Vision 2030

The RPS Strategic Planning Team
Jaime Cangialosi-Murphy, Christine Corliss, Dr. Michelle Fenwick, Richard Matthews, Christopher McCullough, and Brian Ross

Hazard, Young, Attea & Associates
William Adams and Stacey E. Adams

BOE Presentation: April 2025

#TeamRidgewood

Vision 2030



- Collaboration to Create a District Mission and Vision



- Explanation of the Outcomes of the Advisory Board and Action Plan Development



- Introduction of the Initial Timeline

Our Strategic Planning Process Journey

Planning Launch & Initial Interview with Board of Education
Summer 2024

Engagement: Survey and Focus Groups
September 2024

Advisory Board
November - December 2024

Action Teams
January - March 2025

Action Plans Developed
January - March 2025

Plan Proposed to BOE and Community
April 2025

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Strategic Plan - Where Have We Been







- Team Members
- Our Goals
- Key Steps
- Team Insights
- Timeline Overview
- Supporting Our Vision
- Measuring Success

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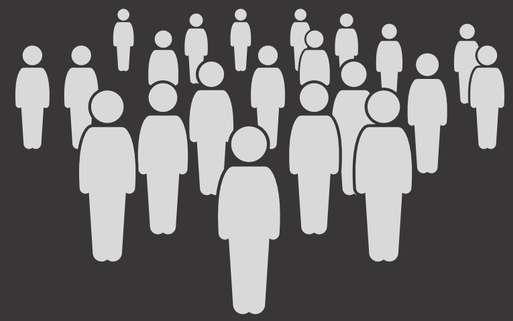
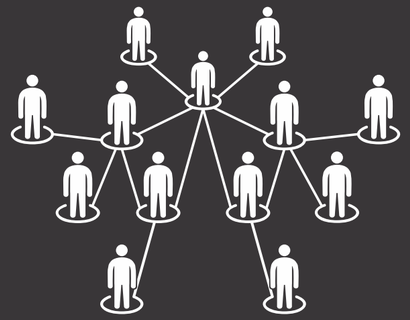
Strategic Planning Process



Plan Participants



Action Teams



Advisory Board



Survey Responses



Community
Focus Groups

More than 1,500 Participants

Strategic Plan Advisory Board - 24 Members

Mila Crane

Benjamin Strauss

Trecia Donnelly

Andrea Watson

Deirdre Azzopardi

Chuck Nebbia

Eva Farrar

Marguarite Carmody

Jaimie Davis (President of SEPAG)

Amy Hayes

Kelly Nakasone

Mark Kossick (RHS Alumi Association)

Lorri Steinbacher (Ridgewood Public Library)

Sheila Brogan (Board President)

Mary Micale (Board Trustee)

Caroline Hoffman

David Bailey

Jeff Nyhuis

Dr. Mark Schwarz

Dr. Michelle Fenwick

Jaime Murphy

Brian Ross

Richard Matthews

Christine Corliss

Students, Parents, Staff, Community Members, Principals & Ed Center

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Survey, Focus Group, Advisory Team Findings

Data

- ✓ District Demographics
- ✓ Operating Statistics, Facilities Utilization, and Maintenance
- ✓ Finance & Budgeting
- ✓ Staffing Trends
- ✓ Technology
- ✓ Academics, Achievement, and Success
- ✓ Student Survey Results



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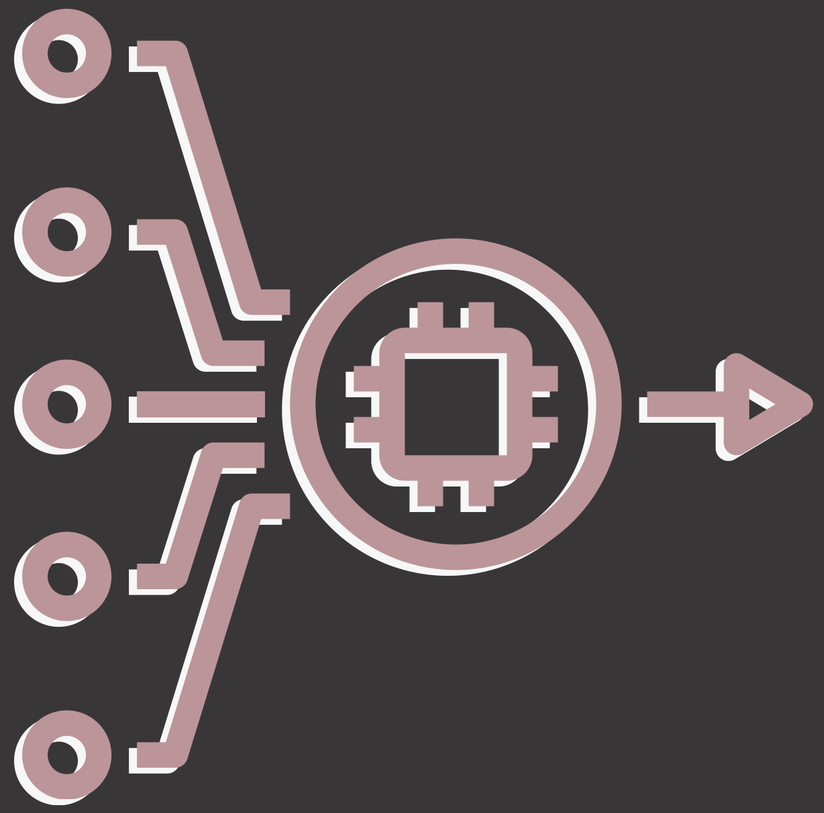
Input and Perceptions

- ✓ Interviews: BOE and Ed Center Administration
- ✓ Focus Groups
  - Students
  - Staff
  - Families
  - Village Representatives
  - Community
- ✓ Online Survey: 1200 Respondents



