

# **RIDGEFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

**MISSION, FOCUS AND  
CONSTANCY OF PURPOSE**

## ***STRATEGIC COHERENCE PLAN***

**CHALLENGING EVERY STUDENT TO BE  
SUCCESSFUL BEYOND SCHOOL**

**2017**

**2022**



*Ridgefield Public Schools  
Strategic Coherence Plan*

**Table of Contents**

**Executive Summary.....**

**Planning Context.....**

**Coherence Planning Team Membership .....**

**Work Process and Phases Detail.....**

**Foundational Assumptions: Mission and Vision.....**

**Attributes of a Successful Graduate.....**

**Phase II Data Collection and Analysis.....**

**Phase II Data Outcomes and Phase III Results.....**

**Phase IV and V – Improving Coherence.....**

- **Strategy One .....**
- **Strategy Two .....**
- **Strategy Three .....**
- **Strategy Four .....**
- **Strategy Five .....**
- **Strategy Six .....**

**Glossary of Terms.....**

## **Executive Summary**

The world we are preparing our children to live in is rapidly changing. With the advent of the digital age and the interconnected global economy, the definition of what it means to appropriately prepare a student for life learning and work beyond school has been transformed. Content knowledge and high test scores are no longer the only variables that portend student success, we know now that they also need to develop a sophisticated set of skills to ensure they can navigate the challenges we know they will encounter.

In Ridgefield, after thoughtful consideration and research, we believe the priorities among those required skills include critical and creative thinking for problem solving, effective communication, and the ability to work cooperatively with others. Without these skills, we know students will have limited choices and will not have the ability to appropriately adjust and learn as circumstances and opportunities change throughout their lives. This planning process was designed to determine to what degree a Ridgefield Public School education make certain that a student who graduates from here will leave with these skills and the content knowledge needed to succeed regardless of their future path of choice. The actions identified by the plan outline what needs to happen to realize that vision.

Unlike traditional strategic planning which seeks to collect data and set goals related to numerous and frequently unrelated topics, this Strategic Coherence Plan was totally focused on just those elements of work that support the development and improvement of skill-based student success. How are K-12 teaching and classroom experiences facilitating student practice of critical and creative thinking for problem solving, effective communication, and the ability to work cooperatively with others? How are we measuring our success and using that K-12 data to create accountability and the continuous improvement of student performance in those areas? How do we budget and plan and make sure that all our K-12 work is designed to increase the number of children who leave Ridgefield ready to perform these skills at a high level? By asking these questions and building the answers based on the good things that are already happening in Ridgefield, the members of the Strategic Coherence Planning team have identified the steps that need to be taken over the next 5 years to help every child build their skills.

This notion of building on past success is a key theme. Over the last decade, mandates from Washington and Hartford have encroached on Ridgefield's decision making, creating policy distractions that can make it more difficult to achieve our mission. This plan seeks to reverse that trend, creating a unified focus around student success that will accelerate Ridgefield's unified vision of successful preparation of all students. On a day to day basis, as the plan is rolled out and the proposed actions are implemented, the district-wide focus will increasingly spotlight how students can demonstrate the degree to which they have mastered the critical skills of critical and creative thinking for problem solving, effective

communication, and the ability to work cooperatively with others. Students will encounter lessons and projects where specific feedback on how well they are applying their skills and what they need to do to improve in all their classes throughout their Ridgefield educational experience. This feedback will be guided by rigorous standards that have been validated by educators across the country. These frameworks will provide consistency and reliability so that students will get similar expectations from grade level to grade level and class to class in these critical skill areas.

