



## **Laurel Public Schools' Strategic Planning Process**

**Initially Adopted November 22, 2010 and Updated Annually**

**LEARNING! COMMITTED! ENGAGED!**

### **Overview**

**The Laurel Public School District (Laurel Public Schools)** has created a new direction for the school district to strategically focus its resources on identified wants, preferences, and needs of its community. As part of this process, Laurel Public Schools has begun a strategic planning and thinking process that will lead to a stronger and more vital school district. This process will be ongoing as Laurel Public Schools moves into the future. This strategic plan is intended to help Laurel Public Schools in focusing its resources in a manner that will best benefit the children enrolled in Laurel Public Schools.

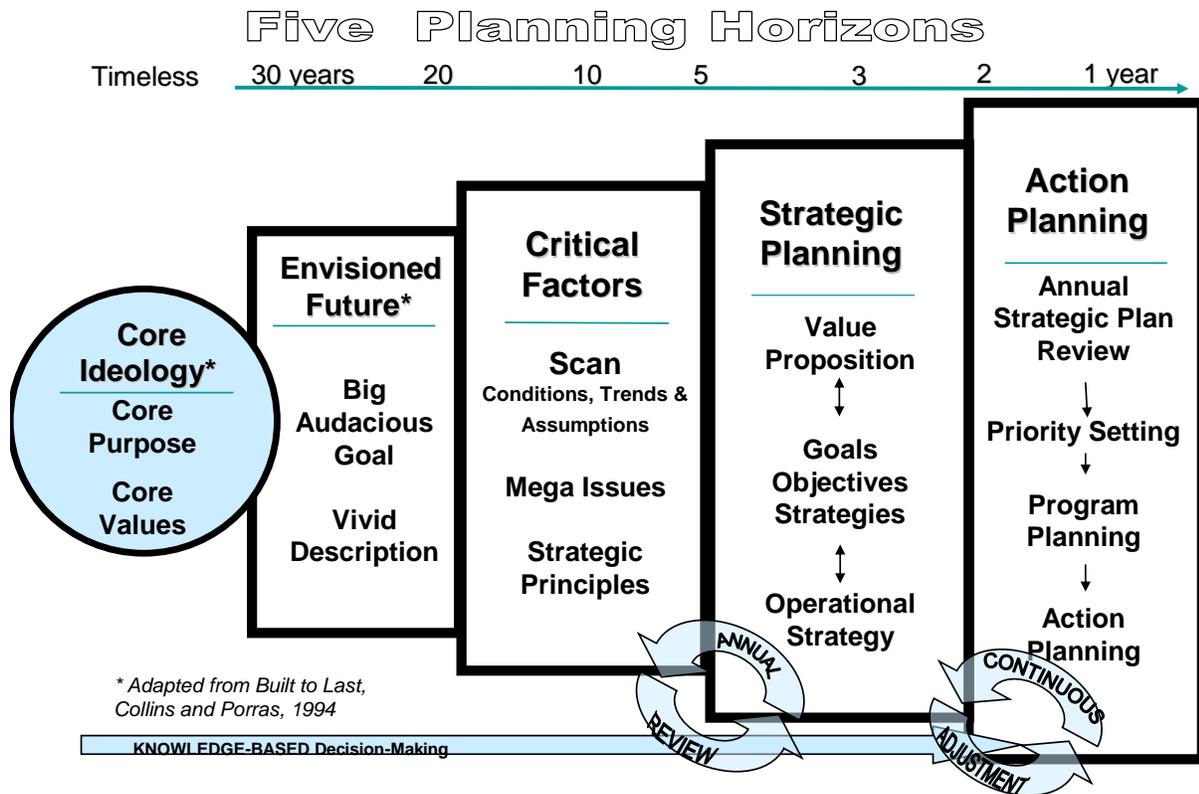
The Laurel Board of Trustees, Staff Leadership Team, and faculty began the strategic planning and thinking process necessary to fit with its commitment to children, to community engagement and to knowledge-based decision-making processes.

As part of its preparation for strategic planning, Laurel Public Schools brought in Debra Silk of Montana School Boards School to help facilitate the strategic planning process.

