

SOCIAL JUSTICE



DIVERSITY LGBTQ

BLACK LIVES MATTER

# Strategic Direction

January 25, 2016

Support  
Learner  
Growth

Learner  
Centered  
Environment



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## Introduction

This document is the first component of the new Strategic Plan currently being developed by the South Orange Maplewood School District.

This work is being done in a context of thinking more broadly about the purpose and process of education, and by engaging the full community in a dialogue about the future of our schools. Rather than trying to adapt an old educational system designed for the needs of the industrial era to be more relevant to the needs of today, the goal of the Strategic Plan is to create a new system which prepares students for a future that we have yet to imagine. This process is a collaborative effort so that the plan ultimately represents the values of our community and the needs of our students.

The Strategic Planning process has multiple phases, with a wide variety of perspectives included in every step along the way. This began with the Superintendent's Listening Tour in which the Superintendent met with community groups and individuals; then continued on to the Education Summit, where the Superintendent invited the full community to share their ideas, recommendations, and concerns on the issues most important to them. The Summit conversations continued online through the month of December, and the community was invited to share input in other ways including the KIVA on Mathematics in December and the 24/7 communications tool *Let's Talk!*

The next phase of the process was the development of this Strategic Direction document. A committee of 27 people from across the community engaged in a 3-day facilitated process on January 11-13, 2016, to co-create this document, which sets the vision and direction for the district's new Strategic Plan. The committee used data from a wide variety of sources as the foundation of their work, including notes from the topic rooms at the Education Summit, notes from a CHS student forum, notes from the Math KIVA, the new Board policy on Access and Equity, the revised Board policy on Academic Placement, and national and state-based documents on transforming education.

Once adopted by the Board of Education, the Strategic Direction, all the group's notes, and the underlying data will be used by Action Planning teams to create the specific plans and related cost benefit analyses which will complete the Strategic Plan.

# Strategic Direction

## Strategic Direction Committee

Name	Affiliation
Elizabeth Aaron, MAT, M.Ed.	Principal, Columbia High School
Thomas Borello	Parent, Architect
Beth Daugherty	Board of Education Member, Systems Engineer
Walter L. Fields	Parent, Journalist, SoMa Black Parents Workshop
Yolande Fleming	Teacher, Clinton Elementary School
Maudjah Francis, LPC	Parent, Psychotherapist, Parenting Center Coordinator of Haitian Family Outreach
William Gaudelli, Ed. D.	Chair of Department of Arts and Humanities, Teachers College, Columbia University
David R. Giles	Parent, Special Education Attorney
Marc Gold	Assistant Principal, Maplewood Middle School
Susan Grierson	Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum & Instruction, SOMSD
Devyani Guha	Parent, Urban Planner, Collective for Community Culture and Environment
Nirlange Heriveaux	CHS Student, MAC Scholar
Karen Wisham Hudson	Parent, Business Consultant
Nina Kambili	CHS Student, Student Representative to the Board of Education
Annemarie Maini	Board of Education Member, Director of South Orange Country Day School
Lynn McGlotten	Teacher, South Orange Middle School
Charles Mitchel, Ed.D.	Associate Professor and Executive Director of The Academy for Urban School Transformation, Seton Hall University
Tyler Perry	CHS Student
John J. Ramos, Jr., Ed.D.	Superintendent of Schools
Audrey Rowe	Program Director, South Orange/Maplewood Community Coalition on Race
Mara Rubin	Supervisor of Fine and Performing Arts, SOMSD
Filip Saulean	CHS Student, Alternate Student Representative to the Board of Education
Peri Smilow, Ed.M.	Parent, Singer/Songwriter, Community Educator
Marisa Stoessel	Teacher, Jefferson Elementary School
Scott Stornetta, Ph.D.	Teacher, Columbia High School
Kevin Walston	Assistant Superintendent for Administration, SOMSD
TJ Whitaker	Teacher, Columbia High School

## Enduring Values

- We value equity and excellence.
- We value students as our primary stakeholders and at the heart of every decision.
- We value the intrinsic potential of every student for continual learning and growth.
- We value and honor our commonalities and our differences.
- We value respectful, transparent and consistent communication in a safe environment.
- We value, in every interaction, empathy, care and compassion.
- We value civic discourse.
- We value collaboration, shared responsibility and accountability for our learning community.
- We value transparency and collaboration in decision making.

