
The Joy of Teaching and Learning: A Framework for the Future

Five Year Strategic Plan for the Vineland School District (2014-2019)



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History of the Vineland School District

The Vineland School District encompasses 33 square miles in rural/agricultural southeast Kern County and is composed of two schools: Vineland Elementary School, which serves students in grades kindergarten through fourth grade; and Sunset Middle School, which serves students in grades five through eight.

The Vineland School District was formed on May 9, 1890, as a one-school district and during its first year of operation had an average daily attendance of fourteen students. Enrollment in the district remained quite small until after 1920 when the beginnings of large-scale agricultural development attracted migrant farm workers to the area. By the 1929-1930 schoolyear, the average daily attendance in the district was 225 students. Ten years later, the average daily attendance rose to 309 students.

Between April 1935 and December 1936, the federal government's New Deal Resettlement Administration (RA) had relocated many struggling rural and urban families to planned communities. In 1936, the Works Progress Administration under the auspices of the Farm Security Administration constructed the Arvin Federal Camp and Sunset Labor Camp, which later became known as the Weedpatch Camp to provide affordable housing to thousands of families during the time of the Great Depression and Dust Bowl.

In September of 1940 the Arvin Federal Emergency School was created by then county Superintendent of Schools, Leo B. Hart, to serve the children from a large migrant labor camp that had been established in the area. Located between Arvin and Weedpatch and situated on Weedpatch Highway, it was more commonly referred to as "Weedpatch Camp" by the families who lived there. The "Okie" children from the camp were not given a warm welcome in the nearby public schools and, in fact, were often poorly treated there. Leo Hart, who had been elected county superintendent of schools in 1939, was aware of the problem and determined to find a way to provide for the special needs of these children. He began his efforts by leasing a 10 acre site adjacent to the labor camp and, using the two old condemned buildings on the property to house the "fifty poorly clad, undernourished, and skeptical youngsters," started the federal migratory school, or, as it came to be called, the Weedpatch School. Renovation of the two buildings and construction of additional facilities was accomplished exclusively by the children and their teachers. They learned the art of making adobe bricks and also how to make shelves, chairs, and even desks. The students dug ditches for water lines and even dug a swimming pool, which was the first public pool in Kern County. Once it became operational, students at the Weedpatch School were offered a curriculum far different from that of other public schools in the area. They learned everything from the practical aspects of agriculture and animal husbandry to airplane mechanics and the cobbling of shoes. During its first year of operation, from September of 1940 to May 1941, approximately 200 students attended Weedpatch School. Its success, due largely to the unique curriculum and a dedicated staff, gained a great deal of favorable attention and before much time had passed, once-hostile members of the community began to express interest in having their own children attend Weedpatch.

The declared emergency that had given birth to Superintendent Hart's creation could, by law, last no more than five years, and so Arvin Federal Emergency School was forced out of existence in 1944 and was absorbed by the Vineland School District, thus swelling the district's average daily attendance to over 600 students. Average daily attendance remained stable over the next ten years, finally topping the 700 mark during the 1969-1970 schoolyear. However, enrollment fell off considerably in the 1970's, and by the 1978-1979 schoolyear, the average daily attendance had slipped to just over 500 students. Mild to moderate growth returned in the 1980's and 1990's and since the 1995-1996 school year the average daily attendance has held steady between 700-800 students.

The earthquake of 1952 destroyed the one story brick building at Vineland School and all but one of the original buildings on the Weedpatch site. Between 1952-1957 the district reconstructed the two schools' buildings and renamed Weedpatch School as Sunset School. The bell located at Vineland School was used in two early schools to call children to school for more than 60 years.

Strategic Planning

A strategic plan is a “blueprint” to be used by the Board of Trustees, Superintendent, and all other faculty and staff to accomplish the District’s vision, mission, and resulting strategic goals, while providing the faculty and staff with the information needed to move from an abstract set of goals to an actionable set of priorities, initiatives, and tasks.

In *Leadership as the Practice of Improvement* (2008) Dr. Richard Elmore suggested that there are very few direct effects in education that can be traced back to a single policy or program. What really happens is that a group of programs or initiatives alters the distribution of effects around the mean. It shifts those curves of performance, usually in small and marginal ways. What that means is that it isn’t the direct effects that matter nearly as much as the distribution of those effects. Interactions are what matter. This strategic plan endeavors to identify the several initiatives that will interact together to produce a greater distribution of effects that will strengthen the educational programs of the District.

Strategic Anchor Points

This strategic plan establishes the anchor points that serve as the foundation for teaching and learning, and other support systems within the District and is intended to ensure that students at all grade levels have access to, and are actively engaged in, a learning path that will lead to a seamless transition into successful high school, college, and other career opportunities. Without a clearly defined and articulated strategy, we may very well find that our priority initiatives—the ones that will drive the highest success—may be given secondary, rather than priority treatment. The first anchor point is setting a clear vision for the future, providing a sense of direction of where we want to go and what we want to become as school district. The second anchor point is the establishment of a mission that serves to define the overall purpose of the district, outlining specific language of why we exist. The third anchor point is the establishment of a guiding principle, which is an attitude or behavior by which the District is guided throughout its life in all circumstances, irrespective of changes in its goals, strategies, type of work, or personnel. These principles usually articulate the fundamental values that provide overall direction to a program throughout its operation irrespective of changes in its goals, requirements or resources. The fourth anchor point is a commitment to a set of values that all stockholders of the school district will follow in order to ensure that all learning environments support the positive academic and behavioral growth of all students. The fifth anchor point is establishing a set of beliefs that convert the values to convictions, describing the character of the District as a living organization. The sixth and final anchor point is establishing strategic goals and priorities that will keep the district focused and efficient, serving as the formula that will lead the District to actualize the vision of becoming a premiere small school district and a model of educational excellence and innovation.

All subsequent plans, systems, policies, and procedures will be carefully aligned to the anchor points outlined in this strategic plan.

Vision

The Vineland School District will be recognized as a premiere small school district and as a model of educational excellence and innovation.

Mission

In a cooperative effort between students, staff, parents and community, Vineland School District will provide a caring, safe, and healthy environment where students may strive to reach their maximum potential in academic, intellectual, social, emotional, and physical skills. By integrating cultures through a common core of knowledge, students will have the opportunity to become positive, contributing members of society.

Guiding Philosophy

The Vineland School District is committed to continuous improvement in every aspect of the District from promoting high levels of student achievement, to maintaining safe and secure facilities, to promoting active partnerships with families and community stakeholders. At its essence, continuous improvement means the desire to get better minute by minute, hour by hour, day by day. It is an acknowledgement that nothing in any organization is perfect and that there are multiple opportunities

for improvement that continuously present themselves. The continuous improvement philosophy is the recognition that the pursuit of excellence is a moving target. What is excellent today may be the definition of mediocrity tomorrow. Never accepting the status quo is the only way to keep a great school district great. Continuous improvement is what we desire for our students as they learn throughout the year and move from grade level to grade level and subject area to subject area. It is the Vineland staff commitment to this philosophy that creates outstanding student performance levels in academics, the arts, and athletics. The results staff members achieve are a reflection of how well our continuous improvement efforts are practiced across all schools, grade levels, and departments.

Core Values

The core values set the stage for providing the best education possible for Vineland students. Core values are a system of beliefs and behaviors that an organization exhibits on a day-to-day basis. They guide all processes and conditions in the District. By the District's commitment to continuous improvement at all levels of the organization and the meticulous attention to quality processes in management of the District, the Vineland School District remains a provider of exemplary public education.

As a District, we value:

- Respect
- Diversity
- Inclusiveness
- Transparency
- Sacrifice and Contribution
- Teamwork and Collaboration
- Data-Driven Decision Making
- Personal and Professional Integrity
- Student Centered Decision-Making
- Advancing and Sharing Knowledge
- Innovation and Continuous improvement
- Continuous Personal and Professional Growth
- Personal and Professional Commitment to excellence
- Family and Community Engagement and Enrichment
- Commitment to Individual and collective accountability

Beliefs

As a District, we believe:

- All students can learn and can be successful.
- All actions should be focused on supporting the success of all students in meeting their educational goals through its commitments to open access learning; to offer a portfolio of appropriate and well-chosen educational programs, services, and activities; and to its ongoing attention to student persistence and educational attainment.
- All students deserve the best educational opportunities period! . . . not just the best possible educational opportunities.

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- All students deserve a high-quality, well-rounded educational experience that is rigorous, relevant, and engaging and where all students have equal access to highly effective teams of teachers and principals, a variety of avenues and opportunities to learn, to achieve, and to celebrate intellectual, personal, and future employment success.
 - All faculty and staff must have as a primary focus the academic and socio-emotional growth of our students and must be committed to “Doing Whatever It Takes” to help students achieve at the highest levels.
 - Engaged parents and a supportive community serve as the cornerstone for the education of our students.
 - Education is a collaborative effort among students, staff, family and community, and therefore, all faculty, staff, families, and community members must work collaboratively and creatively to ensure student success.
 - All schools and work sites must be safe and secure for students, parents, and staff.
 - The fiscal, human, and materiel resources must be appropriately prioritized and aligned toward the accomplishment of the various strategic priorities.
 - Superior performance will be achieved through the establishment of clear goals that set high expectations and standards for all faculty, staff, and students.
 - All faculty and staff, as an individual and part of the collective, are responsible for the successes of the District and its students.
 - The District and its individual schools are an integral part of the broader community and as such, that the District and each person should strive to be a leader and partner in building a strong and vibrant community through its commitments to collaborate with businesses, industries, primary transfer institutions, alumni, donors, and governmental and social services organizations to develop and refine educational programs that prepare individuals for academic success, employment, and lifelong learning; and to provide programs and space for use by the community at large.
 - As good stewards of the public’s resources and trust, the District and its employees should embody the highest standards of service and stewardship of resources and works within the wider community to enhance societal good.
 - That advancing, improving and discovering new ideas, is core to our success and will support the fulfillment of our mission and vision.
 - That continuous improvement is supported through a culture of openness, inquiry and collaboration.
 - That those who take responsibility, demonstrate creativity and take initiative should be honored.
 - That education is the civil rights issue of our time. History has taught us that change and equality are won in the classroom. Regardless of their zip code, socio-economic status, race, or gender, all children deserve a quality education. Few things matter more to a community's well being than the quality of its public education. The classroom is where the battle for change and equality will continue to be fought and won.

Strategic Challenges

The Vineland School District is faced with many challenges that impact directly on its ability to meet or exceed faculty and staff, student, family, and community expectations. Many of these challenges are interrelated and compound the effects of one another; finding ways to address them is the purpose of this strategic plan. These challenges become the goals for the District to address. By focusing on these challenges, the District is assuring each student the best educational opportunities, which prepares them to be successful no matter what further education and life choices they make.

Understanding and addressing these challenges is the focus of this strategic plan. Challenges can arise that are internal (student achievement levels, resource allocation, personnel, facilities, etc.) and external (state and federal mandates, state revenue resources, shifting priorities, new technologies, etc.). Carefully defining these challenges enables development of relevant goals that create the opportunity to not only sustain the District over time but to focus improvement activities where they will have the greatest positive impact. Through an analysis of several data points and critical metrics the District has identified four overarching challenges it needs to address over the next five years.