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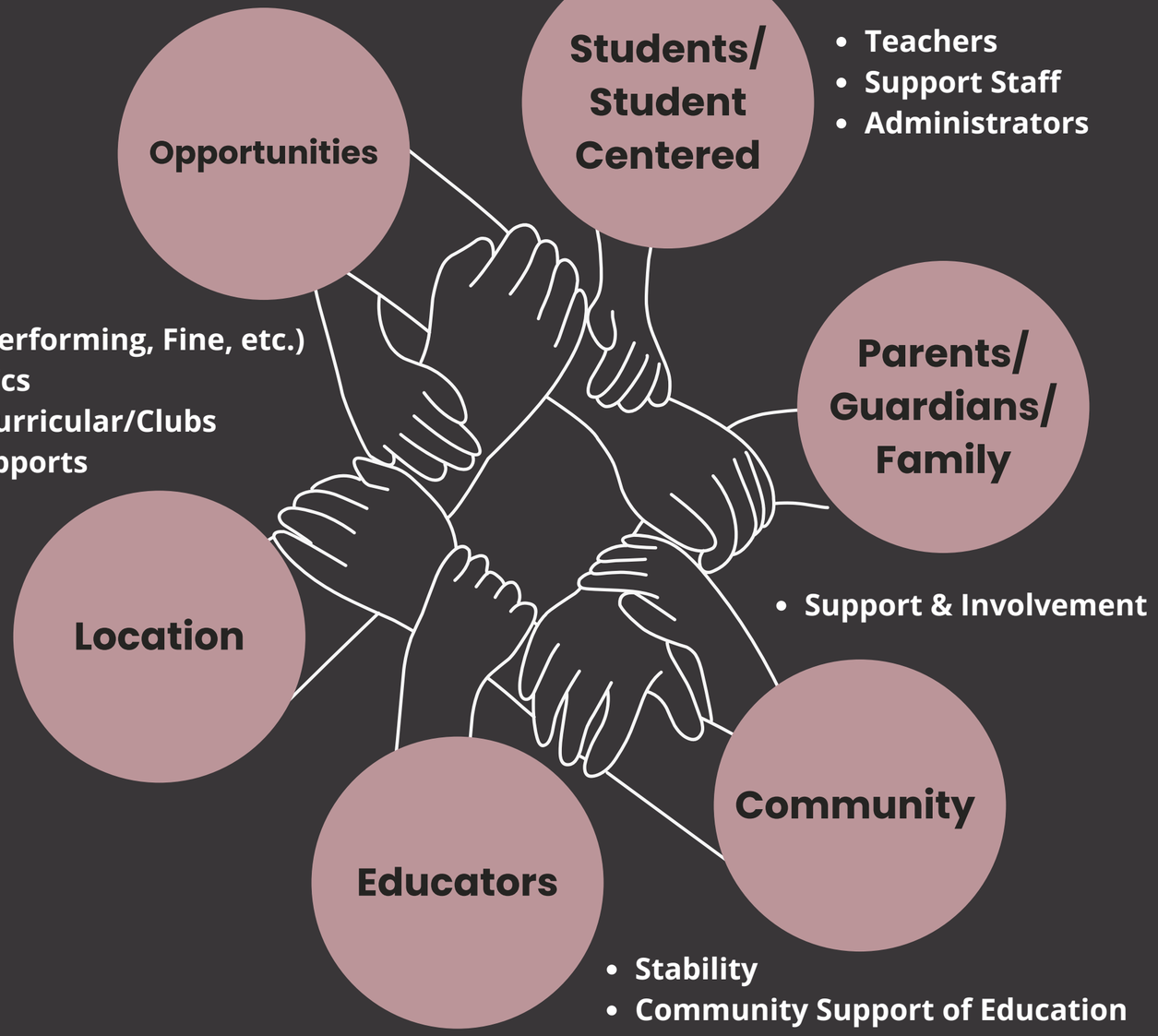
Strengths



- Teachers
- Support Staff
- Administrators

- Arts (Performing, Fine, etc.)
- Athletics
- Extracurricular/Clubs
- SEL supports

- Support & Involvement

- Stability
- Community Support of Education
- Sense of Community in Schools

- High-performing district
  - Ranking
  - Test Scores
  - Opportunities
- Professional Development Support for Staff
- Finances
- Relationships – i.e. Community Leadership & Village Governance

