



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 works with consultants from Montana School Boards School to help facilitate the strategic planning process.

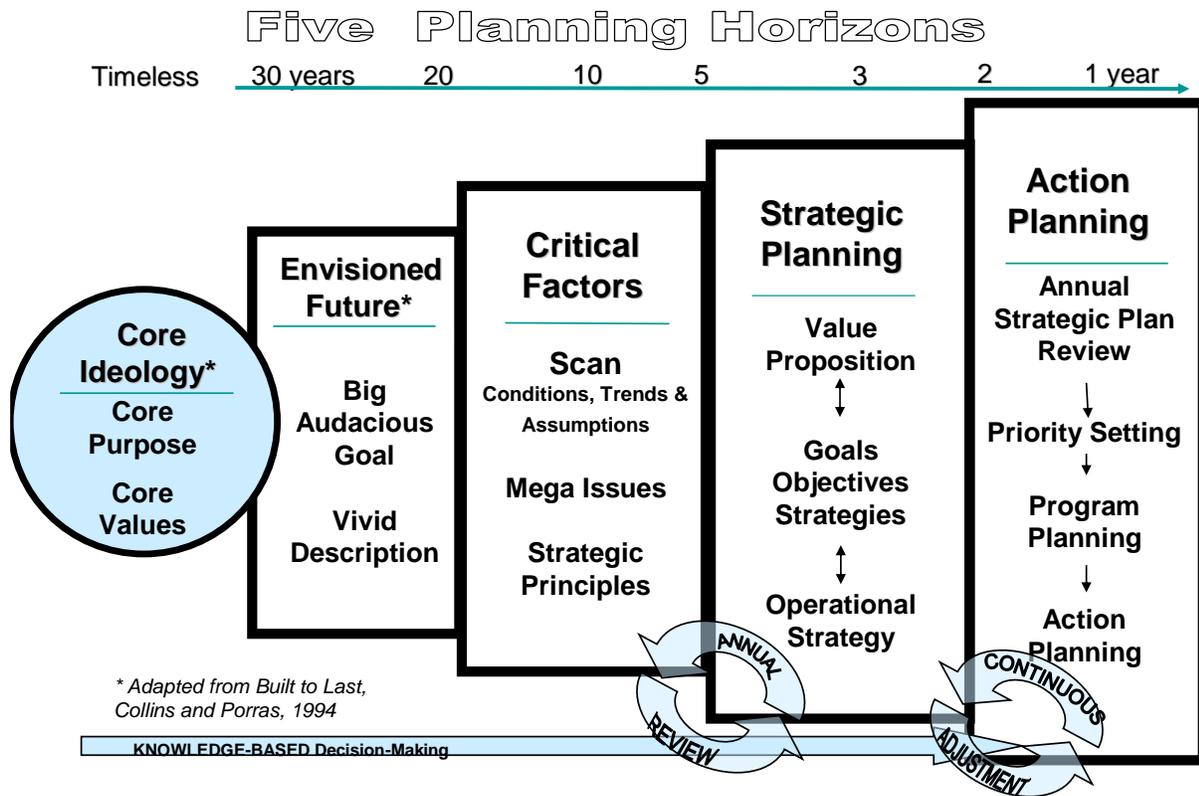
The Laurel Public Schools' Board, Staff Leadership Team, and faculty view the process of strategic planning as an ongoing process within the school system. This is not a "strategic planning project" that is completed. Adoption of a plan is an affirmation of the general intent and direction articulated 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.

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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.



Part I: Planning Horizon: Timeless

Core Ideology¹ of the Laurel Public School District

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 Purpose 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 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.

¹ **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.

- **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.

Part II: Planning Horizon: 10-15 Years

Envisioned Future² 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 of 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., acts 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

² **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 **Vivid descriptions** - vibrant and engaging descriptions of what it will be like to achieve the big audacious goal.

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 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.
- 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.

Part III: Planning Horizon: 5-10 Years

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.

Part IV: Planning Horizon: 1-5 Years

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.

3-5 Year Goals and 1-2 Year Strategic Objectives of the Laurel Public School District

Area 1: Enhanced Learning Opportunities for Each Student

Statement of Intended Outcome, Five years: Laurel Public Schools has developed enhanced learning opportunities that are continually adapting to the needs and aspirations of each student. Our teaching staff is dynamic, highly effective and adjusts their teaching methodologies to meet the needs of each student. We have successfully incorporated differentiated instruction, technology and other innovations into all aspects of our educational programming. As a result of our efforts, our students are enthused about their education, about learning and actively engaged.

1-2 Year Strategic Objectives:

1. We will enhance our K-12 pathway framework to ensure we are enhancing learning opportunities for students and meeting the needs and aspirations of each student. This will include:
 - a. Building flexibilities, alternative choices and innovations into our K-12 pathway framework and learning environments;
 - b. Enhancing our level of staffing and professional development of staff to support this Goal; and

- c. Enhancing our infrastructure to support this Goal Area.

Area 2: Community/District Relationships

Statement of Intended Outcome, Five Years: Laurel Public Schools has been successful in building a strong relationship with our community. As a result, the community is supportive of and enthused about our programs, believe that Laurel Public Schools offers high quality learning opportunities for each student, 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 a strong community-based volunteer program and our 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 consistency and effectiveness of our communications with parents and community members.
2. We will enhance opportunities for meaningful engagement between the District, parents and community members.
3. We will improve our methods and forums for seeking community input on school initiatives, programs and services.

Area 3: Innovation

Statement of Intended Outcome, Five Years: Laurel Public Schools embraces innovations and other flexibilities that meet the needs of individual students and families. We adapt to the changing needs of our students and families and the community we serve.

1-2 Year Strategic Objectives:

1. We will enhance and embrace a culture of continuous improvement to use responsible fiscal management principles, to maximize innovations, flexibilities and efficiencies that are available to provide the best education, programs, services for our students, parents and community we serve.
2. We will maintain an ongoing process of long-range infrastructure planning to ensure that we are meeting the current and future needs of our students, parents and our community.
3. We will increase our support services for students to ensure each student has the necessary tools and resources to reach their full potential.

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 on 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.

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 a continued transient population in our community and in our schools.
- We anticipate a decrease in student enrollment counts.
- We anticipate that Laurel will continue to be viewed as a bedroom community to Billings.
- We anticipate an increase in serving students from non-traditional families.

Business/Economic Climate

- We anticipate continued growth in our community.
- We anticipate a continued need for affordable housing.
- We anticipate a continued need to create and strengthen business partnerships to provide opportunities real world experiences and exploration for our students.

Legislation/Regulation

- We anticipate the necessity of actively advocating for passage of levies and bonds to support our programs and services.
- We anticipate continued challenges in the process for getting housing developments approved that could address our affordable housing issues and the necessity of greater engagement between our school board and the Laurel City Counsel.
- We anticipate additional regulation that will impact our transportation program and our infrastructure.

Technology /Science

- With the change of pace in technology, we will need to be more strategic in our approach to replacing equipment and tools that support student learning.
- We understand the necessity of having reliable connectivity (infrastructure) for our school, our community, families and students.
- We need to ensure we have effectively integrated digital learning options in our curriculum and have provided the necessary professional development of staff that supports this strategy.

Politics and Social Values

- We anticipate that the political divide will continue to deepen and will likely impact our school district operations, programs and services.
- We anticipate the need for greater advocacy of our public schools at the state and federal level.
- We anticipate continued challenges in recruitment and retention due in large part to the diminished support and value of teachers and others that work in our public schools.

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:

TO BE FURTHER ARTICULATED BY THE BOARD!!

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?