*An enduring value statement describes how everyone throughout the district is expected to communicate with, relate to and treat one another. It applies to students, families, teachers, staff, administrators, board members and community partners.*

## **Mission**

The mission of the South Orange Maplewood School District is to empower and inspire each student to explore and imagine, to pursue personal passions, and to collectively create a better future by creating a learner-centered environment through multiple pathways; reimagined structures, systems and supports; innovative teaching; partnering with families; and maximizing community expertise and resources.

*A Mission Statement is a concise statement that captures the strategic direction of the district. It states the district's purpose, identifies its clients, and explains broadly how the district will accomplish its purpose.*

## **Strategic Boundaries**

### **We will always:**

- Ask what is best for the student, as the main driver in our decision making.
- Equip our teachers with relevant tools and resources to create a learner-centered environment.
- Make decisions based on improving learning outcomes for students.
- Encourage students to take an active role in their learning.
- Act honorably and treat each student with respect in upholding our enduring values.

### **We will never:**

- Give up on any student.
- Stop cultivating rapport with families.
- Allow identity to define potential or determine educational opportunity.
- Compromise our enduring values.

*A strategic boundary is a self-imposed limit that states what the district will always do or never do. It guides the district to make substantive decisions consistent with its enduring values. Equally important is a strategic boundary further defines the mission. Strategic boundaries must be enforceable.*

## **Student Performance Statement**

All students in South Orange Maplewood School District will have access to relevant curriculum that is not bound by seat-time but guided by teachers through demonstrated student mastery of competence in subject areas. Courses will leverage the rich and growing network of learning resources (e.g., online resources, collaborative partnerships, collective projects, field experiences, mentoring opportunities, and service learning) to meaningfully support the individual growth of students in these competencies, as measured by rubrics and student portfolios.

*A student performance statement describes a high expectation for student achievement and/or performance and the way in which it will be observed, demonstrated and/or measured. Student Performance Statements are driven by the Enduring Value Statements, Mission, and Strategic Boundaries.*

## Strategies

We will redesign curriculum, instruction and assessment to support learner-centered environments (e.g. reimagining seat-time, multiple pathways, competency standards).

We will develop multiple supports for students to thrive in a learner-centered environment (e.g. mentoring program, peer leadership, individualized academic/emotional support, transitional services, restorative practices and guidance in pursuit of their passions).

We will work with students to redefine their role as active and engaged contributors to the learning experience of their schools and community.

We will provide ongoing, differentiated and relevant professional development to grow teachers and administrators to theorize, critique, examine, and explore in order to engage every student in a learner-centered environment.

We will infuse cultural competency in every aspect of our learning community.

We will partner with families in support of student growth.

We will reimagine and redesign all aspects of student scheduling, use of facilities and administrative structures to guarantee alignment with mission.

We will maximize community expertise and external resources to provide multiple pathways for student and professional growth and learning.

We will engage in robust, open, ongoing and transparent communications with all students, families, staff and community members to generate understanding, excitement, trust and support of our school community and its transformation.

*A strategy is a broad statement consistent with district's values and strategic boundaries. It describes how resources will be used to achieve the mission and student performance statements. A strategy represents an idea in which the district is willing to invest energy, expertise, time and resources. Strategies are broad enough to yield a variety of programs, services or approaches. Each strategy will generate about five or six action plans which will be written later during action planning.*

# Appendix

## Strategic Planning Timeline

Phase	Task	Timeframe
<b>Data Collection</b>	Collect feedback from the community about ideas, suggestions, hopes and concerns in a variety of ways including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community-wide Education Summit,</li> <li>• KIVA on Mathematics,</li> <li>• Town hall meetings with the Superintendent,</li> <li>• Student forum,</li> <li>• Individual dialogues using <i>Let's Talk!</i> and other communication tools.</li> </ul>	October 2015 – January 2016
<b>Data Synthesis</b>	Incorporate all feedback collected by January 4 <sup>th</sup> into synthesis of the data to serve as foundation for Strategic Plan.	December 2015 – January 2016
<b>Strategic Direction</b>	Committee of stakeholders develops a Strategic Direction document stating our mission for the next 3-5 years, the values which will guide our work, the objectives for students' performance, and the strategies that adults are committing to in order to support students in reaching these objectives. The final document will be submitted to the Board of Education for review and approval.	January 2016
<b>Action Planning</b>	Working committees create specific, concrete plans for each strategy, including who will be responsible for what, by when.	February – August 2016
<b>Implementation and Monitoring</b>	The Strategic Plan will serve as the blueprint to guide the District's work for the next 3-5 years. The Superintendent will update the Board and community monthly on progress in implementation.	August 2016 and beyond
<b>Formal Reassessment of Strategic Plan</b>	After 3 years of implementation and fine tuning, the entire plan will be reviewed and adjusted, if necessary, to account for progress made and any changed circumstances.	2019-2020 School Year



