

Community High School District 99 Downers Grove North and South Strategic Planning Process 2010-2011

Summary Report and Executive Summary

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Contents

Executive Summary	3
Summary Report	15
Phase I- Stakeholder Input.....	16
Phase II– Strategic Planning Retreat	17
Phase I. Focus Group Input	18
Phase II. Leadership Workshop and Retreat.....	26
Consensus Strategic Action and Goal Themes	34
Strategic Planning Process	35
Short-term Goals.....	36
Long-term Goals.....	39
Appendix A: Strategic Planning Model	42
Appendix B: List of Focus Groups.....	43
Appendix C: Focus Group Questions.....	44
Appendix D: Focus Group Environmental Scanning Summary	45
Appendix E: Summary of Focus Group Data	59
Appendix F: Leadership Retreat - Ice Breaker Exercise Ideas and Notes.....	61
Appendix G: Strategic Planning Workshop - Preparation Guide	62
Appendix H: Focus Group Scanning	67
Appendix I: Policy & Program Strategic Action Sheet.....	92



COMMUNITY HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT 99 DOWNERS GROVE NORTH AND SOUTH

Board/Staff Leadership Retreat January 21-22, 2011

Executive Summary of Leadership Workshop Results

OPENING REMARKS BY THE FACILITATORS

We'd like to begin this Executive Summary by congratulating the Dist. 99 Board and staff for the time and effort that was invested at the recent retreat, and, during the entire strategic planning, scanning and listening process. The discussions during the retreat/workshop allowed for a great deal of information and important ideas to be exchanged in a relatively short period of time. Group members demonstrated a high degree of reflection on the critical roles Dist. 99 plays in the quality of life and core educational mission that is so important to the youth and communities it serves.

Board discussions during the retreat/workshop allowed for a great deal of information and important ideas to be exchanged in a relatively short period of time. Board members and staff demonstrated a high degree of reflection on the critical role the District plays in the quality of life in the Downers Grove community. Throughout this process, the District also demonstrated their commitment to their core mission: providing high quality educational opportunities for all students in a caring, "student centered" environment.

A leadership workshop/retreat was the culmination of the planning process. At the Leadership retreat held in the District's offices, Dist. 99 Board members and leadership team members were engaged and provided their input in an open and supportive manner. Participants came prepared with the input gathered from stakeholders and the community. Retreat attendees expressed their long-term views of the future, exchanged ideas, and shared perspectives with a common sense of purpose. This report captures the key elements and outcomes of both the stakeholder input sessions, and, the Board/leadership team workshops.

The complete Project Report that accompanies this summary is divided into two sections: Section I- Project Outline and Methodology; and Section II- Summary Results of the Strategic Planning Process and Leadership Retreat. Various appendices and progress reports that were part of the process are also included with this report to document the hundreds of hours devoted to the broad conversation the District engaged in to set the path for the future.

PROCESS OBSERVATIONS

Group members and staff seem to have a good handle on the need to look to the future. There seems little doubt or disagreement on the part of those at the session that the future will be filled with challenges, but that the Dist. Remains committed to its core values of providing high quality education opportunities in a caring, student-centered environment. After considering the totality of the stakeholder input process, the workshop exercises and goals expressed during the leadership retreat, the following strategic issue areas and themes emerged from the collective voices of participants:

2011 DIST. 99 STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

CONSENSUS STRATEGIC ACTION and GOAL THEMES

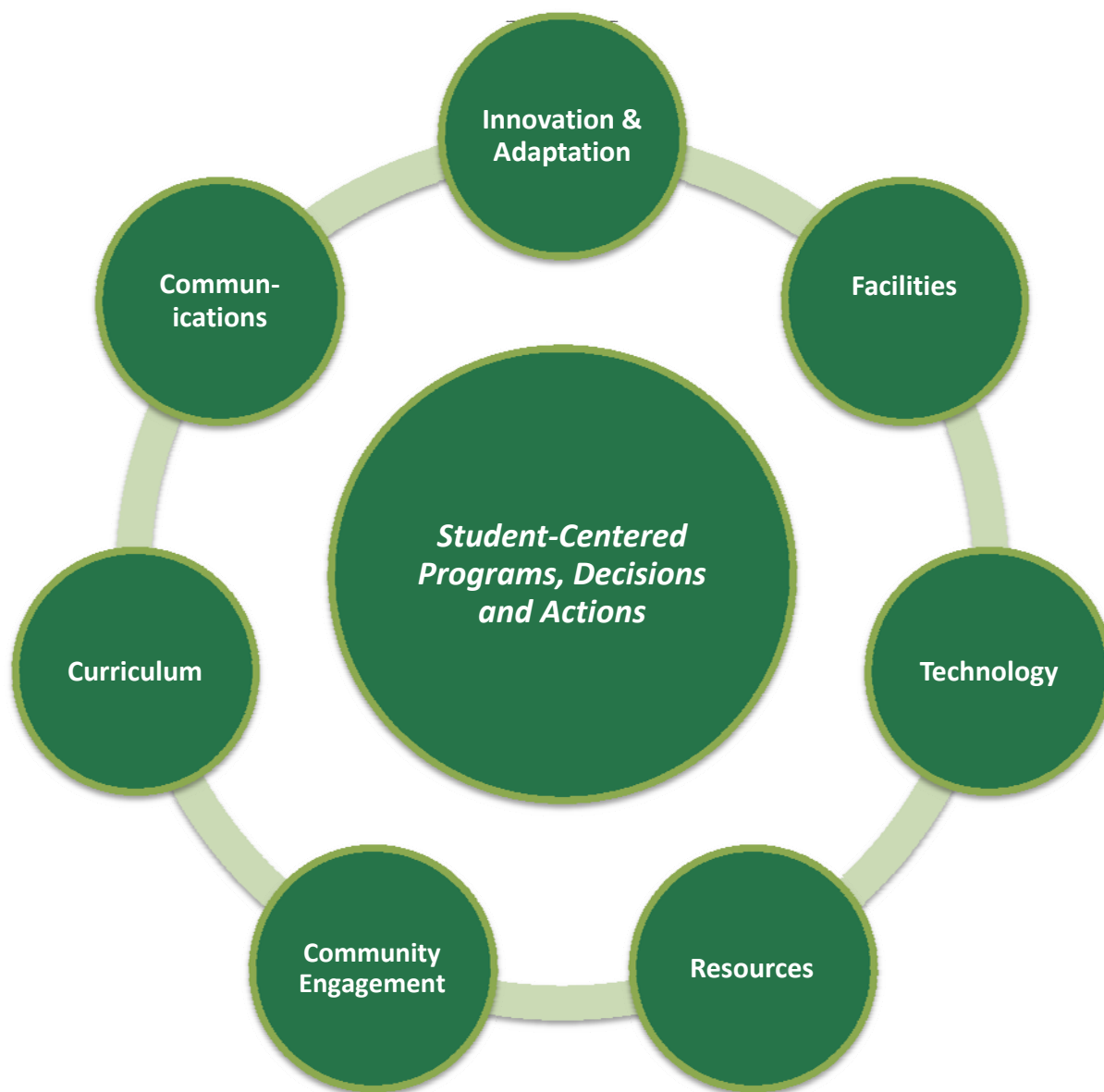
Guiding Policy & Organizational Value...

Student-centered programs, decisions and actions are essential to our mission

1. Facilities
2. Technology
3. Communications
4. Resources/Finance/Personnel/Staff Development
5. Community Engagement
6. Curriculum/Curriculum Development
7. Innovation/Adaptation

These seven themes represent core issue areas that are, and will be, fundamental to the District's success in not only meeting the short- and long-term future, but also meeting its mission as a student-centered institution where excellence and a challenging but caring environment remains the organizational accomplishment. The strategic themes, in fact, are interconnected like the links of a chain, or the points of the compass where each can be seen as representing something different, but their strength and completeness come only when seen as a whole. The following graph attempts to illustrate this point.

Dist. 99 2010-2011 Strategic Planning Process: Key Strategic Goal and Issue Areas



Guiding Mission Statement

The mission of District 99, in cooperation with parents and the community, is to provide a caring and challenging environment where all students develop as lifelong learners to become contributing, responsible members of a changing world.

Short-term Goals Categorized by Strategic Themes

"Stay committed to our student-centered approach and mission as an organization"

1. Student Centered Programs/Mission

- Stay committed to our student centered approach and mission as an organization

2. Facilities

- Complete a Master Site Plan Update/revise and finalize
- Begin phased implementation of the adopted Master Site Plan
- Acquisition of additional land for current and future needs particularly the need for more useable space at North campus
- Evaluate the closing of Prince Street
- Maintain our fiscal stability and health/stay within our budget
- Update our master facility plan (including maintenance, improvements etc.)
- Begin phased implementation of an updated plan
- Implement Master Site Plan
- Work to make facilities available to citizens as much as possible but balance it with resources and school needs
- Update/improve our existing athletic facilities

3. Technology

- Assess and expand wireless capabilities at both campuses; improve speed and availability
- Determine an overall approach to the management of student and staff use of expanded technology in all settings including standards, policies and personnel rules
- Continue to make thoughtful technology upgrades that advance uses and applications for all users
- Review on campus and virtual technology use and applications including Blackboard, in class smart boards and the creation of standardized smart rooms
- Explore the viability, use and application of "interactive touch feedback" technology
- Explore the adoption of a "pilot program" for digital textbooks
- Explore the viability of a "pilot program" for an "each student laptop/ iPad"
- Create paperless meeting packets for the Board
- Undertake/develop a comprehensive long- term tech plan for the entire organization; employ a holistic view for all applications
- Study current tech availability, functionality and shortcomings
- Train faculty and staff on new technology
- Wired/wireless
- Address technology issues such as:
 - Maintenance
 - Implementing a wireless infrastructure system that focuses on adapting teaching to the school district (update existing infrastructure)
 - Connectivity

- Explore alternative-learning models with tech capacity and needs in mind
- Develop technology maintenance strategy/plan to sustain innovations related to budget.
- Review and revise student/teacher expectations re technology use and structure.

4. Communications

- Work to improve, enhance and broaden communication and collaboration between campuses and departments
- Acculturating new Board members, leadership and staff into District expectations for collaborative work and ongoing communications
- Upgrade equipment needed to enhance communications both internally and externally
- Execute website and communications upgrade plan
- Resolve issue of broadcasting Board meetings
- Enhance our Community engagement and communications

5. Resources/Finance/Personnel/Staff Development

- Maintain our fiscal stability and strength/maintain a balanced budget
- Assure that adequate resources are allocated to maintain/enhance facilities
- Explore the options and utilization of non-tax generated funds
- Maximize grant opportunities. Explore the use of a dedicated grant writer or contract writer/coordinator
- Expand our efforts to attract and recruit a diverse faculty and staff
- Implement mandated professional development

6. Community

- Grow connections with local businesses for student learning opportunities on site (internships, part time employment)
- Enhance our community engagement opportunities in the community and with feeder districts
- Improve Dist. Outreach efforts
- Develop a comprehensive citizen volunteer involvement plan

7. Curriculum

- Continue alignment of curriculum with newly defined State and National curriculum standards
- Develop instructional assessment practices that maximize student learning. Articulate our vision for this. Assure that the way we use time now the most effective way.
- Study educational processes at the two schools that enable district to build, enhance and identify strengths of the two campuses. Create/define a strategized process prior to changing programs
- Continual development of schools (RTI model)
- Continue to provide focus for the learning needs of under achievers while also focusing on high achiever opportunities
- Evaluate the effectiveness of our efforts to accomplish our curriculum goals successfully
- Assess the curriculum mix: are the right educational opportunities' present for a diverse student population?
- Identify curriculum instruction beyond NCLB. For example:

- Create opportunities for students (i.e. recreation, beyond traditional sports/athletics)
 - Explore how technology is linked or integrated into instruction
 - Plan for the needs of 21st century learners and teachers
- Define and refine fidelity evaluation
- Successful implementation of Tier one academic behavioral interventions

8. Innovation/Adaptation

- a. Promote an organizational culture that encourages and embraces innovation and adaptation
- b. Work to facilitate idea sharing and input

Long-term Goals Categorized by Strategic Themes

"Stay committed to our student-centered approach and mission as an organization"

1. Student Centered Programs/Mission

- Stay committed to our student centered approach and mission as an organization

2. Facilities

- Complete the Master Site Plan
- Completion of timed phases of the Master Facility Plan
- Work to acquire and program more land around the North campus.
- Continue to work with constraints to make both schools equivalent re: opportunities
- Continue to make both schools more energy efficient/green
- Determine our long-term approach/plan to maintain facilities. Formalize thinking and planning for aging buildings, mechanical systems etc.
- Develop Long-term master technology plan that ties into facility planning

3. Technology

- Begin implementation of our organization-wide/holistic long-term technology plan
- Capitalize on the opportunity to use technology to seamlessly support our student centered goals
- Working for a more paperless organization (includes textbooks digitizing records, maximizing technology alternatives, including documents, tests, handouts)
- Keep up with innovative technology and carefully assess new opportunities
- Make sure all students have equal access to technology resources
- Determine what a model smart room looks like; design and build on phased basis
- Explore, assess and deploy on-line learning where appropriate
- Assure that students and teachers have integrated technology; work to make technology an invisible/seamless tool for education as applications advance

4. Communications

- Continue to commit to broad and open communications both internally and externally
- Provide background and leadership training for all leaders (Board and management team) so all will understand roles and responsibilities

5. Resources/Finance/Personnel/Staff Development

- Retain, hire and train with a commitment to having excellent teachers and professional staff
- Continue our financial stability and fiscal health
- Create an organizational culture that fosters continuity and stability and equivalency and opportunities
- Implement alternative sources of revenue that have been explored and approved

6. Community

- a. Continue to enhance our short-term community goals:
 - Accomplish our Grow connections with local businesses for student learning opportunities on site (internships, part time employment)
 - Enhance our community engagement opportunities in the community and with feeder districts
 - Improve Dist. Outreach efforts
 - Develop a comprehensive citizen volunteer involvement plan

7. Curriculum

- Work to assure and evaluate that our intended curriculum matches actual curriculum
- Keep performance and achievement on the upward trend; keep test scores rising using new and innovative methods
- Continue working with regulators/Federal government on NCLB program elements
- Work toward full implementation of tiered intervention
- Create seamless approach of intervention based on student needs
- Stay committed to student centered counseling and guidance

8. Innovation/Adaptation

- Foster and expand an environment where change is embraced
- Align our educational curriculum and practices with evolving student needs and global competitiveness

Note: These themes and goals were not ranked or presented in any particular priority order

COMMUNITY HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT 99

DOWNERS GROVE

Board/Staff Leadership Retreat

January 21-22, 2011

Environmental Scanning

S.W.O.T. EXERCISE OUTCOMES

(Identified Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats)

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Culture of Continuous Improvement ◆ Supportive Community ◆ Students ◆ Financial Footing ◆ Two Large Campuses ◆ Collaborative Culture ◆ Teacher/Administrator Relationship ◆ Comprehensive Curriculum ◆ Special Education ◆ Co-Curricular Activities ◆ Diversity ◆ TCD ◆ New staff, skills and ideas ◆ Professional reputation ◆ Caring Environment ◆ Resourcefulness ◆ Strong local tax base ◆ Technology ◆ Arts ◆ Board of Education that supports excellence ◆ Differences between campuses ◆ Staff development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Government funding ◆ Two large campuses ◆ Inadequate facilities ◆ Competing demands for resources ◆ Our success/complacency ◆ Diversity ◆ Willingness to “make do” ◆ Technology ◆ HVAC ◆ Pools ◆ Athletic Facilities ◆ Differences between campuses ◆ Land/Space ◆ Auditorium ◆ Career path this not aimed at college ◆ Articulation with feeder schools ◆ # of languages in district ◆ Lack of diverse faculty

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Jobs program ◆ Articulation with feeder Districts ◆ Internal Administrative Academy ◆ Involving students and Stakeholders ◆ # of foreign languages spoken 	

OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ NCLB ◆ Political Climate ◆ Community support ◆ Technology Advancements ◆ Quality Staff ◆ Communication improvements ◆ Technology for communication ◆ Co-curricular opportunities ◆ Diversity ◆ Changing demands on teachers ◆ Welcoming new leaders to organization ◆ Retirements/turnover ◆ Technology ◆ Facilities-opportunity to rethink ◆ Differences between campuses ◆ Working with School's Foundation ◆ New curricular initiatives ◆ Federal educational policy ◆ Special Education job programs ◆ TCD ◆ Parent Education ◆ Career path not directed toward change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Personal Agendas ◆ NCLB ◆ Financial instability ◆ Political Climate ◆ Unfunded mandates ◆ Competing demand for resources ◆ Inadequate facilities ◆ Teacher/administrator Relationship ◆ Diversity ◆ Changing demands on teachers ◆ Welcoming new leaders to organization ◆ Retirements/turnover ◆ Financial Burden on local taxpayer ◆ Technology ◆ Differences between campuses ◆ Land-land locked ◆ Perception of public schools in the media ◆ Myths, misperceptions between campuses ◆ Competition and compensation ◆ Uncertain Federal education policy

OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Feeder District articulation ◆ Core Curriculum standards ◆ Move toward National Curriculum standards ◆ Internal Administration Academy ◆ Hire more diverse faculty 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Not letting go of the past ◆ Opportunity to utilize TCD ◆ Feeder District communication ◆ Move toward National curriculum standards ◆ Reliance on other government units for programs and space

Final Thoughts

As an organization, you have now placed yourselves among the elite class of public educators and units of government that engage in formalized strategic planning and goal setting. As we discussed during the sessions, organization-wide strategic planning sessions and leadership retreats are not a new phenomenon for progressive organizations. The value of such processes continues to be recognized by policy-making boards and executive staffs in both private and public organizations. The world in which we all operate continues to rapidly change and grow more complicated. In turn, the challenges and choices that you face in operating one of Illinois' leading high school districts are likewise more complex and challenging than ten years ago, five years ago--even two years ago.