The Laurel Public Schools' Board, Staff Leadership Team, and faculty view the process of strategic planning as an ongoing process within the school system. This is not a "strategic planning project" that is completed. Adoption of a plan is an affirmation of the general intent and direction articulated by the Core Ideology, Envisioned Future and Goals and Strategic Objectives. It is understood that progress toward achieving plan strategic objectives will be assessed at least annually, and the plan will be updated based on achievement and changes in the needs of the children served by Laurel Public Schools.

# Strategic Planning Framework

The framework used by the Laurel Public Schools for its strategic planning process was adapted from a model developed by Jim Collins, author of “Built to Last” and “Good to Great.” The Board focused on five different planning horizons, starting with the long term issues first to provide focus to shorter term efforts.



## Core Ideology of the Laurel Public School District

**Core ideology** describes a school district's consistent identity that transcends all changes related to its relevant environment. It consists of two elements - **core purpose** - the school district's reason for being - and **core values** - essential and enduring principles that guide a school district. **Envisioned future** conveys a concrete yet unrealized vision for the school district. It consists of a **big audacious goal** - a clear and compelling catalyst that serves as a focal point for effort - and a **vivid description** - vibrant and engaging descriptions of what it will be like to achieve the big audacious goal.

### Core Purpose of the Laurel Public School District:

Laurel Public Schools prepares each child for the future in a safe and entrusted environment with a clear focus on quality education, meeting the unique needs of students and positively impacting students and their families. The district embraces this core within its mission statement; “The Laurel School District is dedicated to the individual development of each child every day, without exception.”

### Core Values of the Laurel Public School District

- **Focus on Students.** We are committed to the delivery of a quality educational program that promotes both academic success and the overall development of every student. We believe in tailoring our educational programs to meet the needs and skill level of each student. Our educational environment promotes high student expectations, the importance of lifelong learning and creative/critical thinking. We believe that it is vital that students have a strong desire to learn and that educators have a strong desire to educate.
- **Accountability.** We are committed to ensuring that decisions at all levels (board, administration, employees and students) are data-driven with the goal of maximizing the positive impact on students. We believe that ethics, perseverance, commitment and efficiency serve as the foundations of everything we do as a school district. We believe that accountability is reciprocal at all levels from our students, staff, board, community and parents.
- **Open Communication/Engagement.** We are committed to open lines of communication at all levels. We understand the importance of engagement at all levels from our students, staff, board, community and parents. We know that the success of our students is dependent on both the involvement of our community and parents in our educational programs and on the school’s efforts in keeping the community and parents informed about our educational programs, our challenges and our needs.

- **Citizenship.** We are committed to providing an atmosphere in which respect, honesty and integrity are required of everyone. We believe that creating a culture of acceptance of others, understanding the importance of giving back to the school district and to our community, recognition and honoring of others and exercising self-discipline is vital to the success of our community, our schools and our students.

## **20 Year Planning Horizon**

### **Envisioned Future of the Laurel School District**

#### **Big Audacious Goal:**

Laurel Public School students and staff are inspired and passionate about the human condition and have a healthy, competitive drive to meet the needs of a global workplace. Students who are educated by Laurel Public Schools are exposed to a rigorous academic program, have opportunities to envision what they could do with their lives and are equipped with the skills they need to accomplish their individual goals. Our students and parents are engaged from the first day of kindergarten. Our paths to post-secondary opportunities start in the elementary grades. We are forward-thinking in our elective offerings to meet individual skills, talents and desires of students, while continuing to stress core curriculum. Each child achieves at their highest possible level based upon their individual potential. Our schools offer a safe and caring environment for all students, staff and parents. We meet the needs of students socially, emotionally and academically. The District remains on the cutting-edge in technology and effectively using tools to enhance student achievement. Our board, staff, parents and community all work collaboratively for the common good of our students.

#### **A Vivid Description of the Desired Future:**

- We provide vast academic and vocational opportunities for all students.
- Our reward system for educators attracts only the best and the brightest.
- We are effective educators “without walls.”
- We have a program of interest-based academic offerings (e.g., arts academy, tech academy, trades, and sciences).
- Our graduates take pride in themselves, what they have accomplished, Laurel Public Schools and our community.
- Notwithstanding state and federal funding for public education in Montana, we have the necessary resources to meet the needs of our students and staff.
- Our students are a positive influence for others.
- We instill self-discipline to work hard to accomplish short-term and long-term life goals.
- Our students recognize the responsibility to be active citizens.
- Our students recognize the importance of continued learning.
- We offer higher education courses at the high school level and encourage all students to continue on that path after high school.
- We have successfully broken the “generational bondage” of the lack of motivation

needed for high achievement.