- Student mastery of expanding and increasingly complex standards in reading and language arts, mathematics, the sciences, world languages, social sciences, and visual and performing arts is essential to maintain the District’s commitment to excellence. Providing students with comprehensive course offerings can also be a challenge for most small, rural school districts. Highlighting the interconnected nature of the issues facing rural schools, content–area coursework deficits in teachers bleeds over into the rigor and diversity of course offerings for students (Monk, 2007, p. 159). School size also impacts the ability of teachers and schools to offer varied course options, and “smaller numbers of students limit the ability of teachers to specialize and may require them to deal with wider ranges of pupil needs” (Monk, 2007, p. 160). Providing special education services is also a significant challenge for rural schools and districts.
- A complementary set of skills to the academic standards separate students who are prepared for increasingly complex life and work environments in the 21st century, from those who are not. An educational program that develops and assesses mastery of the necessary 21st Century Skills, such as of critical thinking and problem solving, creativity, communication, and collaboration is essential to prepare students for the future.
- The requirements placed on the faculty and staff to provide ever-more increasing services and support requires increased opportunities for collaboration among and between all District stakeholders (students, parents, professional and support staff, administrators, community members, businesses) in order to capitalize on the wealth of knowledge, experience, and skill found in these groups and accelerate interactions that create new levels of innovation, productivity, and responsiveness.
- The requirement to maintain fiscal solvency with declining and/or plateauing enrollment, increasing operational costs, a reliance on scheduled sunseting state tax revenues, and a new state funding formula that is more sensitive to average daily attendance and unduplicated student counts becomes increasingly more difficult, while attempting to preserve the integrity

of current educational programs to meet the needs of all of our students; maintaining, increasing, and/or restoring educational programs to meet the needs of all of our students; maintaining operational effectiveness; and providing competitive wages, benefits, and working conditions necessary to keep and attract qualified faculty and staff.

Although small, rural districts face challenges not seen in larger urban districts, their small size enables them to more effectively and efficiently implement programs and procedures designed to improve teaching and learning. Small, rural districts are able to carve out a niche for the students and parents. Although larger districts can offer many programs, they seldom excel at every one. Conversely, because of their size, small districts have the ability to effectively collaborate; provide one-on-one relationships between teachers, students, and parents; are able to specialize in the few programs that are offered. Small, rural school districts are able to enhance strong personal bonds, home and community involvement, improved instructional quality and accountability, and improved teacher working conditions and job satisfaction. But this only comes with a strong commitment from the faculty and staff. Every administrator, teacher, and staff member must be committed to getting to know every student and parent; to "wearing several hats"; to attending school functions (at least a majority of them); to conducting home visits; and to participating in community activities. Most of all, every stakeholder must be comfortable "working and living" the small school life. In short, every member of the faculty and staff must be willing to do "Whatever It Takes" to support student growth.

Strategic Needs

The following strategic needs set the direction and establishes priorities for the District while providing a view of success. These strategic needs will help everyone know what they should be working on, and what they should be working on first. These strategic needs also provide a means of moving people together to achieve the District's goals by simplifying decision-making and aligning resources to maximize our strategic success. Finally, these strategic needs allow all stakeholders to communicate a common message of where we need to be and the key activities that will get it there. Each year, specific needs within these strategic needs will be defined and prioritized.

Fundamental Teaching and Learning Needs

Organizing Theme: Staff Selection, Leadership, and Capacity Building

- *District:* There is a need to provide strong instructional and operational leaders and highly qualified teachers and paraprofessionals. Leadership development opportunities must be deep and rich, emphasizing the use of student performance data to drive decision-making. These opportunities must extend to both current principals and to any internal candidates being developed for this position. Resources to provide powerful teacher collaboration time must be provided to all schools. The District professional development plan, which is carefully monitored for effectiveness, must focus on a deep understanding of the curriculum and on widespread development of instructional strategies that have proven most effective in terms of student achievement gains. These activities must be practice-oriented with structured follow-up activities. The district must also build formal and informal structures of individual and collective accountability.
- *School:* There is a need to select, develop, and allocate staff based on student learning needs and program requirements. Principals must have the authority to select and allocate staff based on specific school academic goals. One thing that the evidence suggests is that ineffective teachers cost their students way more than effective teachers can pay back. Schools that are closing the achievement gap are identifying and removing teachers who are roadblocks to student progress. They are transforming principals from operations managers into instructional leaders, collecting data on everything from weekly test scores to classroom technique, and feeding it back to their teachers every week. And they're doing it in schools that are small enough to make all these systems practical. What these practices have in common is that each one offers a way for a school (or a network of schools) to guarantee consistent excellence among their teachers. Additionally, support systems must be extensive and surround the induction of teachers new to the school. Collaborative teams and other instructional support personnel must focus on curriculum and instruction, not school policies or procedures. Mentors and coaches are chosen based on student performance results. Professional development activities must supplement those provided by the district and are selected based on their connection to the specific academic goals and instructional needs of the school and must also be centered on the extension of teachers content knowledge and teaching skills are ongoing and practice-oriented often embedded in daily activities. Teacher collaboration must be powerfully structured, nurtured, and required. The school leadership must also create the conditions for

high-performing collaborative teams by developing the clarity of purpose and priorities, structures, and support essential to successful teams.

- *Classroom:* There is a need to collaborate in grade level/department teams focused on student learning. Collaborative team meetings must be well-established and frequent. Teachers must meet at least weekly, often daily, in horizontal (grade-level) teams. Collaborative teams must focus on the development of ongoing and honest discussions based on standards and data. These discussions must include the review of student work and the results of common assessments. Teachers must regularly visit other classrooms and expect other teachers to visit their classes. These visits lead to discussions about what is and is not working in terms of instruction and the resulting collaboration leads to a deeper alignment of student learning across grades and to a deeper knowledge of expected levels of student mastery within the grade level. Teachers must understand the need to be “tight” about the work that must be done by the teams, and accept the individual obligation of providing the team with what they need to succeed in what it is being asked to do.

Organizing Theme: Instructional Programs, Practices, and Arrangements

- *District:* There is a need to adopt evidence-based districtwide instructional programs that provide vertical and horizontal alignment and continuity. The selection of instructional programs and resources used district-wide must be based on evidence that they were effective with similar student populations or, when available, on scientifically based research. All support needed for successful implementation of the selected program must be provided to teachers and paraprofessionals. Flexibility in the selection of instructional programs and resources may be granted to higher performing schools as long as student performance is sustained. Selected instructional programs and resources must be tightly aligned with the academic objectives of the curriculum. This provides all teachers with a basic set of instructional structures, strategies, and materials that have been proven effective in curricular delivery. These aligned resources should provide greater freedom for teachers to develop their own teaching style and to respond to the individual needs of students. Selected instructional programs are considered supplemented if all district academic objectives are not sufficiently addressed within the programs. Instructional time may be mandated to support the delivery of the written curriculum.
- *School:* There is a need to ensure the use of evidence-based programs, practices, and arrangements in every classroom. The principal must ensure that all district-selected programs and resources are fully implemented at the school level (unless variation in this selection has been granted due to high student achievement levels) and that there is a powerful feedback loop to the district relative to the implementation. The adopted textbooks, programs, and materials are not mistaken for the curriculum but are seen as tools to successfully deliver the curriculum. Specific needs of teachers and students in a particular school may lead to the development or selection of supplemental resources. This need is based strictly on student performance data. The selection of supplemental instructional resources should be based on the successful use of the resources in schools serving similar student populations. Evidence-based practices such as pacing, higher order thinking, classroom management, differentiation, student motivation, and varied assessment strategies must be institutionalized. Given district guidelines, the master

schedule ensures that uninterrupted instructional time is maximized in core academic subjects, particularly mathematics and reading/language arts. That time must be managed flexibly so that students who need prerequisite skill development prior to accessing grade-level instruction have additional time. Practices and arrangements maintain academic rigor while providing adequate scaffolding so that all students can access higher levels of instruction.

- *Classroom:* There is a need to use evidence-based programs, practices, and arrangements in every classroom. Teachers must embrace the use of district-selected instructional resources, knowing that they were selected based on evidence that they were effective with similar student populations or, when available, on scientifically based research. Supplemental instructional resources (beyond those provided at both the district and school levels) should be selected based on demonstrated student learning needs in the classroom and on their relationship to curricular objectives. Teachers should identify and share both the reasons they sought the additional materials and the materials themselves. All teachers must be skilled in the use of evidence-based instructional practices. These practices must be readily and regularly observed when visiting classrooms, e.g., higher order thinking tasks, lesson differentiation, etc. Instructional time must be guarded to focus on core academic objectives. Teachers must also be careful to pace instruction to ensure that students master the materials prior to being assessed, and flexible grouping arrangements provide individualized and small group instruction to the greatest extent possible.

Organizing Theme: Student Learning- Expectations and Goals

- *District:* There is a need to provide clear, prioritized academic objectives by grade level and subject area that all students are expected to master. Written district curriculum (more detailed than state standards) must exist by grade and subject. This curriculum must be selective and prioritized-avoiding the "too much to teach" problem. There must be clear communication that the district's written curriculum must be taught in all classrooms. The academic objectives within the district curriculum must be vertically aligned Pre K-8 through a backwards mapping process anchored to the needs of the students. Grounding the curriculum to that end point ensures that students' preparation for advanced work begins in early grades. Clarity of district curriculum must be developed through documents, such as course outlines, vocabulary lists, curriculum maps/pacing guides, benchmark assessments, and standards-based achievement reporting.
- *School:* There is a need to implement the district's written curriculum and ensure that all students achieve specific academic goals. Student performance data drive the development of the school improvement plan with improvement goals stated in terms of student achievement. These data must be disaggregated to determine if improvement goals require different target gains for different students. Ambitious academic goals must be anchored to established long-range goals for all students, e.g., "all students will have the necessary skills to access rigorous courses in high school". These goals must be few in number and remain stable throughout the year-they do not shift or multiply. Strategies and actions used to reach academic goals must be restricted to evidence-based or research-based practices. Strategies and actions used to reach academic goals address all potential barriers or contributors to academic success-including school climate, discipline, and attendance. These learning environment indicators are not

treated as improvement goals in and of themselves. Academic goals must guide all actions and decisions at the school, particularly related to resource expenditures, i.e., time, budgets, etc. Grants or other monies generated outside the school budget are coordinated and directly related to the stated goals and priorities.

- *Classroom:* There is a need to ensure the district's written curriculum is taught to and mastered by all students. Based on the district curriculum, teachers must know what is to be taught and learned at their grades and in their subjects. Teaching the written district curriculum must be non-negotiable. Successful mastery of the curriculum, therefore, results in students being fully prepared for the next grade or subject. Teachers must plan instruction from the district curriculum, not from a textbook or other material. Knowing how the objectives will be assessed at the district and state levels, teachers must have strong knowledge of the depth of conceptual understanding that students should attain.

