



Woodland Community Consolidated
School District 50

Strategic Plan Progress Report Year 2

January 23, 2020

Executive Summary

Year two of the Strategic Plan is underway, and this report will provide an update on the progress toward the strategic plan goals. With the adoption of the Strategic Plan in 2018, the Board of Education created a roadmap for moving the district forward. Since that time, the entire school community has been working collaboratively to bring that plan to life. This report summarizes recent accomplishments from July - December of 2019 with contributions from school staff, school leaders, district department leaders, parents and community members. The information has been reformatted to present accomplishments in an easy to read narrative to help explain the work of the committees beyond what a bulleted list can do.

The report will be placed on the website for public viewing following the January 23 Board meeting.

Vision Statement

Together, inspiring tomorrow's creators, thinkers and leaders

Mission Statement

Woodland District 50 empowers our children to reach their potential by providing exceptional learning experiences that foster critical thinking in a nurturing learning community.

Goal 1 - Differentiate instruction with a focus on rigor and relevance to foster student growth

Goal 2 - Create enriched and meaningful student centered learning experiences

Goal 3 - Build positive, personal connections and relationships among staff and students

Goal 4 - Create learning opportunities for stakeholders addressing the physical, mental, emotional and social needs of the "Whole Child"

Goal 5 - Enhance the district's fiscal position and achieve annual state financial recognition

Goal 6 - Focus on sustainability as facilities are updated

Goal 7 – Build instructional capacity to meet student learning and well being goals by engaging staff in high quality, effective professional development.

Goal 8 – Recruit highly qualified staff that are innovative and mirror the student population.

Goal 9 – Promote the Woodland District 50 brand and infuse this initiative into opportunities to connect and give back to the community.

Student Learning

1A: Intensify opportunities to consistently deliver instruction that is differentiated to meet all students' needs.

Summary of major milestones:

The Student Learning Committee was formed in 2018 to focus on instructional practices. Through research and staff feedback, the committee worked on developing a definition for differentiation for Woodland District 50. They also conducted a needs assessment survey of staff in collaboration with the Teaching and Learning Department.

Recent Accomplishments July - Dec 2019:

- **Differentiation:** A survey was sent to all certified staff members asking for input on what differentiation looks like in the classroom. Using the survey results, the district's definition of differentiation is *"Educators using student data to inform and plan flexible, targeted instruction aligned to the standards in order to engage students in learning outcomes."* Lessons taught to all Woodland students should include assessment results and activities which include student voice and choice.
- **Goals for Year Two:** The committee then set two goals for continued work during the second year of the plan.
 1. Develop a student learning survey for Woodland staff to use to provide various instructional strategies tailored to student needs based on student choice and interest.
 2. Focus on using ongoing assessments before, during, and after instruction to align with the district definition of differentiation.
- **FRAMECAB Principles:** To support the implementation of differentiated instruction (Goal 1A), this research-based model will be the center of future professional development training for all certified staff beginning with an overview of the framework and training in formative assessment. For reference, the framework represents the eight guiding principles of Flexibility, Respectful Work, Attention to Student Differences, Modifications in Content, Process and Products of Instruction, Essential Concepts as the Core of Differentiation, Collaboration Between Teacher and Students, Assessment and Instruction Interconnectedness, Belonging.
- **Continued Research:** The committee is further researching assessment and instruction interconnectedness through a variety of assessment models. This research supports the strategic plan goal to establish an improved system for measuring and reporting individual student learning. Using common formative assessments (data that supports common learning) all staff at Woodland will utilize data to align their teaching practices with the common definition of differentiation that was developed by the committee.

Looking ahead:

Now that a definition of differentiation has been developed and training is being designed, staff will begin to implement the instructional practice expectations. The committee will also offer Professional Development opportunities to implement the FRAMECAB principles and focus on selecting assessments based on student feedback.

Student Well-Being:

3A: Provide professional development for staff that encompasses who our students are and enhance our ability to create classroom connections.

4A: Identify current practices in District 50 that address the “whole child” and research new educational trends to aid in the advancement of these programs including school start times and the Dual Language program.

Summary of major milestones:

Equity - The Equity and Inclusivity Committee was developed in 2018 to guide the development of equitable and inclusive beliefs and actions for our school community. This led to training opportunities for staff on the History and Impact of Implicit Bias and changes in policies under students' rights and responsibilities.