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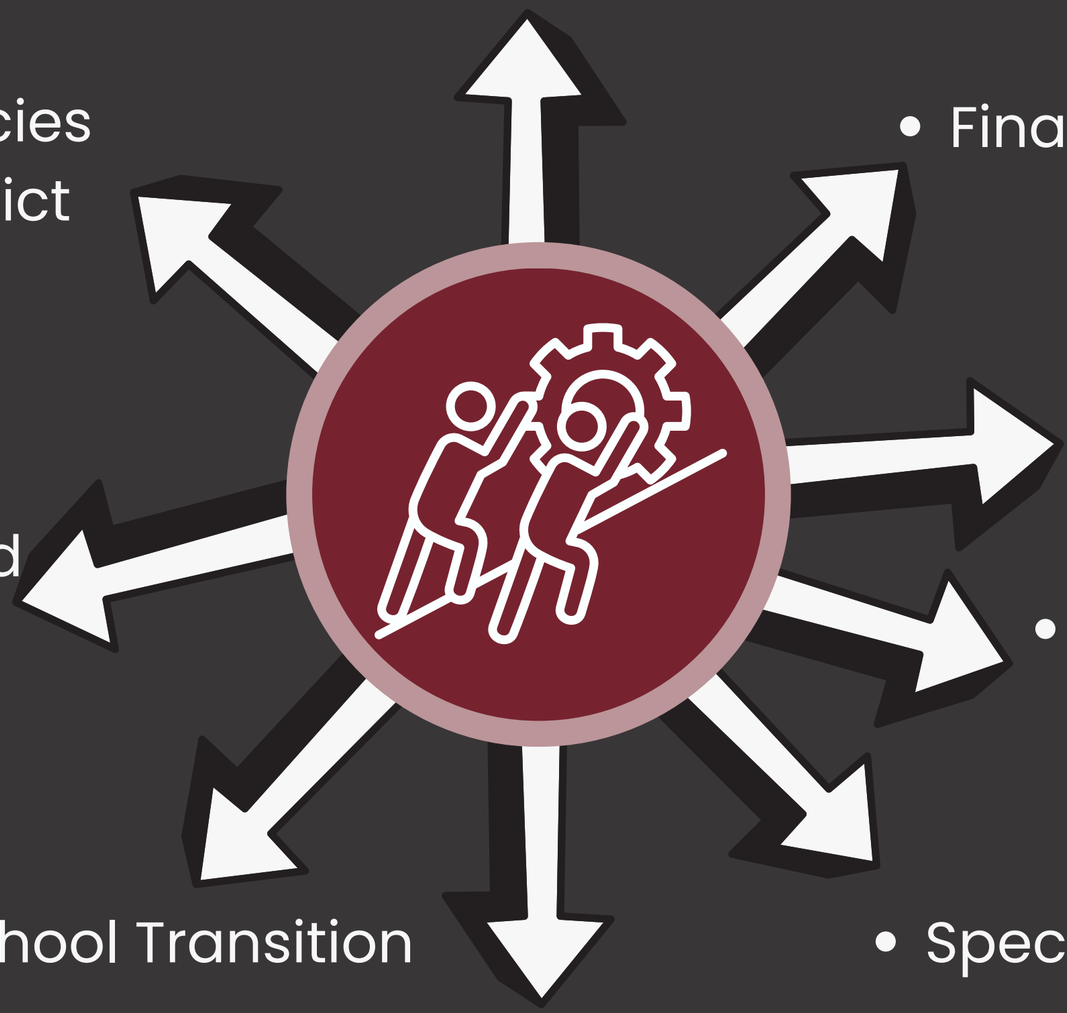
Challenges

- Facilities
- Inconsistencies Across District
- Financial Limitations
- Climate & Culture
- Balance between academic rigor and social & character development
- Staying current: programs, supports, technology, AI
- Middle to High School Transition
- Special Education
- Talent/Staff



Proposed Mission Statement

The Ridgewood Public Schools, in partnership with the community, is committed to the pursuit of excellence and innovation that enables all students to maximize their individual potential and become lifelong learners.



Proposed Vision Statement

RPS will create an inclusive community that empowers students to explore opportunities and shape their futures.

Five Strategic Plan Pillars
Action Team Focus Areas



Journey of a Graduate



Balanced Climate and Culture



Infrastructure | Facilities | Finance



Programs, Pathways & Proficiency (Teaching & Learning)



Engagement

Action Teams



61 Action Team Members

Target Areas



Journey of a Graduate

Jaime Cangialosi-Murphy (Assistant Superintendent)
Christopher McCullough (Supervisor Fine and Applied Arts)
Mila Crane (RHS Student)
Saurabh Dani (Board Trustee)
Thomas Harney (Elementary Teacher, Hawes)
Julie Mchedlishvili (Parent)
Lindsey Rubin (School Counselor, Orchard)
Ben Strauss (RHS Student)





Journey of a Graduate



Additional Team Members that Contributed to Journey Competencies
18 Students Grades 5-12
Additional stakeholders from the school and local community

Journey of a Graduate

To integrate the Journey of a Graduate (JoG) into all aspects of Ridgewood Public Schools, ensuring students develop the competencies and skills necessary for success in college, careers, and life.

- Critical Thinker
- Innovative Problem Solver
- Empowered Learner
- Effective Collaborator
- Engaged Citizen
- Compassionate and Resilient Learner



Critical Thinker

A Critical Thinker knows how to sort through information, ask good questions, and solve problems by carefully looking at evidence. This helps them make smart decisions in school and life.

- Thinks deeply about complex ideas.
- Challenges ideas using logic and evidence.
- Connects knowledge from different subjects.
- Breaks down challenging problems into manageable steps.
- Perseveres to find well-reasoned solutions.
- Evaluates if information is reliable and trustworthy.



Innovative Problem Solver

An Innovative Problem Solver explores new ideas, creates unique solutions, and works with others to tackle tough problems. This skill helps them stay calm when facing challenges and find creative ways to make things better.

- Explores new possibilities by asking questions and being curious.
- Creates practical solutions to tough problems in creative ways.
- Adjusts plans when new information or challenges arise.
- Stays calm and focused when facing uncertainty.
- Works with others to combine different strengths and ideas.
- Learns from mistakes and takes risks to improve problem-solving.



Empowered Learner

An Empowered Learner takes responsibility for their own growth, approaches work with integrity, and stays determined when things get tough. This skill helps them become independent learners who know how to seek support for success.

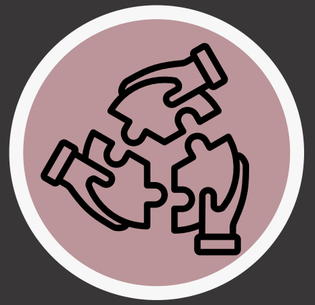
- Shows determination and perseverance when learning new things.
- Takes an active role in their own learning and takes risks to grow.
- Learns from mistakes and stays resilient in the face of setbacks.
- Manages time and work with responsibility and integrity.
- Stays curious and asks thoughtful questions to deepen understanding.
- Advocates for personal growth by setting goals and seeking help.



