

STRATEGIC PLANNING OUTLINE

This document reflects the work of the Strategic Planning
Committee established by Westlake City Schools in 2015-2016
and facilitated by Burges & Burges Strategists

February 2016

Process and Methods

A cross representational group of over 50 residents including business, nonprofit, civic, mental health, higher education, clergy, parent and neighborhood leaders have met six times over the course of three months to create an outline for Westlake City Schools' Strategic Plan. Over 200 people were invited to participate in the process and 58 people regularly attended the meetings while nearly 70 attended at least one meeting.

The Strategic Planning Committee meetings included in-depth presentations about the current state of academics, technology, finances, facilities and the results of staff focus groups, parent listening sessions and a community-wide online survey. There were also a series of input exercises. For these exercises, attendees worked in small groups to identify growing community and global trends, skills gaps, and resource needs. Their final task involved creating goals and accompanying initiatives for Westlake City Schools to position itself to best prepare students for their lives beyond graduation.

This outline will be expanded by school district administrators and staff to complete the Strategic Plan.

Global Trends and Community Changes

Participants noted large economic changes and population shifts that have recently changed the demographics of the community. This highlighted the need to focus on global and community awareness and sensitivity, learning multiple languages, and service to the community to remain competitive.

Additionally, the committee noted the quickening of the pace of science and industry innovations not only in business, but in educational delivery methods. They linked these trends and changes to a need to implement digital learning at all levels, along with early access to internships, job shadowing or mentorships to expose students to real-world work experiences.

In a culture of 24/7 access, the group members mentioned the need to train and teach children to adapt by protecting their digital footprint, personal "brand" and safety standards. As communication speed and connectivity increases, it becomes even more critical to ensure that all students understand the long-term implications of their actions because so much can be recorded and made available online. Because there are so many competing communication vehicles and our ability to "switch screens" instantaneously, delivering pertinent, time sensitive messages becomes more difficult and material retention may suffer.

Skills Gaps

The committee discussed the skills necessary to succeed in the future and noted there were some gaps with interpersonal or soft skills, career-readiness, critical thinking, character and integrated technology.

Through an open group dialogue with the full committee, participants noted that items like adaptability, social skills, negotiation, self-motivation, collaboration and complex problem solving skills seem to be lacking or not as strongly emphasized as necessary and will be more important moving forward. Because the pace of change accelerates, those skills will ensure that our learners can keep up with and lead in their fields.

As we become an increasingly global society due to connectivity, the need to integrate everyday coursework or work with technology also increases. It is not enough to know how to use modern

technology, but also understanding how it applies to core subject areas and business and industry. On the same token, cultural awareness and sensitivity becomes more important because your clients, peers or employers could be from anywhere around the world and communicating with, leading or serving them requires understanding them thoroughly.

Conversely, participants also noted a need for more skilled laborers. Innovations will always need to be implemented and our high-tech manufacturing fields are growing, while employers struggle to fill those jobs.

Regardless of their chosen career path, our students must be able to provide positive impressions to employers, colleagues and consumers and that requires solid presentation skills, follow-through, empathy, judgment, leadership, along with job knowledge. In a more practical approach, graduates must know how to write a resume, interview well and how to dress properly for work or an interview.

Resource Needs

Our schools must be equipped to provide the education necessary to keep up with global and community changes and provide students with the skills they need to thrive. Members of the Strategic Planning Committee identified the following resource needs or goals - separated by category.

Finance - Proper funding for the school district was the first resource need noted by the committee. Recognizing that financial support must come from the community, the committee also stated they must be educated on the state's funding formula and the district's financial state to do so. The participants called for continued financial transparency from the treasurer's office.

While the need for funds was universally accepted, there was considerable discussion about what was the most urgent need: permanent improvement, bond/facility, or operating.

Curriculum and Technology - The committee wanted to stress the need for solid, basic traditional educational elements like math, science, language, history and AP courses; while providing access to character-strengthening extracurricular programs, clubs and sports. To ensure students can maximize those opportunities, participants noted the need for adequate academic resources to support learning including library, media and access to tutoring and academic coaching.

As it relates to human resources, it is critical that Westlake City Schools retain high-quality teachers and administrative leadership with a passion for their jobs. It is also important to have the adequate number of teachers and staff to meet student needs, from media specialists and aides to counselors. Additionally, time must be allocated for professional development and teacher and staff collaboration to share and implement best practices.

Participants also noted the need to integrate exercise, adequate nutrition and healthy lifestyle lessons into the curriculum. Also, students need the ability to create and form their own groups with faculty assistance.

The majority of the Strategic Planning Committee members strongly support the International Baccalaureate program and urge the district to continue the program and expand its implementation. While the International Baccalaureate program had both critics and supporters present during the sessions, it is clear that more education to community and staff about the merits and purpose of the program is necessary.