Consider some of the trends within and beyond the District's borders: changing demographics, value shifts, development and re-development pressures, changing attitudes, tax limitations, demands for high service levels, federal mandates, energy costs, infrastructure needs etc. These are just a representative sampling of the many factors that impact the how, what, when, where and whys of establishing policy and delivering fundamental education services within the District's communities.

The many stakeholders that participated in the planning initiative perceive the strategic planning process as a valuable step in moving the District forward and being prepared for the future with a consensus of direction.

The input gathered from the various focus groups along with the ideas discussed and developed during the leadership retreat will help both Administrators and School Board members focus on the District's highest priorities in context. Because of the current fiscal situation that all levels of government face in Illinois, it is imperative that the District use its resources in the most efficient and effective way possible. How can the District achieve its expressed vision and mission in the present and future environment? By using the Strategic Planning process as a tool for clarifying the District's highest priorities and using them to frame its work plan for the next 2-5 years. The planning process has been an energizing process and the activities and exchange of idea that have contributed to this organizational conversation serve as an opportunity for purposeful actions and decisions by the District.

This report's value will be realized as a working guide to both the School Board and staff as you pursue the agenda and issues that were raised and developed during the lengthy process of discussion, consideration and evaluation. This report is intended to assist the organization in developing action

plans in a follow-up session for appropriate committees, departments and elected officers, we don't anticipate any difficulties in laying out a workable and manageable plan for addressing these issues.

The next step is for your senior staff to review the results, fine-tune these goals and develop clear objectives in the action-planning phase of the project. These action-planning activities will then be shared with the Board and appropriate committees on how and when the goals presented during the process might be most efficiently and effectively addressed. What is apparent from the exchange of ideas and discussion during the various sessions and workshops is that the organization is fortunate to have elected leadership and an administrative team that is looking ahead. One noted organizational observer summarized the challenges of long range planning, vision and progress this way:

"The art of progress is to preserve order amid change,
and change amid order..."

A.F. Whitehead



COMMUNITY HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT 99 DOWNERS GROVE NORTH AND SOUTH

2010-2011 Strategic Planning Initiative

Summary Report

INTRODUCTION

We'd like to begin this Summary Report by congratulating the District 99 School Board and staff for completing a new Strategic Plan. The District's commitment to the process and their desire for broad input from all stakeholders is to be commended. Stakeholder participation was thoughtful and offered in a positive manner with an eye toward the future.

Board discussions during the retreat/workshop allowed for a great deal of information and important ideas to be exchanged in a relatively short period of time. Board members and staff demonstrated a high degree of reflection on the critical role the District plays in the quality of life in the Downers Grove community. Throughout this process, the District also demonstrated their commitment to their core mission: providing high quality educational opportunities for all students in a caring, "student centered" environment.

A leadership workshop/retreat was the culmination of the planning process. At the Leadership retreat held in the District's offices, Dist. 99 Board members and leadership team members were engaged and provided their input in an open and supportive manner. Participants came prepared with the input gathered from stakeholders and the community. Retreat attendees expressed their long-term views of the future, exchanged ideas, and shared perspectives with a common sense of purpose. This report captures the key elements and outcomes of both the stakeholder input sessions, and, the Board/leadership team workshops.

The report is divided into two sections: Section I- Project Outline and Methodology; and Section II- Summary Results of the Strategic Planning Process and Leadership Retreat. Various appendices and progress reports that were part of the process are also included with this report to document the hundreds of hours devoted to the broad conversation the District engaged in to set the path for the future.

Strategic Planning Project Outline/Methodology

Introduction to Strategic Planning Process

It is important to begin with a definition and understanding of what constitutes strategic issues and goals. Although the question of what is 'strategic' is open to debate, broadly defined strategic goals or issues are those that are important or essential in order for the organization to accomplish its central mission. Strategic issues also represent fundamental choices that must be made at the highest levels of an organization. Strategic issues are focused on the future and generally include an element of tension, uncertainty, or divergence. Elements of choice usually surround strategic issues over traditional verses new methods of doing business; differences over needs and resources; differences over current and future capacities; or differences over major roles and responsibilities. Finally, strategic issues usually have no obvious, best, or easy solution.

In addition to this definition of strategic issues, it is also important to outline the process that was used to identify District 99's strategic issues. The District chose a comprehensive, multi- staged process, which was designed to gather and consider a great deal of input from stakeholders, administrators, and elected officials. The process was divided into the following phases:

1. Listening and learning from stakeholders inside and outside of the organization through the focus groups process; and
2. Strategic planning retreat workshops with Board members and senior staff that considered the focus group input.

Phase I- Stakeholder Input

Phase I gathered input from a wide spectrum of stakeholders via focus groups sessions. Focus groups are a highly interactive method of eliciting participation and sharing ideas in a group environment. Each group's session was facilitated by trained professionals from the Center for Governmental Studies. Participants were led through a structured but "informal" discussion that was designed to elicit their input on areas of interest to the District. The advantage of these focus groups is that the District chose a very broad representation of stakeholders, and as a result, received input that was outstanding in both quantity and quality.

In total, approximately 300 stakeholders provided input in focus group sessions that represented approximately 75 hours of discussion. The Center conducted 22 focus group sessions. Focus group sessions covered students, faculty, administrators, staff, and parents from each of the two campuses. Sessions were also held for residents, civic institutions, and businesses. Finally, input was gathered from District administrators, exempt staff, the union's staff, and support staff. Appendix A is a listing of all the focus group sessions scheduled by the Center for Governmental Studies staff.

The format for each discussion session followed the same themes but had some flexibility depending on the audience. The sessions were designed to guide, but not control the discussions. Sessions were all highly participative and interactive and the input was recorded for all participants to view by the

facilitator via rough notes on flip chart paper. All sessions included the classic strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) analysis. Appendix B is a list of the questions asked in the sessions.

The final step of Phase I was to summarize the data in three ways: key word or phrase search; key theme association; interpretive impressions and summary thoughts. A summary report and workshop presentation of the focus group data was provided to elected officials and District administrators for incorporation into the Board retreat sessions. Appendix C is the summary of the findings from the focus group sessions

Phase II- Strategic Planning Retreat

The District 99 Board/staff strategic planning retreat and workshop included a variety of interactive sessions with beginning with sessions on Friday evening January 21 followed by a full day of discussion sessions on Saturday January 22, 2011. All sessions were held at the District offices and were open to the public to attend. The first session on Friday evening included ice breaker and visioning exercises. The visioning exercise was an exploration and identification of the organization's desired future. This input was gathered from as individuals and from the group as a whole. Both exercises were facilitated by the Drs. Gabris and Kuhn.

The workshop sessions held on Saturday included a group exercise and classic SWOT analysis which identified both internal and external factors that will impact the District's future. Strengths and weaknesses tend to be *internal* factors that can either inhibit or contribute to achieving the future vision of the District. Opportunities and threats tend to be the *external* factors that can impact the District's vision both negatively and positively. The group also participated in group exercises focused on the collaborative establishment of strategic themes as well as key goals and objectives ranging from short-term objectives to long-term complex goals. Finally, the wrap-up session was a collaborative policy classification of goals based on a matrix of complexity and time.

This document represents a synthesis of all the elements of the strategic planning process including focus group input, Board and staff's collaborative vision for the District, and the identified short-term and long-term, routine and complex goals. It is important to note that the District's mission of providing high quality, "student centered" education runs through all the short-term and long-term goals that were shaped during the planning process.

Summary of Results

The central strategic theme supported by stakeholders, the Board, and District staff is that the District is committed to the core value of providing high quality educational opportunities for all its students in a caring, "student centered" environment. Although there seems to be little doubt that District will continue to face a variety of future challenges, the fact that there is such wide agreement about the District's commitment to students is a very positive outcome of this process. There is also wide agreement that the District must prepare for the future in a way that maximizes its many assets, is forward thinking, and is mindful of the importance of its financial and human resources, and of the supportive community it serves.

The following pages and tables capture the discussion sessions that framed the strategic planning process as well as the themes and goals that emerged from the broad input of stakeholders and District leadership.

Phase I.

Focus Group Input Stakeholder Exercises and Discussion Sessions

The format for all of the discussion sessions used in the planning effort employed approaches that were highly participative and interactive. The process utilized a group discussion approach called Nominal Group Technique where participants were assured equal opportunities to speak and share opinions by the facilitators. During the discussion sessions, individuals had the opportunity to generate and share individual ideas, weigh alternatives, and further refine their thinking. As these ideas were shared and debated, the group worked steadily toward a consensus of organizational values, purpose, future directions and priorities.

Exercise 1. Focus Group Word Association Summary

The analytical analysis of the focus group notes was a cross-group search for common themes or idea threads. This data is presented by focus group exercise questions detailed in Appendix B. It should be noted, that all groups expressed a nearly universal view that District 99 and the North and South campuses were excellent schools that enjoyed a strong reputation within and beyond the community.

Overwhelmingly positive adjectives were used to describe the district by most groups. Below are some of the most common themes.

- Excellent education
- Well known/good reputation
- Quality, good reputation, high standards
- Held in high esteem
- Educational opportunities – lots of choices – well prepared for college
- Dedicated staff – caring, passionate, and professional
- Top 6% of the schools in the USA!
- “A special place”
- Sports-24 sports offered
- Proactive District
- Great teachers
- Great staff
- Abundant programs; tons of choices for involvement beyond sports
- Great Arts/Music program
- School spirit
- North and South

- Big with lots of kids, 3000 at South, 2100 at North
- Only two schools in the district
- Well maintained
- Amazing special services
- Strong tradition
- Community oriented
- A very diverse student population
- Financially stable
- Hard-working
- Resilient

There were also cautionary adjectives used to describe the District by some participants. Here are some of the more common cautionary themes that surfaced in response to this exercise:

- Very large schools – a lot of kids in one place. Creates constraints/presents challenges
- High expectations for students and staff. Some feelings of conservative approaches and heightened control/ more corporate
- Two schools not substantially different, but there are constant perceptions of differences
- Tradition can be good, but can lead to view of not “rocking the boat”. Change can take a long time (e.g., technology)
- Demanding
- Crowded
- Tests/Competition
- Heavy on process
- Slow to change

Exercise 2. Focus Group Summary - What Would You Tell A Neighbor/Stranger about District 99

The vast majority of participant’s opinions about the District were positive, but some concerns were also expressed. In general, participants described the District as having a good reputation, offering a high quality education, and one that has committed and caring teachers and administrators. Participants generally believe that opportunities abound both academically and from an extra-curricular standpoint. Most would encourage others to take full advantage of this community asset. Some themes that were found across groups are noted below:

- Most participants listed positive qualities and attributes about the school including: awesome energetic teaching staff; students who take ownership and pride in the school; a community with ownership and pride in their schools; and the great strength of college prep – college bound curriculum. As one participant put it, with others that agreed, District 99 provides “a lot of bang for the “buck” – “high value” education.

- Several participants also cited the strength of the District's programs for special need/multi-need students. This was brought up in many groups with the comment that these programs must not be overlooked.
- Students were really excited about school and its options. There were also many positive responses related to opportunities, activities, and academics and a caring environment.
- The District was seen as financially sound.
- For a large school many said that it still focuses on the individual, has a – caring environment, is very responsive to parents, and where staff and teachers celebrate success and respond to every e-mail.

The analysis also revealed the following concerns:

- Although the schools were seen as meeting high expectations and standards many voiced concerns that there were real and perceived differences between the North and South campuses in terms of size, diversity, sports, and academics.
- Some students and parents commented that the school was crowded, big, and with lots of rules.
- Some felt it would be important to tell potential residents/parents to be aware of the saw tooth boundaries
- There was uncertainty about the present financial crisis and how it might eventually impact funding or taxes that some felt were already high.
- Technology was cited as important and many comments were made that more technology for teachers, students, classrooms and resource centers are needed to catch up and keep up with trends and opportunities.

Finally, participants believe that there is a strong, competitive environment to produce good students and results. Further, the community has extremely high expectations of staff performance. These comments were seen as both a positive and a negative depending upon the focus group participant.

Exercise 3. Focus Group SWOT Analysis Summary

This exercise asks participants to identify factors across a four-corner matrix of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. Known as SWOT analysis, this exercise is a core element of strategic planning discussions.

In general, groups found more weaknesses than strengths, which is a common outcome based on the facilitator's experience with many focus groups.

Strengths

The responses from all groups with regard to strengths were remarkably similar. Common themes included an overall/strong satisfaction with the schools. District 99 schools were seen as having committed and dedicated teachers, staff, counselors, administrators, and parents. There are numerous opportunities for students and something for everyone from clubs, fine arts, debate, and athletic teams. The District's schools were seen as having a long standing reputation of offering a high quality education with an emphasis on academic achievement in every program from college prep to multi-need

programs. Resources for college prep students were noted as strength, but there does not appear to be clear agreement as to whether college prep is over-emphasized or not emphasized enough. This probably depends on the perspective of the participant.

Weaknesses/Areas of Improvement

Although the weaknesses cited varied among groups, there were some themes that ran throughout the responses. It should be noted that some responses were difficult to categorize and seemed to be more oriented to the individual responding. In order to provide context on weaknesses, there were two themes cited frequently by all groups. In addition, the weaknesses were broken down by focus group participant category.

The following two themes stood out from all groups:

- **Facility Issues-** Facilities were a major theme that was mentioned in most groups. The facility issues included: crowding in classrooms and hallways, outdated auditorium, HVAC and air movement issues, athletic facilities including desire for artificial turf, inadequate space to grow and the need for off-site facility use for some sports. It should be noted that facility issues were not mentioned as frequently by stakeholders at the North campus, except for the outdoor recreation/athletic facilities. The facility issues at South most frequently included HVAC needs and some postponed maintenance. Some mention of outdated equipment, deferred maintenance, and lowest bid issues also were noted.
- **Size of School and Impacts of Size** - This issue was mentioned across a number of groups but was somewhat difficult to categorize or summarize. Most groups recognized the differences in the enrollments and size of the two campuses as contributors to the sense of crowding or to impressions of the schools being “large.” Size was cited as a strength that provides diversity in the kinds and types of classes and classmates, but it was also seen as a limiting factor to be addressed in order to preserve connectedness to both the “school” and each other.

The following were frequently mentioned weaknesses by group.

