

**Rogers Public Schools
Strategic Plan
Executive Summary
For Year Nine
2014-2015**

It is time for us to reflect on the objectives and actions in year nine of Strategic Plan. While continuous improvement does not lend itself to a beginning and an end, this summary is an attempt to capture our progress for the past year.

June

While June marks the end of a school year, it is just the beginning of our Strategic Plan evaluation. At the end of 2013-14, the district prepared for the new state data system, eSchoolPlus Student Information Management Software, as well as a new personnel evaluation system. These statewide changes meant increased summer training and cautious preparation for the beginning of the 2014-15 school year. With input from administrators and data that had been compiled, we set objectives and created action steps and priorities for Year Nine of our Strategic Plan.

July

The business of writing the plan began in earnest in July. Over the course of six days in July, objectives and priorities were amended, eliminated or added to the plan. Highlighted additions included a concentrated effort to improve administrative feedback to teachers. This was accomplished through instructional activities embedded in each principal and assistant principal meeting.

A great deal of time was spent in July preparing and training for state updates to the teacher and administrator evaluation process (TESS and LEADS) and the companion management software, BloomBoard. ESchool was also updated. This tasked our district with additional training as we prepared to migrate from the old system to the new system in time to open school.

By the end of July, the plan had been written and reports were scheduled. There were 78 reports scheduled for Leadership Cabinet for the 2014-15 year. Reports included monitoring demographics, enrollment, grade reports, formative (MAP) tests, credits earned, graduation rates and participation in credit recovery. Time was also allotted for reports from national conference participants, as well as any new issues that occurred during the school year. These reports and discussions around those issues created a common understanding and set the course of action for the district.

August

August began with a kick-off meeting with administrators. At that time, the Strategic Plan was shared and new initiatives were highlighted. New initiatives included an enhanced social media presence through our webpage and applications, an investigation into the possibility of a virtual school or classes, and efforts to provide a richer STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) curriculum. The Strategic Plan was also shared with new teachers as part of their enculturation into our district.

The start of school meant we closely watched enrollment and staffing to be good stewards of the public's funds. Schedules, class sizes, and personnel were adjusted if necessary. The predicted secondary enrollment for 2014-15 was 7729, while actual enrollment was 7773. Elementary enrollment is scrutinized for boundary enrollment and available space. Because elementary buildings are smaller, and kindergarten registration is often less predictable, some late assignments and transfers were required. All of this was done to balance efficiency and equity for our students and parents.

Reports from the previous school year were delivered in August at Leadership Cabinet and to the school board. The Benchmark scores were summarized and analyzed. Performance by subgroups, overall achievement, school and district ratings and trends in performance were examined building by building in both math and literacy. This is our summative test and therefore impacts public perception and state ratings of our schools. Normally, there is some adjustment to our plan to address any persistent concerns, but the state testing program shifted to PARCC testing. Subsequently the focus was on teaching the new Common Core standards in preparation for the new tests.

September

Leadership Cabinet received more end-of-the-year reports in September. With an increased emphasis on "career-ready" education, the cabinet examined the Career and Technical Education (CTE) program. Enrollment in CTE classes was shared including opportunities for Alternative Learning Environment students (ALE) to participate in drafting, machine tools and automotive classes. There was a 32% increase in the number of students enrolled in courses through Northwest Technical Institute.

In early September, the cabinet reviewed the results of the Advanced Placement (AP) exams from the previous spring and the academic growth of students in the Gifted and Talented program. There has been an effort to challenge more of our high-achieving students by preparing them for AP classes and middle school accelerated math courses. Enrollment was examined by feeder pattern and demographics. On the AP exams, the high schools continued to outperform the state. On the other hand, there was some concern for students that are well above grade level and the rate of growth shown on the Benchmark exams. Ms. Carnes shared a

plan to improve the performance of these students through additional training of the district REACH facilitators.

A committee of high school administrators delivered a report on district guidelines for the use of Grad Point. Grad Point has become the software used to recover credits for students that failed classes. Time requirements and the ability to offer original credit to students were standardized in all high schools. This report coincided with a report on enrollment in remedial courses. Remedial courses included all two-hour block math classes in high school and those literacy classes designed to bolster reading and writing skills. Achievement and enrollment were monitored in these courses. This year, enrollment was down from 18% in 2010 to 12% of secondary students in 2014. A progress report was scheduled at the end of the first semester to help evaluate this approach. Some concerns were raised about impact of block classes on on-time graduation and the Smart Core curriculum necessary to qualify for scholarships.