Effective Collaborator

An Effective Collaborator works well with others by listening actively, communicating clearly, and showing compassion through actions. This skill helps them build strong teams and create an environment where everyone can contribute their best work.

- Works well in teams by including and valuing everyone's voices.
- Adapts communication style to work through different situations.
- Listens actively and helps others feel comfortable sharing ideas.
- Takes responsibility for their role in team success and growth.
- Expresses ideas clearly while remaining open to feedback and different viewpoints.
- Demonstrates compassion by understanding others' perspectives and taking action to help.



Engaged Citizen

An Engaged Citizen takes action to improve their community, supports others who need help, and works to understand different perspectives. This skill helps them create positive change and build a better world together.

- Is an informed and responsible community member with global awareness.
- Speaks up for what is right and works toward positive change.
- Takes action to identify and address community challenges.
- Creates welcoming and inclusive spaces for all people.
- Shows courage by supporting others when they need help.
- Builds understanding across different groups and perspectives.



Compassionate & Resilient Learner

A Compassionate & Resilient Learner supports others with understanding while maintaining their own emotional health and boundaries. This skill helps them build genuine relationships and face challenges with both strength and kindness.

- Shows compassion by understanding and responding to others' needs.
- Demonstrates resilience by seeing challenges as opportunities to grow.
- Advocates for mental health awareness and emotional well-being.
- Builds real connections through honesty, kindness, and respect.
- Sets healthy boundaries and advocates for self and others.
- Balances their own emotions while supporting and uplifting others.



Journey of a Graduate

Goal 1

Embed the Journey of a Graduate into Curriculum and Instruction.

Secondary Goals

- Identify and align the skills that lead to mastery of the 6 JoG competencies.
- Conduct an audit of current curricula at each grade level and subject area to identify areas where JoG competencies are embedded and where additional integration is needed.
- Revise and update curriculum documents to explicitly include JoG competencies, ensuring alignment with NJ Student Learning Standards and best instructional practices.
- Provide ongoing training and workshops for educators on effective strategies to integrate JoG competencies into instruction, project-based learning, and formative assessments.
- Develop and implement digital student portfolios to document growth in JoG competencies over time.
- Develop rubrics aligned with JoG competencies and integrate competency-based assessment into existing grading practices.



Journey of a Graduate

Goal 2

Integrate Journey of a Graduate into School Culture and Co-Curricular Activities

Secondary Goals

- Identify and align existing school culture elements, co-curricular activities, and leadership programs with the 6 JoG competencies.
- Cultivate and strategically enhance student leadership in all extracurricular activities, embedding JoG competencies into student-led initiatives and groups, building upon existing strengths.
- Partner with local organizations to create service-learning projects aligned with JoG competencies and incorporate them into school programs.
- Develop and implement JoG-aligned themes for advisory periods, morning meetings, and school-wide assemblies.
- Establish an award system that recognizes students who consistently demonstrate JoG competencies in academic and extracurricular activities.



Journey of a Graduate

Goal 3

Communicate and Market the Journey of a Graduate to All Stakeholders

Secondary Goals

- Develop a comprehensive communication plan using newsletters, website updates, and social media to share JoG initiatives.
- Design an engaging JoG visual identity, including an infographic and logo, for display across schools and digital platforms.
- Host informational sessions, workshops, and town halls to educate families and community partners about JoG's impact.
- Highlight JoG branding throughout the school district, for example website messaging, posters in every school, integrate JoG competencies into report cards, and highlight student achievements in JoG competencies through newsletters and social media campaigns, etc.



Journey of a Graduate

Goal 4

Establish Accountability and Continuous Improvement Measures

Secondary Goals

- Conduct initial surveys and focus groups with students, staff, and parents to assess awareness and perception of JoG.
- Establish JoG progress monitoring mechanism with milestones for grade level bands and individual student growth in JoG competencies.
- Conduct periodic reviews of JoG implementation across curriculum, instruction, and co-curricular activities.
- Develop and share an annual progress report outlining successes, challenges, and future adjustments for JoG integration as part of State of the Schools.



Balanced Climate & Culture Team Members

Balanced Climate and Culture

Michelle Fenwick (Assistant Superintendent)
David Bailey (GWMS Principal)
Daniel Kilday (Wellness Supervisor)
Danielle Pagani (Ridgewood Village Health/(IDPG)



Balanced Climate & Culture

Goal 1

Foster a Supportive Environment that Promotes Well-being through the:

- Development of comprehensive assessment framework
- Implementation of targeted support programs
- Review and development of balanced policies
- Providing of wellness training and professional development

Secondary Goals

- Create a comprehensive well-being-centered school culture.
- Proactively address stress, anxiety, and burnout.
- Build community resilience through systematic support.



Balanced Climate & Culture

Goal 2

Ensure that All Staff and Students Experience a Safe Learning Climate by:

- Conducting comprehensive safety assessment
- Implementing preventive programs and support systems
- Enhancing infrastructure and communication systems

Secondary Goals

- Focus on physical and emotional safety
- Create inclusive environments for all stakeholders



Balanced Climate & Culture

Goal 3

Evaluate and Address Staff Recruitment and Retention Throughout the District by:

- Assessing current practices and gather data
- Implementing mentoring and support programs
- Enhancing communication systems and feedback loops