- **Students** - Scheduling issues such as longer lunches, passing periods, scheduling conflicts and the need for more announcements and communications were frequently cited by students. They also mentioned crowding, lack of foreign language options, and the differences in the amount of experience and teaching styles among teachers.
- **Administration** – Staffing challenges, retirements, turnover, hiring and compensation issues for teachers and support staff were cited. Communication issues were also frequently mentioned.
- **Faculty** - Loss of social connectedness with other faculty was noted as was the growing impact and emphasis on testing and achieving test scores. The impact of testing was seen as affecting flexibility and creativity. Faculty also noted the need to better serve a diverse student population. Faculty also mentioned perceived or real North /South differences including differing expectations, demands, and goals. The differences included parental involvement, the size of schools, and design of daily schedules. Faculty also noted the need to continue to develop opportunities for lower achievers as well as high achieving students.

- **Support Staff** – This group noted lack of input, communication, consultation and involvement in decision-making. Other common themes expressed by support staff were the compensation structure and stretched budgets for maintenance and repairs. Differences between campuses from size to facility differences to were also mentioned.
- **Parents** - Communications with parents, financial issues including increasing reliance on fees were noted. Parents also saw a loss of balance on student schedules as a weakness
- **Community Groups** – The community groups mentioned the need for career options and preparing the next generation for the job opportunities. They also noted better communications and connections with the business community, civic groups, and other local governments.

Opportunities

The opportunity question did not receive the same number of responses that other SWOT questions received. However, the responses were very consistent among groups.

- Most groups mentioned the opportunity (perceived or real) that technology presents for the District. Both future and current development of technology is seen as an opportunity. Technology was the most frequently mentioned opportunity and it was a consistent response in all groups.
- More connections/communications with parents, support staff, alumni, other schools, business groups, and governments were also consistently mentioned.
- Improving facilities was mentioned several times.
- Capitalizing on the District's demographics and diversity was listed as an opportunity.
- Finally, developing a more global vision of education was mentioned several times as a necessary step for planning and keeping the District at the top of its game as a high quality educational organization.

Threats

- The economy and financial issues were mentioned as a threat by nearly all groups. This issue was mentioned more than any other.
- Demographics, diversity, and the aging population was mentioned but with much less frequency than the economy. Note: Demographics and diversity were also viewed as an opportunity.
- The physical facility issues were mentioned as a threat by many.
- Some saw technology as an opportunity but also a threat by possibly changing dynamics in the classroom and replacing relationship building.
- Some saw retirements and turnover of leaders, administrators, and experienced teachers as a possible threat.
- Changing government regulations (NCLB, testing, etc.) was mentioned as a threat that would require both monitoring and adaptation if new regulations are handed down.
- Funding policies by the state were also seen as a threat to future planning and stability.

Exercise 4. Focus Group “Important Priority Exercise” Summary

The wrap up question asked of focus groups was to highlight a singular goal, action, program or decision they would change immediately if they had the ability to impact one item related to District 99. Although this question generated almost as many responses as participants, some themes did emerge and are highlighted below:

- Improvement to the facilities was mentioned most often in response to this question. It was listed across most groups and with great frequency by the participants.
- Improving technology from smaller items to large scale/organization wide improvements was often cited.
- More collaboration between campuses and even departments was mentioned several times.
- The issue of the class schedules combined with class size, workload issues, and time spent teaching (creative learning verses standardized testing emphasis) was also mentioned with some frequency across many groups.
- Solving economic issues was mentioned however with less frequency than the first two items.
- A cross-section of staff would add opportunities for greater input, voice and recognition.
- Many participants were appreciative of the District’s financially sound and stable profile and keeping that in place was seen as an important priority.
- Some participants noted the school board’s ability to stay focused on key issues and minimize disagreements was important to the District’s ongoing success.
- Feeder school relations and communication was cited by various participants as an important priority.

FOCUS GROUP INPUT SUMMARY THOUGHTS

In summary, the input of stakeholders developed some important perspectives for the School Board and leadership team to consider. Participants view the District as very strong academically offering two comprehensive high schools with academic and extracurricular opportunities for every student. The District is in the black financially and as a result enjoys strong community support for quality education. The organization is seen as professional with high skill levels for both teachers and administrators. The general culture is dynamic, adaptive, innovative, and aims for excellence as an educational system. Many noted that students are the focus of the District’s mission and purpose and they represent the District’s greatest resource. It was common to hear comments that the two campuses are friendly, safe, and welcoming environments that are seen as having strong and positive relationships with the broader community.

However, there are challenges and pressures on the organization, the teaching mission, and the two campuses. Potential weaknesses and deficiencies include the Federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) policy. Many pointed to the impact of this policy and the impact of test score goals and standards on the classroom and curriculum. While in its broadest sense, the policies may be well-intentioned, they are perceived to have many potentially negative consequences for the quality of overall teaching. Perceived differences between the educational experiences at the two high schools is part of the equation that

leaders, administrators, and staff should keep in mind when fashioning strategies, goals, and approaches. The need to keep up with technology and how to maintain and expand what is in place was a frequent issue noted during the process. Physical plant needs including the HVAC systems at the two high schools and indoor and outdoor space needs were also common topics in the focus group discussions. Staffing change is a constant in large organizations and District 99 is no different. From top administrative posts, to teachers, and support staff, selecting staff and building compensation systems to help attract and retain quality staff are an important part of the equation in developing and sustaining a high quality organization.

Analysis of Scanning Input

District 99 stakeholders perceive the school system as a high quality, comprehensive, and very effective educational experience. Participants noted that the District can boast of excellent teachers and a solid college preparatory focus, yet it also pays careful attention to all students; including those with special educational needs. In fact, a broad goal of the District is to prepare all students to be life-long learners and effective citizens.

The recent economic recession has had an impact on the financial planning and fiscal environment of the District, especially in the context of state funding. Since 80 percent of the District's budget is derived from local property taxes, and due to careful and conservative fiscal management, the District has remained in the black while not cutting into its core curriculum or being forced to lay off the quality teaching staff it has assembled. While the financial situation is presently under control, the recession's length and the state payments to the District could eventually erode the District's capacity to maintain current program levels. In addition to a challenging fiscal situation, the District is also being challenged on several other fronts.

The Federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) mandate requires the District to maintain adequate yearly progress (AYP) on how its students fare on a standardized test. While successfully meeting these thresholds, this accomplishment will become increasingly difficult given the expectations that the District will eventually achieve a 100 percent success rate in NCLB performance testing. Many stakeholders wonder if this policy presents an unrealistic expectation without massive infusions of financial assistance from the federal government. Without such funding and hiring of new teaching staff, existing teaching staff will be pressured to teach more and more to the standardized test. Although this pressure may be appealing from the standpoint of achieving a proscribed level of performance, such testing may not be training students to be deeper, more creative, and innovative learners. Developing a realist and proactive balance between the value of the NCLB testing process and a deeper, more creative and innovative curriculum is a challenge the District will need to face during the next several years.

The District faces other issues as well. Adapting new technology, especially wireless technology, into the educational process in the near future is a concern. While difficulties exist in making such a transition, the transition itself probably cannot be avoided. As several stakeholders mentioned, carefully planning for and purchasing new information technology is the first step in the process. The second involves putting tools to use and finding the resources to adequately maintain the new systems. Without a commitment to implementation and maintenance, new technology may not be consistently useable, therefore, raising questions about its benefit to cost ratio.

Physical space both indoors and outdoors is a part of the District's evolutionary history. While not a new issue, stakeholders did point out the School District continues to face challenges with limited

physical space for parking, new physical plant development, and athletic activities. Presently, there is a commonly identified shortcoming with the HVAC systems in both school buildings that will represent significant capital investments.

In addition, the District is presently facing a general societal trend of changing demographics. Increasing diversity in the community and a recent decline in enrollment trends, which is expected to flatten out over the next few years, are important elements to factor into strategic planning. The issue becomes not only enrollment, but how to best serve the demographic groups that will be more common at the schools. South High is perceived to have some programmatic differences with North High School. However, both administrative staff and teachers believe these perceived differences are not very significant, and that both schools offer very high quality educational experiences. Nonetheless, how parents and residents perceive the two high schools seems to be an issue for the District.

Finally, many stakeholders perceive the strategic planning initiative as a valuable step in moving the District forward and being prepared for the future with a consensus of direction. Because of the current fiscal situation, it is imperative that the District use its resources in the most efficient and effective way possible.

Phase II.

Leadership Workshop and Retreat

January 21-22, 2011

Outline of Exercises and Discussion Sessions Dist. 99 Board and Administrative Staff

Again, the format for all of the discussion sessions at the Board/Staff workshop phase of the planning initiative employed approaches that were highly participative and interactive. The process utilized a group discussion approach called Nominal Group Technique where participants were assured equal opportunities to speak and share opinions by the facilitator. During the sessions, individuals had the opportunity to generate and share individual ideas, weigh alternatives, and further refine their thinking. As these ideas were shared and debated, the group worked steadily toward a consensus of organizational value, purpose, future directions and priorities.

Session I. Leadership Retreat: Visions of the Future

Exploration and identification of the District 99's desired future condition.

Each participant was asked to articulate what he or she perceives to be the preferred future state of District 99 in five, ten, and twenty years down the road. What educational needs, staffing levels, capital needs and general facets would or should be present at District 99 during this time? At the Board/staff retreat, participants were asked to jot down their ideas ahead of time and then be ready to share them with the group during the first session. This was a brainstorming exercise—any and all ideas about District 99's future were encouraged and shared. No evaluative or judgmental debate was permitted during this session.

The responses listed below are in no particular order.

A FUTURE VIEW OF COMMUNITY SCHOOL DISTRICT 99

If you left Dist. 99 and the Downers Grove area and returned in 15-20 years, what do you hope you'll see, what do you think you'll see when you visit both high schools and the community?

1. Fitness centers for both schools
2. Expand both campuses

3. Adequate and well maintained space for parking
4. Enlarge auditorium in both schools
5. Continue community environment of support for schools
6. Continue outside support
7. State of the Art Technology for every student
8. District is locally controlled
9. Quality of education is high
10. Global vision with off -site learning and virtual classrooms
11. Continue to place importance on special needs
12. District still produces leaders of next generation
13. Equivalent facilities for both schools
14. Hand held technology in lieu of books
15. Brand new outdoor facilities for both schools
16. Continue community support-True monetary support due to district's credibility
17. Unified cohesive community that embraces the importance of public education
18. Cutting edge technology and education
19. Leading edge faculty
20. Self-directed learning
21. Technology which is means to end
22. Like what I see now but don't want to see lack of money
23. Education is first priority
24. Would not like to see facility challenges downgrade education
25. We may See very little use for the kind of facilities we rely on today (may be more virtual classrooms)
26. Good leadership
27. Special education move to 3-4% from current
28. Still see school (s) serve a fundamental role but not factory model
29. More interdisciplinary hiring of staff-less scheduled
30. More flexibility, offer more
31. Teachers who view themselves as educators not just "math teacher"
32. Focus on student needs with positive relationships. School should not get in way of student learning
33. Outside directives that support work and don't side track staff
34. Staff dedicated to always getting better
35. Not sure external opportunities are the ones that matter
36. Forward thinking is a quality of an outstanding school
37. Schools need to work hard to continue to meet kids needs and the challenges they face
38. Schools need to be a safe haven and nurturing environment as life continues to be more complicated and challenging
39. Who are our customers (business, military) what approach will prepare our kids for those customers
40. What are the 21st century skills? What about collaboration skills
41. Open classrooms, without walls, Skype?
42. College internships
43. School day extended with things coming at different times
44. Understand the way to address all the needs of our students especially students with deficiencies

45. Recognize its hard to be all things for all students served, but escalate our work to serve all as best we possibly can
46. Facilities could be smaller because of technology
47. Continue sports and activities that make DG 99 a center of community
48. Funding continues to support programs because of community.
49. Concerned about a future where schools are fully state funded and impact that would have
50. Technology tool would be invisible and totally embraced and utilized by the staff
51. We don't talk about technology we talk about results
52. Shift in demographics doesn't mean we lower our standards
53. Parents are partners so it's important to reach out to parents
54. Technology will be important and should support kids
55. Technology in terms of instruction should be invisible. It should be so much a part of learning that it is not recognized as separate
56. Facilities would accommodate whatever education needs
57. Always need schools where young people can come to learn and teachers can facilitate learning, pass on knowledge, and mentor. This cannot be replaced by technology
58. Virtual classroom is help to students who need help
59. Still interaction between student and teachers. Teachers will always be important
60. Schools pass on culture. Human relations will still be key
61. Fitness centers serve kids for life
62. Teaching students how to be good citizens
63. A blend of flexible schedules
64. Like to see state government come through with money needed. Education is well worth the amount spent
65. Guard against technology as a cost savings device/excuse to cut budgets
66. Technology as a tool to get you where you want to go
67. We are not about just technology, we bring together students, teachers, community
68. We need to advocate/plan for outside facilities as well
69. If we just had buildings, it would not be the same as activities. Activities are what bring parents to school. Activities are what connects us to community
70. Schools are as old as Socrates and will continue to fill a vital role in our communities and society

Session II. Leadership Retreat: Group Exercise – “Surrender or Lead”

Environmental Scanning.

Participants were introduced to a leadership exercise entitled “Surrender or Lead.” The premise is that sub-groups of the participants work to develop responses to some simple, but extremely effective and thought-provoking questions. Participants’ were broken up into two working groups and asked to respond to a series of structured questions designed to initiate discussion and reveal perspectives, challenges and frustrations of the participants as a whole. The participants’ responses were recorded and discussed. The responses provided by each group are recorded below. Underlined sections are key phrases that groups were asked to respond to. Groups were given the assignment to name their group

and to offer a spirit of camaraderie among group members. Responses to the exercise questions are presented below:

Group #1 – “T&T”

1. We want to Improve all facilities but have to prioritize in face of competing claims on resources.
2. We can't do everything because of limited resources.
3. If it weren't for differing community expectations, we would communicate more effectively.
4. We have to execute the master site plan.
5. We need to always be sure our focus is on continued improvement in student centered learning as that makes us the outstanding District we are.

Group #2 – “P2”

1. We want to stay focused on our mission but negative energies and agendas have distracted us.
2. We can't lose sight of our mission because advancing student learning is essential.
3. If it weren't for the 800 lb. gorilla in the room, we would be able to engage in the process to move forward to more effectively resolve issues.
4. We have to move forward because most of us are ready and the kids need us to.
5. We need to finally admit we can't be all things to all people.
6. Real or perceived fear and trepidation make us over process some things which may hold us back and make us stagnate.

Group #3 – “Three Squared Twice”

1. We want to be innovative – purposeful.
2. We can't rest on tradition and laurels because to do so would jeopardize our excellence.
3. If it weren't for a lack of resources, we would be able to provide more effective learning opportunities.
4. We have to create a vision because if we don't, we won't know where we're going.
5. We need to leave this item blank because we realize nothing in our work is final.
6. Remaining reflective and flexible makes us able to adapt to needs.

Session III. Leadership Retreat: S.W.O.T. Analysis and Environmental Scan

The next step of the strategic planning process was a review and accounting of the internal and external factors present in the environment that can potentially impact the success of District 99, both negatively and positively.

Given the futuristic statements of the preceding session, and the challenges raised in the Surrender or Lead exercise, participants were then asked to identify what constraints and practical difficulties are likely to be encountered that will make it difficult to achieve the desired future state. These elements included both internal and external factors, conditions, trends, regulations, agencies, resources, etc. Furthermore, what are the organization's strengths and weaknesses? In what areas does it regularly excel, and in what areas are there difficulties or shortcomings in terms of expertise, resources, training, etc.? What opportunities are on the horizon that can be used to its advantage? Conversely, what trends lay ahead that would be obstacles or hindrances?