Organizing Theme: Recognition, Intervention, and Adjustment

- *District:* There is a need to recognize, intervene, and/or adjust based on school performance. Since accountability for reaching student learning goals exists at all school levels, the superintendent, principals, and teacher evaluations must be linked to student performance outcomes. Schools that reach established academic goals must be recognized and/or rewarded. Demonstrated success at the school or classroom levels must be studied and shared across the district. Schools needing extra assistance in reaching academic goals must be identified quickly. Well-developed pyramids of proven, practical intervention programs and practices must be present to support them. Intense intervention plans must be in place for students in the district who are below grade level. Interventions must begin early before the state testing program begins, as well as early in every grade across the district. The effectiveness of these interventions must be constantly reviewed and necessary adjustments must be made. Student achievement results must lead to the continual review and adjustment of all district-level resources and support, such as written curriculum, professional development activities, instructional resources, and intervention plans.
- *School:* There is a need to recognize, intervene, and/or adjust based on teacher performance. Since learning is not a variable, the school leadership must provide the structure needed for teachers to be able to manipulate other variables such as time, resources, and strategies to ensure all students meet stated academic goals. Teachers must be recognized for high levels of student achievement. Demonstrated success must be used as a model for teachers, teaching strategies, and instructional materials. Teachers who need assistance in helping all students reach academic goals must receive structured and intense instructional support (e.g., master teachers, teacher collaborative planning groups, frequent feedback, extended development opportunities, etc.). Proven, practical intervention programs and practices must be identified and developed to supplement those provided for students at the classroom level. Students below grade level must participate in highly structured learning activities designed to develop prerequisite skills necessary for accessing rigorous grade-level instruction. This support must begin within the first weeks of the school year and must be supplemental to any classroom-level supports provided by the teacher. School-selected instructional programs, practices, and

arrangements must be continually evaluated and/or adjusted in terms of student achievement results. Interventions must also be continually evaluated.

- *Classroom:* There is a need to recognize, intervene, and/or adjust based on student performance. Since all students are expected to master grade-level standards, teachers must be skilled at varying resources, time, and strategies for learning to ensure all students in the classroom meet stated academic goals. Students must be recognized for mastering learning objectives. Extended learning opportunities must be available for students who demonstrate early mastery of the curriculum, as well as those who required extra assistance. Flexible grouping arrangements must be incorporated to provide individualized and small group instruction to the greatest extent possible. Classroom-selected instructional resources, practices, and arrangements, as well as the effectiveness of selected interventions must be continually evaluated and/or adjusted in terms of student achievement results.

Organizing Theme: Monitoring: Compilation, Analysis, and Use of Data

- *District:* There is a need to develop student assessment and data monitoring systems to monitor school performance. District benchmark assessments, aligned with the district curriculum and state standards, must supplement state and standardized tests. Success on district benchmark assessments ensures success on state assessments. District benchmark assessments must provide consistent, reliable, and pertinent data to staff about student performance early and often. The district assessment program must begin prior to when state testing begins (i.e., student performance is benchmarked quarterly beginning in kindergarten). Assessment data must be disaggregated by school, teacher, and any other grouping significant to the student population of the district, and must provide enough information to trigger and direct any needed instructional interventions. District staff must ensure principals and teachers have the necessary skills to use assessment data. The Superintendent must regularly discuss the results of all student performance data with principals.
- *School:* There is a need to monitor instructional practices and individual/cohort student learning. Additionally, collaborative team meetings must be well-established and frequent. Teachers must meet at least weekly, often daily, in horizontal (grade-level) teams. Principals must set the tone for the administration of assessments and use of assessment data in the school. District benchmark assessments, state, and standardized testing results must be considered an integral part of the teaching-learning process and the primary means to monitor the goals of the school improvement plan. Data drive all decision-making. In faculty meetings, teacher collaborative planning sessions, and individual teacher meetings, the principal must ensure that student performance data are continually studied and analyzed. When needed, the principal must work with teachers to construct and use more frequent common assessments than those provided by the district or the state. School instructional leadership must frequently observe teachers to monitor instructional practices and curriculum delivery. Teachers must also receive constant feedback.
- *Classroom:* There is a need to monitor individual/cohort student learning. Collaborative teams must focus on the development of ongoing and honest discussions based on standards and data. These discussions must include the review of student work and the results of common assessments. Teachers must examine and use district benchmark and state assessment results to

direct instructional decisions. Teachers must study prior student performance data to understand the needs of students entering their classes. Classroom assessments must be ongoing and richly varied to monitor student learning of district curriculum. These assessment data must ensure that what has been taught has been learned. Student performance data must be used to identify early mastery of a given academic objective or significant learning gaps. Students performing below grade level must be monitored even more frequently. Specific student progress must be shared with the principal, parents, and students in writing, by phone, and in conferences. Teacher grades and feedback must be highly predictive of student's ability to demonstrate mastery on district and state assessments. Students must be actively engaged in monitoring their own progress.

Organizing Theme: Pupil Engagement, School Climate

- *District:* There is a need to adopt, implement, and monitor research-based programs that increase the quality and character of school life.
- *School:* There is a need to develop, monitor, and communicate expected norms, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching, learning and leadership practices, and organizational structures, as well as routinely and comprehensively evaluating the school climate. The school must also recognize student, parent, and school staff contributions and establish school wide co-curricular and extra-curricular programs and activities. With the support of each member of the faculty and staff, the school must also investigate, adopt, and implement programs and protocols for reducing the number of student suspensions and trancies including: character education; truancy reduction and abatement; and anti-bullying, anti-drug, tobacco, and alcohol education.
- *Classroom:* There is a need for teachers to be personally involved in providing a positive, caring, and nurturing classroom environment with high expectations, opportunities for meaningful participation, and appropriate and effective behavior management protocols. The extent to which students feel attached to at least one caring and responsible adult at school is an area of increased attention among school climate researchers. Teachers can increase attachment by showing respect by listening, recognize student's individual differences, communicating realistic expectations for achievement, and providing encouragement and feedback.

Organizing Theme: Family and Community Engagement

- *District:* There is a need to adopt a Districtwide Family and Community Engagement Policy and Districtwide Family and Community Engagement Plan aligned to the State's adopted *Family Engagement Framework, 2011*.
- *School:* There is a need to appropriately and effectively connect families and the community to one another in school in support of student learning and engagement.
- *Classroom:* There is a need for teachers to be personally involved in advertising, promoting, and creating opportunities for connecting students, parents, and other community members to the school. Teacher must also be personally involved in the training parents and others on how to support learning at home and in the community and to help them understand what their children need to be successful and then provide them with the tools they need to attain that success.

Organizing Theme: Operational Effectiveness

- *District:* There is a need to establish proper fiscal, human resource, and operational protocols, as well as effective protocols for collecting, analyzing, and reporting critical metrics and performance data to determine trends and anomalies. This data is critical to determining the level and type of technical assistance and operational support to the school sites in developing their operating and educational budgets in accordance with research-based strategies, as well state and federal guidelines.
- *School:* There is a need to identify and develop an optimal organizational structure to support the schoolwide initiatives, while maintaining operational effectiveness. Protocols must be implemented for evaluating and reporting key indicators that drive operational performance. These indicators will provide the necessary information for the continued development and refinement of the chosen strategies.
- *Classroom:* There is a need to increase the personal and collective efficiency and effectiveness of teachers and paraprofessionals with regard to the operations of the school in order to improve the teaching and learning process.

Strategic Goals

Strategic Goal 1: Individual and Collective Efficacy and Accountability

The District shall establish and continually foster a culture of individual and collective efficacy and accountability by mobilizing the faculty and staff to improve the systems, structures, practices, and protocols that will promote an accessible, rigorous, relevant, coherent, and articulated curriculum that delivers high quality teaching and is grounded in high expectations for all students.

The promotion of the quality, continuity, and effectiveness of faculty and staff through comprehensive and exemplary recruitment, staff development, and evaluation practices, so that every classroom will have assigned a high-quality, effective educator supported by high-quality, effective administrators and support staff.

Creating the conditions to help others succeed is one of the highest duties of a leader. If school and district leaders are to create the conditions that help more students succeed at learning at higher levels, they must build the capacity of educators to function as members of high-performing collaborative teams. As Fullan (2010) writes, “time and again we see the power of collective capacity. When the group is mobilized with focus and specificity, it can accomplish amazing results” (p. 9). To create the conditions for high-performing collaborative teams, leaders must develop the clarity of purpose and priorities, structures, and support essential to successful teams. They must be willing to be “tight” about the work that must be done by teams, and they must accept the obligation of providing teams with what they need to succeed in what it is being asked to do.

Strategic Priority. Highly Qualified Teachers. The District will ensure all teachers are appropriately assigned pursuant to Education Code section 44258.9, and fully credentialed in the subject areas and for the pupils they are teaching.

A teacher of core academic subjects must possess: (1) a bachelor's degree; (2) a state credential or have an Intern Certificate/Credential for no more than three years, and (3) demonstrated core academic subject matter competence. The core academic subject areas as: English, reading/language arts, mathematics, science, foreign languages, civics/government, economics, arts, history, and geography. Elementary school teachers must demonstrate competence in reading, writing, mathematics and other core academic subject areas of the elementary school curriculum. NCLB requires all “New” to the profession elementary teachers who receive a Multiple Subject Teaching Credential or a Multiple Subject Intern Credential or Certificate to demonstrate subject matter competency by exam. Currently the CSET is the only CCTC approved exam for “New” elementary teachers. The MSAT exam may be used if it was passed within five years of the issuance date for credentialing purposes. Federal law provides “Not New” elementary teachers with two options to demonstrate subject matter competence. They may pass a CCTC approved subject matter examination (any past or current CCTC approved subject matter examination will qualify) or they may complete the California High Objective Uniform State Standard of Evaluation (HOUSSE). Federal law provides “Not New” middle/

high school teachers with several options to demonstrate subject area competence. They may pass a CCTC approved single subject matter examination (any past or current CCTC approved single subject matter examination will qualify), or they may complete one of the following in each core subject area taught:

- A CCTC approved subject matter program, or
- A major, or
- A major equivalent (32 semester units or the equivalent), or
- A graduate degree, or
- Hold National Board Certification, or
- Complete the California HOUSSE

Strategic Priority. Targeted Professional Development. The District shall ensure that ongoing, high-quality, job-embedded, materials-based professional development to all teachers, administrators, and paraprofessional, including effective instructional strategies, materials, and student support, that is aligned with the District's and schools' comprehensive instructional program and designed with school staff to ensure that they are equipped to facilitate effective teaching and learning and to develop the capacity to successfully implement school reform strategies. Such strategies must should include:

- Content Knowledge and Pedagogy, which includes core content knowledge; effective instructional strategies, methods and skills.
- Common Core State Standards (CCSS), which includes the use of challenging State academic content standards and student academic achievement standards in preparing students for the State assessments.
- Instructional and Analytical Technology- the use of technology for instruction and analyzing achievement data.
- Mentoring, Induction, and Support, which includes mentoring, induction and support programs for new teachers.