Start Times - Another major initiative under this category was researching the impact of school start times on the well-being of adolescents. The Board of Education directed district administration to develop and implement a new school start times schedule for the 2019-2020 school year. An extensive public information campaign was conducted and a transportation routing plan was developed to support the change.

Recent Accomplishments July - Dec 2019:

Equity

- **Midwest and Plains Equity Assistance Center:** Woodland signed a Memo of Understanding and entered into a partnership with the Midwest and Plains Equity Assistance Center (Center). The Center staff identified two specific objectives for Woodland this year. The first objective was to train two administrators through a Leadership Equity Focused Initiatives training. Dr. Thomas, Assistant Superintendent of Teaching and Learning and Mrs. Sanchez Szepesi, Assistant Director of Language Acquisition have attended two of the four days of training clarifying how best to support the district in complex and difficult equity conversations, decisions and leadership. The second objective is to have the district participate in an Equity Context Analysis Process (ECAP). This is a needs assessment that will begin in January and end in May 2020. A video describing the Center can be found at this link: <https://youtu.be/GaRIQ-2YHC8>
- **Equity Oriented Strategic Planning (SEPA):** The Center has also provided Equity Oriented Strategic Planning (SEPA) training for Dr. Casey, Mrs. Drake, Ms. Guterrez, Dr. Thomas and Dr. VandenBroek. This training brought out three areas the district will pursue to build greater equity within our system.
 - Establish an enrichment support system for higher performing 1st and 2nd grade students who are Black or Latinx to increase the percentage of students qualifying for advanced and challenge services.
 - Woodland will retain 90% of new staff of color.
 - Reduce the number of initial eligibility of students who are Latinx for Specific Learning Disabilities and students who are Black for Emotional Disabilities.
- **Diversification of Resources:** Woodland has begun to implement a diverse English Language Arts series for kindergarten through fifth grade students. As presented to the Board in May and June 2019, Pearson's myView/miVision resource is very diverse and better representative of our community. The stories, authors, themes and characters all reflect the demographic composition

of Woodland students. Observations of the curriculum materials in the classroom show that students are very engaged with the text. Woodland Middle School has also had teams review novels and print resources in its library to help teachers diversify the books and perspectives our students experience in the middle school. The librarians at all schools have been reviewing books recommended by the Center. This includes books on family diversity, gender expression/identity and immigrant families.

Student Well Being

- **School Start Times:** The new start times schedule was implemented in August at the beginning of the 2019-2020 school year.
- **Continued Outreach:** Information and reminders about the new bell schedule were shared with Woodland families throughout the registration and proof of residency process. Additionally, a story about school start times was included in the Village of Gurnee's "Keeping Posted" newsletter that went to all households in Gurnee in August 2019.
- **Versatrans My Stop:** The Versatrans My Stop App was provided for parents to help with the implementation of the new start times schedule. The app allows users to track their bus to more accurately plan for arrival at the bus stop.

Looking ahead:

Equity - Woodland is awaiting the Midwest and Plains Equity Assistance Center staff review of the Equity Action Plans developed in May 2019. Using the feedback from this review, the committee will finalize a multi-year action plan for all three areas of focus: students, staff and community. There will also be a continued effort for the Center to train Woodland administrative staff on how to lead equity work. Finally, Woodland will be conducting the ECAP needs assessment through May 2020.

Start Times - Over the next few years, the district will use metrics to measure the outcomes of start times changes such as monitoring attendance rates, academic grades, and health office visits at the middle school as well as gain feedback from staff, parents and middle school students.

Finance and Facilities

5A: Establish a legislative action committee to advocate for school funding and reduce unfunded mandates

6A: Establish and implement a capital improvement spending plan that prioritizes expenditures for health, life safety, technology and maintenance projects to minimize the cost and maximize sustainability.

Summary of major milestones:

Under the Finance and Facilities Strategic Goals, two committees were formed. The Finance Committee has focused their efforts on legislation, advocating for school funding, and reducing unfunded mandates. The other major focus area was the development of a capital improvement spending plan that prioritizes expenditures for health, life safety, technology and maintenance projects to minimize the cost and maximize sustainability.