S.W.O.T. EXERCISE
(Identified Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats)
Leadership Retreat

INTERNAL

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Quality Staff ◆ Culture of Continuous Improvement ◆ Supportive Community ◆ Students ◆ Financial Footing ◆ Two Large Campuses ◆ Collaborative Culture ◆ Teacher/Administrator Relationship ◆ Comprehensive Curriculum ◆ Special Education ◆ Co-Curricular Activities ◆ Diversity ◆ TCD ◆ New staff, skills and ideas ◆ Professional reputation ◆ Caring Environment ◆ Resourcefulness ◆ Strong local tax base ◆ Technology ◆ Arts ◆ Board of Education that supports excellence ◆ Differences between campuses ◆ Staff development ◆ Jobs program ◆ Articulation with feeder Districts ◆ Internal Administrative Academy ◆ Involving students and Stakeholders ◆ Number of foreign languages spoken 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Government funding ◆ Two large campuses ◆ Inadequate facilities ◆ Competing demands for resources ◆ Our success/complacency ◆ Diversity ◆ Willingness to “make do” ◆ Technology ◆ HVAC ◆ Pools ◆ Athletic Facilities ◆ Differences between campuses ◆ Land/Space ◆ Auditorium ◆ Career path this not aimed at college ◆ Articulation with feeder schools ◆ Number of languages in district ◆ Lack of diverse faculty

EXTERNAL

OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ NCLB ◆ Political Climate ◆ Community support ◆ Technology Advancements ◆ Quality Staff ◆ Communication improvements ◆ Technology for communication ◆ Co-curricular opportunities ◆ Diversity ◆ Changing demands on teachers ◆ Welcoming new leaders to organization ◆ Retirements/turnover ◆ Technology ◆ Facilities-opportunity to rethink ◆ Differences between campuses ◆ Working with School's Foundation ◆ New curricular initiatives ◆ Federal educational policy ◆ Special Education job programs ◆ TCD ◆ Parent Education ◆ Career path not directed toward change ◆ Feeder District articulation ◆ Core Curriculum standards ◆ Move toward National Curriculum standards ◆ Internal Administration Academy ◆ Hire more diverse faculty 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Personal Agendas ◆ NCLB ◆ Financial instability ◆ Political Climate ◆ Unfunded mandates ◆ Competing demand for resources ◆ Inadequate facilities ◆ Teacher/administrator Relationship ◆ Diversity ◆ Changing demands on teachers ◆ Welcoming new leaders to organization ◆ Retirements/turnover ◆ Financial Burden on local taxpayer ◆ Technology ◆ Differences between campuses ◆ Land-land locked ◆ Perception of public schools in the media ◆ Myths, misperceptions between campuses ◆ Competition and compensation ◆ Uncertain Federal education policy ◆ Not letting go of the past ◆ Opportunity to utilize TCD ◆ Feeder District communication ◆ Move toward National curriculum standards ◆ Reliance on other government units for programs and space

Session IV. Leadership Retreat: Nominal Group Goal Identification

This session provided the forum for the collaborative establishment of strategic goals and objectives necessary to achieve the future vision of District 99. With the preceding sessions serving as a sound foundation for goal setting, the final sessions included the presentation and discussion of goals or action items needed to achieve the future visions as expressed by the group. Participants worked in groups to develop listings of important policy/program goals that District 99 should accomplish in the next two to six years.

Goals could be highly specific or general. The groups gathered together to present the results of their goal identification exercise in a follow-up session where all participants engaged in open discussions of the goals or action items, their impact and their relative importance to District 99's current or future circumstances.

Classification. At the end of the open discussion, participants were asked to collaboratively classify each goal according to a matrix model of complexity and time. Agreed criteria were used to classify a goal as short- or long-term and as complex or routine. The purpose of the exercise is to group goals of roughly the same "type" together so when prioritization occurs, the participants can avoid the problem of comparing "apples to oranges".

All statements were recorded on flip chart paper. The goals and their classifications are presented as short- or long-term, complex or routine. Agreed criteria were used for classifying goals as either routine or complex: short-term goals were those goals that could or should be completed or substantially underway by the end of the coming fiscal year. Complex goals were goals that required extraordinary resources, specialists, funding or the agreement of outside organizations or agencies. Routine goals, although not necessarily simple, were goals that could be accomplished upon unilateral decision of the Board and within present budget streams or with minor revenue enhancements or reallocations.

Open Group Discussion and Consolidation of Goals

This final phase of the discussion served as the forum for the Board members and staff to discuss, evaluate and debate the ideas and goals offered by each participant in the previous sessions. Participants are asked to give their opinions and assessment of the aims, value and importance of different policy objectives. The goals listed on the following pages were not ranked or presented in any particular priority order.

From the discussion of ideas and goals, the following general action themes evolved and are listed below.

2011 DIST. 99 STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS
CONSENSUS STRATEGIC ACTION and GOAL THEMES

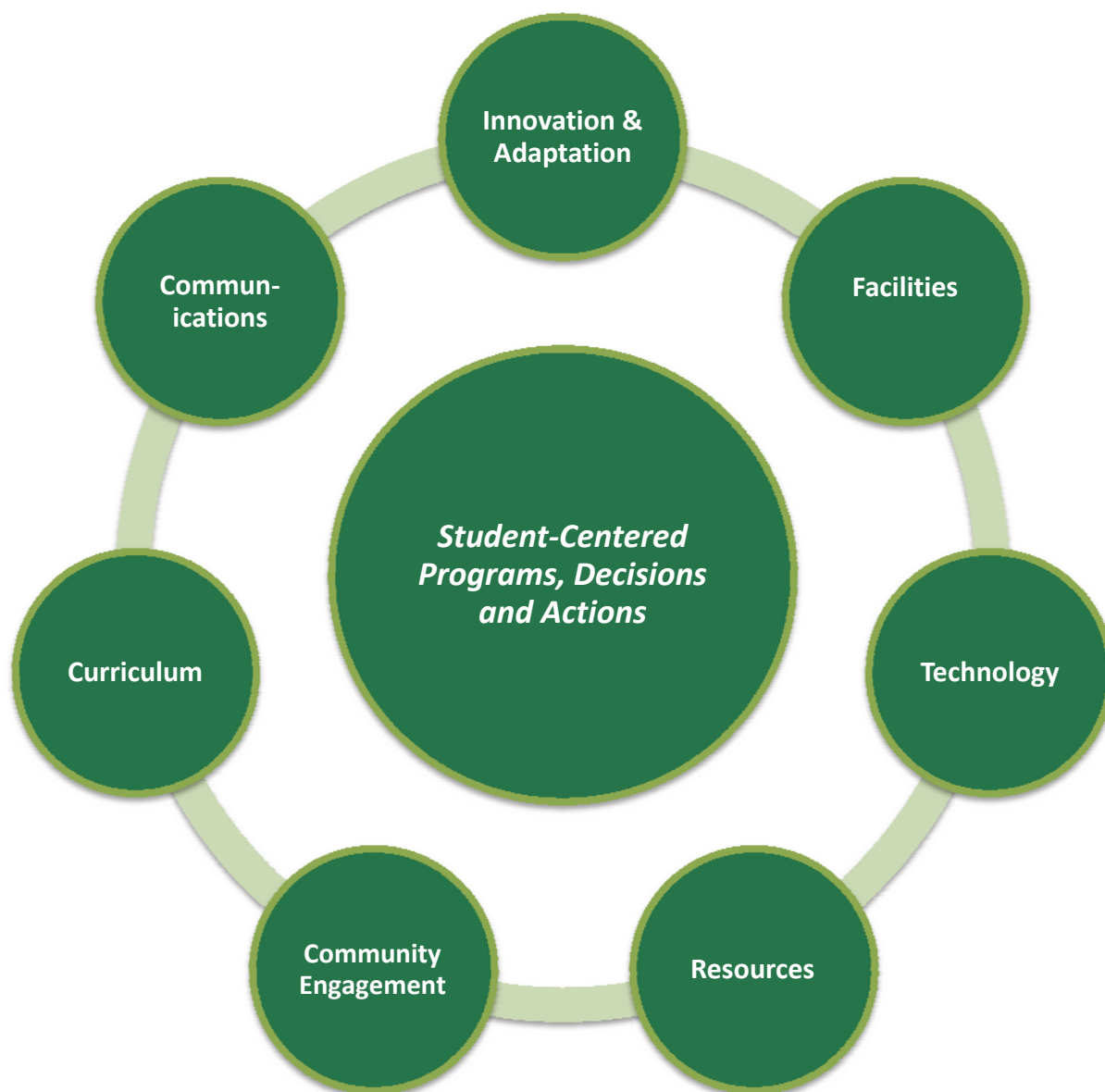
Guiding Policy & Organizational Value...

Student-centered programs, decisions and actions are essential to our mission

1. Facilities
2. Technology
3. Communications
4. Resources/Finance/Personnel/Staff Development
5. Community Engagement
6. Curriculum/Curriculum Development
7. Innovation/Adaptation

These seven themes represent core issue areas that are, and will be, fundamental to the District's success in not only meeting the short and long term future, but also meeting its mission as a student-centered institution where excellence and a challenging but caring environment remains the barometers of organizational accomplishment. The strategic themes, in fact, are interconnected like the links of a chain, or the points of the compass where each can be seen as representing something different, but their strength and completeness come only when seen as a whole. The following graph attempts to illustrate this point.

Dist. 99 2010-2011 Strategic Planning Process: Key Strategic Goal and Issue Areas



Guiding Mission Statement

The mission of District 99, in cooperation with parents and the community, is to provide a caring and challenging environment where all students develop as lifelong learners to become contributing, responsible members of a changing world.

Dist. 99 Short-term Goals Categorized by Strategic Themes

"Stay committed to our student-centered approach and mission as an organization"

1. Student Centered Programs/Mission

- Stay committed to our student centered approach and mission as an organization

2. Facilities

- Complete a Master Site Plan Update/revise and finalize
- Begin phased implementation of the adopted Master Site Plan
- Acquisition of additional land for current and future needs particularly the need for more useable space at North campus
- Evaluate the closing of Prince Street
- Maintain our fiscal stability and health/stay within our budget
- Update our master facility plan (including maintenance, improvements etc.)
- Begin phased implementation of an updated plan
- Implement Master Site Plan
- Work to make facilities available to citizens as much as possible but balance it with resources and school needs
- Update/improve our existing athletic facilities

3. Technology

- Assess and expand wireless capabilities at both campuses; improve speed and availability
- Determine an overall approach to the management of student and staff use of expanded technology in all settings including standards, policies and personnel rules
- Continue to make thoughtful technology upgrades that advance uses and applications for all users
- Review on campus and virtual technology use and applications including Blackboard, in class smart boards and the creation of standardized smart rooms
- Explore the viability, use and application of "interactive touch feedback" technology
- Explore the adoption of a "pilot program" for digital textbooks
- Explore the viability of a "pilot program" for an "each student laptop/ iPad"
- Create paperless meeting packets for the Board
- Undertake/develop a comprehensive long- term tech plan for the entire organization; employ a holistic view for all applications
- Study current tech availability, functionality and shortcomings
- Train faculty and staff on new technology
- Wired/wireless
- Address technology issues such as:
 - Maintenance

- Implementing a wireless infrastructure system that focuses on adapting teaching to the school district (update existing infrastructure)
- Connectivity
- Explore alternative-learning models with tech capacity and needs in mind
- Develop technology maintenance strategy/plan to sustain innovations related to budget.
- Review and revise student/teacher expectations re technology use and structure.

4. Communications

- Work to improve, enhance and broaden communication and collaboration between campuses and departments
- Acculturating new Board members, leadership and staff into District expectations for collaborative work and ongoing communications
- Upgrade equipment needed to enhance communications both internally and externally
- Execute website and communications upgrade plan
- Resolve issue of broadcasting Board meetings
- Enhance our Community engagement and communications

5. Resources/Finance/Personnel/Staff Development

- Maintain our fiscal stability and strength/maintain a balanced budget
- Assure that adequate resources are allocated to maintain/enhance facilities
- Explore the options and utilization of non-tax generated funds
- Maximize grant opportunities. Explore the use of a dedicated grant writer or contract writer/coordinator
- Expand our efforts to attract and recruit a diverse faculty and staff
- Implement mandated professional development

6. Community

- Grow connections with local businesses for student learning opportunities on site (internships, part time employment)
- Enhance our community engagement opportunities in the community and with feeder districts
- Improve Dist. Outreach efforts
- Develop a comprehensive citizen volunteer involvement plan

7. Curriculum

- Continue alignment of curriculum with newly defined State and National curriculum standards
- Develop instructional assessment practices that maximize student learning. Articulate our vision for this. Assure that the way we use time now the most effective way.
- Study educational processes at the two schools that enable district to build, enhance and identify strengths of the two campuses. Create/define a strategized process prior to changing programs
- Continual development of schools (RTI model)
- Continue to provide focus for the learning needs of under achievers while also focusing on high achiever opportunities
- Evaluate the effectiveness of our efforts to accomplish our curriculum goals successfully

- Assess the curriculum mix: are the right educational opportunities' present for a diverse student population?
- Identify curriculum instruction beyond NCLB. For example:
 - Create opportunities for students (i.e. recreation, beyond traditional sports/athletics)
 - Explore how technology is linked or integrated into instruction
 - Plan for the needs of 21st century learners and teachers
- Define and refine fidelity evaluation
- Successful implementation of Tier one academic behavioral interventions

8. Innovation/Adaptation

- a. Promote an organizational culture that encourages and embraces innovation and adaptation
- b. Work to facilitate idea sharing and input

Dist. 99 Long-term Goals Categorized by Strategic Themes

"Stay committed to our student-centered approach and mission as an organization"

1. Student Centered Programs/Mission

- Stay committed to our student centered approach and mission as an organization

2. Facilities

- Complete the Master Site Plan
- Completion of timed phases of the Master Facility Plan
- Work to acquire and program more land around the North campus.
- Continue to work with constraints to make both schools equivalent re: opportunities
- Continue to make both schools more energy efficient/green
- Determine our long-term approach/plan to maintain facilities. Formalize thinking and planning for aging buildings, mechanical systems etc.
- Develop Long-term master technology plan that ties into facility planning

3. Technology

- Begin implementation of our organization-wide/holistic long-term technology plan
- Capitalize on the opportunity to use technology to seamlessly support our student centered goals
- Working for a more paperless organization (includes textbooks digitizing records, maximizing technology alternatives, including documents, tests, handouts)
- Keep up with innovative technology and carefully assess new opportunities
- Make sure all students have equal access to technology resources
- Determine what a model smart room looks like; design and build on phased basis
- Explore, assess and deploy on-line learning where appropriate
- Assure that students and teachers have integrated technology; work to make technology an invisible/seamless tool for education as applications advance

4. Communications

- Continue to commit to broad and open communications both internally and externally
- Provide background and leadership training for all leaders (Board and management team) so all will understand roles and responsibilities

5. Resources/Finance/Personnel/Staff Development

- Continue our financial stability and fiscal health
- Retain, hire and train with a commitment to having excellent teachers and professional staff
- Create an organizational culture that fosters continuity and stability and equivalency and opportunities
- Implement alternative sources of revenue that have been explored and approved

6. Community

- Continue to enhance our short-term community goals:
 - Accomplish our Grow connections with local businesses for student learning opportunities on site (internships, part time employment)
 - Enhance our community engagement opportunities in the community and with feeder districts
 - Improve Dist. Outreach efforts
 - Develop a comprehensive citizen volunteer involvement plan

7. Curriculum

- Work to assure and evaluate that our intended curriculum matches actual curriculum
- Keep performance and achievement on the upward trend; keep test scores rising using new and innovative methods
- Continue working with regulators/Federal government on NCLB program elements
- Work toward full implementation of tiered intervention
- Create seamless approach of intervention based on student needs
- Stay committed to student centered counseling and guidance

8. Innovation/Adaptation

- Foster and expand an environment where change is embraced
- Align our educational curriculum and practices with evolving student needs and global competitiveness

Note: These themes and goals were not ranked or presented in any particular priority order

Final Thoughts

As an organization, you have now placed yourselves among the elite class of public educators and units of government that engage in formalized strategic planning and goal setting. As we discussed during the sessions, organization-wide strategic planning sessions and leadership retreats are not a new phenomenon for progressive organizations. The value of such processes continues to be recognized by policy-making boards and executive staffs in both private and public organizations. The world in which we all operate continues to rapidly change and grow more complicated. In turn, the challenges and choices that you face in operating one of Illinois' leading high school districts are likewise more complex and challenging than ten years ago, five years ago--even two years ago.

Consider some of the trends within and beyond the District's borders : changing demographics, value shifts, development and re-development pressures, changing attitudes, tax limitations, demands for high service levels, federal mandates, energy costs, infrastructure needs etc. These are just a representative sampling of the many factors that impact the how, what, when, where and whys of establishing policy and delivering fundamental education services within the District's communities.

The many stakeholders that participated in the planning initiative perceive the strategic planning process as a valuable step in moving the District forward and being prepared for the future with a consensus of direction.