October

The first of three reports on the performance and initiatives in Special Education, English Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) and New Technology High School were delivered to the cabinet in October. Each report included information on benchmark performance, class size and instructional delivery methods. Both departments and New Technology High School were scheduled to provide information on academic progress after the first semester.

On-time graduation data became available in October. Summer school credits were added to student records allowing the high schools to better estimate their respective graduation rate. Included this year was an in-depth look at students taking the “Smart Core” curriculum. It was calculated that approximately 86% of our seniors were still in the Smart Core track and that an upper level math class was the greatest barrier for most students trying to remain in the Smart Core curriculum.

Final discipline statistics were released in October. There was a general decrease in the number of students with a reported incident. That continues to be the trend since 2008. The report indicated that 11% of the student body had a reported incident. The cabinet discussed creating more consistency in reporting incidents and noted that 9th graders had the highest rate of referrals.

November

The first student achievement indicators for the 2014-15 school year were compiled in November. The cabinet reviewed the number of secondary students presently failing a course, what courses they are failing and the demographics of those students. The information was then shared with secondary principals in an effort to prevent any loss of credit or grading issues.

Attendees to the National Middle School Conference in Nashville shared their experiences with the Leadership Cabinet. Analysis of middle school schedules and team structure prompted a recalibration of the middle school principles. The expectation was to help principals find ways to incorporate middle school values in their faculties and building structures to become more responsive to adolescent development and learning.

December

Three different software programs were revisited in December. The district uses a program called WebText to inventory and track textbooks and laptops that will be checked out for the school year. Gary Day explained some of the challenges associated with maintaining an inventory of student-issued materials and barcodes.

Cris Carter had been tasked to explore virtual learning opportunities for students in our district. Mr. Carter shared that virtual classes offer potential opportunities to stay current with learning methods, meet the varying interests of students and families and possibly relieve some stress on future facility needs. Challenges included the development of a virtual curriculum, and meeting state standards for science labs and PARCC testing. Mr. Carter shared some free and purchased virtual learning software (Edmodo) which is the platform being used by the district to meet the state mandated digital course offering.

Mr. Sparks delivered the Student Tracker report to Leadership Cabinet. Student Tracker is a service to help the district track our graduates. Information on post secondary enrollment and completion of either a two or four year degree is used by the district to measure our students' preparedness for college. Mr. Sparks shared some of the limitations of the service and the inability to monitor college transfer students. He noted that 53% of our students enrolled in college after high school. He reported that the average six-year graduation rate from either a two-year or four-year institution was around 39% and that an estimate for our district's six year graduation rate was about 41%.

January

Winter break and district professional development limited the cabinet to one meeting in January. Consequently, the agenda was full.

Dan Cox and Stephen Bowman reported to the cabinet on efforts to improve communication and articulation between feeder schools. This has been an ongoing effort and an objective in the Strategic Plan for several years. While coordinating dates for parent conferences, open houses, and other events has been improved, the real objective was to create continuity between grade levels for students and their parents. Dan and Stephen reported that administrators visited one another's buildings in the fall to see the use of high yield instructional strategies at various grade levels. They commented that this has helped administrators see the bigger picture of our school system.

Part of the district's action plan is to "...deliver a well-articulated curriculum". To monitor progress, Dr. Abernathy and Mr. Moore update the cabinet twice a year on progress made in the area of curriculum. Mr. Moore shared that the English Language Arts curriculum was aligned to Common Core. Mr. Moore stated that science and social studies teachers have been receiving training in the use of high yield strategies as they adapt to the Common Core standards. Other efforts at the secondary level included establishing a rubric for World Languages' adoption and piloting the digital health course.

During the elementary report, Dr. Abernathy thanked the curriculum specialists for their work in creating a template that is being used to develop and plan units. She added that 78 teachers have used this tool to contribute to unit planning. Dr. Abernathy commented that work is being done K-12 to improve vocabulary for the Common Core standards and improving teachers' understanding of text complexity. She stated that these efforts are being supported through four days of professional development over the next few months. Dr. Abernathy also related that teachers were intentionally instructing students on how to use the PARCC online tools that were to be used during this year's assessment. She added that coordinated efforts are being made at each building to make technology available for all students. This will allow students to be familiar with online tools and programs so that test scores will reflect student learning, not technological abilities.