As noted by Elmore (2008), the effect of professional development on practice and performance is inverse to the square of its distance from the classroom and that building capacity (the knowledge and skills needed to improve performance) must come before accountability. Elmore (2008) further suggests that when capacity is present, students do well on just about any test. The success of any accountability policy, then, depends on the development of the practice of improvement-explicit strategies for developing and deploying knowledge and skill in schools. Accountability tends to lead to an under-investment in knowledge and skill and an over-investment in testing and regulatory control. Correcting this distortion requires changing the relationship between policy and practice, particularly around the definition and development of leadership. Accountability policies will not increase school performance unless there is substantial investment in developing human capital focused on school improvement. Elmore (2008) calls this the principle of reciprocity. If a principal demands a particular performance from a teacher, then that principal owes that teacher the tools to accomplish it.

Strategic Priority. Teacher and Administrator Collaboration Time- Professional Learning Communities (PLC) The District will schedule and conduct regular and systematic opportunities for teachers, administrators, and paraprofessional to collect, analyze, and apply student achievement

data, student support data, and other district-wide and school-wide data, as well as to appropriately design and/or adjust instructional practices.

The best professional development not only claims teachers' knowledge as a valid expertise, but also obligates teachers to challenge, validate, and enhance the knowledge developed in, through, and for practice. This philosophy requires teachers to inquire into their "own practice and the work of others, including educational researchers and theorists" to adapt features from successful lessons or construct concrete ideas from theory. Effective professional development is not a standalone or short-term event, but rather an ongoing practice of reflection and inquiry that promotes this generation and distribution of knowledge of, for, and through teaching. Professional development should be expanded through sharing with other educators, and it is precisely this process of sharing that sustains the reflection and inquiry processes.

According to Dewey, "the best professional development offers all of those involved a chance to share successful adaptations and puzzling questions after the initial professional development event. These long-term, sustained pathways for sharing new ideas, lessons, and knowledge facilitate communication in all directions." Dewey encourages the use of collaborative "inquiries into practice" across grade levels and content areas to meet shared challenges. These inquiries, such as examining student work or sharing lessons, should make up the bulk of professional development activities. Dewey explains that "such collaborative efforts in turn foster mutual respect among the teachers based on the professional expertise displayed during this inquiry-oriented work." Dewey advises that professional development activities be led by teachers who "know first-hand the struggles and satisfactions of teaching," as "it is the grounding in the daily and personal experience of teaching that supplies authority." Rather than suggesting simple solutions to complex classroom situations, professional development leaders teaching experience are able to "treat the activity of teaching in all its complexity and allow teachers to do the same."

The promotion of the quality, continuity, and effective of faculty and staff through comprehensive and exemplary recruitment, staff development, and evaluation practices, so that every classroom will have assigned a high-quality, effective educator supported by high-quality, effective administrators and support staff. Creating the conditions to help others succeed is one of the highest duties of a leader. If school and district leaders are to create the conditions that help more students succeed at learning at higher levels, they must build the capacity of educators to function as members of high-performing collaborative teams. As Fullan (2010) writes, "Time and again we see the power of collective capacity. When the group is mobilized with focus and specificity, it can accomplish amazing results" (p. 9). To create the conditions for high-performing collaborative teams, leaders must develop the clarity of purpose and priorities, structures, and support essential to successful teams. They must be willing to be "tight" about the work that must be done by teams, and they must accept the obligation of providing teams with what they need to succeed in what it is being asked to do.

Critical to the success of any district in ensuring that all students learn at high levels is the ability to effectively collaborate toward some defined end. Research has demonstrated that when teachers, administrators, and paraprofessionals use student progress monitoring, students learn more, teacher decision making improves, and students become more aware of their own performance. To this end, teachers, administrators, and paraprofessionals must be provided with regular and systematic

opportunities to collect, analyze, and apply student achievement data, student support data, and other district-wide and school-wide data in order to effectively:

- Evaluate the effectiveness of the academic program and make recommendations for improvement.
- Develop/revise the academic support plans to address student academic deficiencies for those students in need.
- Monitor student performance progress throughout the school year.
- Provide recommendations for instructional strategies.

In *Leaders of Learning: How District, School, and Classroom Leaders Improve Student Achievement*, authors Richard DuFour and Robert Marzano offer the following precise strategies for how to build the collaborative culture of a Professional Learning Community (PLC) and help educators succeed as members of high-performing collaborative teams:

- **Organize Staff Into Meaningful Teams:** A collaborative team in a (PLC) is a group of people working interdependently to achieve a common goal for which members are mutually accountable. In the absence of interdependence, one or more common goals, and mutual accountability a group cannot be a team. There are a variety of structures that support meaningful teams. The collective inquiry that drives the work of collaborative teams is typically pursued in job-alike, course-specific, or grade-level specific teams.
- **Provide Teams with Time to Collaborate:** A major impediment to providing time for educators to work together is the uniquely American notion that a teacher who is not working with a classroom of students is not working. In countries that have made the greatest progress in educational achievement since 1980, teachers have 15 to 25 hours a week to plan collaboratively and engage in analysis of student learning, lesson study, action research, and peer observations. Schools will not find time for collaboration; they must make time for collaboration, and collaboration must be viewed as an integral part of contemporary teaching.
- **Provide Supportive Structures That Help Groups Become Teams:** Teams are more effective when they have clarified expectations regarding how they will work together, translated those expectations into collective commitments, and use the commitments to monitor their working relationship on an ongoing basis. Additional supportive structures include the team's identifying one or more specific goals (SMART goals) they will work to achieve that focuses on concrete evidence of student learning. Every member should be clear on the goal, how he or she can contribute to its achievement, and the specific indicators the team will use to monitor progress.
- **Clarify the Work the Team Must Accomplish:** Effective leaders help teams clarify their purpose and priorities, focus on the right work, and continuously improve their effectiveness. Perhaps the biggest mistakes leaders make in attempting to create a collaborative culture is to assign staff into groups and encourage them to collaborate—with little other direction. The likelihood that people who have worked in isolation throughout their careers will suddenly discover how to work effectively as a team, or will identify the nature of the work they should focus on is extremely remote. Educators must be clear about the nature of the work to be done and be focused on collective inquiry regarding student learning. Administrators and teachers must work together to identify the “right work” of teams—the work with the greatest potential to have both a positive impact on student learning and the capacity of staff to function as members of high-performing teams.

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- **Monitor the Work of Teams and Provide Direction and Support as Needed:** There are a number of strategies for monitoring the work of teams, including calling upon a team to develop a product that results from the work of the team, creating a time line for a work product, and presenting completed products.
 - **Avoid Shortcuts in the Collaborative Team Process:** It can be tempting to circumvent steps in developing a PLC, and to leave out steps such as developing norms, engaging in dialogue, and constructing work that another state or district has already completed. However, it is the process of building shared knowledge and the collaborative dialogue about that shared knowledge that builds the capacity of staff to function as high performing teams. When teams are removed from that process, they lessen the likelihood of building capacity. The effectiveness of others is enhanced when leaders provide clarity regarding what needs to be done and ongoing support to help staff succeed. Having the work done for them does not assist a team's growth.
 - **Celebrate Short-Term Wins, and Confront Those Who Do Not Contribute to Their Teams:** It is difficult to create and sustain momentum for the collaborative team process without recognizing and celebrating both concerted effort and incremental progress. Effective PLCs weave expressions of appreciation and admiration into the routine life of the school. Additionally, when collaborative work is "a tight," leaders must be willing to be direct in addressing those who make no contribution to their collaborative teams. Leaders who are unwilling to confront staff members who ignore the collaborative team process not only undermine that process but also damage their relational trust with the rest of the staff. Leaders who do not have the courage to confront team members to step up to the requirements of teamwork are advised to avoid the collaborative team concept all together.

Using data and feedback to improve instruction is helpful all by itself. But it's far more valuable when it's part of a system of other practices that reinforce one another. The key to analyzing critical metrics and performance data is not necessarily comparing test scores between teachers, or schools, or years, but comparing growth, by comparing a student's actual progress with that student's expected progress. If you know, for example, how well a hundred students were reading at the end of the third grade, and therefore how well you expected them to be reading at the end of the fourth grade, you can measure how much value their fourth-grade teachers, through the implementation of various instructional strategies and support, added to the not-so-raw material they inherited. This is known as value-added measurement.

More importantly, this feedback has to be produced in a form that that is usable. There is absolutely no evidence that collecting data has any effect until it was understandable to every teacher in a school. The frequency of feedback is also critical, and also important is what it consists of. To be useful, it needs to incorporate a large amount of data, which means lots of tests. (formative, interim, and summative). It is not surprising that the highest achieving schools test students more than lower performing schools: 3.92 interim assessments of math and language arts every semester vs. 2.42 times elsewhere, respectively. The difference is even larger as the students got older. Middle schools whose students score above the median assess their students 4.00 times a semester; those below assess them 2.04 times. High-achieving schools also have more strategies for using data to customize instruction for different students: Elementary schools on the top half of the achievement ladder used 4.62 different data-driven ways to create lesson plans that accommodated classroom differences.

More than forty years ago, a group of physicians started the movement that became known as “evidence-based medicine.” Their reason wasn't that doctors hadn't been using evidence; it was that the evidence they were likeliest to believe was local and often personal experience instead of global data. One hospital might be three times likelier to perform cesarean deliveries than another, even in the exact same circumstances: age of mother, fetal heart rate, everything. The reasons were a whole encyclopedia of cognitive biases: availability errors made by doctors who miscalculated the probability of a diagnosis based on recent experience and confirmation biases that persuaded them to use only data that supported a desired outcome. Most important, doctors turn out to be just as vulnerable to the “anchoring effect,” which causes them to give too much value to a single trait in decision-making. What really makes instructional practices successful is what happens to information after it's collected. That is when the data is analyzed, transformed into action plans, and fed back to classrooms on a weekly, if not daily, basis.

Strategic Priority. Teacher, Administrator, and Paraprofessional Evaluation System. The District will design, implement, and monitor an effective evaluation and support system for teachers, administrators, and paraprofessionals which is based upon the powerful correlation between teacher, administrator, and paraprofessional effectiveness to student learning and growth.

Effective teaching and leadership matter. Within the school environment, teachers, administrators, and paraprofessionals have the most impact in creating equity and excellence for each and every student. Teachers, administrators, and paraprofessionals have a challenging task in meeting the needs of an educationally diverse student population, and meaningful evaluations are necessary to provide educators with the support, recognition, and guidance needed to sustain and improve their efforts. Evaluation systems must be designed comprehensively to go beyond the use of personnel decision making to inform the growth process across the system and to measure a full range of performance across different settings. The primary goal of elevating teaching, leading, and learning throughout the systems cannot be accomplished with summative assessment alone. Undertaking the work of designing, implementing, and monitoring an effective evaluation and support system for educators is both complex and time consuming; however, based upon the powerful correlation between teacher, administrator, and paraprofessional effectiveness to student learning and growth, this work is imperative and of the utmost importance.

Strategic Goal 2: High Quality, Well-Rounded Educational Experiences

The District shall provide a high quality, well-rounded, educational experience to all students that is rigorous, relevant, and engaging so that all student meet or exceed district, state, and federal academic performance goals.