The input gathered from the various focus groups along with the ideas discussed and developed during the leadership retreat will help both Administrators and School Board members focus on the District's highest priorities in context. Because of the current fiscal situation that all levels of government face in Illinois, it is imperative that the District use its resources in the most efficient and effective way possible. How can the District achieve its expressed vision and mission in the present and future environment? By using the Strategic Planning process as a tool for clarifying the District's highest priorities and using them to frame its work plan for the next 2-5 years. The planning process has been an energizing process and the activities and exchange of idea that have contributed to this organizational conversation serve as an opportunity for purposeful actions and decisions by the District.

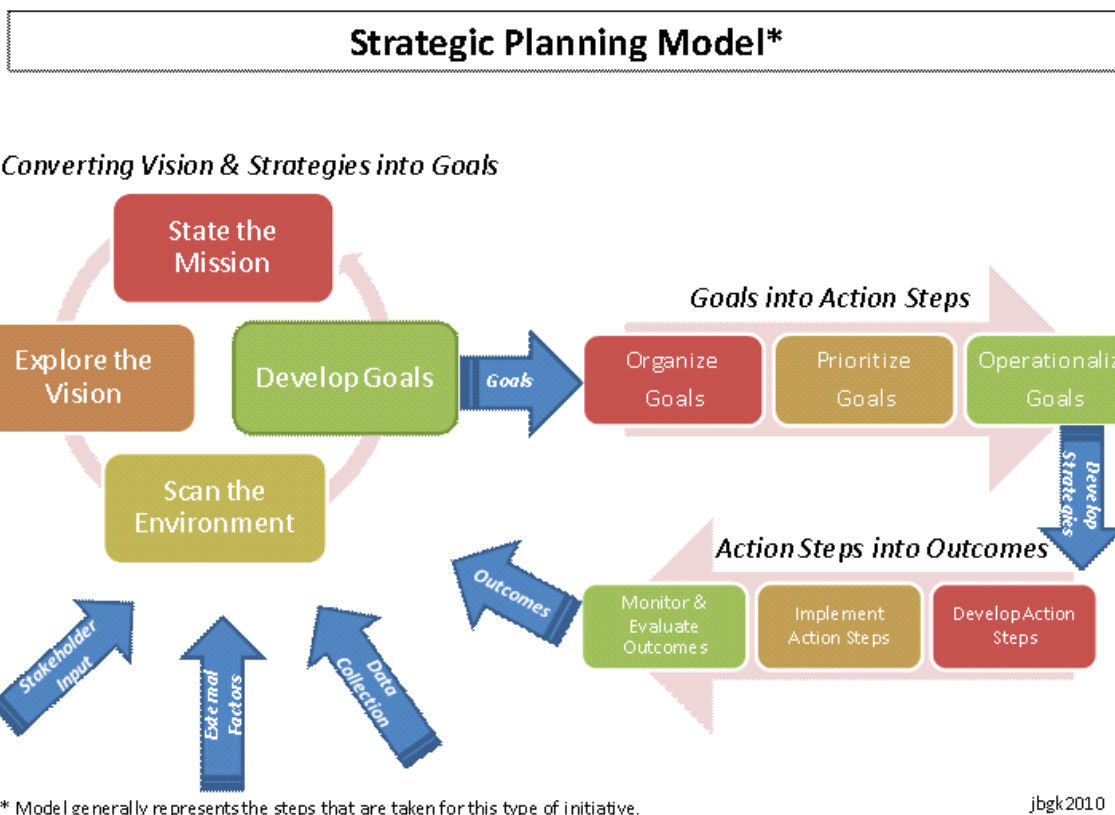
This report's value will be realized as a working guide to both the School Board and staff as you pursue the agenda and issues that were raised and developed during the lengthy process of discussion, consideration and evaluation. This report is intended to assist the organization in developing action plans in a follow-up session for appropriate committees, departments and elected officers, we don't anticipate any difficulties in laying out a workable and manageable plan for addressing these issues.

The next step is for your senior staff to review the results, fine-tune these goals and develop clear objectives in the action-planning phase of the project. These action-planning activities will then be shared with the Board and appropriate committees on how and when the goals presented during the process might be most efficiently and effectively addressed. What is apparent from the exchange of ideas and discussion during the various sessions and workshops is that the organization is fortunate to have elected leadership and an administrative team that is looking ahead. One noted organizational observer summarized the challenges of long range planning, vision and progress this way:

"The art of progress is to preserve order amid change,
and change amid order..."

A.F. Whitehead

Appendix A



Appendix B

List of Focus Groups Participating in the Listening and Scanning Phase

Community-Wide Groups

- Community Views
 - Residents (2 focus groups of 12-15 participants)
 - Resident Open Forum Focus Group (1 evening session with 2-3 facilitators)
- Community Views
 - Civic Institutions (1 focus group of 12-15 participants)
 - Businesses (1 focus group of 12-15 participants)

North Campus

- Organizational Focus Groups
 - Administrative Group: Principal, Asst. Principal, A.D., Deans (1 focus group)
 - Dept. Chairs (1 focus group)
 - Faculty (2 focus groups of 12 participants)
 - Support Staff (1 focus group)
- Stakeholder Focus Groups
 - Students (4 focus groups at each grade level of 15 participants)
 - Current Parents (1 focus group of 12-15 participants)
 - Future and Former Parents (1 focus group of 12-15 participants)

South Campus

- Organizational Focus Groups
 - Administrative Group: Principal, Asst. Principal, A.D., Deans (1 focus group)
 - Dept. Chairs (1 focus group)
 - Faculty (3 focus groups of 12 participants)
 - Support Staff (1 focus group)
- Stakeholder Focus Groups
 - Students (4 focus groups at each grade level of 15 participants)
 - Current Parents (1 focus group of 12-15 participants)
 - Future and Former Parents (1 focus group of 12-15 participants)

District Wide Groups (Administrative / Headquarters Staff, Represented Employee Groups)

- Superintendent Cabinet/Administrators (background interviews and 1 focus group)
- ASC Exempt Staff (1 focus group)
- DGEA Certified Staff (1 focus group)
- DGEA Support Staff (1 focus group)
- CMG Building/Grounds Staff (1 focus group)

Appendix C

Focus Group Questions

The discussion questions posed were generally structured as follows:

1. Word Association: If you hear the phrase “Dist.99”, you think what _____?
2. If you were meeting with a new neighbor, friend or colleague considering District 99/Downers Grove Township HS area for location of their residence or a place to work, how would you describe the high schools, or the District? If it had a personality, what would it be?

3. Imagine that you left the District tomorrow and didn’t return until 2015 or 2020. What do you think you would see in the community on your return as it relates to the District’s High Schools?

4. What are some of the readily identifiable strengths of the District? _____
5. What are some of the weaknesses, shortcomings, or challenges in the District?

6. As you look into the future, are there any identifiable external threats to the District?

7. Similarly, are there any identifiable opportunities for the District?

8. If you could change, improve, or create one important feature, attribute, or goal of the District immediately (or in the near future), what would it be? _____?
9. Other Questions. In some instances, a handful of topical open-ended, follow-up questions were raised according to group participant discussion.

Appendix D

Preliminary Summary of Key Themes from 2010 Focus Group Environmental Scanning Sessions

Community High School Dist. 99
Downers Grove North and South High Schools

Updated Workshop Preparation Draft
January 11, 2011

Facilitators:
Center for Governmental Studies at NIU

I. INTRODUCTION

The information that follows is a preliminary summary of the key themes and topics that surfaced during the focus group/outreach sessions of the strategic planning process. The information that is presented in this summation is designed to add input to the Board and Senior Leadership Team's upcoming strategic planning retreat sessions on January 21 and 22. As presented in the project outline, the Pre-Retreat Data Gathering Phase was designed as a listening tour to listen and learn from stakeholders inside and outside of the organization.

This pre-retreat/workshop component is an important piece of the process. "Listening" is vital to planning and pausing to gather stakeholder understanding. Further, input adds to the development of broad policy and operational perspectives, perceptions, and preferences. The information that follows is a qualitative summation of the listening sessions gathered for your use in preparing for the upcoming strategic planning workshop.

II. WHAT IS A STRATEGIC ISSUE?

This question is a topic of nearly endless debate among authors, observers, and facilitators of strategic planning efforts. In brief, strategic issues are critical factors, decisions, or choices that project what will affect the direction or approaches the District will need to take in meeting its mission while responding to environmental changes and pressures. Some commentators argue that strategic issues also include items that the organization must decide immediately, or risk losing the opportunity to act on them in the future. Strategic issues typically include some element of urgency that requires action, or a plan for action, which is the outcome of organizational consensus and prioritization.

Strategic issues or goals should include what is truly important for the District to accomplish, given the breadth of circumstances and information (at both the policy and operational levels) that confronts the District as a dynamic organization. Identifying strategic issues can be compared to pouring an assessment of all the issues the District faces into a filtered funnel. What eventually emerges is a mix of “clarified” issues that demand attention.

For the upcoming workshop, there are some guidelines and suggestions in the preparation packet that offer additional ideas from observers that help to describe what “strategic” issues typically include.

III. METHODOLOGY

Stakeholder Environmental Scan/SWOT Analysis Phase

This multiple session/multiple participant scanning exercise represented an expanded adaptation of the classic SWOT analysis that serves as a key component of any strategic planning endeavor. The District chose to include a broad swath of stakeholders in this early phase of the strategic planning process. Using focus groups as the vehicle to gather input, this expanded approach to environmental scanning helps expose key decision-makers to a variety of ideas and perspectives about the organization’s past, present, and future.

Focus groups are a highly interactive approach that elicits participation and the sharing of ideas in a non-threatening group environment created by the facilitator. Participants are led through a structured but “informal” discussion that will focus on key areas of interest to district leaders. The advantage of focus groups is the efficiency of multiple insights coupled with, dynamic discussion among multiple participants, and the robust nature of the comments.

This synopsis highlights the themes heard during the focus group sessions. During the sessions, stakeholders (including students, faculty, administrators, and community members) shared ideas about the preferred future state of the District along with perceived challenges, strengths, and opportunities. The focus group sessions included the following groups:

- Community-wide participants
 - Community Views
 - Residents (2 focus groups of 12-15 participants)
 - Resident Open Forum Focus Group (1 evening session with 2-3 facilitators)
 - Community Views
 - Civic Institutions (1 focus group of 12-15 participants)
 - Businesses (1 focus group of 12-15 participants)
- North Campus
 - Organizational Focus Groups
 - Administrative Group: Principal, Asst. Principal, A.D., Deans (1 focus group)
 - Dept. Chairs (1 focus group)
 - Faculty (2 focus groups of 12 participants)
 - Support Staff (1 focus group)
 - Stakeholder Focus Groups
 - Students (4 focus groups at each grade level of 15 participants)
 - Current Parents (1 focus group of 12-15 participants)
 - Future and Former Parents (1 focus group of 12-15 participants)

- South Campus
 - Organizational Focus Groups
 - Administrative Group: Principal, Asst. Principal, A.D., Deans (1 focus group)
 - Dept. Chairs (1 focus group)
 - Faculty (3 focus groups of 12 participants)
 - Support Staff (1 focus group)
 - Stakeholder Focus Groups
 - Students (4 focus groups at each grade level of 15 participants)
 - Current Parents (1 focus group of 12-15 participants)
 - Future and Former Parents (1 focus group of 12-15 participants)
- District Wide Groups (Administrative / Headquarters Staff, Represented Employee Groups)
 - Superintendent Cabinet/Administrators (background interviews and 1 focus group)
 - ASC Exempt Staff (1 focus group)
 - DGEA Certified Staff (1 focus group)
 - DGEA Support Staff (1 focus group)
 - CMG Building/Grounds Staff (1 focus group)

In total, approximately 300 stakeholders provided scanning input in focus group sessions that represented approximately 75 hours of discussion. The format for the group discussion sessions was intended to be structured but informal. The sessions all followed the same themes but had some flexibility depending on the audience and were designed to guide, but not control, discussion and commentary. The discussions were all highly participative and interactive and the input was written by the facilitator via rough notes on flip chart paper for all participants to see.

The discussion questions posed were generally structured as follows:

1. Word Association: If you hear the phrase "Dist.99", you think what _____?
2. If you were meeting with a new neighbor, friend or colleague considering Dist. 99/Downers Grove Township HS area for location of their residence or a place to work, how would you describe the high schools, or the District? If it had a personality, what would it be? _____
3. Imagine that you left the District tomorrow and didn't return until 2015 or 2020. What do you think you would see in the community on your return as it relates to the District's High Schools? _____
4. What are some of the readily identifiable strengths of the District?

5. What are some of the weaknesses, shortcomings, or challenges in the District?

6. As you look into the future, are there any identifiable external threats to the District?

7. Similarly, are there any identifiable opportunities for the District?

8. If you could change, improve, or create one important feature, attribute, or goal of the District immediately (or in the near future), what would it be?
_____?

9. Other Questions. In some instances, a handful of topical open-ended, follow-up questions were raised according to group participant discussion.

Note: The narratives presented below are taken from the transcribed/handwritten flip chart notes and the statements taken as participants talked during the sessions. As such, they are subject to minor error, paraphrasing, or summarization by the facilitator during the meetings.

IV. APPROACH TO SUMMARIZING THE SCANNING INPUT

The approach used in analyzing the data from the focus groups took three basic forms:

1. Key word or phrase search
2. Key theme association/notation
3. Interpretive impressions and summary thoughts

DATA ANALYSIS HIGHLIGHTS

A. KEY WORD OR PHRASE SEARCH:

One of the first analytical passes that can be undertaken with a rich set of focus group notes is a computer search for key phrases, words, or terms that cuts across all groups. The words and phrases listed below present the results of our analysis of focus group notes. At a glance, the reader can discover what terms were used or referred to most frequently in the feedback notes. Using the search feature in MS Word and working from review notes, the researcher enters terms that seemed to recur across groups and across questions. The analyst can also enter key terms that were hypothesized to be likely terms used in the discussions prior to the focus group sessions being undertaken. The results are revealing in that they highlight key topics or issues that should be weighed and considered when proceeding with strategic planning discussions. The results of the key word/phrase search are presented below:

- Technology & Connectivity (93 times)
- Communication (48 times)
- Quality & Excellence (47 times)
- Pride & Tradition (42 times)
- Size (41 times)
- Testing, etc., (38 times) (NCLB, AYP, Standardized Test/Test Scores, PSAE)
- Facilities (35 times)
- Athletics/Sports (33 times) (Athletics - 9 times plus Sports - 24 times)
- Compensation (31 times) (Pay/Wages/Benefits)
- College or College Prep (26 times)

- Curriculum (24 times)
- Budget & Finance (22 times)
- Band/Music/Fine Arts (21 times)
- The “future” (20 times)
- Opportunity (19 times)
- Largeness/size of schools or classes (19 times)
- Clubs (18 times)
- Friendly/Welcoming/Family-oriented (18 times)
- HVAC/Air Conditioning (16 times)
- Spirit/school spirit (16 times)
- Caring/Committed Teachers (14 times)
- Technical/Vocational Training (10 times)
- Feeder Schools/Middle Schools (10 times)
- Equity/inequity (10 times)
- Diversity (8 times)
- Calendar or year-round class (3 times)
- Library (2 times)

Below is a table summarizing the key word search information. *Note: Some categories that were seen as closely related were combined for the counts presented below.*

Table I
Key Word Search Summary

Key word/ Phrase	Times Cited	Percent
Technology & Connectivity	93	13.6%
Size, Largeness, Class Sizes <i>(all combined)</i>	60	8.8%
Facilities <i>(combined including HVAC)</i>	51	7.5%
Communication	48	7.0%
Quality & Excellence	47	6.9%
Pride & Tradition	42	6.1%
Testing (NCLB, AYP, Standardized, PSAE)	38	5.6%
Athletics/Sports	33	4.8%
Compensation	31	4.5%
College or College Prep	26	3.8%
Curriculum	24	3.5%
Budget & Finance	22	3.2%
Band/Music/Fine Arts	21	3.1%
The “future”	20	2.9%
Opportunity	19	2.8%
Clubs	18	2.6%
Friendly/Welcoming/Family-oriented	18	2.6%
Spirit/school spirit	16	2.3%

Key word/ Phrase	Times Cited	Percent
Caring/Committed Teachers	14	2.0%
Technical/Vocational Training	10	1.5%
Feeder Schools/Middle Schools	10	1.5%
Equity/Inequity	10	1.5%
Diversity	8	1.2%
Calendar or year-round class	3	0.4%
Library	2	0.3%
	684	

As the above summary illustrates, there are some important issues that recurred throughout the various focus group discussions. The top ten recurring phrases or words were: Technology & Connectivity, Facilities/HVAC, Size of Schools and Classes, Communication, Quality & Excellence, Pride & Tradition, Testing, (including NCLB, AYP, Standardized Test/Test Scores, and PSAT), Athletics/Sports, Compensation, and, College or College Prep.