Other reports to the cabinet included an update on technology trainings offered by Ashley Daniel, feedback from the January 19th professional development day, an update on direct reading instruction at the secondary level and a summary of the Classroom Walk-Through visits conducted in the first semester.

February

Leadership Cabinet agendas in February were full of reports on the first semester. Mr. Sparks presented two reports related to secondary academic progress. The first report was an analysis of the number of failures by course and student. Details of this report provoked the question of who is failing what and why? This has implications for on-time graduation and possibly unintentional bias in grading practices. The report noted that 1300 "F's" were assigned to students in grades 6 through 12 and that ESOL and poverty students received a disproportionate number of these failures. Further inquiry revealed that many students were assigned such low grades at the end of the first nine weeks that passing grades were mathematically impossible. This information was later shared with secondary principals for action.

There were several updates on Strategic Plan initiatives delivered in February. These were done to monitor the implementation of year-long objectives. Updates included Link Crew activities since the freshmen welcome activities, academic progress at New Technology High, progress on new webpage implementation, updates on virtual school possibilities, changes in Smart Core enrollment, and a check on Classroom Walk-Through observations.

February was also the beginning of next year's planning. Dr. Hill presented secondary enrollment and staffing projections for 2015-16. He monitored changes in student enrollment throughout the year and watched student/teacher ratios over time. Early enrollment projections allow the district to enter spring hiring season as soon as possible.

March

American College Testing (ACT) remediation information became available in March. This information has been used to assess our level of college preparedness. Students scoring below a 19 in either math or English are required to take a remedial class at the college level. Ashley Daniel shared that the number of students taking the ACT has more than doubled since 344 students took the test in 2010, but the remediation rate in math has increased from 27% to 32% and in English from 24% to 31%. Overall, the composite score remained steady in 2014 at 22.1.

Mr. Moore gave a remedial math update in March. He reported on the performance in the high school block math classes. He expressed his concern on the number of "D's" and "F's" in those courses. He added that the additional class time has not had the desired impact on student achievement. He recommended restructuring the block classes into one-hour blocks each semester rather than two-hour blocks. Dr. Darr asked that the best teachers work with these struggling students. Mr. Moore added that two middle schools, Kirksey and Lingle, offered remediation in math to reduce the number of students needing block classes in high school.

Heritage teacher, Shane Miller, represented the district at the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics conference. He relayed the latest set of guiding principles and trends in math education. He offered some suggestions to improve math achievement such as facilitating meaningful mathematical discourse in our classrooms.

Leadership Cabinet also heard updates from the ESOL department and the Special Education department. Ms. Elmore and Mr. White gave a follow-up report on the "Where Everyone Belongs" (WEB) program. Ms. Elmore shared activities that are ongoing at Lingle on decision-making, anti-bullying and respecting others. Mr. White added that he felt the program has helped his 6th graders transition into middle school.

April

Throughout the state, there is a movement to improve opportunities for Arkansas students in the areas of science, technology, engineering and math (STEM). To improve these opportunities, Mr. Moore led a committee for the district and reported his findings in April. He offered an example that at the elementary level there were STEM activities through English/language arts classes. He added that gifted and talented teachers were incorporating STEM activities for K-12 classes. He shared that there were grant funds under a program called "Project Lead the Way" and that the district had received a grant but the committee wished to

reapply for more next year. He commented that teachers were already doing many STEM activities in the district and that more professional development was needed to help teachers identify exactly what STEM is and ways that they can make more connections.

One ongoing objective in the Strategic Plan is supporting the achievement of our Hispanic/Latino students. Dr. Toni Thorn was asked to conduct a meeting of Hispanic students and their families on accessing post secondary education. Representatives from NWACC and the University of Arkansas presented to 45 students and their families to explain the enrollment process and financial aid opportunities.

As graduation neared, the counselors assigned to the senior class at both high schools were asked to update the Leadership Cabinet on this year's graduating class. Janna Gartman from Rogers High School stated that there were 472 seniors and only 2 were not expected to graduate on time. She added that there were 54 seniors that were still at risk, but were being monitored closely. Kristin Collins of Heritage reported that there were 439 seniors and that 98% were expected to graduate, but Heritage was monitoring 79 seniors who were still at risk.