Secondary Goals

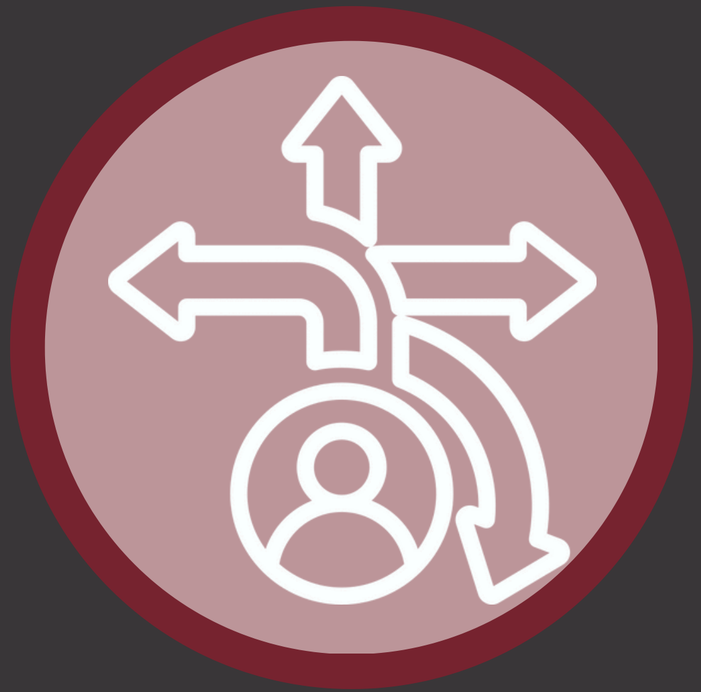
- Improve talent acquisition and retention
- Support staff development and growth



Programs, Pathways, & Proficiency Team Members

Programs, Pathways & Proficiency

Brian Ross (Director of Curriculum)
Dr. Michelle Fenwick (K-5 Asst. Superintendent)
Jaime Cangialosi-Murphy (6-12 Asst. Superintendent)
Mary Micale (BOE Trustee)
Jeffrey Nyhuis (RHS Principal)
Jeannie O'Neill (K-5 Math/Science Supervisor)
Alexandra Hayes (Parent)
Harrison Burns (RHS Student)



Programs, Pathways, & Proficiency

Goal 1

Establish Comprehensive and Integrated Systems for Student Success

Secondary Goals

- Ensure Consistency in Instruction, Assessment, and Transitions
- Strengthen Math and ELA Curriculum and Instruction



Programs, Pathways, & Proficiency

Goal 2

Create Pathways to Meet the Needs of All Students for Pre- and Post-Graduation Success

Secondary Goals

- Review and Expand Program Offerings



Programs, Pathways, & Proficiency

Goal 3

Create a Flexible System That Engages Generative AI Technology to Support Student Learning

Secondary Goals

- Define “Authentic Work” and Student Ownership



Infrastructure, Facilities, & Finance Team Members

Infrastructure/Facilities/Finance

Sheila Brogan (BOE President)
Richard Matthews (Business Administrator)
Aaron Bowman (Assistant Business Administrator)
Gregory Wu (Ben Franklin Middle School Assistant Principal)
Naomi Widener (Budget Specialist)
Serhiy Morhun (Director of IT)
Julie Yohana (Supervisor of Transportation & Operations)
Todd Rothman (Parent)
Ariadna Karole (RHS Student)



Infrastructure, Facilities, & Finance

Goal 1

Enhance Safety, Security, and Technology

Secondary Goals

- Strengthen the district’s infrastructure through enhanced cybersecurity and district training.
- Implement and maintain comprehensive safety and security protocols, including emergency preparedness plans, surveillance systems, and access control measures.
- Conduct regular safety inspections to identify and address potential hazards.
- Create a culture of safety awareness among students, staff, and visitors.



Infrastructure, Facilities, & Finance

Goal 2

Optimize Facility Management and Maintenance

Secondary Goals

- Develop and implement a proactive maintenance plan to ensure the proper upkeep of all school facilities.
- Utilize technology and data analytics to improve facility management efficiency.
- Explore energy-efficient upgrades and sustainable building practices to reduce environmental impact and operating costs.
- Programmatic assessment and facility need assessment.
- Initiate, update, and amend the Long Range Facility Plan (LRFP).



Infrastructure, Facilities, & Finance

Goal 3

Ensure Sound Financial Stewardship

Secondary Goals

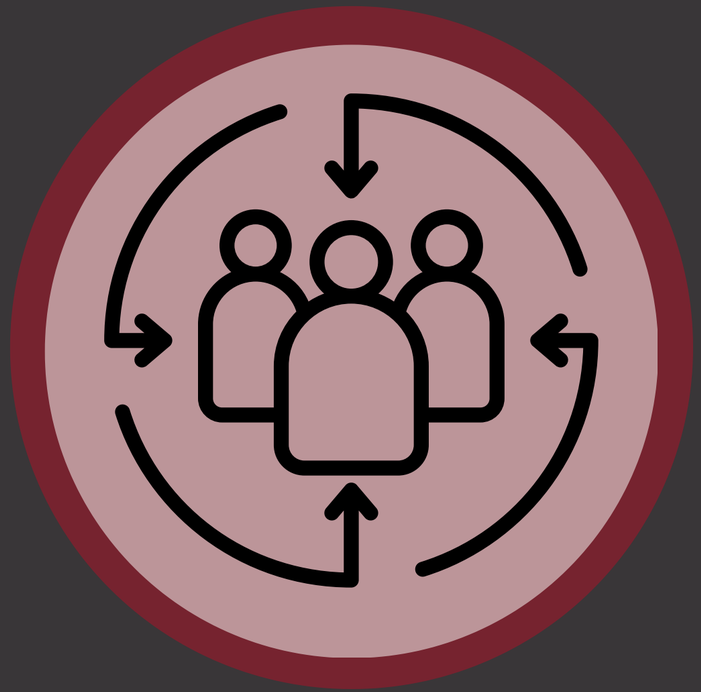
- Develop and maintain a balanced and sustainable budget that supports the district's operational and instructional needs.
- Explore and implement cost-saving measures while maintaining high-quality services.
- Enhance financial transparency and accountability through regular reporting and audits.
- Administer policy and procedures that ensure sound financial reporting and monitoring of business services such as transportation, food services, and risk management.
- Present fund balance review to the finance committee and the full board twice a year.