B. KEY THEME ASSOCIATION

The next analytical pass that was undertaken with the cross-group notes was a search for common themes or idea threads. Here the analysts make notations using key words to search for common themes and topics within a contextual set of questions. The team's initial assessment of the focus group notes produced the following results. It should be noted, that all groups expressed a nearly universal view of Dist. 99 and the North and South campuses as excellent schools that enjoy a strong reputation within and beyond the community.

WORD ASSOCIATION EXERCISE

Overwhelmingly positive adjectives were used to describe the district by most groups. Here are some of the most common themes that surfaced in response to this exercise:

- Excellent education
- Well known/Good reputation
- Quality, good reputation, high standards
- Held in high esteem
- Educational opportunities – lots of choices – well prepared for college
- Dedicated staff – caring, passionate, and professional
- Top 6% of the schools in the USA!
- “A special place”
- Sports-24 sports offered
- Proactive District
- Great teachers
- Great staff
- Abundant programs; tons of choices for involvement beyond sports
- Great Arts/Music program
- School spirit

- North and South
- Big with lots of kids, 3000 at South, 2100 at North
- Only two schools in the district
- Well maintained
- Amazing special services
- Strong tradition
- Community oriented
- A very diverse student population
- Financially stable
- Hard-working
- Resilient

However, there were also cautionary adjectives used to describe the District by some participants. Here are some of the more common cautionary themes that surfaced in response to this exercise:

- Very large schools – a lot of kids in one place. Creates constraints/presents challenges
- High expectations for students and staff. Some feelings of conservative approaches and heightened control/ more corporate
- Two schools not substantially different, but there are constant perceptions of differences
- Tradition can be good, but can lead to view of not “rocking the boat”. Change can take a long time (e.g., technology)
- Demanding
- Crowded
- Tests/Competition
- Heavy on process
- Slow to change

WHAT WOULD YOU TELL A NEIGHBOR/STRANGER ABOUT DIST.99

The vast majority of the opinions from almost all participants were positive, but some concerns were also expressed in this exercise. In general, participants described the District as one that has a good reputation, offers a high quality education, has committed and caring teachers and administrators, and where opportunities abound both academically and in activities. Most would encourage others to take full advantage of this community asset. Some themes that were found across groups are noted below:

- Most participants listed positive qualities and attributes about the school including: awesome energetic teaching staff; students who take ownership and pride in the school; a community that also takes ownership and pride; and the great strength of college prep – college bound curriculum. As one participant put it, with others that agreed, Dist. 99 provides “a lot of bang for the “buck” – “high value” education.
- Several also were diligent in pointing out the strength of the District’s programs for special need/multi-need students. This was brought up on many occasions and some felt this should not be overlooked.

The analysis also revealed that there were, as might be expected, some differing or mixed comments as well:

- The schools were seen as having high expectations and standards which the school district achieves. On the other hand, many voiced concerns that when talking to a stranger or potential new resident, that there are real and perceived differences between the North and South campuses (size, diversity, sports, academics).
- Students were really excited about school and its options. Some commented that the school was crowded, big, and with lots of rules. There were also positive responses related to opportunities, activities, and academics.
- Several mentioned they would tell anyone about the high quality education, quality of teachers, amazing class choices, lots of opportunities, and caring environment.
- Some felt it would be important to tell potential residents/parents to be aware of the saw tooth boundaries
- The District was seen as financially sound, but there was uncertainty by some if the present financial crisis might eventually impact funding or taxes that some felt were already high.
- For a large school many said that it still focuses on the individual, has a – caring environment, is very responsive to parents, and where staff and teachers celebrate success and respond to every e-mail.
- Technology seems to be slightly behind. Comments were made that more technology for teachers, students, classrooms and resource centers is needed to catch up and keep up with trends and opportunities. Some thought this might be a competitive disadvantage at the present time.
- There is a strong, competitive environment to produce strong students and results. The community has extremely high expectations of staff performance.

SWOT ANALYSIS SUMMARY

This exercise asks participants to identify factors across a four-corner matrix of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. Known as SWOT analysis, this exercise is a core element of strategic planning discussions. In general, groups found more weaknesses than strengths; a common outcome based on the facilitator's experience with many kinds of groups. In many respects, this seems to be a reflection of human nature when asked to view organizations or phenomenon with a critical eye.

STRENGTHS

General Themes:

The responses from all groups with regard to strengths were remarkably similar. Participants across the various groups pointed to many factors they see as strengths. Some of these positive attributes can be found in the summaries of the earlier sections of this report. Common themes included an overall/strong satisfaction with the schools.

As noted previously, the schools were seen as having committed and dedicated teachers, staff, counselors, administrators, and parents. There are innumerable opportunities for students and something for everyone from clubs, to fine arts, debate, to frequently recognized athletic teams. The District's schools are seen as having a long standing reputation of offering a high quality education with an emphasis on academic achievement from college prep studies to multi-need programs. Resources for college prep students were noted as strength, but there does not appear to be clear agreement as to whether college prep is over-emphasized or not emphasized enough. This probably depends on the perspective of the participant.

WEAKNESSES/AREAS OF IMPROVEMENT

General Themes:

Although the kinds of deficiencies or areas of improvement that were expressed had more variation among groups, there were some themes that seemed to run throughout the responses. Some responses to the weaknesses question were more difficult to categorize and seemed to be somewhat more oriented to the individual responding.

- **Facility Issues** - This was a major issue which, at some point, came up in most groups. In some groups, it was mentioned repeatedly. The facility issues included: crowding in classrooms and hallways, outdated auditorium, HVAC and air movement issues, athletic facilities including desire for artificial turf, inadequate space to grow and the need for off-site facility use for some sports. It should be noted that facility issues were not mentioned as frequently by stakeholders at the North campus, except for the outdoor recreation/athletic facilities. The facility issues at South most frequently included HVAC needs and some postponed maintenance. Some mention of outdated equipment, deferred maintenance, and lowest bid issues also were noted.
- **Size of School/Impacts of Size** - This issue was mentioned across a number of groups but was somewhat difficult to categorize or summarize. Most groups recognized the differences in the enrollments and size of the two campuses as contributors to the sense of crowding or to impressions of the schools being "large". While many believed that size can be a strength that offers diversity in the kinds and types of classes and classmates, it was also seen as a limiting factor to be addressed in order to preserve personal connectedness to both the "school" and each other.

The following listing presents some of the more frequently mentioned weaknesses that appeared. In an effort to offer context, notable weaknesses are presented in broad group categories:

- **Students** - Noted scheduling and transition period issues such as longer lunches, passing periods, and the need for more announcements and communications. Students also mentioned crowding, foreign language options, scheduling conflicts, and the differences in experience and teaching styles among teachers.
- **Administration** – Staffing challenges, retirements, and turnover were noted, as were hiring and compensation issues for teachers and support staff. Communication issues were also noted.
- **Faculty (all levels)** - Loss of social connectedness with other faculty was noted as was the growing impact and emphasis on testing and achieving test scores. This element was seen as an impact on flexibility and even creating a feeling of a loss of creativity and resistance to change. Faculty also noted the need to find better ways to serve a diverse student population and the need to keep an eye on perceived or real North /South imbalances, differing expectations, demands and goals. Parental involvement and size of schools were noted as were the limitation of the present schedule design and the need to continue to develop opportunities for lower achievers as well as high achieving students.
- **Support Staff** - Input, consultation and more involvement in decision-making, better communications, and a review of compensation structure were common themes

expressed by support staff. The differences between campuses from size and facility differences to stretched budgets for maintenance and repairs were also mentioned.

- **Parents - Communications** with parents, financial issues including the increasing reliance on fees, to support the school were noted. Parents also saw a creeping loss of balance on student schedules as a weakness including pressure and constant busyness.
- **Community Groups -** Saw a need for the District to be more aware of career options for graduates and preparing the next generation for the job opportunities of the future. They also noted a need for better communications and connections with the business community, civic groups, and other local governments.

OPPORTUNITIES

General Themes:

The opportunity question did not receive the same number of responses that other SWOT questions received. However, the responses were very consistent among groups.

- Most groups mentioned the opportunity (perceived or real) that technology presents for the District. Both future and current development of technology is seen as an opportunity. This was the most frequently mentioned opportunity, and it was a consistent response in all groups.
- More connections/communications with parents, support staff, alumni, other schools, business groups, and governments were also consistently mentioned.
- Improving facilities was mentioned several times.
- Capitalizing on the District's demographics and diversity was listed as an opportunity.
- Finally, developing a more global vision of education was mentioned several times as a necessary step for planning and keeping the District at the top of its game as a high quality educational organization.

THREATS

General Themes:

- The economy and financial issues were mentioned as a threat by nearly all groups. This issue was mentioned more than any other.
- Demographics, diversity, and the aging population was mentioned but with much less frequency than the economy. Note: Demographics and diversity were also viewed as an opportunity.
- The physical facility issues were mentioned as a threat by many.
- Some saw technology as an opportunity but also a threat by possibly changing dynamics in the classroom and replacing relationship building.
- Some saw retirements and turnover of leaders, administrators, and experienced teachers as a possible threat.
- Changing government regulations (NCLB, testing, etc.) was mentioned as a threat that would require both monitoring and adaptation if new regulations are handed down.
- Funding policies by the state were also seen as a threat to future planning and stability.

C. IMPORTANT PRIORITY QUESTION

The final wrap-up question posed to each group was an open ended question asking each participant to identify the singular goal, action, program or decision they would change right away if they had the ability to impact one item related to Dist. 99 in the very near term. With nearly 300 participants, there were almost as many responses since the question was open to personal interpretation. However, some themes did emerge and are highlighted below:

General Themes:

- Improvement to the facilities was mentioned most often in response to this question. It was listed across most groups and with great frequency by the participants.
- Improving technology from smaller technology related items to large scale/organization wide improvements was often cited.
- More collaboration between campuses and even departments was mentioned several times by groups.
- The issue of the class schedule combined with class size, workload issues, and time spent teaching (creative learning verses standardized testing emphasis) was also mentioned with some frequency across many groups.
- Solving economic issues was also mentioned however with less frequency than the first two items.
- A cross-section of staff would add opportunities for greater input, voice and recognition.
- Many were appreciative of the District's financially sound and stable profile and keeping that in place was seen as an important priority.
- Some participants noted the school board's ability to stay focused on key issues and minimize disagreements was important to the District's ongoing success.
- Feeder school relations and communication was cited by various participants as an important priority.

D. PRELIMINARY SUMMARY THOUGHTS

Overview

In summary, the input of stakeholders has developed some important perspectives for the School Board and leadership team to consider as the strategic planning initiative moves forward. Participants view the District as very strong academically offering two comprehensive high schools with academic and extracurricular opportunities for every student. The District is in the black financially due to strong community support for quality education. The organization is seen as professional with high skill levels for both teachers and administrators. The general culture is dynamic, adaptive, innovative, and aims for excellence as an educational system. Many noted that students are the focus of the District's mission and purpose and they represent the District's greatest resource. It was common to hear comments that the two campuses are friendly, safe, and welcoming environments that are seen as having strong and positive relationships with the broader community.

However, there are challenges and pressures on the organization, the teaching mission, and the two campuses. Potential weaknesses and deficiencies include the Federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) policy. Many pointed to the impact of this policy and the impact of test score goals and standards on the classroom and curriculum. While in its broadest sense, the policies may be well-intentioned, they are perceived to have many potentially negative consequences for the quality of overall teaching. Perceived

differences between the educational experiences at the two high schools is part of the equation that leaders, administrators, and staff should keep in mind when fashioning strategies, goals, and approaches. The need to keep up with technology and how to maintain and expand what is in place was a frequent issue noted during the process. Physical plant needs including the HVAC systems at the two high schools and indoor and outdoor space needs were also common topics in the focus group discussions. Staffing change is a constant in large organizations and Dist. 99 is no different. From top administrative posts, to teachers, and support staff, selecting staff and building compensation systems to help attract and retain quality staff are an important part of the equation in developing and sustaining a high quality organization.

Analysis of Scanning Input

District 99 stakeholders perceive the school system as a high quality, comprehensive, and very effective educational experience. Participants noted that the District can boast of excellent teachers and a solid college preparatory focus, yet it also pays careful attention to all students, including those with special educational needs. In fact, a broad goal of the District is to prepare all students to be life-long learners and effective citizens.

The recent economic recession has taken a major toll on the financial well-being of the District, especially in the context of state funding. Since 80 percent of the District's budget is derived from local property taxes, and due to careful and conservative fiscal management, the District has remained in the black while not cutting into its core curriculum or being forced to lay off the quality teaching staff it has assembled. While the financial situation is presently under control, how long the recession continues, and how far behind the state falls in its payments to the District could eventually erode the District's capacity to maintain current program levels. In addition to a challenging fiscal situation, the District is also being challenged on several other fronts.

The Federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) mandate requires the District to maintain adequate yearly progress (AYP) on how its students fare on a standardized test. While successful in meeting these thresholds up to this point, this accomplishment will become increasingly difficult given the expectations that the District will eventually achieve a 100 percent success rate in NCLB performance testing. Many stakeholders wonder if this policy presents an unrealistic expectation without massive infusions of financial assistance from the federal government. Without such funding and hiring of new teaching staff, existing teaching staff will be pressured to teach more and more to the standardized test, which perhaps is appealing from the standpoint of achieving a proscribed level of performance, however, such testing may not be training students in deeper, more creative, and innovative ways of learning. Hence, developing a realistic, proactive balance between the value of the NCLB testing process and a deeper, more creative and innovative curriculum is a challenge the District will need to face during the next several years.

The District faces other issues as well. How will it adapt new technology, especially wireless technology, into the educational process in the near future? While difficulties exist in making such a transition, the transition itself probably cannot be avoided. As several stakeholders mentioned, carefully planning for and purchasing new information technology is the first step in the process. The second involves putting tools to use and finding the resources to maintain the new system adequately. Without the maintenance and implementation commitment, the new technology may not be consistently useable, therefore, raising questions about its benefit to cost ratio.

Physical space both indoors and outdoors is a part of the District's evolutionary history. While not a new issue, stakeholders did point out the School District continues to face challenges with limited physical space for parking, new physical plant development, and athletic activities. Presently, there is a commonly identified shortcoming with the HVAC systems in both school buildings that will represent significant capital investments to address. Having a good handle on what needs and demands will be placed on the physical plant, in the not so distant future, is an important issue facing the District.

In addition, the District is presently facing a general societal trend of changing demographics. This Increasing diversity in the community and a recent decline in enrollment trends, which is expected to flatten out over the next few years, are important elements to factor into strategic planning. The issue becomes not only enrollment, but how to best serve the demographic groups that will be more common at the High Schools. Indeed, South High is perceived to have some programmatic differences with North High School. Both administrative staff and teachers believe these perceived differences are not very significant, and that both schools offer very high quality educational experiences. Nonetheless, how parents and residents perceive the two high schools seems to be enough of an issue that the District may want to address this area in its strategic plan.

Finally, many stakeholders perceive the strategic planning initiative as a valuable step in moving the District forward and being prepared for the future with a consensus of direction. The input gathered here along with the processes yet to come will help both Administrators and School Board members focus on the District's highest priorities in context. Because of the current fiscal situation, it is imperative that the District use its resources in the most efficient and effective way possible. Two key questions to be answered are: 1) What is the Board's vision and mission for the District? 2) How can the District achieve its expressed vision and mission in the present and future environment? By using the Strategic Planning process as a tool for identifying the District's highest priorities and using these to frame its vision and mission, Administrative staff will be energized to pursue these core strategic elements in a dynamic, innovative, and accelerated context. In this way, the Strategic Planning process itself serves as an underlying opportunity for the District.