Recent Accomplishments July - Dec 2019:

Finance

- **Legislation:** Senate Bill - 1226 was signed by Governor Pritzker in August 2019. Woodland advocated for this bill which dismantles the Charter Commission and moves the responsibility of hearing appeals on school openings, closings and renewals to the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE).
- **Prairie Crossing Charter School (PCCS):** Woodland is currently involved in litigation against the Charter Commission regarding the renewal of Prairie Crossing Charter School (PCCS). The State Superintendent tasked PCCS with clarifying/defending their almost non-existent transportation plan as well as their lottery system by Oct. 30, 2019. ISBE awarded the 5-year renewal of Prairie Crossing's Charter and Woodland Administration is in the process of fact finding to learn more information from ISBE as to their renewal determination.
- **Illinois Association of School Board (IASB):** Woodland introduced three new resolutions to IASB seeking charter school legislative change, all of which gained support and approval from IASBO at the Joint Annual Conference in November. IASBO will introduce and support the resolutions during legislative session with the goal of passing all three.
 - Legislation creating a new funding methodology in line with Evidence Based Funding for State Authorized Charter Schools
 - Legislation that allows host districts to participate in the renewal process
 - Legislation that defines the expectation of charter schools to educate at risk students

Facilities

- **Building Improvements:** The HVAC work at various buildings, and the air conditioning project at Primary was completed during summer 2019.
- **Transportation Office:** In Sept. 2019, the Board of Education approved a partnership with Wold Architecture and Engineering to develop plans for a new Transportation Office. The Transportation Department has been housed in a temporary mobile unit since 1996. Due to the facility's state of disrepair, a permanent solution is needed.

- **Energy Efficiency:** The Sustainability Committee conducted an electric device audit at all buildings in Dec. 2019 to identify areas where the District could become more energy efficient. The committee will evaluate the data in Jan. 2020.

Looking ahead:

Finance - With the renewal of PCCS, Woodland will focus on a legislative solution regarding funding. A meeting with the Illinois Network of Charter Schools (INCS) is scheduled for Jan. 16 where Woodland wants to discuss the possibility of a joint legislative solution. If Woodland and INCS can find common ground, Woodland will use the spring sessions as a starting point for potential change.

Facilities - The solar project will advance in 2020 with solar panel installation to begin in June. The new transportation office will also be constructed in the summer of 2020.

Staff Recruitment and Development

7A: Research methods to add professional development time to support student achievement within the annual calendar.

8A: Develop a recruitment and selection plan that aligns to the district's mission and vision with a focus on increasing the diversity of our staff.

Summary of major milestones:

Professional Development - The Professional Development committee was formed to research effective professional development standards and seek input about how to incorporate more professional development time in the annual school calendar. The committee researched best practices in other school districts and surveyed Woodland staff for feedback about professional development needs in our organization.

Recruitment - The Staff Recruitment Committee was formed to look at current recruitment efforts and partnerships, as well as the hiring process. The committee looked for consistency across the district and identified areas for improvement. Efforts to standardize the application process and redesign district job postings were initiated to aid in attracting and selecting highly qualified, diverse candidates for Woodland.

Recent Accomplishments July - Dec 2019:

Professional Development

- **Stakeholder Feedback:** Feedback from staff was gathered using focus groups at all the schools, as well as a focus group with Principals. The major takeaway from this feedback is that staff feels additional time is needed for reflection, planning with teams, collaboration/articulation and follow up on previous professional development sessions. Teachers want meaningful professional development and more dual language specific sessions. Slightly more than half of Woodland staff favor keeping SIP Days to a Friday citing limiting instructional disruptions and issues related to child care. Most staff prefer Early Release over Late Start citing more time is available for early release compared to Late Start; issues with child care and less student impact.
- **Committee Recommendations:** The goal is to add sufficient quality professional development time to our district calendar to make a difference in the classroom to improve learning for students. Referring to feedback from surveys, focus groups and the Strategic Plan Professional Development Committee, the following is being recommended:
 - Keep the Early Release model on SIP Days.
 - Keep SIP Days on Fridays minimizing less disruption to parents, staff and students.
 - For the FY21 calendar, add four (4) SIP days above what we currently have on our FY20 calendar for a total of 10 SIP Days.
- **Board of Education Presentation:** Dr. Victoria Kieffer, and other members of the committee provided an overview of the findings and recommendations to the Board of Education at the December 2019 meeting. The committee is recommending for the FY21 school year 10 School Improvement Days using the Early Release model as we currently have in place. With this additional time, staff will be able to engage in collaborative curriculum and instructional planning to meet the needs of our diverse student population. Staff will also have a chance to engage in professional learning communities (PLCs) and have a deeper understanding of curricular outcomes.