Engagement Team Members

Engagement

Christine Corliss (Public Information Officer)
Mary Louise Handy (BOE Trustee)
Stacey Wisniewski (MS Principal)
Lorri Steinbacher (Ridgewood Pubic Library)
Jaimie Davis (Parent/SEPAG President)
Marc Dwihe (RHS Student)



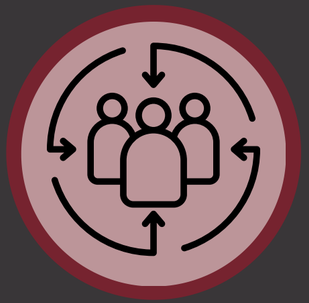
Engagement

Goal 1

Promote and connect Mission, Vision and Journey of a Graduate throughout district community

Secondary Goals

- Develop a districtwide communications plan to launch messaging into the community that promotes the district's mission, vision, and initiatives through best practices in strategic communications.
- Develop branded materials and logos to accompany messaging.
- Streamline communication, using common language and processes to ensure clarity and consistency with messaging that originates from a common source.
- Educate district leadership and provide the support needed for them to incorporate the Mission, Vision and Journey of a Graduate into all aspects of the student experience, including education plans and school activities districtwide to exemplify the importance of the interconnectedness of the Mission, Vision, and Journey of a Graduate.



Engagement

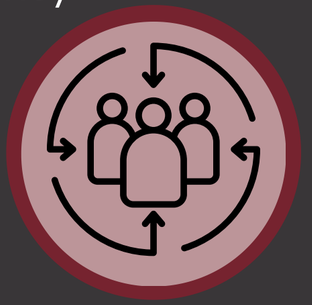
Goal 2

Foster a sense of cohesiveness, belonging, and continuity in the student's educational journey by communicating the processes being implemented to ensure smooth and positive transition for all students across the district, from school-to-school and grade-to-grade, and providing opportunities for student and staff input and the resources to enable improved decision making in the areas of:

Curriculum - Programs and course offerings - Extracurricular programs - Scheduling - Facilities

Secondary Goals

- Institute mentor-mentee initiatives as part of transition programs throughout the district.
- Foster a sense of belonging, inter-school collaboration, and continuity in the students' educational journey through collaborative initiatives, such as orientation programs and transitional support services.
- Balance current orientation practices with evolving needs, potentially integrating team-building events and activities across buildings for students transitioning to middle school and high school.
- Promote vertical alignment among schools and enhance district-wide communication.
- Establish best practices and create shared opportunities while recognizing each building's unique needs.



Engagement

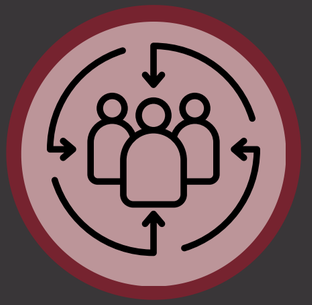
Goal 3

Enhance district perception for all stakeholders by expanding opportunities for community collaboration to foster partnerships and promote a shared commitment to successful student outcomes through the fulfillment of the district’s mission and vision.

- Local Businesses
- Local Organizations
- Village Departments
- Community at large

Secondary Goals

- Create and strengthen partnerships with Village Departments and local businesses through internships, volunteer opportunities, etc.
- Foster community involvement to enhance the district's positive image and establish partnerships.
- Implement a district-level initiative to encourage community involvement, with collaboration groups at each school level, high, middle, and elementary.
- Welcome local organizations and departments into the schools to foster stronger mutually-beneficial personal relationships.



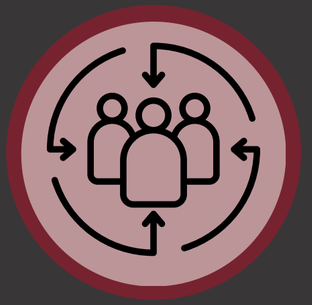
Engagement

Goal 4

Increase engagement with RPS alumni to explore and highlight diverse academic and career pathways

Secondary Goals

- Create and maintain an alumni database of information, regarding post-RPS education and career paths.
- Develop consistent communications with alumni groups and members to foster increased interaction, promote positive interest, and maintain valuable connections and relationships.



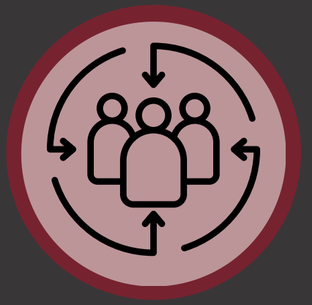
Engagement

Goal 5

Improve communication channels, including the district website, auxiliary tools (i.e., the website app), and other digital communications tools to increase accessibility, transparency, and compliance.

Secondary Goals

- Create varied avenues of digital communication to ensure that all stakeholder needs are met.
- Ensure consistent information updates to establish the website as a primary source of information for students, staff, families, and the community.
- Identify the information valued by stakeholders and eliminate information better obtained via alternate channels to avoid redundancy in communications.