Strategic Priority. High Quality Instruction At-Scale. The District will adopt and implement systemic improvement efforts to the instructional core within individual classrooms and across all schools, which can be applied to all levels of practice to improve instruction and increased learning for all students, matter which classroom they are in.

There is little debate that what happens inside the classroom has a direct affect on student learning. “It is what teachers think, what teachers do, and what teachers are at the level of the classroom that ultimately shapes the kind of learning that young people get” (Hargreaves & Fullen, 1998). However, learning at scale is severely diminished when teachers operate in isolated autonomy and within closed classrooms. But, when teachers, administrators, and other school staff collaborate they can do more to improve student learning. However, effective collaboration requires that all participants agree on a base language for their discussions. One of the greatest barriers to school improvement, then is the lack of an agreed upon definition of what high-quality instruction looks like. In their work *Instructional Rounds in Education: A Network Approach to Improving Teaching and Learning*, City, Elmore, Fiarman, and Teitel (2011) suggest that most schools fail to improve and progress toward educating all students at high levels because

they do not have the internal structures, processes, and norms that are necessary to use information about student learning, from multiple sources, to find the most promising instructional problems to work on and then systematically developing with teachers and administrators the knowledge and skill necessary to solve those problems.

High quality instruction at-scale builds a shared language and understanding of high-quality teaching and learning in order to move exceptional practices from an individual to the collective, from a single classroom to the school, and from a single school to the district. As we endeavor to define high-quality instruction at scale

we are searching for cause-and-effect relationships between what we observe teachers and students doing and what students actually know and are able to do as a consequence.” (City, Elmore, Firaman & Teitel, 2009)

They also suggest that in order to improve student learning, schools must improve the instructional core, which is the relationship between the teacher and the student in the presence of the content (City et al., 2011). By defining what the instructional core is, districts and schools can better identify what high-quality instruction is.

As Elmore (2007) concludes, “you don’t change performance without changing the instructional core.” At the center of the instructional core, according to Walter Doyle (City et al., 2011), is the instructional task, which is

the actual work that students are asked to do in the process of instruction-not what the teachers think they are asking student to do, or what the official curriculum says that students are do to do, but what they are actually asked to do.

Finally, Elmore (2008) noted that the highest performing schools created consistency in their students' experience. He argued that students don't just occupy a classroom for a year; they spend three or four years in a succession of classrooms in a single school. If the key to increasing student learning was putting students in front of three or four good teachers in a row, then a principal isn't a leader; he or she is quality control officer. Because traditional public schools for more than a century have treated teachers (especially experienced ones) as the custodians of a secret skill, they've allowed them a lot of leeway in the basics of classroom management. Some third-grade teachers are strict disciplinarians, and some are easygoing. Some give homework every night; others once a week. One teacher might stand by the blackboard for an entire lesson, and another wander through the classroom. There is no consistency. And all those third-graders are going to find themselves in fourth-grade classrooms with a mixture of kids from the strict and not-so-strict teachers and find that the homework schedule in the fourth grade is completely different from that in the third grade. There must be a commitment to reducing variability between classrooms. Because a student's education is not something that happens in one classroom, but in a succession of classrooms the key components of long-term learning is remembering that it is the sequence that matters more than any one element. You can't make an effective educational program out of two or three super teachers any more than a great movie consists of two or three great highlight scenes. In *Teach Like a Champion*, Doug Lemov (2010) identifies the techniques, rhythms, and tactics for teaching kids, which shows every teacher a way to be successful in every classroom and which shows every student that the same work habits, demeanor, and study skills would be as rewarding in the fourth or fifth grade as they were in the second and third. A lot of well-intentioned reform efforts promote teacher autonomy. The good intentions are real-to remove the bureaucratic barriers that keep the best teachers from practicing their profession at the highest levels of excellence. Unfortunately, autonomy doesn't just allow the best teachers to thrive; it also leaves alone the ineffective ones to deny students that years' learning opportunities. Principals who spend their days on budgets and building management don't reduce variability in instruction; they nurture it. If classroom performance-as measured not just by improvement against expectation on tests, but weekly observation and annual surveys of students- isn't measured and communicated to the teacher, then, good teachers plateau and struggling teachers degrade. The faculty and staff must recognize that the needs of the students have to come first, even if the cost is some unfairness.

Strategic Priority. Highly Effective and Engaging Instructional Strategies. The District will implement, with fidelity, research-based instructional strategies that have the greatest potential to impact student learning.

Instruction provides the information (new or already possessed), component learnings, and/or skills students need in order to accomplish the intended learning target(s). Instructional design can be understood as a related group of systematic procedures for educational settings. It is highly recommended for the instructional design to be based on theoretical principles, which justify the reason of procedures and strategies applied. Given certain characteristics of the learning environment, such as instructional objectives, content to be taught, learning peculiarity, learning context and so on, it

is possible to establish which are the most adequate instructional strategies to be embedded in the design of learning settings. Such strategies include:

- Robert Marzano’s “Nine Instructional Strategies For Effective Teaching and Learning”
- Phil Schlechty’s “Ten Highly Effective Design Qualities”
- Tiered Assignments (Tomlinson)
- Accountable Student Talk (Kinsella)
- Direct Vocabulary Instruction (Kinsella)
- Sentence Frames
- Gradual Release of Responsibility (Fischer/Frey)
- Whole brain teaching and learning strategies (Biffle)
- Use of graphic organizers to help students classify ideas and communicate more effectively.
- Appropriate and effective instructional grouping and scheduling based on each student’s proficiency level.
- Specially Designed Academic Instruction in English (SDAIE) strategies

Strategic Priority. Observations of Practice. The District shall regularly schedule and conduct formal and informal observations of instructional practices.

By observing and describing what is happening inside individual classrooms, educators can more effectively analyze, discuss, and understand the practice of instruction, which will lead to an identification of those to determine those high-quality systemic efforts related to the instructional core that can be used to improve student learning “at scale.” These observations of practice can also address the gap between professional development activities and the ability to implement the knowledge and skills learned in professional development activities by forcing on the underlying assumptions about instructional improvement and identifying and addressing the structural gaps that prevent meaningful implementation of various initiatives.

After a century of giving lip service to the idea that principals should be primarily responsible for instruction, it remains the activity that accounts for the fewest number of hours of every administrator. According to a McKinsey & Company survey, a typical principal spends less than 20 percent of the workday on instruction. However, principals in the highest performing schools spend 80 percent of the school day on improving instruction, most of it in the place instruction occurs—in the classroom. These principals are constantly engaged in observing instructional practices, modeling effective instructional strategies, and providing feedback. Teachers at high-achieving elementary schools—those above the median in performance on standardized tests—got some kind of feedback from classroom visits and student achievement 16.41 times each semester, while below the median 11.31 times. At high-achieving middle schools, the difference was even bigger. Their teachers received feedback 13.42 times each semester, compared to 6.35 times elsewhere. Because principals have only a mediated affect through their teachers on student learning and achievement, it is imperative that principals are actively engaged in monitoring and analyzing instructional practices.

Strategic Priority. Implementation of the Common Core State Standards. The District will implement, with fidelity, the Common Core State Standards (CCSS).

The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) are the culmination of an extended, broad-based effort to fulfill the charge issued by the states to create the next generation of K–12 standards in order to help ensure that all students are college and career ready in literacy no later than the end of high school. The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) are an extension of a prior initiative to develop College and Career Readiness (CCR) standards in reading, writing, speaking, listening, and language as well as in mathematics. The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) set requirements not only for mathematics and English language arts (ELA) but also for literacy in history/social studies, science, and technical subjects. Just as students must learn to read, write, speak, listen, and use language effectively in a variety of content areas, so too must the standards specify the literacy skills and understandings required for college and career readiness in multiple disciplines.

The Awareness Phase represents an introduction to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), the initial planning of systems implementation, and establishment of collaborations.

- The Transition Phase is the concentration on building foundational resources, implementing needs assessments, establishing new professional learning opportunities, and expanding collaborations between all stakeholders.
- The Implementation Phase expands the new professional learning support, fully aligns curriculum, instruction, and assessments, and effectively integrates these elements across the field.

and include the following seven guiding strategies:

- Facilitate high quality professional learning opportunities for educators to ensure that every student has access to teachers who are prepared to teach to the levels of rigor and depth required by the Common Core State Standards (CCSS).
- Provide Common Core State Standards (CCSS)-aligned instructional resources designed to meet the diverse needs of all students.
- Develop and transition to Common Core State Standards (CCSS)-aligned assessment systems to inform instruction, establish priorities for professional learning, and provide tools for accountability.
- Collaborate with parents, guardians, and the early childhood and extended learning communities to integrate the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) into programs and activities beyond the K–12 school setting.
- Collaborate with the postsecondary and business communities and additional stakeholders to ensure that all students are prepared for success in career and college.
- Seek, create, and disseminate resources to support stakeholders as Common Core State Standards (CCSS) systems implementation moves forward.
- Design and establish systems of effective communication among stakeholders to continuously identify areas of need and disseminate information.

Strategic Priority. Instructional Coherence. The District will develop a scope and sequence for teaching and assessing standards and skills by grade and/or content area, and which will include opportunities for re-teaching and enrichment.

According to Koppich & Knapp (1998) "when curriculum, instructional materials, and assessments . . . are all focused on the same goals the prospects for educational improvement are enhanced" (p. 2). Instructional coherence is framework that guides curriculum, teaching, assessment, and learning climate by providing specific expectations for student learning, with specific strategies and materials to guide teaching and assessment (Newmann, Smith, Allensworth, and Bryk, 2002). Instructional coherence promotes the integration of learning experiences and connecting those experiences over time. These connections can make learning experiences clearer, more meaningful, and more motivating. Accordingly, Newmann, et al (2002) suggest that the curriculum, instructional strategies, and assessments of students must coordinated among teachers within a grade level and that the curriculum and assessments of students proceed logically from one grade level to the next and offer a progression of increasingly complex subject matter rather than repeating rudimentary material previously taught. Furthermore, the delivery of instruction is faithful to the program's design paying special attention to ensuring that the components of the instructional core are implemented with fidelity.

Strategic Priority. Curriculum Calibration. The District will regularly conduct grade level and/or skill level calibration of instructional activities/materials .

Curriculum calibration is the process of determining the alignment of instructional materials to the rigor of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) to ensure appropriate alignment between those activities and materials/activities and the grade level learning targets and content standards. It also includes an objective review of student assignments for alignment to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) shifts and assessments, and suggestions for how to modify material to meet these rigorous demands.

Strategic Priority. Balanced and Coherent System of Assessments. The District will develop an appropriate protocol of assessment of student leaning to determine the extent to which a gap may or may not exist between the learning objective(s), what was actually taught, and what was learned.