Facilities – There is a need for larger, improved, modern facilities at the elementary level. The committee expressed that students learn better in an environment that enables learning - not hinders it and that have natural light and good air quality. Westlake needs safe and secure schools with flexible work spaces that accommodate the latest educational technology and supports collaborative inquiry.

Community Partnerships & Communications – Credible and timely communications are extremely important, especially right now. The committee wants to see the use of varied avenues/methods of communication to ensure the full community receives the same messages at the same time. Parents, the greater community, city government and faculty and staff should be the main target for communication. All parties must understand the school district’s goals, priorities, achievements and **needs** so they can effectively partner with the schools to meet those needs. Additionally, this committee requests monthly emails and twice annual meetings to reconnect with the district and review progress on strategic plan initiatives.

The committee strongly encouraged leveraging community and business resources to assist the schools in preparing students for their futures and in elevating the district’s community standing. Westlake City Schools must create partnerships with community organizations to provide work and service experience, with colleges and universities to increase access to higher education experiences, and with businesses to provide job skills and mentoring.

Culture & Environment - The committee called for stable, visionary management to work toward creating collaborative and productive relationships among parents, teachers and the administration. With a building staff that is sensitive to the social, physical and emotional needs of students, Westlake City Schools can improve meeting individual student needs - academically, culturally and emotionally. It is also important for teachers to feel supported by the district and for parents to feel welcomed and engaged in the schools so they can best support student learning.

To best serve students, we must understand what drives their individual performance, and provide them with the enrichment they need - which also includes appropriate downtime for lunch and recess. Students need an inclusive community environment that embraces all types of diversity, from ethnicity, income, family makeup, and learning style.

Following are the goals and initiatives identified by the Strategic Planning Committee.

Finance

Goal: Maintain a constant and appropriate long-term funding stream to achieve the educational mission of the Westlake City Schools.

Initiatives:

1. Inform the community about finances with a strategic, professional-level plan targeted to community groups.
2. Address the needs and concerns of the community head-on.
3. Ensure a dedicated local revenue stream for building, maintaining, and upgrading facilities and operating the district.
4. Identify non levy sources of financial support (business partnerships and grants).

Curriculum & Technology

Goal: Create a systematic framework to develop an all-inclusive learning environment aimed at educating the whole child which empowers every Westlake student to positively and purposefully contribute to society and to strive for excellence.

Initiatives:

1. Ensure implementation of effective core instruction with evidence-based practices that appropriately integrates technology to enhance instruction across the curricula.
2. Implement a PK-12 curriculum model that works within the global community and incorporates developing career-readiness, critical thinking, and cognitive, character, and interpersonal skills.
3. Increase access to college courses for students on our high school campus.
4. Continue to evaluate the effectiveness of the International Baccalaureate program and other curriculum models and communicate results to the greater community.
5. Provide experiential learning environments to our students to be engaged in a variety of extracurricular programs, clubs, sports and visual and performing arts.
6. Recruit and retain high-quality educators that can reach all students and provide ongoing professional development to keep their skills up-to-date.

Facilities

Goal: Have a 21st century learning environment where form follows flexible function and accommodates safety, curriculum and technology.

Initiatives:

1. Ensure a dedicated revenue stream to pursue and implement relevant current instructional and operational technology and the infrastructure to support it.
2. Implement relevant and appropriate technology to ensure the safety/security for all while on campus.
3. Ensure that campuses (building and grounds) create positive, healthy, learning environments that maintain their quality over time.
4. Guarantee equitable facilities that maximize the ability to make data-driven decisions that enhance, support and ensure student needs are met (educationally, safety).
5. Provide the infrastructure necessary to support technology and other electrical needs.

Communication & Community Partnerships

Goal: Build a sense of pride, confidence and trust through communication and partnerships.

Initiatives:

1. Engage residents, local businesses, civic and community organizations through a grassroots approach.
2. Develop a steering committee made up of community members and staff members by June 1 to promote awareness about Westlake City Schools in the community.
3. Recognize the importance and value of communications and marketing by expanding resources dedicated to it.
4. Create a kick-off event with the community to start the new school year, engage seniors and students.
5. Continue existing partnerships and expand opportunities to include business, higher education, other K-12 institutions, City of Westlake, nonprofits, foundations and healthcare entities.

Culture & Environment

Goal: Build a culture of inclusion, collaboration, open-mindedness, respect and inspiration, so every student, faculty and community member feels welcomed and inspired to do their very best.