Strategic Plan Timeline Overview

Phase 1: Foundation (2025-2026)
- Assessment, planning, and pilot programs
- Training and initial implementation
- Data collection and baseline establishment

Phase 2: Implementation (2026-2027)
- Full program rollout
- Systems integration
- Initial evaluation of effectiveness

Phase 3: Refinement (2027-2030)
- Data-driven program adjustments
- Scalable expansion of successful initiatives
- Long-term sustainability planning

Support for Vision 2030

- Communication Excellence: Regular updates across multiple platforms to keep all stakeholders informed and engaged
- Resource Alignment: Prioritizing budget and staffing to support well-being, safety, and retention initiatives
- Leadership Commitment: Administrative support and modeling of balanced practices at all levels
- Data Transparency: Sharing progress metrics and outcomes with the school community
- Cross-Team Collaboration: Working with other strategic groups to ensure cohesive implementation

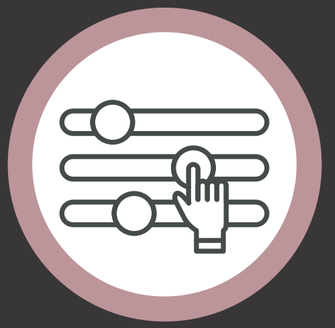
Recommendations
Strategic Plan Final Report



Adopt
Mission & Vision



Adopt
Action Plans



Adjust
Review and Modify Plans Annually as Necessary



Act
Work on Items that Require Immediate Attention



Journey of a Graduate
Identify Exit Skills by Grade/School Level & Adjust Curriculum as Necessary

Recommendations



1. Adopt the mission and vision statements as proposed and finalized by the advisory committee.

2. Adopt the action plans for the first two years with the caveat that the status of action plans will be reviewed quarterly, based on the agreed to metrics and timelines that are reflective of progress and the commitment level of resources. This will also require additional work to be completed on several of the action plans relative to budget, resources, and metrics.

3. Be prepared at the conclusion of the first year to modify the objectives and to consider those objectives that were identified through the process but not included in the initial biennial action plans.

Recommendations



4. Consideration should be given to modifying the mantra or tag line “Tradition of Excellence” to reflect the proposed updated mission statement. To reflect this, three iterations are suggested for consideration. They are, “Pursuit of Excellence” or “Pursuit of Excellence for All Students” or “Committed to the Pursuit of Excellence.”

5. Fully embedding the Journey of a Graduate into the district culture will require the identification of academic, social, emotional, and life skills centered on the six target descriptors identified by the action team for each grade level. This should drive future modifications to instructional strategies and curriculum at each grade level.

Recommendations



6. Communication and staying connected with stakeholders at all levels is imperative to the success of moving the vision forward. The engagement action team plan is strong; and if fully supported and implemented can make a difference. Several proposed action strategies are already in motion.

7. Each of the five action plans are interconnected and will require coordination and commitment from the governing body, the district leadership team, building level leadership, and buy-in from all staff.

8. Professional development priorities and needs should be driven by the five action plans goals and objectives.

Recommendations



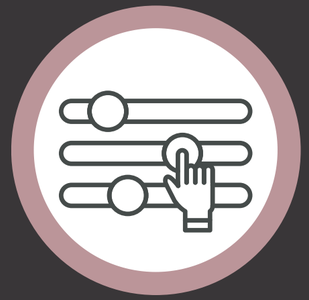
9. As part of each regularly scheduled Board of Education meeting, a brief update should be provided on one of the action plan primary goals or objectives.

10. Facilities, infrastructure, and staffing needs will likely create financial and budgeting challenges that will require creativity, innovation, transparency, and stakeholder support. It may also require an examination of staffing patterns and needs, the elimination of any silos, and a more systematized coordinated approach to providing programs and services.

Additional Considerations

Additional considerations presented by the consultants:
1. Recommended that consideration be given to the development of an information mechanism or to the purchase of a dashboard for accountability, tracking, and transparency of progress toward achievement of the district's mission, vision, Journey of a Graduate and the pursuit of excellence.

2. Recommended that the strategic plan and plan updates be included in a prominent and regularly updated section of the district website as a part of the Engagement Plan for stakeholder transparency and support.

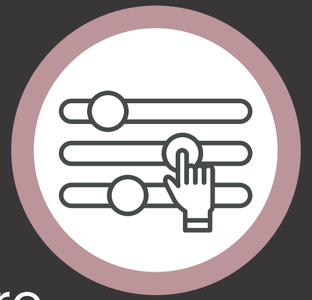


Additional Considerations

3. Although, the Infrastructure, Finance and Facilities action team did not pursue facilities challenges as a separate goal, it is recommended that the district pursue an analysis and comparison of the pros & cons of the infrastructure's current adequacy and to determine future educational/instructional space needs through multiple lenses. Based on this analysis inventory; short, mid, and long-term options and/or recommendations should be presented to the Board of Education.

Potential solutions or courses of action may include consideration of:

- Available & equitable instructional space (Updated architectural and demographic studies as needed)
- Possible need for a referendum
- Possible alternative funding or donor sources
- Scheduling options
- Athletic fields (Village of Ridgewood master plan)

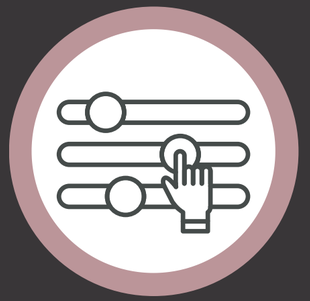


Reaching the vision for the district will require that some or all of the above steps be reviewed and considered to address the adequacy of the district's infrastructure, facilities, and any inequities.

Additional Considerations

4. Some action plans lack specificity regarding financial needs. Inclusion of these needs will be required in plans as the 2025-26 budget is finalized and in successor budgets. To move several of the plans forward, it may be necessary to reallocate some of the resources within the current budget and in the 2025-26 budget.

5. Action team coordination will be required to address duplication and overlapping that by design occurs in the plans. To ensure coordination and the maximum use of all available resources it is recommended that as part of the leadership teams, regular meetings that the status of plans, and the use and sharing of resources be discussed and reviewed.

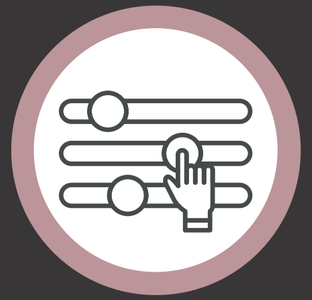


Additional Considerations

6. Under the recently revised organizational structure, it was observed that the districts leadership team works well together, especially in areas where overlapping responsibility may occur. In order to avoid the establishment of silos in the future, it is important these relationships and openness be continued.