At the end of 3rd quarter, the cabinet reviews student progress for secondary students through the "F" report. This is an attempt to intervene before there is any loss of credit. After the third quarter, about 5% of all 6-12 graders were failing. The greatest percentage of failing grades in high school occurred in Algebra I, Geometry, and the Algebra block class. The group also noted that the largest group of students that received a failing grade was identified as students of poverty.

Mr. Moore and Mr. Jim White led a discussion on plans for summer school. The dates for summer school were set at The Annex from June 3 through June 30. Mr. Moore stated that classes would be delivered face-to-face for Algebra and Geometry. He noted that many other credits would be recovered through the credit recovery software, Grad Point. There would be a \$25 charge for Grad Point students. It was estimated that about 200 students would be attending summer school, 150 of which would enroll through Grad Point. Mr. Moore stated that the district would need to review the cost of summer school and look for funds to continue in the future since the ATT grant that had been used in the past is no longer available. Jake Haak suggested budgeting National School Lunch Act funds in the future to support summer school.

Improving career readiness is an ongoing state and district effort. Dawn Stewart reported on enrollment in Career and Technical Education (CTE) classes. CTE classes are viewed as an important part of the career readiness effort. Ms. Stewart identified trends in the courses students were choosing. She pointed out that an increase in Travel and Tourism enrollment may be related to the changes in our local economy.

May

Mr. Carter delivered three reports in May. He shared his findings on the use of technology in our classrooms. He and his staff visited classrooms throughout the year and compiled data for the cabinet. His report included what equipment was available, the level of use of that equipment and whether teachers or students were the ones using technology. He also shared the updated technology plan for 2015-16. The major features of next year's plan included the development of minimum expectations for teacher data usage and the district's use of the state's data dashboard. Ashley Daniel delivered the third report from the technology department on technology trainings she conducted during the school year. She reviewed the trainings that had been offered, who attended and made suggestions for future trainings. It was noted that a small number of administrators and teachers attended regularly and there was a need to expand the breadth of attendees.

Two reports related to math were delivered in May. Leadership Cabinet monitored the number of students at each middle school that qualify for an accelerated math class. This impacts the future course offerings at the high schools and is the first indicator of the level of math achievement in the district. The second math report was presented by Candice Kindrick and Beth Pesnell. They had attended the national conference for the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics. Ms. Kindrick shared research on the importance of providing feedback in math education and allowing students to learn from their mistakes through nonjudgmental feedback. Ms. Pesnell talked about the relationship between math achievement and the ability to be a problem solver. Ms. Pesnell said that Rogers' teachers at the conference were reaffirmed as the district use of Cognitively Guided Instruction (CGI) was cited as one of the most impactful practices in math education.

Dawn Stewart gave an end-of-the-year report on the district Career and Technical Education programs. In 2014, the district had 139 students that took 3 or more courses in a program of study. These students are referred to as "completers". Dawn stated more of those students are employed in the workforce and did not enter college.

Summary

More than in any other year, 2014-15 was driven by state rules, requirements and changes. All teachers and administrators participated in evaluation training throughout the summer and into the school year. Secretaries and personnel were trained to use the state's new software, eSchool, to enter student data and schedules. Finally, the new state assessment, PARCC, required the full attention of everyone in the district. Preparation that really began in 2013 continued this past year for students, teachers, administrators, and the technology department. The final report by Testing Coordinator, Alyssa Peterson, was very positive and many employees wearing many hats made the first year of PARCC testing a success.

Keeping those significant changes in mind, the Strategic Plan proved resilient. The work of the Leadership Cabinet remained the backbone of the Strategic Plan's infrastructure. There were 78 reports by 40 different employees delivered to the cabinet in 2014-15. "What gets measured

gets done” and these reports keep the district focused on what’s important. There were numerous new initiatives in Year 9. The district held to our action plan. Monthly trainings with administrators focused on improving their ability to help teachers incorporate high yield strategies in their instructions. Curriculum documents and resources were continuing to evolve and improve. Our commitment to professional development was affirmed as the district committed to ten days, and the use of those days continues to bring focus to elevating the skills of our staff.

There are, and always will be, external pressures and influences on the business of education. Despite these pressures, our Strategic Plan proved that we can hold the course and continue to improve. The Strategic Plan will move into its tenth year in 2015-16. While the educational landscape will continue to change, the Strategic Plan will hold our district on a course of continuous improvement where “all learn, all belong, and all succeed”.