# Education Summit

## Data Synthesis

***Overarching Theme:* Paradigm shift from fitting students and families into currently established structures and systems to structuring programs, services, outreach and communications to meet the needs of students and families.**

Theme	Sampling of Concepts
<b>Mindset</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High expectations</li> <li>• Cultural competence</li> <li>• Eliminate profiling</li> <li>• Social emotional learning / Whole child / Restorative Practices</li> <li>• All kinds of learner / Multiple intelligences / Multiple paths</li> </ul>
<b>Reimagining the Structure - Time, Space and Organization of Learners</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Flexible schedules / Schedules tied to awareness of developmental needs</li> <li>• Flexible school spaces / using spaces throughout our community</li> <li>• Maker spaces</li> <li>• Multiple paths to mastery</li> <li>• Rethinking levels</li> <li>• Rethinking organization of learners</li> <li>• Capturing additional time – extended day, extracurricular, sports &amp; summer programming</li> </ul>
<b>Updating Curriculum &amp; Instruction to be Relevant, Contextualized and Engaging</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student-led learning</li> <li>• Integrated curriculum / Interdisciplinary curriculum</li> <li>• Globally / Culturally relevant and inclusive</li> <li>• Articulation (clear connection)- vertically (between grade levels) and horizontally (between content areas at each grade level)</li> <li>• Innovative use of expanded off-campus opportunities Internships</li> <li>• All kinds of learners / Multiple paths to mastery</li> <li>• Metrics that use assessment as a tool</li> <li>• Project-based learning</li> <li>• Technology supporting the curriculum</li> <li>• Define meaning of Learning</li> <li>• Reimagining organization of learners</li> </ul>

<b>Increased Student Support</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus early and focus on transitions into elementary, middle and high school</li> <li>• Strong academic supports at every level</li> <li>• Mentoring</li> <li>• Inclusion</li> <li>• Focus on life skills</li> <li>• Social emotional learning/Whole child/Restorative Practices</li> </ul>
<b>Shared Decision Making with students, parents and staff</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduced gatekeeping</li> <li>• Decentralized decision making</li> <li>• Students as active co-creators of their learning</li> <li>• Student advisory boards for discipline, school climate, academics</li> </ul>
<b>Relationships/Community Building</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus on school climate</li> <li>• Focus on relationships / Sense of 'belongingness' for all students and families</li> <li>• Behavior/ Discipline /Restorative Practices</li> <li>• Meaning of learning</li> <li>• Demystifying the process for students and families</li> <li>• Understandable clear information</li> <li>• Outreach / Parents as partners</li> </ul>
<b>Creating and supporting an excellent staff</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Professional Development (including teacher-led)</li> <li>• Coaching</li> <li>• Joint planning time</li> <li>• Wider staff recruitment</li> </ul>
<b>Partnerships with External Organizations, Experts and Resources</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meaningful liaisonships and collaborations with universities, cultural institutions, businesses etc.</li> <li>• Create and use volunteer pools</li> <li>• Student Internships as intrinsic part of the curriculum</li> <li>• Finding new funding sources</li> </ul>
<b>Governance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consistency</li> <li>• Quality control</li> <li>• Accountability</li> <li>• Institutional memory – Learn from our failures</li> </ul>

## **Next Step: Action Planning**

- An action planning team will be formed for each of the 9 strategies.
  - Each team will have 2 co-chairs – one member of the Strategic Direction Committee and one with expertise in the area.
  - Each team will consist of 5-7 members.
- The Strategic Planning consultants will conduct a 2-day training for all co-chairs and any other available action planning team members.
- Action planning teams will receive all of the notes from the Education Summit and ensuing dialogues, and from the small working groups in the Strategic Direction Committee, to serve as the foundation for their work.
- Action planning teams will meet regularly for several months to create specific, concrete plans for each strategy, including who will be responsible for what, by when.
- The action plans will then be submitted to the Strategic Direction Committee to ensure they align to the original intent, and to the Board of Education for approval.
- Membership on the action planning teams will once again include diverse viewpoints and expertise.
- Information on how to express interest in joining one of the teams will be available shortly.