IV. NEXT STEPS

So, what is the purpose of all of the information gathered and shared here? How will it help the Board at the retreat/workshop? In a word it provides context. The benefit of the information that has been provided is the broad perspective it offers in helping to create a fertile environment for reflection as well as adding different perspectives for discussion and decision making. This preliminary summary should be used to help Board members and Senior Staff focus their thinking on the potential strategic issues that are likely to be identified and explored at the retreat. A preparation guide has been developed to offer suggestions on how to further consider the information presented here as well as to offer some suggested steps to prepare for the upcoming sessions.

BACKGROUND SOURCES AND READING SUGGESTIONS ON STRATEGIC PLANNING

Bryson, John M., *Strategic Planning for Public and Nonprofit Organizations: A Guide to Strengthening and Sustaining Organizational Achievement*, revised edition, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1995.

Gabris, Gerald T., *Strategic Planning in Municipal Government: A Tool for Expanding Cooperative Decision Making between Elected and Appointed Officials* *Public Productivity & Management Review*, Vol. 16, No. 1 (Autumn, 1992), pp. 77-93

Gabris, Gerald T., "Educating Elected Officials in Strategic Goal Setting," *Public Productivity & Management Review* (1989, 23, vol. 2), pp.:161-175.

Mobilizing for Action through Planning and Partnerships (MAPP) The MAPP Framework, NACCHO <http://www.naccho.org/topics/infrastructure/MAPP/index.cfm>

Mintzberg, H., *The fall and rise of strategic planning*. *Harvard Business Review*, (1994, January-February), pp. 107-114.

Mintzberg, H. *The Rise and Fall of Strategic Planning*, The Free Press, 1994.

Canary, Hal W. *Linking Strategic Plans With Budgets*, *Government Finance Review* (April 1992): pp 21-24.

Appendix E

Summary of Focus Group Data

This appendix summarizes the focus group data that was provided to Board members and executive staff prior to the workshop sessions. The data was analyzed and presented in three forms: key word or phrase search; key theme association; interpretive impressions and summary thoughts. The highlights of the data are presented below.

KEY WORD OR PHRASE SEARCH

The words and phrases listed below present the results of our analysis of focus group notes. The advantage to this presentation of focus group data is that key words and phrases reveal topics or issues that should be weighed and considered when proceeding with strategic planning discussions. The results of the key word/phrase search are presented below:

Technology & Connectivity (93 times)
 Communication (48 times)
 Quality & Excellence (47 times)
 Pride & Tradition (42 times)
 Size (41 times)
 Testing, etc., (38 times) (NCLB, AYP, Standardized Test/Test Scores, PSAT)
 Facilities (35 times)
 Athletics/Sports (33 times) (Athletics - 9 times plus Sports - 24 times)
 Compensation (31 times) (Pay/Wages/Benefits)
 College or College Prep (26 times)
 Curriculum (24 times)
 Budget & Finance (22 times)
 Band/Music/Fine Arts (21 times)
 The "future" (20 times)
 Opportunity (19 times)
 Largeness/size of schools or classes (19 times)
 Clubs (18 times)
 Friendly/Welcoming/Family-oriented (18 times)
 HVAC/Air Conditioning (16 times)
 Spirit/school spirit (16 times)
 Caring/Committed Teachers (14 times)
 Technical/Vocational Training (10 times)
 Feeder Schools/Middle Schools (10 times)
 Equity/inequity (10 times)
 Diversity (8 times)
 Calendar or year-round class (3 times)
 Library (2 times)

The table below summarizes the key word search information in terms of percentage of frequency of the term cited.

Key Word Search Summary

Key Word/Phrase	Times Cited	Percent
Technology & Connectivity	93	13.6%
Size, Largeness, Class Sizes <i>(all combined)</i>	60	8.8%
Facilities <i>(combined including HVAC)</i>	51	7.5%
Communication	48	7.0%
Quality & Excellence	47	6.9%
Pride & Tradition	42	6.1%
Testing (NCLB, AYP, Standardized, PSAE)	38	5.6%
Athletics/Sports	33	4.8%
Compensation	31	4.5%
College or College Prep	26	3.8%
Curriculum	24	3.5%
Budget & Finance	22	3.2%
Band/Music/Fine Arts	21	3.1%
The “future”	20	2.9%
Opportunity	19	2.8%
Clubs	18	2.6%
Friendly/Welcoming/Family-oriented	18	2.6%
Spirit/school spirit	16	2.3%
Caring/Committed Teachers	14	2.0%
Technical/Vocational Training	10	1.5%
Feeder Schools/Middle Schools	10	1.5%
Equity/Inequity	10	1.5%
Diversity	8	1.2%
Calendar or year-round class	3	0.4%
Library	2	0.3%
	684	

Appendix F

Community School District 99 Leadership Retreat Ice Breaker Exercise Ideas and Notes

Participants selected an object from a collection of miscellaneous household and workshop items and were asked to respond by sharing their thoughts with this discussion prompt in the context of the District and/or long-term planning.

This reminds me of...

1. Compass tells you where to go
2. Culture perpetuates itself. Plant a tree and never see the shade
3. Gold Coin-Stable programs, stable funding and go forward with fiscal restraint
4. Connectivity present and future which may have wire or not
5. Connector- decisions made yes or no
6. Rich tradition, rich quality (bag)
7. Combination lock-we are still figuring it out
8. Nuts and bolts
9. Life preserver –supportive and helpful people
10. Be a listener to student need and to people here many years. Work together
11. Sports timer represents competition-district leaders with curriculum and timer in timely fashion
12. Binder- flexible- Flexible thinking allows change. It also joins paper together-collaboration
13. Light switch- building projects –turns on a light of opportunity for students
14. Were never satisfied always want to be better
15. Book mark remember where we've been as we move forward
16. Globe- world that students have been given to be productive, prepared and good people
17. All good and positive. Make all good for students where we accomplish a lot
18. Pin of 16th President- Lincoln- represents good of Illinois and courage to continue to keep people's best interests at heart
19. Ruler-what we do is measure with facts
20. Keep in mind the big picture-where we want to go

APPENDIX G

Strategic Planning Workshop Preparation Guide

High School Dist. 99
Board of Education
And Senior Administrative Staff
January 2011

updated

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

What Are “Strategic Issues or Strategic Goals?”

This question is the topic of nearly endless debate among authors, observers and facilitators of strategic planning efforts. For the upcoming workshop, here are some guidelines and suggestions from some authors and observers that help to describe what “strategic” issues typically include.

Strategic issues or goals should include what is truly important for the District to address or accomplish given the breadth of circumstances and information (at both the policy and operational levels) that confronts the organization and its central mission. Identifying strategic issues can be compared to pouring your own professional assessment of all the issues the District faces into a filtered funnel. What eventually emerges is a mix of “clarified” issues that *demand attention*.

Further hints: As many experts on the topic debate this question, the following summary of ideas are offered to help you think about or identify “strategic issues” for the retreat. According to various authors, strategic issues or goals usually follow a pattern that includes the following attributes as identified in NACCHO’s MAPP Framework (see further information and a good discussion of strategic issues at www.naccho.org/topics/infrastructure/mapp/upload/strategic_issues.pdf. NACCHO has a very good resource site on strategic planning elements).

- Strategic issues tend to have *no obvious best solution*. These kinds of issues are likely to present significant operational or policy concerns for either the government as a whole, for a particular work unit, or for key individuals. If an obvious best solution exists, then the strategic question is why hasn’t the approach been implemented?
- Strategic issues usually include an element of *tension, uncertainty, or conflict* on an issue that must be resolved because of: differences over past ways of doing things v. future demands; differences between current capacities and necessary capacities; differences in roles and responsibilities; and significant differences between needs and resources.

- Strategic issues *represent a fundamental choice* that must be made at the highest levels of the organization (either at the policy (elected) or administrative level). From this vantage point, strategic issues tend to be viewed as responses to the “forces of change.”

Strategic Planning Questions:

Another way to prepare for group discussions that will be part of the process is to ponder the following questions...

- What significant initiatives, programs or mandates can you identify that the District must confront in the next 2-10 years?
- What significant initiatives, programs or mandates can you identify that the District would like to address in the next 2-10 years?
- What significant initiatives, programs or mandates have been postponed that should be re-evaluated?
- Do you foresee any significant changes or paradigm shifts in the next 5-10 years that will impact the District or the District’s mission, or governance structure?

THE LONG-RANGE/STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

Although the word "planning" appears in the description, it should be emphasized, at the outset, that the end result of this process is not to create a "plan" that sits on a bookshelf but rather, the primary desired outcome is to foster strategic thinking and communications among Board members and senior staff. The end result of this session should be a viable listing of identified and prioritized goals and objectives that mesh with your overall vision of the District’s key services, policy, and program decisions for the future.

-General Outline of Discussion Sessions at the Retreat/Workshop

Session I. Organization Values and Visions of the Future-

Exploration and identification of the Organization’s desired future condition as individuals and as a group. **Focus Question.** Imagine that you left the District tomorrow and didn’t return until 2020 or 2030. Develop three to four “vision” statements that would describe what you think you would see or hope you would see in the way of Dist. 99 accomplishments, policies, programs, facilities and changes 10 or 20 years into the future. Can these issues be categorized into key “issue areas”? There are no wrong answers—use your imagination!

Session II. Environmental Scan & Assessment of Strengths, Weaknesses and Opportunities (SWOT)-

- A. Identification of the internal factors inhibiting the achievement of the future vision.
Focus Question A: What are the District’s strengths? Where are its weaknesses? How is the District functioning as team and as an organization? Is the District moving toward a policy focus? Can you identify the factors that may be inhibiting achievement of clear

roles, organizational arrangements, work methods, resources, finances, facilities, and other factors or decisions?

- B. A review and accounting of the external factors present in the environment that can potentially impact the success of the District's activities both negatively and positively. **Focus Question B:** What's happening around you? What are the major challenges you anticipate that the District will face in the coming two–four years? Can you identify the factors that may be inhibiting the District's achievement of the future vision, particularly regional trends, national policies, work methods, finances, and other governmental agencies decisions?

Session III. Goal Identification-

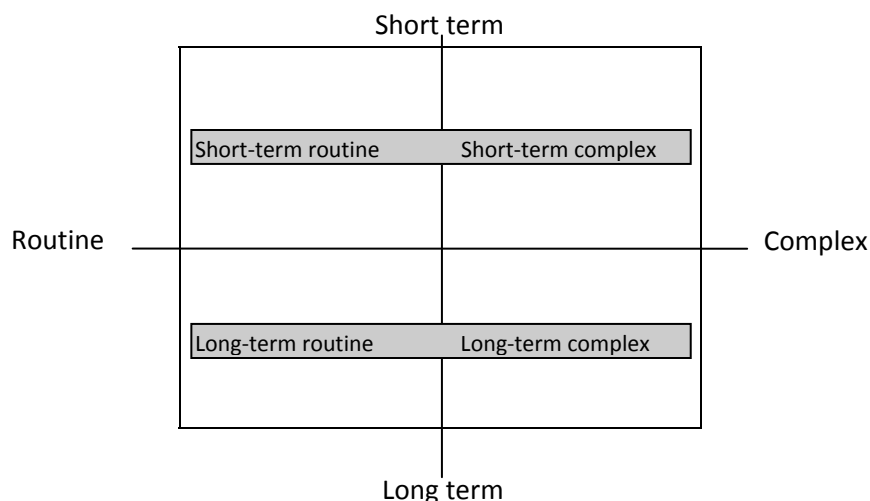
Collaborative establishment of strategic goals and objectives necessary to achieve the future vision. Goals will range from short-term simple objectives to long-term complex goals. **Focus Question:** What are the new and ongoing goals and accomplishments you want staff to concentrate on or put in place in the short term? . . . the long term? The facilitator will lead the Board and Senior Staff through a goal development session. Each participant should be prepared to present 3-5 measurable goals or objectives for the near and long term.

Session IV. Classification and Prioritization of Goals-

Collaborative classification of complexity and priorities. Using a group discussion technique, the group will work together to classify the identified goals according to a matrix of complexity and time to complete. Once the goals are classified as short or long term, complex or routine, a consensus ranking of goals and objectives in each quadrant of the matrix below will be done by all participants via follow-up balloting.

Policy Classification Grid

-Gabris



PREPARATIONS AND APPROACH

As with any group discussion, the ultimate success of the retreat will hinge on your involvement. Your willingness to step back from your usual role at regular meetings and workshops and work as a team is of key importance. Communication of ideas and patience will be vital to the success to your work. Our discussions will be broad-based and each member of the senior staff should come prepared to share ideas on what can and should happen in the not too distant future.

Our role during the session is to facilitate the "process" itself. Our primary goal as facilitators is to elicit-- to the best of our abilities- the equal participation of all involved. We will offer comments ask for clarifications and elaborations or probe your reasoning, but we will not be evaluating or judging your ideas. We will be the neutral ombudsman--fostering dialogue and guiding your discussions.

Be prepared for our upcoming sessions by thinking of the following:

-come to the sessions with an open-mind and a willingness to listen as well as share ideas

-be prepared to comment on policy issues important to the District in a comprehensive context--- giving credence to the overall impact of certain plans, decisions, actions, and inactions

-be prepared to articulate and explain what you consider to be the KEY short and long-term goals, issues and objectives that are, or will be, facing the District and its various programs and services.

SOURCES AND READING SUGGESTIONS ON STRATEGIC PLANNING

Bryson, John M., Strategic Planning for Public and Nonprofit Organizations: A Guide to Strengthening and Sustaining Organizational Achievement, rev. ed., San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1995.

Gabris, Gerald T., Strategic Planning in Municipal Government: A Tool for Expanding Cooperative Decision Making between Elected and Appointed Officials
Public Productivity & Management Review, Vol. 16, No. 1 (Autumn, 1992), pp. 77-93

Gabris, Gerald T., "Educating Elected Officials in Strategic Goal Setting," Public Productivity & Management Review (1989, 23, vol. 2), pp.:161-175.

Mobilizing for Action through Planning and Partnerships (MAPP) The MAPP Framework, NACCHO
<http://www.naccho.org/topics/infrastructure/MAPP/index.cfm>

.Mintzberg, H.,The Fall and Rise of Strategic Planning. Harvard Business Review, (1994, January-February), pp. 107-114.

Canary, Hal W., Linking Strategic Plans With Budgets, Government Finance Review (April 1992): pp. 21-24.

BRAINSTORMING FORM 2010-11

PLEASE TAKE A FEW MINUTES TO JOT DOWNSOME IDEAS BEFORE THE SESSION

Section One. Visions of the Future.

Take some time to imagine what District 99, the programs, and the two high schools could or should look like in the future. Imagine that you left Dist. 99 today and didn't return for 15-20 years. Develop two to three statements that would describe what you think you will find or what you hope to find when you return in 2025. There are no wrong answers—use your imagination!

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Section Two. Short-term ideas.

Develop three or four critical short-term goals and issues to discuss during the session. By short term, we mean any goals, objectives, services or issue that you would like to see initiated or completed within the upcoming fiscal year. These should be plans, programs etc. than can be realistically achieved or initiated within the next fiscal year, that in your opinion, the staff and Board should commit to.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

Section Three. Long-term ideas.

Develop three or four essential long-term goals and issues to discuss during the session. By long-term, we mean any goals, objectives, services or policy issues, although being initiated in the coming fiscal year, cannot be realistically advanced or completed for three, five, seven, or more years down the road. Medium to long-term goals typically include many of your most costly and complex initiatives and ideas.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

APPENDIX H

Dist. 99 Strategic Planning: Focus Group Scanning

Facilitation Summary Workshop

Center for Governmental Studies
Northern Illinois University
January 2011

Center for Governmental Studies



- Public service, applied research, and public policy development unit within NIU Outreach.
- Functions as a “think and do” tank
- Founded in 1969
- Interdisciplinary, full-time professional staff of more than 25 associates
 - Doctoral and Masters degree associates
 - Training and fields of study represented: public administration, political science/public policy, economics, history, education, business, economic development, computer science, mathematics, and statistics.