With the implementation of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) teachers will need to integrate the new expectations into their own classrooms, and these experiences must be introduced over time and followed by ongoing support. Experiences should include oral, written, and collaborative engagement in teaching, learning, and evaluating the knowledge, skills, and dispositions and practices related to implementation of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and the assessments. Teachers will need to develop an in-depth understanding of the standards and improve instructional approaches to help students master the more complex concepts and skills. Finally, teachers must gain knowledge and skills around how to develop a range of assessments, how to balance the use of formative, interim, and summative assessments, and how to use assessment data to understand each learner's progress, adjust instruction as needed, provide feedback to learners, and document learner's progress against the standards.

Strategic Priority. Student Progress and Performance Grading System. The District will implement an effective student performance grading system that is timely, accurate, consistent, and meaningfully represents what students know and/or are able to do in relation to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS).

Strategic Priority. Course Syllabus. The District will ensure the development of and distribution of a quarterly course syllabus for each course taught.

The course syllabus serves three major roles: the syllabus serves as a contract, as a permanent record, and as a learning tool. As a contract, the syllabus serves to set forth what is expected and to guide the behaviors and responsibilities of both parties, as well as the policies and procedures. As a permanent record, the syllabus provides a record of what was covered, what students were expected to do, and how performance was measured. As a learning tool, a syllabus provides information about how to plan for the tasks and experiences, how to evaluate and monitor one's performance, and how to allocate time and resources to areas in which more learning is needed; provides guidance to students about the learning to be done in the course; help students to identify whether or not they are prepared for the work the course involves, and if not, what they might do about it; provide pieces of context about the course content for students so that they are able to see where the course fits into other courses they have taken or will take; to teach other broader lessons; and to serve students as a model of professional thinking and writing.

Strategic Priority. Instructional Material Sufficiency. The District will ensure all students shall have access to and all teachers shall utilize the State Board of Education (SBE) and Vineland School District Board of Trustees adopted core instructional materials. Instructional materials refer to all materials that are designed for use by students and their teachers as a learning resource and help students to acquire facts, skills, or opinions or to develop cognitive processes. Instructional materials may be printed or non-printed, and may include textbooks, technology-based materials, other educational materials, and tests.

Strategic Priority. Academic Skills Building and College Readiness. The District will implement and monitor the use of research-based academic skill building and college readiness support programs and activities designed to assist students in developing the skills necessary to access and excel in the District's educational programs. Such skills include:

- Organizational skills
- Time management skills
- Digital literacy skills
- Critical thinking skills
- Information classification and organization skills

Strategic Priority. Integration of the Framework for 21st Century Learning. The District will integrate, with fidelity, the 21st Century Themes and Skills as outlined in the state adopted *Framework for 21st Century Learning*.

The Framework for 21st Century Learning describes the skills, knowledge and expertise students must master to succeed in work and life; it is a blend of content knowledge, specific skills, expertise and literacies. Teachers need to be able to impart global skills and dispositions on learner, particularly in the areas of problem solving, curiosity, innovation, interpersonal skills, the ability to synthesize across disciplines, global awareness, ethics, and technological expertise. Additionally, teachers need to emphasize cross disciplinary skills including communication, collaboration, and critical thinking and must design learning experiences that draw upon multiple disciplines. Every 21st Century skill implementation requires the development of core academic subject knowledge and understanding among all students. Those who can think critically and communicate effectively must build on a base of core academic subject knowledge. Within the context of core knowledge instruction, students must also learn the essential skills for success in today’s world, such as critical thinking, problem solving, communication and collaboration. The theme(s) will be used to construct enduring understandings. The enduring understandings are the essential knowledge and expertise (big idea) derived from the identified theme(s) for which the students will be assessed throughout and at the end of the unit of study. The skills will be the means by which students will demonstrate mastery and understanding of the enduring understandings by way of writing assessments, project-based assessments, and/or performance-based assessments. Together, the 21st Century themes and skills bring “real-life” meaning to unit of study.

Strategic Priority. Increased Access and Use of Operational and Instructional Technology and Digital Resources. The District will ensure increased access and use of instructional technology and digital resources to support the teaching and learning process.

Technology ushers in fundamental structural changes that can be integral to achieving significant improvements in teaching and learning. Coupled with sound instructional pedagogy, technology infuses classrooms with digital learning tools, such as computers and hand held devices; expands course offerings, experiences, and learning materials; supports learning 24 hours a day, 7 days a week; builds 21st century skills; expands the scope of classroom learning beyond the physical boundaries of the classroom (and also beyond inclusion of only teacher and students); provide accessibility, support, choice and flexibility to students; increases student engagement and motivation with the content and information; expand the ways students can demonstrate what they have learned; and accelerates learning. Technology also has the power to transform teaching by ushering in a new model of connected teaching. This model links teachers to their students and to professional content, resources, and systems to help them improve their own instruction and personalize learning.

Strategic Priority. Development of Language and Literacy Skills. The District will implement and monitor core and targeted strategic/intensive intervention programs and instructional activities designed to increase language and literacy skills (reading comprehension, vocabulary skills, and reading fluency) so that all students read at or above grade level expectations.

A strong command of language goes hand-in-hand with the ability to think logically and creatively. All of the important adults in children's lives play an important role in helping them develop verbal language skills and build a good foundation for later reading and writing. Learning to read and write doesn’t start in kindergarten or first grade. Developing language and literacy skills begins at birth through everyday loving interactions—sharing books, telling stories, singing songs, and talking to one another. Parents, grandparents and teachers—play a very important role in preparing young children

for future school success and in becoming self-confident and motivated learners. After two-and-a-half years, and more than 1,300 hours of recording the volume of conversation between parent and child, researchers Hart and Riley found that the families in the top income and education tier spoke to their children more than those in the middle, who in turn spoke to their kids more than those in the lower tier. The upper-income families were recorded using an average of 2,153 words every hour; the middle-income families 1,251; and those lower income families 616. This meant that the average kid from an upper-income family hears 11.2 million words a year; one from a middle-income family 6.5 million; and from a family with far less income, 3.2 million words. By age four, that's a gap of some 30 million words. Which wouldn't matter, except that the number of words that four-year-olds can understand and speak is directly related to the number of words they've heard. Students, and especially English Learners (EL), must be provided with research-based instructional strategies and support efforts to assist them in acquiring English language fluency skills and accessing the core curriculum. These strategies and supports must include access to a variety of high interests texts aligned to the themes in the adopted Reading/English-Language Arts (ELA) and English Language. Students must also be provided multiple opportunities to speak and write. Research-based instructional strategies and support efforts designed to assist students in acquiring English language fluency skills and accessing the core curriculum, which include access to a variety of high interests texts aligned to the themes in the adopted Reading/English-Language Arts (ELA) and English Language Development (ELD) and which provide students with multiple opportunities to speak and write.

The essential elements of language and literacy instruction include:

- **Phonological Awareness:** While many children enter school with well-developed phonological awareness skills, research has shown the critical need for explicit instruction to ensure all children have this foundation in learning to read. In this module, specific examples of several phonological awareness skills and suggested methods for planning effective instruction are demonstrated.
- **Fluency Development:** Understanding that fluency is not speed-reading, and knowing how to assess and teach fluency, is critical to improving reading instruction at all levels. In addition to explaining the component skills necessary, this module provides an overview of the research on and rationale for assessing and teaching reading fluency. Several practical tools for planning fluency instruction are included, as well as resources and hands-on practice activities.
- **Vocabulary Development:** Teachers who are masterful in engaging students with new vocabulary attend to certain critical components of instructional design and delivery. This module offers recommendations for incorporating strategies such as read-alouds with embedded vocabulary instruction, suggests criteria for selecting words to teach, and provides ways to increase student exposure to new word meanings. Practical and easy-to-use sample formats, graphic organizers and systematic routines to teach specific word meanings in everyday language are included, along with additional resources to support vocabulary development for English Learners.
- **Academic Language:** Although the definitions of academic language vary in their complexity and scope, researchers and practitioners alike agree that all students, not just English Learners, need explicit instruction focused on the academic language used in the classroom in order to be successful in school and beyond. The purpose of this presentation is threefold: (1) to provide a comprehensive, thorough understanding of academic language, (2) to discuss the importance of

academic language, and (3) to present examples of instructional practices educators can engage in to teach and promote academic language.

- **Reading Comprehension:** Reading comprehension is not one fixed skill, but is developed over time with effective instruction in multiple strategies. In this module, teachers will become familiar with six main classroom practices to include in comprehension instruction. Examples of valuable teaching procedures, templates and frameworks are provided to help plan instruction.
- **Motivation:** Older students, as well as struggling readers, frequently lose motivation to read as texts become more complex and demanding. By gaining information on students' feelings and reading practices, teachers can begin to develop a plan for increasing student motivation. This presentation proposes that through incorporating collaborative instructional practices, allowing some choice of reading materials and activities, and including the use of technology will increase student motivation, foster engagement with the text and lead to improved comprehension.

Strategic Priority. Writing Across the Curriculum. The District will implement a common writing support program that provides a focus and shared accountability for school-wide writing performance; provides for continuous writing instruction for all students; assists teachers in differentiating instruction according to the individual needs of their students; and allows schools to assess areas of strengths and areas that need improvement using analytic rubrics.

Every student must be able to write in every subject. In addition, written output is an effective way to assess student knowledge. Furthermore, writing is the essential skill students need as they enter adult life. Students who write clearly, think clearly have better chance of navigating their way through the obstacles of adolescence, as writing helps students learn to express themselves with confidence in all subject areas can contribute to improvements in behavior and self-esteem.

Strategic Priority. Development of Mathematical Practices and Fluency Skills. The District will implement and monitor core and targeted strategic/intensive intervention programs and instructional activities designed to increase mathematical knowledge, skills, and fluency so that all students perform mathematical practices and fluency skills at or above grade level expectations.

Mathematical principles and concepts have become a part of almost every area of work. Knowing these principles will help students succeed in both school and work. Mathematical knowledge and skills refers to the conceptual understanding of numbers, their relationships, combinations, and operations. Mathematics also includes shapes and their structure; reasoning; measurement; classification; and patterns. Because math is also about generalizations and abstractions, math skills during the early years help children to connect ideas, develop logical and abstract thinking, and to question, analyze, and understand the world around them. Math knowledge, interest, and skills are basic to student's success in school and later in life. The mathematical standards, when modeled by teachers and put into practice by students will allow students to move beyond the mere mastery of basic mathematical facts and computation skills as outlined in the Common Core State Standards, to possessing efficient and accurate methods for computing. The latter is known as mathematical fluency, where students are able to demonstrate flexibility in the computational methods they choose, understand and explain these methods, and produce accurate answers efficiently. The computational methods students use are, then, based on mathematical ideas that they have a deep understanding of,

including the structure of the base-ten number system, properties of multiplication and division, and number relationships.

Strategic Priority. Response to Instruction and Intervention (RtI²) Program. The District will ensure that every student working below grade level, including English learners, students with disabilities, and any other student not meeting standards, is provided with strategic or intensive intervention, including high quality instruction, early intervention, prevention and behavioral strategies, appropriate intervention materials and extended learning time.