- **Research:** The committee gained a deeper understanding of professional learning standards from Learning Forward, a national professional learning organization, and analyzed research studies on professional development. The Standards for Professional Learning outlines the characteristics of professional learning that leads to effective teaching and student results. Researchers are not able to link a specific amount of time to increased staff or student learning. However, the research points to making sure professional development time is (1) well organized (2) carefully structured and (3) purposely directed.

Recruitment

- **Website:** The Staff Recruitment Committee worked to make sure that job opportunities were easy to find on the district website. They researched how visible employment opportunities were on other school district websites and worked with the Technology Department to add a “Careers” tab to the main menu structure of the homepage. This change is supported by feedback from applicants and district staff that receive phone calls about how to find information about open positions.

Looking ahead:

Professional Development - The Professional Development Committee is recommending the addition of SIP Days as outlined in the recommendation above, but that is only step one. Based on staff feedback, the committee understands that teachers wish to have relevant and meaningful professional development opportunities. The next step of the committee’s work will be to develop a multi-year professional development plan for certified and non-certified staff under goal 7B.

Staff Recruitment - The Staff Recruitment Committee will conduct a review of the pre-screeners as part of the hiring process. A pre-screener is another source for screening candidates that will identify indicators that will support a new hires success. They will also work with the Communications Manager to look for new ways to promote career opportunities in other outlets such as social media and community organizations.

Community Relations and District Pride

9A: Develop and communicate the brand that showcases the positive attributes of Woodland District 50, unites us and represents our pride.

Summary of major milestones:

The Community Relations and District Pride Committee was formed in 2018 to research and develop a brand that reflects our core values and district pride. The committee then created a timeline for implementation and an identity guide to support brand consistency.

Recent Accomplishments July - Dec 2019:

- **Brand Launch - #LifeintheW is born:** The Community Relations and District Pride committee launched the new district brand in a variety of ways in August, 2019. Information was shared with parents at our Proof of Residency event with a flyer introducing our new casual logo and hashtag. Each school received a flag with our new logo on it to display. Our new brand and district pride in Woodland was on full display at the Gurnee Days' parade. #LifeintheW bracelets were passed out to students and families as the float passed by.
- **Staff Welcome Back Event:** The launch of the brand continued with our staff at the back to school Institute Day. There was a huge kickoff and a variety of stations that staff could visit. There was a special #LifeintheW media backdrop and employees were encouraged to take photos and selfies with friends and start using the new hashtag. All tweets with the #LifeintheW hashtag were displayed on a large screen for all staff to see as they scrolled live on Twitter. Staff were encouraged to spin the #LifeintheW wheel to win a branding product such as fanny packs, magnets, computer stickers and buttons. Additionally, all staff received a #LifeintheW t-shirt at the event and our administrative team welcomed back staff with a flash mob and a #LifeintheW movie. It was a great event and full of school spirit and pride!
- **Incorporating Student Voice:** This fall the committee has continued to meet to implement the brand into our students' daily lives. At each of the schools it is being done differently to match the age of our students and their knowledge of what a brand is and how we use it. Examples would be small items being sold in the ROAR store at the higher grade levels and class books being made at the younger grade levels. #LifeintheW is said daily during announcements and staff are using the hashtag when tweeting and highlighting positive events in their classroom.
- **Community Awareness:** The Winter 2019 edition of The Woodland Insider featured a story of the new brand and invited the community to follow #LifeintheW to stay informed about all the important events and achievements of Woodland students and staff. This was mailed to nearly 25,000 households in the Woodland District 50 boundaries in December 2019.
- **Challenges:** The implementation of the new brand has presented some challenges as this is a new concept and it's hard to achieve consistency across five schools. Using the brand consistently and staying true to the new design has been a challenge for staff because in the past, t-shirts and merchandise was created in different colors and themes and not consistent. Based on the research done on branding during the first year of the strategic plan, we learned that consistency is key. The committee created a #LifeintheW style guide to inform staff on how the brand can be used, what color options are available and do's and don'ts to guide their use of the new logo.

Looking ahead:

The Community Relations District Pride Committee will continue to work with staff on ways to implement the brand consistently, as well as find new and creative ways to showcase the brand to Woodland students, families and the community. The committee will launch a “reboot” of the brand in January/February with our staff and students, and look for additional ways to incorporate the student voice into the brand. The committee will also continue their outreach to the community to establish the brand as a solid image of our district that people recognize.