Outline – Focus Group Listening & Scanning Session Participants

Approximately 300 participants/75+ hours

- **Community-wide participants**
 - Residents (2 focus groups)
 - Resident Open Forum Focus Group (1 evening session)
- **Civic Institutions** (1 focus group)
- **Businesses** (1 focus group)
- **North and South Campuses**
 - (11 total focus groups)
 - **Organizational Focus Groups**
 - **Administrative and Faculty Groups: Principal, Asst. Principal, A.D., Deans**
 - **Dept. Chairs**
 - **Faculty**
 - **Support Staff**

Outline – Focus Group Listening & Scanning Session Participants

- **Student & Parent Focus Groups**
 - At both North and South Campuses
 - **Students** (8 focus groups; one at each grade level)
 - **Current Parents** (2 focus groups)
 - **Future and Former Parents** (2 focus groups)
- **District Staff and Represented Employee Groups**
 - **Administrators- Superintendent, Cabinet, Administrators** (Interviews and focus group)
 - **DGEA Certified Staff** (1 focus group)
 - **DGEA Support Staff** (1 focus group)
 - **ASC Exempt Staff** (1 focus group)
 - **CMG Building/Grounds Staff** (1 focus group)

What was asked?

- Word Association: if you hear the phrase "Dist. 99" you think what _____?
- If you were meeting with a new neighbor, friend or colleague considering Dist. 99/Downers Grove Township HS area for location of their residence or a place to work, how would you describe the high schools, in the District?

- Imagine that you left the District tomorrow and didn't return until 2015 or 2020. What do you think you would see in the community in your return as it relates to the District and to the High Schools?

- What are some of the readily identifiable strengths of the District?

- What are some of the weaknesses, shortcomings, or challenges in the District?

- As you look into the future, are there any identifiable external threats to the District?

- Similarly, are there any identifiable opportunities for the District?

- If you could change, improve or create one important feature or goal of the District, right away or in the near future, what would it be?

DATA ANALYSIS HIGHLIGHTS

KEY WORD OR PHRASE SEARCH:

- Technology & Connectivity (93 times)
- Communication (48 times)
- Quality & Excellence (47 times)
- Pride & Tradition (42 times)
- Size (41 times)
- Testing including NCLB, AYP, Standardized Test/Test Scores, PSAT (38 times)
- Facilities (35 times)
- Athletics/Sports (33 times)
- Compensation (31 times) (Pay/Wages/Benefits)
- College or College Prep (26 times)
- Curriculum (24 times)
- Budget & Finance (22 times)
- Band/Music/Fine Arts (21 times)
- The “future” (20 times)

Key Word Search Table

Table 1
Key Word Search Summary

Key word/ Phrase	Times Cited	Percent
Technology & Connectivity	93	13.6%
Size, Largeness, Class Sizes <i>(all combined)</i>	60	8.8%
Facilities <i>(combined including HVAC)</i>	51	7.5%
Communication	48	7.0%
Quality & Excellence	47	6.9%
Pride & Tradition	42	6.1%
Testing (NCLB, AYP, Standardized, PSAE)	38	5.6%
Athletics/Sports	33	4.8%
Compensation	31	4.5%
College or College Prep	26	3.8%
Curriculum	24	3.5%
Budget & Finance	22	3.2%
Band/Music/Fine Arts	21	3.1%
The "future"	20	2.9%
Opportunity	19	2.8%
Clubs	18	2.6%
Friendly/Welcoming/Family-oriented	18	2.6%
Spirit/school spirit	16	2.3%
Caring/Committed Teachers	14	2.0%
Technical/Vocational Training	10	1.5%
Feeder Schools/Middle Schools	10	1.5%
Equity/Inequity	10	1.5%
Diversity	8	1.2%
Calendar or year-round class	3	0.4%
Library	2	0.3%
	684	

WORD ASSOCIATION EXERCISE THEMES

Overwhelmingly positive adjectives were used to describe the District by most groups...

- Excellent education
- Well known/Good reputation
- Quality, good reputation, high standards
- Held in high esteem
- Educational opportunities – lots of choices – well prepared for college
- Dedicated staff – caring, passionate, and professional
- Top 6% of the schools in the USA!
- “A special place”
- Sports-24 sports offered
- Proactive District
- Great teachers
- Great staff
- North and South-different campuses
- Abundant programs; tons of choices for involvement beyond sports
- Great Arts/Music program
- School spirit
- Big with lots of kids, 3000 at South 2100 at North
- Only two schools in the district
- Well maintained
- Amazing special services
- Strong tradition
- Community oriented
- A very diverse student population
- Financially stable
- Hard-working
- Resilient

WORD ASSOCIATION EXERCISE THEMES

There were also some cautionary adjectives used to describe the District including ...

- Very large schools – a lot of kids in one place. Creates constraints/presents challenges
- High expectations for students and staff, some feelings of conservative approaches and heightened control/ more corporate
- Two schools were seen as not substantially different, but, there are constant perceptions of differences
- Tradition can be good, but can lead to view of not “rocking the boat”
- Change can take a long time, e.g., technology
- Demanding
- Crowded
- Tests/Competition
- Heavy on process

HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE THE DISTRICT TO OTHERS?

WHAT WOULD YOU TELL A NEIGHBOR/STRANGER ABOUT DIST. 99...?

- The vast majority of the opinions from almost all participants were positive, but some concerns were also expressed in this exercise.
- In general, participants described the District as one that has a good reputation, offers a high quality education, and has committed and caring teachers and administrators where opportunities abound both academically and in activities.
- Most would encourage others to take full advantage of this community asset.
- Most participants listed positive qualities and attributes about the school, awesome energetic teaching staff, students take ownership and pride, community takes ownership and pride, and the great strength is college prep – college bound curriculum.
- As one participant put it, with others that agreed, Dist. 99 provides “a lot of bang for the “buck” – “high value” education.
- Several participants were diligent in pointing out the strength of the District’s programs for special need/multi-need students. This was brought up on many occasions and some felt this should not be overlooked.

HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE THE DISTRICT TO OTHERS?

- **WHAT WOULD YOU TELL A NEIGHBOR/STRANGER ABOUT DIST. 99...? (continued)**
- The schools were seen as having high expectations and standards which the school district achieves.
- On the other hand, many voiced concerns that when talking to a stranger or potential new resident, that there are real and perceived differences between the North and South campuses (size, diversity, sports, academics).
- Students were really excited about school and its options. However, some commented that the schools were crowded, "big," and with lots of rules.
- There were consistently positive responses related to opportunities activities and academics.
- The District was seen as financially sound, but there was uncertainty by some if the present financial crisis might eventually impact funding or taxes that some felt were already high.
- Some felt it would be important to tell potential residents/parents to be aware of the saw tooth boundaries
- For having large schools – the District was seen as still focusing on the individual – having a caring environment that is very responsive to parents, and where staff and teachers celebrate success and respond to every e-mail.
- There were several that felt technology seems to be slightly behind. More technology for teachers, students, classrooms, and resource centers is needed to catch up and keep up with trends and opportunities. Some thought this might be a competitive disadvantage at the present time.

HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE THE DISTRICT TO OTHERS?

- Several mentioned they would tell anyone about the high quality education, quality of teachers, amazing class choices, lots of opportunities and caring environment.
- The vast majority of the opinions from almost all participants were positive, but some concerns were also expressed in this exercise.
- In general, participants described the District as one that has a good reputation, offers a high quality education, has committed and caring teachers and administrators, and where opportunities abound both academically and in activities.
- The District's schools are seen as having a long reputation of offering a high quality education with an emphasis on academic achievement from college prep studies, to multi-need programs.
- Resources for college prep students was noted as a strength, but there does not appear to be clear agreement as to whether college prep is over emphasized or not emphasized enough. This probably depends on the perspective of the participant.

SWOT ANALYSIS SUMMARY- STRENGTHS

- The responses from all groups with regard to strengths were remarkably similar.
- Participants across the various groups pointed to many factors they see as strengths. Some of these positive attributes can be found in the summaries of the earlier sections of this summary report.
- By way of summary, common themes included an overall/strong satisfaction with the schools.
- Schools were seen as having committed and dedicated teachers, staff, counselors, administrators, and parents. There are innumerable opportunities for students and something for everyone from clubs, to fine arts, and from debate, to frequently recognized athletic teams.
- The District's schools are seen as having a long reputation of offering a high quality education with an emphasis on academic achievement from college prep studies, to multi-need programs.
- Resources for college prep students was noted as a strength, but there does not appear to be clear agreement as to whether college prep is over emphasized or not emphasized enough. This probably depends on the perspective of the participant.
- Again, as early data has indicated, the District is seen as one that has a good reputation, offers a high quality education, and has committed and caring teachers and administrators, and where opportunities abound both academically and in activities.

SWOT ANALYSIS SUMMARY- DEFICIENCIES/WEAKNESSES

DEFICIENCIES/AREAS OF IMPROVEMENT

General Themes

- Although the kinds of deficiencies or areas of improvement that were expressed had more variation among groups, there were some themes that ran throughout the responses.
- Some responses to the weaknesses question were more difficult to categorize and seemed to be somewhat more oriented to the individual responding.
- Facility Issues - This was a major issue that at some point came up in most groups. In some groups, it was mentioned repeatedly.
- The facility issues included: crowding in classrooms and hallways, outdated auditorium, HVAC and air movement issues, athletic facilities including desire for artificial turf, inadequate space to grow, and the need for off-site facility use for some sports.
- •Size of School/Impacts of Size - This issue was mentioned across a number of groups but was somewhat difficult to categorize or summarize. Most groups recognized the differences in the enrollments and size of the two campuses as contributors to the sense of crowding or impressions of the schools as being "large".
- While many stated that size can be a strength, offering a diversity in the kinds and types of classes and classmates, it was also seen as a limiting factor that needed to be addressed in order to preserve personal connectedness to both the "school" and each other.
- Further elaboration on weaknesses can be found in the preliminary summary that illustrates some themes found within various participant groups

SWOT ANALYSIS SUMMARY- OPPORTUNITIES

General Themes:

- The opportunity question did not receive the same number of responses that other SWOT questions received. However, the responses were very consistent among groups.
- Most groups mentioned the opportunity (perceived or real) that technology presents for the District. Future and current development of technology is seen as an opportunity. This was the most frequently mentioned opportunity and it was a consistent response in all groups.
- More connections/communications with parents, support staff, alumni, other schools, business groups, and other governments were also consistently mentioned.
- Improving facilities was mentioned several times.
- Capitalizing on the District's demographics and diversity was listed as an opportunity.
- Finally, developing a more global vision of education was mentioned several times as a necessary step for planning and keeping the District at the top of its game as a high quality educational organization.

SWOT ANALYSIS SUMMARY- THREATS

General Themes:

- The economy and financial issues were mentioned as a threat by nearly all groups. This issue was mentioned more than any other.
- Demographics, diversity, and the aging population was mentioned but with much less frequency as the economy. Note: Demographics and diversity were also viewed as an opportunity.
- Some saw technology as an opportunity and a threat, by possibly changing the dynamics in the classroom and by replacing relationship building.
- Some saw retirements and turnover of leaders, administrators and experienced teachers as a possible threat.
- Changing government regulations (NCLB, testing, etc.) was mentioned as a threat that would require both monitoring and adaptation if new regulations are handed down.
- The physical facility issues were mentioned as a threat by many.
- Funding policies by the state were also seen as a threat to future planning and stability.

IMPORTANT PRIORITY QUESTION

- The final/wrap-up question posed to each group was an open ended question asking each participant to identify the singular goal, action, program, or decision they would change right away if they had the ability to impact one item related to District 99 in the very near term.
- With nearly 300 participants, there were almost as many responses as participants since the question was open to personal interpretation.
- However, some themes did emerge and are highlighted on the next slide:

IMPORTANT PRIORITY QUESTION

General Themes:

- Improvement to the facilities was mentioned most often in response to the important priority question. It was listed across most groups and with great frequency by the participants.
- Improving technology from smaller technology related items to large scale/organization wide improvements was often cited.
- More collaboration between campuses and even departments was mentioned several times by groups.
- The issue of the class schedule combined with class size, workload issues and time spent teaching (creative learning verses standardized testing emphasis) was also mentioned with some frequency across many groups.
- Solving economic issues was also mentioned however with less frequency than the first two items.
- A cross-section of staff would add opportunities for greater input, voice, and recognition.
- Many were appreciative of the District's financially sound and stable profile and keeping that in place was seen as an important priority.
- Some participants noted the School Board's ability to stay focused on key issues and minimizing disagreements was important to the District's ongoing success.
- Feeder school connections/relations and communication was cited by various participants as an important priority.

Focusing Issues

Participants view the District as very strong academically offering two comprehensive high schools with academic and extracurricular opportunities for every student.

The District is in the black financially due to strong community support for quality education. The organization is seen as professional with high skill levels for both teachers and administrators.

The general culture is dynamic, adaptive, innovative, and aims for excellence as an educational system.

Many noted that students are the District's focus and its greatest resource and that the two campuses are friendly, safe, and welcoming environments, which are seen as having strong and positive relationships with the broader community.

However, there are challenges and pressures on the organization, the teaching mission, and the two campuses.

Focusing Issues (cont'd)

- Ongoing challenges include the Federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) policy. Many pointed to the impact of this policy and the impact of test score goals and standards on the classroom and curriculum.
- Perceived differences between the educational experiences at the two high schools is part of the equation that leaders, administrators, and staff should keep in mind when fashioning strategies, goals, and approaches.
- The need to keep up with technology and how to maintain and expand what is in place was a frequent issue noted during the process.
- Physical plant needs including HVAC systems at both schools and indoor and outdoor space needs were also common topics in the focus group discussions.
- Staffing change is a constant in large organizations and District 99 is no different.
- From top administrators, to teachers and support staff, selecting staff and building compensation systems to attract and retain quality staff are an important part of the equation in developing and sustaining a high quality organization.

Next Steps

- So, what is the purpose of all of the information gathered and shared here? How will it help the Board at the retreat/workshop?
- In a word, *context*.
- The benefit of the information that has been gathered is the broad perspective it offers.
- It should foster a fertile environment for reflection as well as adding a variety of perspectives for discussion and decision making.
- This preliminary summary should be used to help Board members and senior staff focus their thinking on the potential strategic issues that are likely to be identified and explored at the retreat.

Next Steps

- Dist. 99 Strategic Planning Retreat
- General Outline
 - Vision
 - Scanning
 - Strategic Issues
 - Goals
 - Prioritization
- Action Planning

Defining Strategic & Thinking Strategically

Preparation Guide

What Are “Strategic Issues or Strategic Goals?” *

- “Strategic” issues typically include or involve:
 - Issues or decisions that represent a fundamental change or paradigm shift
 - Complex problems or issues without obvious solutions
 - Environmentally formed issues in that must be addressed
 - Issues that can no longer be postponed or are opportunistic
 - Include issues or goals that are truly central to the District’s mission, which must be addressed given the breadth of responsibilities that define the core mission

What eventually emerges is a mix of “clarified” issues that *demand attention*.

**note: for a good discussion of strategic issues see the discussion prepared by NACCHO as listed in the accompanying source and suggested reading page*

Comments

- Comments or questions?

Thank you

BACKGROUND SOURCES AND READING SUGGESTIONS ON STRATEGIC PLANNING

- Bryson, John M., *Strategic Planning for Public and Nonprofit Organizations: A Guide to Strengthening and Sustaining Organizational Achievement*, revised edition, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1995.
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- Gabris, Gerald T., *Strategic Planning in Municipal Government: A Tool for Expanding Cooperative Decision Making between Elected and Appointed Officials* *Public Productivity & Management Review*, Vol. 16, No. 1 (Autumn, 1992), pp. 77-93.
- Gabris, Gerald T., "Educating Elected Officials in Strategic Goal Setting," *Public Productivity & Management Review* (1989, 23, vol. 2.), pp. 161-175.
- *Mobilizing for Action through Planning and Partnerships (MAPP) The MAPP Framework*, NACCHO <http://www.naccho.org/topics/infrastructure/MAPP/index.cfm>.
- Mintzberg, H., *The Fall and Rise of Strategic Planning*. *Harvard Business Review*, (1994, January-February), pp. 107-114.
- Mintzberg, H. *The Rise and Fall of Strategic Planning*, The Free Press, 1994.

APPENDIX I

Policy & Program Strategic Action Sheet

Project or Action	Priority Level	Primary/Lead Supt'd or Dept.	2 ndry/Coop. Dept.(s)	Role of the Dist.	Other Participants or Outside Expertise	Potential Funding Source(s)	Action/duration Schedule	Initiation Date	Key Status Date #1	Key Status Date #2