Initiatives:

1. Launch an internal communications campaign announcing our intent and expectations around culture. Provide details with what it means to be inclusive, collaborative, open-minded and inspirational.
2. Leverage nationally recognized programs and surveys to gain an understanding of the current state of the culture and climate within the Westlake City Schools (parents, teachers/staff, and students) and regularly measure progress.
3. Create internal and external communications sharing findings from culture surveys, plans for addressing gaps, and progress on initiatives.
4. Engage students to help identify best practices for learning and achieving their best; develop as an essential agreements-type initiative.
5. Leverage the International Baccalaureate program as a people and change initiative to help ensure we are working to develop the “intellectual, personal, emotional and social skills needed to live, learn, and work in a rapidly globalizing world.”

These five goals will provide an outline for administrators and staff at Westlake City Schools as they create a 3-5 year strategic plan.

Strategic Planning Committee Members

Dina Abugroon	Parent, PTA Westlake High School
Dr. Mike Adornetto	Internal Medicine & Pediatrics Physician, Westshore Primary Care
Thikra Albaheli	Parent, PTA
Lynda Appel	Councilwoman, Westlake City Council
Harry Applegate	Community member
Cathleen Augustine	Parent & RN, MetroHealth Medical Center
Tim Barrett	Principal, Dover Elementary, Westlake City Schools
Ann Beyer	Programming Chair, Westlake Council of PTAs
Robb Blatchford	President, Lesko Architecture
Kathy D'Ettorre	Teacher, Dover Elementary School
Jacqueline Forestall	President, Alego Health
Lydia Gadd	Director of Community Services, City of Westlake
John Gast	Teacher, Dover Intermediate School
Ellen Goggin	Community member, Substitute Teacher
Amy Havelka	President, Westlake Council of PTAs
Dameon Headings	IB Coordinator, Dover and Holly Lane Elementary Schools
Tim Heiman	Head Custodian, Dover Elementary School
Matt Hlavin	CEO, Jalex Medical / Thogus Products
Dana Hoffman	Secretary, Bassett Elementary School
Tom Horwitz	President, Citizens Advisory Committee
Virnette House-Browning	Parent, Senior Associate Athletic Director, Cleveland State University
Hannah Jennings	Parent, PTA
Rachel Jewell	Parent, PTA
Diane Jordanger	Parent, PTA President, Bassett Elementary School
David Jordanger	Parent, Vice President of Sales, Dealer Tire, LLC
Yalcin Karagoz	Parent, Material Cost Analyst, Bendix Commercial Vehicle Systems, LLC
Cris Kennedy	President, Westlake High School PTA
Suzi Khawaja	President, Lee Burneson Middle School PTA
Dave Kocevar	Director of Business Affairs, Westlake City Schools
Doug Lancashire	Vice President, Osborn Engineering
Jenny Larcey	Teacher, Bassett Elementary School
Andrew Mangels	Library Director, Westlake Porter Public Library
Kathi Maxwell	Director of Academic Services, Westlake City Schools
Patty McHugh	Special Education Assistant, Dover Elementary School
Patrick McMorrow	President, Westlake Teacher Association
Stephanie Morgan	Director of Pupil Services, Westlake City Schools
Rich Nash	Scheduler, Westlake Soccer Association
Nick Nunnari	Councilman, Westlake City Council
Dottie Palazzo	VP of the Board, Clague Playhouse, Retired Cont. Legal Ed. Admin., Jones Day
Geoff Palmer	Interim Superintendent, Westlake City Schools
Jane Peer	Associate Director, Market Development, KPMG LLP

Ellie Peiffer	Welcoming and Small Group Ministry, Westlake United Methodist Church
Mark Pepera	CFO/Treasurer, Westlake City Schools
Liz Pirnat	Parent, PTA Board, Bassett Elementary School
Bob Plantz	Board member, Westlake Porter Public Library
Geoff Rapp	President, CauseMark LLC
Jennifer Riley	Teacher, Dover Elementary School
Sarah Rintamaki	Executive Director, Connecting for Kids
Paul Rogerson	Branch Director, West Shore YMCA
Mary Beth Schneider	Former Teacher, Westlake Alumni Association
Robert Searson	Dean of Academic Affairs, Cuyahoga Community College, Westshore Campus
Brady Sheets	Human Resources Director, Westlake City Schools
Laurie Skvarek	Special Education Assistant, Westlake City Schools
Gary Sole	CEO, Lakeshore Community Credit Union
Kristine Sole	Parent
Kim Tucker	Principal, Hilliard Elementary School
Mimi Verdone	Principal, Holly Lane Elementary
Deb Wadden	IB Coordinator, Bassett and Hilliard Elementary Schools
Brian Widowski	Vice President, Mechanical Engineering, Fredrick, Fredrick & Heller Engineers, Inc.
Greg Wiechert	COO and Director of Development, Lutheran Home at Concord Reserve
Jackie Wohleber	PTA Board, Dover Intermediate School
Pete Zagray	Director of Technology, Westlake City Schools

School Board representatives:

Joe Kraft	Board Member, Westlake City Schools
Carol Winter	Board President, Westlake City Schools

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