Response to Instruction and Intervention (RtI²) is a general education approach of high quality instruction, early intervention, and prevention and behavioral strategies. Of the many solution strategies employed nationwide, Response to Instruction and Intervention (RtI²) is an approach with evidence of success with creating the conditions necessary for closing the achievement gap and improving problem behaviors. The Response to Instruction and Intervention (RtI²) process focuses on individual students who are struggling and provides a vehicle for teamwork to strengthen their performances before educational problems increase in intensity. Leadership is critical to the implementation of Response to Instruction and Intervention (RtI²). To be effective, Response to Instruction and Intervention (RtI²) must harness and coordinate the full resources of the school, district, and community. Administrators and their leadership teams, in collaboration with all teachers, have central roles in the planning, implementation, and successful day-to-day use of the Response to Instruction and Intervention (RtI²) approach. Analysis of how students respond to instruction and interventions is an organizing principle for structures and programs that already exist in our schools. An education system implementing Response to Instruction and Intervention (RtI²) promotes collaboration and shared responsibility for the learning of all students across all personnel, programs, and parent inclusion processes located in any given school. Further, data gathered from Response to Instruction and Intervention (RtI²) can be utilized in the identification process to determine if a student requires special education services.

An effective Response to Instruction and Intervention (RtI²) program begins with providing academic intervention services to students in kindergarten to grade two when such students are determined, through a district-developed procedure, to lack reading readiness based on an appraisal of the student, including his/her knowledge of sounds and letters; or are determined, through a district-developed procedure, to be at risk of not achieving the State designated performance level in English language arts and/or mathematics in later grades. Academic intervention services will also be provided to students who score below the State designated performance level on one or more of the State assessments in English language arts, mathematics, social studies or science. The process to determine if a student responds to scientific, research-based instruction shall include appropriate instruction delivered to all students in the general education class by qualified personnel; screenings applied to all students in the class to identify those students who are not making academic progress at expected rates; instruction matched to student need with increasingly intensive levels of targeted intervention and instruction for students who do not make satisfactory progress in their levels of performance and/or in their rate of learning to meet age or grade level standards; repeated assessments of student achievement which should include curriculum measures to determine if interventions are resulting in student progress toward age or grade level standards; the application of information about the student's

response to intervention to make educational decisions about changes in goals, instruction and/or services and the decision to make a referral for special education programs and/or services; and written notification to the parents when the student requires an intervention beyond that provided to all students in the general education classroom.

The Response to Instruction and Intervention (RtI²) program includes four tiers of support:

- Tier I. All students receive Tier I interventions, also known as “Best Practices.” Tier I interventions will be successful with 80-90% of the student population. Classroom teachers provide Tier I interventions and supports.
- Tier II. Based on academic school-wide screening, students who are not meeting grade level benchmarks and for whom Tier I interventions are not supportive enough will receive Tier II interventions. They receive the same instruction as students in Tier 1 as well as targeted interventions. Tier II represents 5-10% of the population. Tier II interventions are provided by the classroom teacher as well as support staff when necessary.
- Tier III. Students who are not making adequate progress at Tier II will receive Tier III interventions. Tier III interventions include intensive instruction, specific to the student’s highest area(s) of need. Tier III should only represent 1-5% of the population. Tier III interventions are provided by the classroom teachers as well as specialists in the specific area of skill deficit.
- Tier IV: If the Student Assistance Team (SAT) finds after trying several individualized intervention plans that a student still has not made sufficient progress, the school may refer the student for Tier IV, special education. Students may need to go through a formal evaluation process, including specialized testing, to determine if they qualify for these services.

Strategic Priority. Extended Learning Time. The District will ensure that every student working below grade level, including English learners, students with disabilities, and any other student not meeting standards, is provided with strategic or intensive extended learning time.

Researchers have long realized that America’s achievement gap is also a symptom of a time gap; that from the time they’re born, kids with more affluent and better-educated parents were receiving literally hundreds of additional hours in supplemental education every year that poorer families just can’t supply. Sometimes just to describe the problem is to solve it. Schools that want to build highly effective instructional programs have to turn the usual relationship between families and schools upside down. Instead of affluent families compensating for deficits in school resources, schools need to compensate for shortfalls in home and community resources. It’s simple to calculate those deficits in terms of time. Time spent reading, or talking, or attending music lessons or religious school. Or days, weeks, or years spent in classrooms. However, it must be clearly understood that there is a difference between time and “instructional time.” Most researchers break school hours into a bunch of different overlapping categories. “Allocated school time” or “allocated class time” refers to the number of days or hours that students are required to attend annually. These, in turn, are broken into “instructional” and “non-instructional” time, with the non-instructional time devoted to administration, class management, and stuff like that. Instructional time, in turn, is divided into “engaged time” (sometimes “time on task”) and “academic learning time.” For this reason, high performing schools are succeeding in closing the achievement gap by adding hours to the school year, in just about every way they can think of.

Ensure that every student working below grade level, including English learners, students with disabilities, and any other student not meeting identified standards of performance, is provided with strategic or intensive intervention, including appropriate intervention materials and extended learning time. The extended learning time shall traditionally non- instructional days (e.g. Saturday school, boot camps, clinics, targeted summer school). may be in conjunction with other programs. (consolidated services).

All extended learning programs shall include the following components:

- Student selection criteria
- Research-based curriculum to be used
- Method of student progress monitoring
- Schedule of support
- Exit criteria
- Program monitoring/evaluation criteria

Strategic Priority. Monitoring, Evaluating, and Reporting Instructional Effectiveness and Student Learning. The District will regularly and systematically collect, analyze, evaluate, and report relevant metrics and performance data in order to determine the effectiveness of the various educational programs and initiatives.

Successful organizations monitor their operations extensively and intensively. To be sure, numbers are the language of measurement. Knowing what to measure, how to measure it and how to communicate those metrics can help improve the District's efficiency, effectiveness, and standing. As a District, we need to adopt a systems approach to continuous improvement. This focus on using data will lead us to become more adept at improving our key processes within the district; and by improving our key processes, we will also see improved results.

- **District and School Level Performance Scorecards.** A performance scorecard “directly links strategic goals and priorities to measures of those goals and priorities.” The purpose of the district scorecard is to focus on the important, enduring strategic priorities that will always be measured. The district scorecard serves as a monitoring instrument for strategists, a resource allocation guide for tacticians, and the primary reporting vehicle to the district’s community. A school scorecard identifies the same strategic priorities as the district scorecard, but does not necessarily use all of the same measures, and certainly not the same targets. It reports on what the school is accomplishing as a subset of what the district is accomplishing.
- **Grade Level/Department Performance Dashboards.** Grade level/department performance dashboards serve as a data collection vehicle and an operational reporting tool for the grade level or department team. This data is divided into summative and formative data and provides the team with the information necessary to make frequent, informed decisions about how to address student learning needs. Teams will spend much of their time on the formative data, which power the day-to-day instructional choices and student learning options. Through the summative data, teams will be able to identify how their initiatives align with the school and district’s efforts to improve student learning.

Strategic Goal 3: Student Engagement and School Climate

The District shall ensure a safe, healthy, and secure environment for all students, parents, and employees and shall implement a student code of conduct/behavior management and attendance models that promote positive student engagement and school climate as measured by: a) school attendance rates, b) chronic absenteeism rates, c) middle school dropout rates, d) student suspension rates, e) student expulsion rates, and f) other local measures including surveys of students, parents and teachers on the sense of safety and school connectedness. School climate may be defined as the quality and character of school life. It may be based on patterns of student, parent, and school personnel experiences within the school and reflects norms, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching and learning practices, and organizational structures. A school's culture is largely determined by the values, shared beliefs, and behavior of all the various stakeholders within the school community and reflects the school's social norms. Culture is everything distinctive to a place. Building a culture takes time-sometimes years of trial and error. Before evaluating teachers in a rigorous manner, or tasking principals and other leaders with observing and controlling the quality of instruction, providing high quality instruction at-scale means building a culture of high expectations. And not just writing it down, but spending every day making sure that everyone involved in education buys into the culture's norms.

Research supports the connection between engagement, achievement, and school behavior across all levels of economic and social advantage and disadvantage. Every school, irrespective of school level, geographic locale, or demographic characteristics of students has students who are disengaged and engaged. In fact, the student body in schools can be organized along a continuum of marginal-disengaged to member-engaged students. The importance of student engagement with school is widely recognized as a critical component of the level of student success, as is the observation that far too many students are bored, unmotivated, and uninvolved, that is, disengaged from the academic and social aspects of school life and may even fail to complete middle school or high school. Schools have holding power for students; thus, school policies and practices can and must foster engaging climates, especially for disconnected youth. How student engagement is conceptualized, the importance of multiple engagement subtypes, and its applicability for all students is paramount to advancing the use of this construct and improving academic, social, and emotional learning outcomes for students. The role of contexts in facilitating student engagement can be defined as:

- Extent to which students participate in academic and nonacademic activities and identify with and value the goals of schooling (Audas & Willms, 2001).
- When psychological needs (i.e., autonomy, belonging, competence) are met within cultural enterprises such as family, school, and work, engagement occurs and is exhibited in affect, behavior, and cognition (Connell & Wellborn, 1991).
- Emotional (positive and negative reactions to teachers, classmates, academics, and school), Behavioral (participation in school), and Cognitive (investment) Engagement subtypes (Fredericks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004).
- Extent to which students are motivated to learn and do well in school (Libby, 2004)

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- Energy in action, the connection between person and activity; consisting of three forms: behavioral, emotional, and cognitive (Russell, Ainley, & Frydenberg, 2005).
 - Willingness to participate in routine school activities with subtle cognitive, behavioral, and affective indicators of student engagement in specific learning tasks (K. Chapman, 2003).
 - Student participation in the activities offered as part of the school program (L. Natriello, 1984).
 - Cognitive/Intellectual/Academic (students' effort, investment, and strategies for learning), Social/Behavioral/Participatory (social, extracurricular, and nonacademic school activities; interactions with peers), and Emotional (feelings of connection to school, including their performance, school climate, and relationships with others).(M. Yazzie-Mintz, 2007).

Strategic Priority. Campus Supervision. The District will provide appropriate student supervision.

Strategic Priority. Positive Student Attendance. The District will implementation of effective programs and strategies that promote regular school attendance and reduces incidents of truancy.

Regular school attendance is a necessary part of the learning process and the means to graduation with a good education. Students who are frequently absent may be putting their futures in jeopardy. Chronic absenteeism, especially truancy, is a behavior that is highly associated with dropping-out of school. An effective positive student attendance program should provide the best learning environment for students who are at risk of becoming truant. Such programs and services are designed to help the student and parents remedy problems that are contributing to the student's absenteeism.

Strategic Priority. Character Education. The District will implement an effective and appropriate character education program as a proactive effort foster ethical, responsible, and caring students and which may be used as the underpinning for other critical issues such as discipline problems, gang violence, teen pregnancy, and poor academic achievement.