- We encourage each child to realize that their dreams can be reality – the only thing standing in their way is their effort.
- Our students move through the system at their own pace. They are not grouped by age but by academic ability. Learning is a function of time. We adjust the time factor to the student’s rate of learning.
- Our teachers are “facilitators of knowledge” rather than “dispensers of knowledge.”
- Our teaching staff is inspiring, motivated, innovative, embraces change and are rewarded intrinsically and financially for their efforts.
- The school day is no longer from 8-4. Some students need 6-7 hours of instruction/day and support, while other only need 1-2 hours/day or week.
- We have a fully integrated technological environment from the Board down to the classroom and instruction.
- Students are exposed to career opportunities onsite, via technology and through community business partnerships.
- There is global integration with curriculum.
- Our facilities are environmentally-cognizant.
- Every student leaves Laurel Public Schools with an educational, career, vocational or other plan for succeeding in life.
- The district continues to be a wise steward with financial resources.
- Parents have access to a variety of resources (health, social, emotional, skills) from the school and other agencies.
- With the assistance of parents and our community, we have developed creative methods for funding and providing needed resources to our schools.

## **5-10 Year Planning Horizon**

### **Assumptions Regarding the Relevant Future for the Laurel Public School District**

In order to make progress against the 20 year Envisioned Future, Laurel Public Schools must constantly anticipate the strategic factors likely to affect its ability to succeed, and to assess the implications of those factors. This process of building foresight about the future will help Laurel Public Schools to constantly recalibrate its view of the relevant future, a basis upon which to update the strategic plan on an annual basis. As the outcome-oriented goals that will form the basis of the long-range strategic plan will be based on this foresight, annual review of these statements will be an appropriate method of determining and ensuring the ongoing relevance of the strategic plan.

*See Appendix “B” hereto for the assumptions about the future that have been made by the District. The District is committed to a process of continuing to look at the horizon to anticipate barriers to the intended success of the District.*

## Five Year Planning Horizon

### Outcome-Oriented Goals and Strategic Objectives

The following thinking represents goals for the next five years. They are areas in which Laurel Public Schools will explicitly state the conditions or attributes it wants to achieve. These outcome statements will define, "what will constitute future success." The achievement of each goal will move the school district toward realization of its Envisioned Future.

Strategic Objectives provide direction and actions on how the school district will accomplish its articulated goals. All strategies included in the strategic plan should be considered accomplishable at some point in the future. Strategic Objectives are reviewed annually by the Laurel School Board, Staff Leadership Team, and faculty.

*See Appendix "A" hereto identifying the progress the District has made on its identified Goals and Strategic Objectives.*

### Objectives of the Laurel Public School District

#### Area 1: Quality/Dynamic Instruction

**Statement of Intended Outcome, Five years:** Laurel Public Schools has developed a quality, dynamic educational program that continually adapts to the needs of our students so that when students leave our school system, they are prepared to take on whatever challenges/direction that best suit them. Our teaching staff is dynamic, highly effective and adjusts their teaching methodologies to meet the needs of our students. We have successfully incorporated differentiated instruction and technology into all aspects of our educational programming. As a result of our efforts, students are enthused about their education, about learning and actively engaged.

#### 1-2 Year Strategic Objectives:

1. We will establish clear and articulated grade expectations with common assessments developed in math, language arts and science.
2. We will provide increased opportunities to expose students to "real world experiences" so that they can see options available when leaving Laurel Public Schools.
3. We will enhance our early intervention programs and services as a means of addressing school readiness for all students.
4. We will increase our focus on individual student needs and talents (e.g., students moving at their own pace).

## **Area 2: Communication, Accountability and Effective Leadership**

**Statement of Intended Outcome, Five Years:** Laurel Public Schools is accountable for all that we do from fiscal management to the performance of board, administration, staff and students. We have high expectations of the trustees, administration, staff and students and expect people to perform at high levels and be accountable for both the success of students and for the failures. Our evaluations of the board, administration and staff reflect our expectations and hold people accountable.