7. As systems are put in place and progress is made toward achievement of action steps, it is recommended that periodically the organizational structure be reviewed to ensure the most effective and efficient use of resources.

8. As the Journey of a Graduate, exit standards are identified for each grade level there is an opportunity to embed the current district initiative on Habits of Work into the process.



Recommendations
Strategic Plan Final Report



Communications

Robust plan with immediate support and operations (Mission & Vision Support)



Action Plans

Coordination and Buy-In



Professional Development

Driven by Action Plans



Board Meetings

Plan Updates Presented

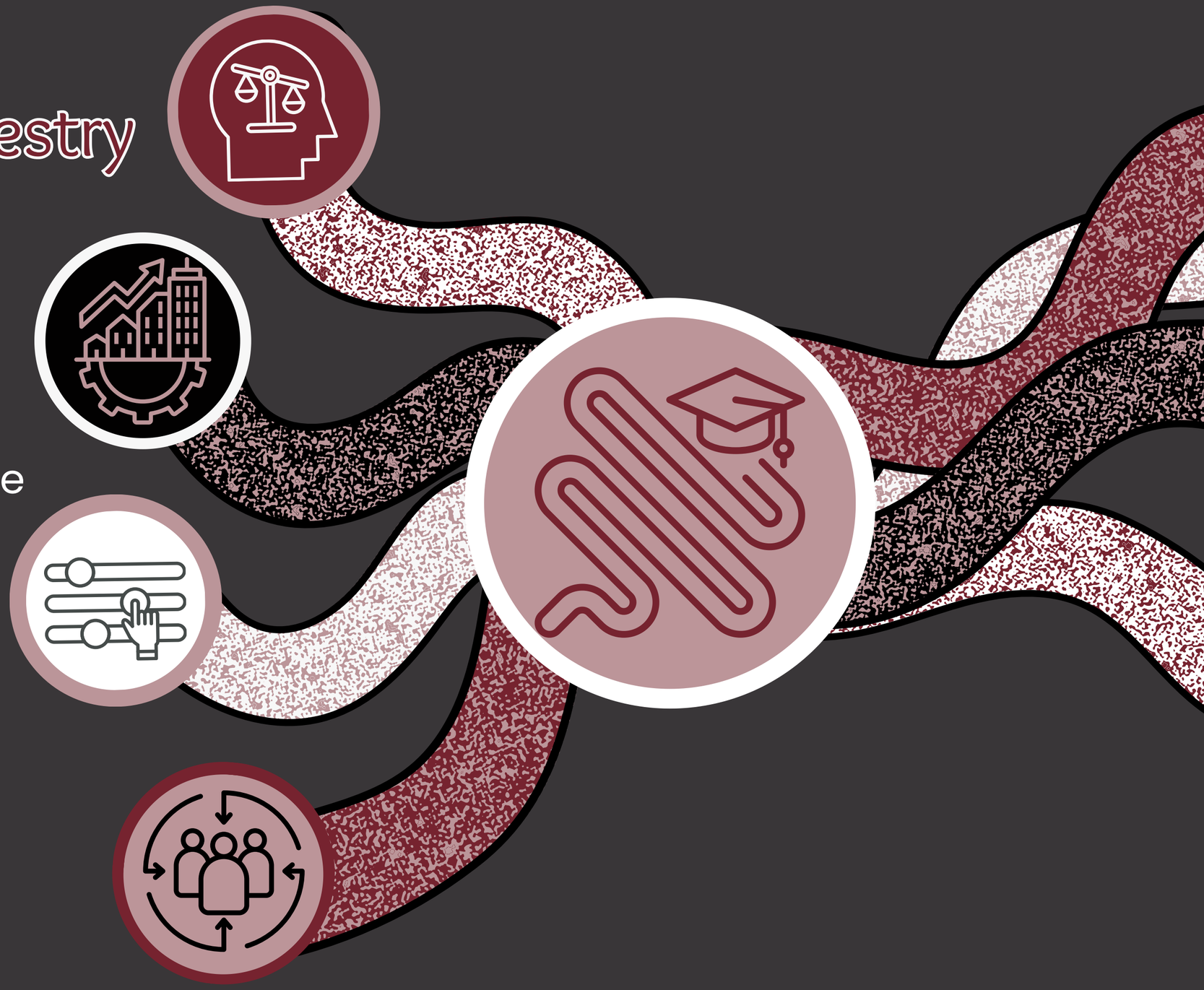


Finance/Budget

Impact on Budget from PD, Staffing, & Infrastructure

Five Pillars - One Tapestry

The action plans of each pillar come together, like the threads of a tapestry, to create and support the Journey of a Graduate, resulting in a strong foundation as the journey continues.



Key Takeaways

- Vision 2030 was built using a variety of stakeholder input, data, analysis, and survey input
- Vision 2030 provides the foundation for forming our 2025-2026 plans and priorities
- Vision 2030 progress will be integrated into our State of the Schools, annual District Goals, Superintendent Coffees, and Board of Education Meetings

Vision 2030

Vision to Motion

Strategic plans can live within the daily rhythm of school districts. Grounded in a shared way and responsive to real time needs, they can become more than documents they can become drivers of change.

In this year of educational and technological evolution, progress is measured, not just by deliverables, but by momentum, engagement and impact.
When guided by intentional leadership and supported by responsive tools, strategic planning becomes a movement, transforming staticism into dynamism.

Innovate with intention.
Iterate with insight.
Lead with clarity, purpose, and connection.

Heather Daniel, “Beyond the Plan: From Static Strategy to Dynamic, Data-Driven Action”, American Association of School Administrators, March 2025

Thank You

Vision 2030

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