Character Education is the intentional, proactive effort by schools and districts to foster ethical, responsible, and caring students by modeling and teaching good character through an emphasis on universal values that we all share. Character Education may be used as the underpinning for other critical issues such as discipline problems, gang violence, teen pregnancy, and poor academic achievement. An effective character education program also addresses such critical issues as student absenteeism and inappropriate student conduct provides an operational framework for that guides selection, integration, and implementation of the best evidence-based academic and behavioral practices for improving important academic and behavior outcomes for all students. Through the character education program, families also participate in the process with additional social services provided, as necessary to promote pro-social behavior in students. Preventing recidivism through opportunities, mentoring, interventions, supports, and education is a critical component of any character education program.

Strategic Priority. Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports (PBIS). The District will adopt and implement a behavioral intervention program, which promotes positive behavior, reduced incidents of inappropriate behavior, and provides alternatives to suspension.

Durable, and adaptable school-wide PBIS in a school requires systemic support that extends beyond an individual school. It is important to organize multiple schools (e.g., cluster, complex, district, county, state) so that a common vision, language, and experience are established. This approach allows districts and states to improve the efficiency of resource use, implementation efforts, and organizational management. An expanded infrastructure also enhances the district and state level support (e.g., policy, resources, competence) and provides a supportive context for implementation at the local level.

Strategic Priority. Co-Curricular and Extra-Curricular Programs. The District will ensure that all students have access to co-curricular and extracurricular activities as a means of developing the “whole student,” as well as connecting the student to the school and its instructional programs.

Co-curricular activities are activities that are relevant, supportive, that are an integral part of the program of studies in which the student is enrolled, and that are under the supervision and/or coordination of the school instructional staff. Extracurricular activities are those activities, which are not directly related to the program of studies, which are under the supervision and/or coordination of the school instructional staff, and which are considered valuable for the overall development of the student.

Strategic Priority. Visual and Performing Arts Program. The District will ensure that all students have access to a broad range of visual and performing arts programs as a means of developing the “whole student,” as well as connecting the student to the school and its instructional programs.

The arts are profound ways of knowing and communicating about one’s world. They provide creative solutions to problems where standard, approved answers do not exist. The arts draw upon a range of instructional styles that meets the diverse learning needs of all students. By teaching in and through the arts, we increase the potential of every student and complement learning in other disciplines. The arts are vital in building understanding between and among cultures, past and present. The arts teach tolerance and celebrate diversity in a shrinking world. They elevate our consciousness and are indispensable to the freedom of inquiry and expression. The arts contribute to the culture and community of the school. Performances and exhibitions also provide students with a sense of achievement.

Strategic Goal 4: Family and Community Engagement

The District shall build strong relationships with families and community members to increase capacity to navigate the educational system in order to partner and advocate for educational opportunities and access to high quality teaching and learning to optimize student achievement as measured by the degree to which the District implements activities consistent with the state's adopted *Family Engagement Framework*, 2011.

Students with parents who are involved in their school tend to have fewer behavioral problems and better academic performance, and are more likely to complete high school than students whose parents are not involved in their school (Henderson and Berla, 1994). According to Jaynes (2005, 2007) and Stewart (2008) positive effects of parental involvement have been demonstrated at both the elementary and secondary levels across several studies, with the largest effects often occurring at the elementary level. A recent meta-analysis showed that parental involvement in school life was more strongly associated with high academic performance for middle school students than helping with homework (Hill and Tyson, 2005). Involvement allows parents to monitor school and classroom activities, and to coordinate their efforts with teachers to encourage acceptable classroom behavior and ensure that the child completes schoolwork (Hill and Taylor, 2004). Teachers of students with highly involved parents tend to give greater attention to those students, and they are more likely to identify at earlier stages problems that might inhibit student learning. Parental involvement in school, and positive parent-teacher interactions, has also been found to positively affect teachers' self-perception and job satisfaction (Tschannen-Moran and Hoy, 2007).

Strategic Priority. Building Capacity. The District shall plan and implement activities designed to build capacity for families and community members by:

- Ensuring all schools have family and community involvement programs.
- Ensuring all school staff understand and implement required and effective family and community engagement practices at their schools.
- Establishing family and community-friendly volunteer policies to recruit and organize parent help and support.
- Training family and community members to successfully participate in curricular and budgetary decision-making.
- Identifying and integrating resources and services from the community to strengthen school programs, family practices, and student learning and development.
- Ensuring staff and family and community member access to training in effective school, family, and community partnerships.
- Training staff, with the assistance of family and community members, in how to reach out to and work with family and community members as equal partners in their children's education.
- Ensuring that teachers and family and community members have the knowledge and tools to help students with homework and other curriculum-related activities (i.e., literacy and/or math nights, homework help, and classroom instructional observations).

Strategic Priority. Demonstrating Leadership. The District shall provide opportunities for families and community members to develop and demonstrate leadership by:

- Meeting requirements of state and federal law regarding family involvement.
- Ensuring family and community member representation on district and school committees as required by law.
- Establishing district family and community member involvement policies and programs.
- Ensuring family and community member representation on district and school committees as required by law.
- Involving family and community member in advisory bodies and training strategies.

Strategic Priority. Monitoring Progress. The District shall provide opportunities for family and community members to be involved in the monitoring the progress of the District's programs by:

- Providing oversight, support, and coordination of family and community member involvement activities among district schools and programs.
- Documenting progress of each school's implementation of its family and community member involvement program [*EC 11503(c)(d)*, refers specifically to Title I].

Strategic Priority. Access and Equity. Access and Equity for all families and community members include:

- Ensuring that critical family and community member information is readily available in accessible formats and languages spoken by families in the district.
- Ensuring that family and community member representation on committees reflects the composition of the student body
- Ensuring that schools have a system in place with multiple strategies to facilitate two-way communication with family and community member on a regular basis.

Strategic Goal 5: Operational Effectiveness

The District shall maintain fiscal solvency and ensure the fiscal, human, and materiel resources are appropriately aligned to deliver basic services consistent with and to accomplish the various strategic priorities.

The operational agenda involves continual improvement everywhere. Failure to do this creates vulnerability even for organizations with a good strategy. The operational agenda is also the proper place for constant change, flexibility, and relentless efforts to achieve best practice. In *What is strategy?*, Michael Porter (1996) suggested that operational effectiveness involves: leading and controlling functional performance; measuring and improving processes analytical, testing, and innovation techniques based on quality measurement and reduction in variation; leveraging and automate processes, where applicable; and continuously improving functional performance. Toward this end, the District must maximize the use of various inputs, processes, and/or protocols by leading and controlling functional performance, measuring and improving processes, leveraging and/or automating process, and continuously improving performance.

Strategic Priorities. The strategic priorities are how we will achieve our strategic goals. By making progress in these areas, and being faithful to our vision and values, the District can constantly and consistently move forward in achieving the strategic goals.

Strategic Priority. Collecting, Analyzing, and Reporting Critical District Metrics and Performance. The District will regularly and systematically collect, analyze, evaluate, and report relevant metrics and performance data in order to determine the effectiveness of the various operational programs and initiatives.

Successful organizations monitor their operations extensively and intensively. To be sure, numbers are the language of measurement. Knowing what to measure, how to measure it and how to communicate those metrics can help improve the District's efficiency, effectiveness, and standing. As a District, we need to adopt a systems approach to continuous improvement. This focus on using data will lead us to become more adept at improving our key processes within the district; and by improving our key processes, we will also see improved results.

To this end, the critical metric and performance scorecards “directly links strategic goals and priorities to measures of those goals and priorities.” The purpose of the district scorecard is to focus on the important, enduring strategic priorities that will always be measured. The district scorecard serves as a monitoring instrument for strategists, a resource allocation guide for tacticians, and the primary reporting vehicle to the district’s community. It also identifies the key performance indicators that the District and its stakeholders will monitor to determine progress toward specific targets and ultimately the successful achievement of the strategic plan goals. The key performance indicators are the metrics derived from the data sources listed in the strategic plan. These indicators operationally define the standards the District will hold itself accountable for and the most salient measures within each goal area. Key performance indicators may be modified accordingly after each annual plan review.

Strategic Priority. Technical Assistance and Operational Support. The district will provide technical assistance and operational support to the schools in researching, selecting, and implementing scientifically based research strategies that will strengthen the core academic programs. These strategies will include:

- Ensuring that every student in every classroom has State Board of Education (SBE) adopted and/or standards-aligned core instructional materials.
- Ensuring that classroom instruction is aligned with California content standards and standards-aligned instructional materials, including technology-based materials.
- Ensuring that every student working below grade level, including English Learners, Students with Disabilities and any other student not meeting standards, is provided with strategic or intensive intervention, including appropriate intervention materials and extended learning time.
- Providing materials-based professional development to all teachers, including effective instructional strategies
- Providing regular opportunities for data-based collaboration for all teachers.
- Providing all administrators with professional development based on instructional materials used in their schools
- Involving and engaging staff, parents, and community groups in academic improvement strategies.
- Ensuring articulation of services among educational levels including preschool, elementary, middle school, high school, community college, and post-secondary options as appropriate.
- Monitoring program implementation and effectiveness.

Strategic Priority. Budgeting, Aligning, Monitoring and Reporting. The District will adopt/develop and implement a spending plan and budget development and monitoring protocol that supports the District's mission, vision and goals, while planning for funding necessary to ensure an effective and stable educational environment, while appropriately aligning fiscal resources to the identified strategic priorities.

Strategic Priority. Maintenance, Operations, and Transportation. The District will adopt/develop and implement a maintenance, operations, and transportation plan that supports the District's mission, vision and goals, while ensuring an effective and stable educational environment.

The District's facilities, operations, and transportation fleet must be acquired and/or maintained to meet the needs of all student and staff. An effective maintenance, operations, and transportation program maintains, throughout its expected useful life, the interior and exterior of school buildings, the grounds and the roadways, all fixed and moveable equipment, and all vehicles through preventive maintenance and repairs. The program also is specifically intended to provide:

- Buildings and their components, which function safely and at top efficiency.
- Busses and vans, which function safely and at top efficiency.
- Facilities and equipment which greatly minimize the possibility of fires, accidents, and safety hazards.
- Continuous use of facilities without disruptions to the educational program.

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- Protection of public property through proper planning, scheduling, and preventive maintenance.
 - Provide quality management of maintenance projects and tasks.
 - Conservation of energy through utilization of the latest technology and energy conservation measures.
 - Insure a quality maintenance program through effective management and efficient utilization of resources.
 - Provide the best indoor air quality possible by maintaining a physical environment that supports the needs of the instructional program, staff, students, other users, and visitors who use school facilities and grounds.

Monitoring, Evaluating, and Reporting

Although the Strategic Plan is designed to provide a stable focus for the district over a five-year period, it must also be responsive to any major changes in the District. Therefore, at least quarterly, the District Advisory Committee (DAC) shall monitor the status of the various strategic priorities and initiatives. An annual evaluation process will also be conducted by the District Advisory Committee (DAC) to determine whether any revisions are needed to the plan. This process will be informed by District Metrics and Performance Scorecard, which will be available to all faculty and staff, families, and community members. This data report includes results related to all of the metrics included in the strategic plan, showing whether targets have been met and whether improvements have been made. Based on this input, preliminary recommendations will be provided to the Superintendent, who in turn will prepare recommendations to the Board of Trustees. The Board must approve any revisions to the strategic plan.