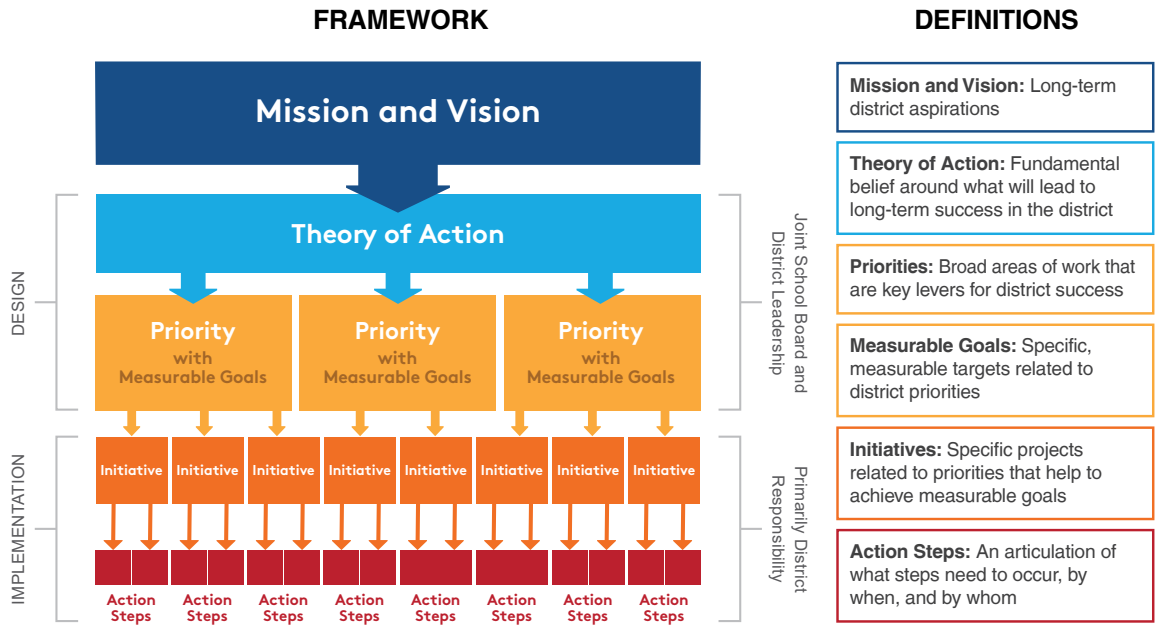


Analysis Themes

1. Academic Achievement
2. Social-Emotional Learning
3. Staff
4. Family and Community Engagement
5. Operations and Facilities

Phase II: Develop Strategic Plan

Based on the findings from the needs assessment, DMGroup and the PSD Working Committee developed the initial draft of the strategic plan. This draft adhered to DMGroup's strategic planning framework, emphasizing essential components such as the mission and vision, theory of action, priority areas, and measurable goals. During the implementation phase, PSD will establish annual targets, initiatives, and action steps to drive the district's efforts forward.



After completing the initial draft of the strategic plan, the broader PSD community was invited to share feedback during an additional in-person engagement session as well as through an online survey.

Strategic Planning Process Overview



Phase III: Develop Final Strategic Plan

After the community engagement session, DMGroup carefully analyzed stakeholder feedback to identify key themes and recommend revisions to the initial strategic plan draft. The PSD Working Committee incorporated this input into a revised version of the plan. This iterative process ensured that the final strategic plan captured diverse perspectives and effectively addressed the needs and priorities of the broader PSD community.





Next Steps - Implementation

Once the PSD School Committee approves the strategic plan, the focus will shift to its implementation. Implementation will involve establishing specific data benchmarks and milestones for each measurable goal, as well as designing initiatives and action steps for each priority area. PSD will take the lead in executing the plan, with the School Committee offering critical guidance and oversight to ensure its successful implementation. This collaborative approach will result in a cohesive, action-driven strategy aimed at achieving meaningful outcomes for students, staff, and the broader PSD community.



Appendix



Full Strategic Planning Process

Design

Perform Preliminary Analysis
(July 2024-October 2024)

- **Form and convene a strategic planning design working committee**
- **Conduct needs assessment**
  - **Gather quantitative data**
  - **Conduct stakeholder focus groups and interviews** to better understand root causes of district challenges
  - **Collect community and stakeholder input**
  - **Analyze data and share findings from needs assessment**

Develop Strategic Plan
(October 2024-January 2025)

- **Work with Steering Committee** to:
  - **Incorporate existing mission and vision**
  - **Codify a theory of action**
  - **Develop district priorities** in line with the theory of action
  - **Identify measurable goals** related to district priorities
  - **Create initial draft of strategic plan**
- **Gather community and stakeholder feedback** again and incorporate feedback into the drafted plan

Appendix



Detailed Summary of the Needs Assessment Analysis

In the fall of 2024, DMGroup conducted a comprehensive qualitative and quantitative analysis of district needs. This work aimed to identify the district's current strengths and challenges to guide the development of the theory of action and the priorities outlined in the strategic plan. The key needs identified through this analysis are detailed below.

District Strengths

- **District and School Leadership –** Staff consistently shared that leaders set clear expectations and a positive tone, leading to what many called 'the best start to a school year in recent memory'. Their collaborative leadership positively impacts every school.
- **Teachers and Staff –** Community survey respondents indicated teachers are a major strength in the district. Focus groups emphasized their experience, dedication, and strong relationships with students, making learning enjoyable and supporting student success.
- **Finances -** Despite shrinking budgets, the School Committee and district leadership report that finances are being managed effectively. Additionally, the strong CTE program in the district has created a significant new revenue stream.

Appendix



Themes on Current State

- **Education Accountability Act (EAA) –** Based on direction from the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE), schools in Portsmouth have been given increased autonomy. Every LEA in Rhode Island is required to develop a strategic plan.
- **Community Involvement and Perspective –** School performance is important to the wider community, as Portsmouth has become a sought-after destination for families. Social media has become an increasingly prominent platform for families to share their insights and opinions on the district in recent years elevating family perspective.
- **Vertical Cohesion –** Despite the small size of the district, focus groups with school administration and staff shed light on different processes across schools. Ranging from family engagement and communication to IEP development and services.
- **Academic Differentiation –** While academic achievement was highlighted as a major strength in the district, conversations with parents and related service providers revealed that the academics in the district could focus more on serving high performing and underperforming student groups.

Appendix



Key Areas of Focus

Academics

Similar to many districts, Portsmouth is addressing learning loss from the COVID-19 pandemic. Over the past 5 years, grades 3-8 saw a slight decrease in ELA proficiency but an increase in math, SAT scores decreased slightly, and the achievement gap between students with and without disabilities remains for proficiency but gains have been made in growth. Graduation rates remain high and Portsmouth continues to be one of the top performing districts in the state of Rhode Island.

Social Emotional Learning

Portsmouth has committed to providing expanded SEL support to students by increasing spending on key staff supporting students' mental health. Over the past 5 years, students' sense of belonging has remained strong at the elementary level and slightly increased in grades 6-12 yet chronic absenteeism of high school students remains an area of focus.

Professional Development

Staff reported a desire for additional professional development aligned to their needs. New leadership in the district has been highly praised by teachers and staff, but some non-teaching staff feel spread thin and that their access to relevant and targeted professional development is limited.

Facilities

The past 5-year capital plan was successful though staff, families, and students report the need for continued upgrades.

Family Communication and Engagement

Feedback on family communication was mixed with many families identifying communication as a strength in the district though some family members still report they would like more communication.