### **1-2 Year Strategic Objectives:**

1. In collaboration with staff, we will make enhancements to our systematic approach to employee effectiveness, accountability, professional development, collaboration, and a program of continuous improvement.
2. We will enhance our opportunities to communicate and collaborate with our community and parents for the purpose of ensuring open, honest lines of communication, understanding each other's needs, wants and preferences, and providing mutual benefit to all stakeholders.
3. We will maintain a program of continuous improvement to use responsible fiscal management principles, to maximize flexibilities and efficiencies that are available to provide the best education, programs, services and facilities for the students and community we serve.

## **Area 3: Community/District Relations**

**Statement of Intended Outcome, Five Years:** Laurel Public Schools has been successful in getting the necessary information out to the community in such a manner that people are enthused about our programs, believe that Laurel Public Schools offer the best possible education for children, and people want to be involved through volunteering and/or assisting the district in its endeavors. We have parents involved in the education of their children, we have retired individuals volunteering their time and services and we have quality and committed individuals wanting to serve on the Board. The business community is an important partner of the school district providing necessary services, resources and opportunities for our students.

### **1-2 Year Strategic Objectives:**

1. We will increase the awareness and promotion of the great things that are occurring in our schools with parents and our community.
2. We will enhance our relationships and partnerships with our business community to provide enhanced opportunities for students and local businesses.
3. We will enhance the opportunities for community collaboration, engagement and input.
4. We will enhance the understanding of and opportunities for students to engage in public service.
5. We will enhance opportunities for parental involvement.
6. We will improve the collaboration between staff, parents and students.

**Area 4: Capital Improvements:**

**Statement of Intended Outcome, Five Years:** Laurel Public Schools has adapted to the changing needs of our students and the community we serve. Our effective planning strategies have resulted in long-term financial stability and sustainability.

**1-2 Year Strategic Objectives:**

1. We will maintain an ongoing process of long-range capital improvement. We will plan and engage in regular analysis and updating to ensure we are meeting the current and future needs of our students and our community.

## Appendix “A”

### Institutionalized Strategies

**The District has made significant progress as a result of planning strategically. The following strategies have been characterized as “institutionalized” due to the fact that they are now part of the culture of our District and remain relevant to preserve our current and ongoing success.**

#### **Quality/Dynamic Instruction – We have:**

- Increased the programs and services available to students and families to address the social/emotional needs of students;
- Increased the integration of the arts into the curriculum and at all grade levels;
- Increased the accessibility to technology by students for the purpose of enhancing student achievement;
- Enhanced our professional development program for staff to ensure that such professional development is aligned to district curriculum, instruction and assessment;

#### **Knowledge-Based/Data-Driven Decisions – We have:**

- Increased training for staff on the importance and use of data to drive instruction and enhance student achievement;
- Increased our use of standards-based progression as a means of making improvements in the delivery of our educational services to students;
- Expanded the use and integration of school improvement processes as a means of ensuring consistency, clarity and consensus District-wide;
- Established and tracked educational indicators as a means of using data to drive decisions, improve processes and enhance student achievement;
- Enhanced our use of a knowledge-based, decision-making process to support collaboration between schools, departments, and the community to improve student educational needs and services.

#### **Communication, Accountability and Effective Leadership – We have:**

- Improved our working relationships with collective bargaining groups by focusing on the common goal of students and student achievement and success;
- Provided enhanced opportunities for trustee visits, exposure and interactions with students and staff.

#### **Community/District Relations – We have:**

- Enhanced the understanding of and opportunities for students to engage in public service;
- Improved the collaboration between staff, parents and students.

#### **Engaging, Safe, Tolerant Learning Environment – We have:**

- Improved issues relating to the transportation of students;
- Increased our programs and services that provide positive reinforcements and supports for students, with specific emphasis and enhancements for students identified as at-risk;
- Developed and enhanced initiatives that provide for an ongoing, engaging, safe and tolerant learning environment. **By way of example, we have . . .**

## **Appendix “B”**

### **Megatrend Analysis to Help Inform and Assess Laurel Public School District’s Strategic Plan**

#### **Assumptions about the future (5-10 years)**

**Assumptions:** The following are 5-10 year assumptions concerning the key external trends, challenges, or issues facing Laurel Public School District in the future. They may represent either future opportunities or threats to the District.

#### **5-10 Year Planning Horizon**

#### **Assumptions Regarding the Relevant Future for the Laurel Public School District**

##### **Demographics**

- We anticipate that the distance between Billings and Laurel will continue to get smaller because of future development.
- We anticipate the population to increase (through subdivisions) with a corresponding decrease in farmland which will result in a change from a farm-based economy to a more urban economy.
- We anticipate an increase in student enrollment counts.
- We anticipate an increased in the transient student population.
- We anticipate a continued disparity in economic circumstances of families with school-aged children.
- We anticipate an increase in the cultural diversity of our student and community populations.

##### **Business/Economic Climate**

- We anticipate an increase in business development in our community and surrounding area because of the new interchange.
- We anticipate that the lack of infrastructure may negatively impact business opportunities.
- We anticipate our local economy and the economy in the surrounding area to continue improving.
- We anticipate that we will continue to be viewed as a bedroom community to Billings.
- We anticipate an increase in opportunities for vocational growth areas.

## **Legislation/Regulation**

- We anticipate a continuation of unfunded mandates.
- We anticipate that we will experience continued funding challenges at the local, state and federal levels, e.g., protested taxes.
- We anticipate an increase in operational costs.
- We anticipate Title IX, discrimination challenges.

## **Technology /Science**

- We anticipate a continued increase in technology and science related expenses for the District.
- As technology advances, we anticipate a continued issue with ethics and inappropriate uses of technology.
- We anticipate a continued challenge keeping staff equipped with up-to-date technology and training.
- We anticipate a continued trend to integrate technology and science.
- We currently lag in the area of science and anticipate that this trend will continue unless we make this a priority.
- We anticipate an increased emphasis on science education as result of state/national interests and standards.
- We anticipate enhancements of our website and other technology tools available to students and parents.
- We anticipate a continued gap in the availability of technology for students because of disparities in socio-economic status.

## **Politics and Social Values**

- We anticipate an increase in the need and demand for vocational opportunities of students.
- We anticipate that methods of communication will continue to change with changes in social values and technology impacts that will likely result in less face-to-face communication.
- We anticipate a continued challenge dealing with interpersonal skills and related issues.
- We anticipate an increased emphasis on global communication. We will need to keep up with societal expectations in order to ensure that our students are college/career ready.
- We anticipate continued ethical issues (e.g., appropriate tech. usage, bullying).
- We anticipate continued challenges relating to parental involvement, social values, etc.
- We anticipate a continued increase on the demand on time for students, staff and parents. As a result, we will need to assess when communication with parents is best.
- We anticipate an increased need for mentoring programs for both students and staff.
- We anticipate that the traditional school day will change to meet student needs.

# 5-10 Year Planning Horizon

## Mega Issues facing the Laurel Public School District

**Mega issues** are issues of strategic importance, which represent choices the school district will need to make in defining the ultimate direction of its long-range plan. These issues represent potential impediments to achievement of the Envisioned Future and form a basis for dialogue about the choices facing the school district. These questions can serve as an ongoing "menu" of strategic issues that, using a knowledge-based approach in gathering insights relative to Laurel Public Schools' strategic position and directional choices for each of the issues, can be used by the Board to create regular opportunities for strategic dialogue about the future issues facing the school district.

Note: The questions are not necessarily arranged in priority order.

### Mega-Issue Questions:

**Need to identify the critical dilemmas/mega issues facing the District that require the Board and Staff Leadership Teams attention.**

### Knowledge-Based Decision-Making Questions

The Board should prioritize the above-referenced mega issues and decide which of these issues require immediate attention on the part of the Board. Once the identified mega-issues are prioritized, the Board will set aside time at scheduled meetings to analyze a particular mega issue. At such meetings, the Board's primary focus will be on the mega-issue at hand. All other business (routine or otherwise) will be conducted at the end of the meeting once the dialogue and deliberation on the mega-issue has been concluded for that meeting. When analyzing mega issues, the Board will utilize a knowledge-based decision-making process. This will keep the focus of the Board on relevant factors to consider as it develops strategies to overcome particular impediments/barriers that may impact the Board's strategic direction. The Board will analyze mega-issues by answering the following questions:

1. What do we know about the wants, needs and preferences of our constituents that are relevant to this decision?
2. What do we know about the current realities and evolving dynamics facing our constituents/community that is relevant to this decision?
3. What do we know about the capacity/strategic position of our school district that is relevant to this decision?
4. What are the ethical implications of our choices?