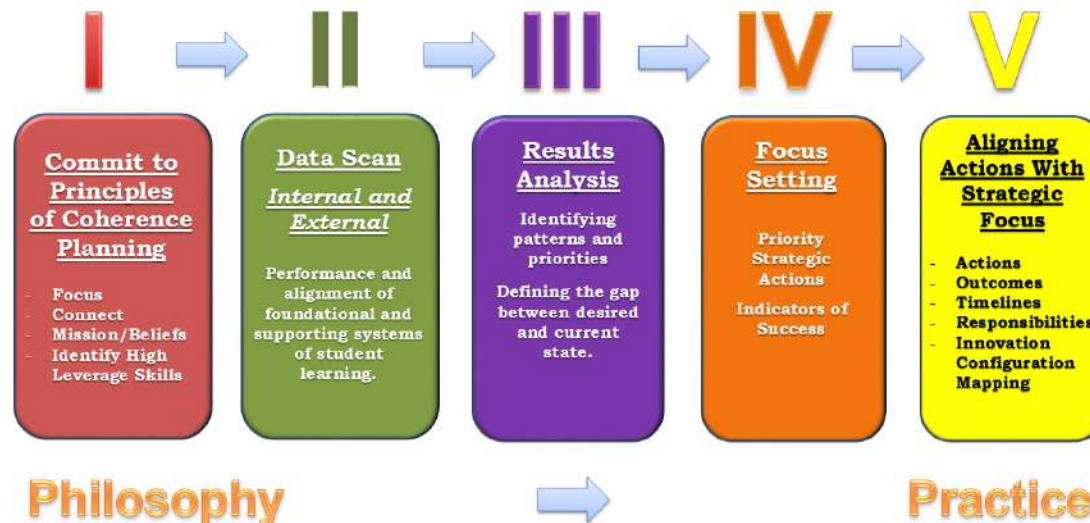
Parents will be hearing more about what kinds of work students are doing that support these skills and they will be learning the language that the Ridgefield schools use to measure and evaluate how well they are doing them. Over time, they will see the evidence that their children can apply the district's foundational skills effectively and they will be reported on so all are accountable for their acquisition.

Community members should be seeing that budgets and resources are designed to increase the district's capacity to support these skills for the entire student body. As we work to improve practice and build student capacity for critical and creative thinking for problem solving, effective communication, and the ability to work cooperatively with others, we intend to maintain the successful aligned practices that Ridgefield is currently engaged in, but build on them so that teachers have the instructional space and resources they need to do quality work at a reasonable pace focused on those things that the Ridgefield community values most.

This report is designed to tell the story and results of the entire planning process – from the “vital few” rationale and assumptions that guided it, through the data collection and analysis activities, and then to the priority strategies and specific actions that will guide the first 12-18 months of work to be done. Those strategies are the start of a multi-year effort to reframe the public-school experience in Ridgefield so that the district's Mission of empowering our community to strive for excellence and embrace the opportunities of our globally connected world can be realized for every student.

## Planning Context

The Ridgefield Public Schools have a history of success and high achievement. The commitment to excellence that is found in our schools makes the District one of the most successful in a county known for the high quality of its public schools. It was from this position of strength that newly hired superintendent, Dr. Karen Baldwin, proposed an effort to explore the degree to which those elements that created the district’s past success can be used to prepare it for an educational future that demands a more difficult to measure set of skills to ensure student success. To this end, Dr. Baldwin invited Jonathan Costa, a planning consultant, to meet with the Board in the spring of 2016. In his presentation, Costa proposed a different path from traditional strategic planning as a method to determine the answer to this essential planning question. Costa explained that his process, Strategic Coherence Planning, employs a backwards design method similar to those employed by Ridgefield teachers when they plan their lessons. Just as it does for instructional planning, backwards design allows participants to start the improvement process by agreeing on what student success (skills and attributes) would look like for Ridgefield students and then focus solely on those research-based practices that ensure a coherent PreK-12 system that supports that definition of student success. The five-phase process is outlined below (*Figure 1*) and is described in greater detail in the next section of this report.



(Figure 1)

With this student centered focus, the entire Strategic Coherence Planning process is designed to create a system dedicated to ensuring that every Ridgefield child acquires the skills and attributes required for success in life, learning and work beyond school. The Board of Education endorsed this approach and in June of 2016, the Superintendent convened a Strategic Coherence Planning Team consisting of key staff members, Board of Education members, and a diverse group of community representatives to complete the work required in each of the five phases. The members of this Strategic Coherence Planning Team and their affiliations are as follows:

## ***Planning Team List***

| <b>Core Members</b> | <b>Role</b>                      | <b>Core Members</b> | <b>Role</b>                        |
|---------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------|------------------------------------|
| Dr. Karen Baldwin   | Superintendent of Schools        | Christine Hopkinson | Ridgefield High School Teacher     |
| Fran Walton         | Board of Ed Chair                | Shaun Gallagher     | Scotts Ridge Middle School Teacher |
| David Cordisco      | Board of Ed member               | Prajakta Oppel      | Branchville Elementary Teacher     |
| Doug Silver         | Board of Ed member               | Michael Hougasian   | East Ridge Middle School Teacher   |
| Margaret Stamatis   | Board of Ed member               | Melinda Violante    | Scotland Elementary Teacher        |
| Dr. Stacey Gross    | Ridgefield High School Principal | Rebecca McHardy     | Ridgebury Elementary Teacher       |
| Kim Beck            | Assistant Superintendent         | Tricia Winkler      | Veterans Park Elementary Teacher   |
| Dr. Robert Miller   | Director of Technology           | Maureen Kozlark     | Board of Selectmen member          |
| Keith Margolus      | Branchville Elementary Principal | Deidre Basile       | Parent                             |
| Mike McNamara       | Ridgefield High School Teacher   | Tina Malhotra       | PTA Council President              |
|                     |                                  | Alison Villanueva   | Supervisor K-12 Humanities         |

## Work Process and Planning Phases Detail

The Strategic Coherence Planning team began their work with an introductory meeting in June of 2016 designed to; 1. provide an orientation to the challenges presented by planning in this era, 2. familiarize everyone with the five-phase strategic coherence planning process, and 3. to explore the basic principles of coherence that are the foundation of this approach to planning. These principles are summarized in the following declaration: a district can only ensure student success in a digital age by articulating a clear vision of what that student success looks like and then thoughtfully connect that vision to specific goals for learning, aligned measures of learning, and associated effective teaching practices (*Figure 2 -Foundational Instructional Systems*).



This formula for student success may seem obvious, but as noted earlier, the last several years have demonstrated that with a myriad of external distractions, it is easy for planning groups to lose their way. Time and energy are finite resources and the more work that needs to be done with those limited commodities the more fragmented and dispersed the efforts on the most important issues can become. The Strategic Coherence Planning Team took some time to discuss this reality and review the major mandates and changes that have been introduced in Connecticut, and by extension in Ridgefield, over just the last five years:

- A variety of testing and educator evaluation changes driven by the state’s No Child Left Behind waiver which changed the way every educator was supervised and evaluated in the district
- Making explicit connections between student test results and educator evaluation processes
- Annual educator ratings
- Language arts curriculum and instructional challenges including higher expectations related to new Connecticut Core Standards
- Mathematics curriculum and instructional challenges including higher expectations related to new Connecticut Core Standards
- Social Studies curriculum and instructional challenges including higher expectations related to new national standards framework



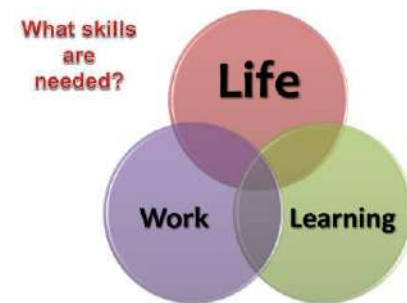
- Science curriculum and instructional challenges including higher expectations related to the new Next Generation Science Standards
- Transition to a new generation of computer based adaptive student assessments
- New models of professional learning and support guided by a new set of voluntary state professional learning standards
- The inevitable transition from a primarily print based learning environment to one that features ready access to digital resources
- The challenges of meeting the social and emotional needs of an increasingly wide range of students
- Additional adjustments to the above as now required by the recently passed Education Transformation Act of 2015 which will go into effect in the summer of 2016.

With all of this, it is not surprising that professionals, parents and students alike can feel adrift in the tumult. The key learning takeaway for the team at the launch meeting was understanding that Strategic Coherence Planning is about rediscovering and recommitting to a focus on student success and then rebuilding the systems connections required to make it happen for all students in the Ridgefield Public Schools.

Following their orientation to this conceptual background, The Strategic Coherence Planning Team explored the five phase planning process in detail. **Phase I** is about understanding the four Strategic Coherence Outcomes that frame the backwards design. This is why Phase I is entitled “Commit to the Principles of Coherence.” These outcomes are the reference point for each of the following phases of the planning process; the student goal setting, the data collection, and all of the action planning that is to come. Each of these four outcomes are described below with accompanying illustration of the foundational concept for each.

**Strategic Coherence Outcome One: Goals for Learning**  
*(Figure 3)*

The district has identified, defined and committed to supporting a focused set of appropriate student learning goals that will ensure student success in life, learning and work beyond school.



*Figure 3*

*Figure 4*

**Strategic Coherence Outcome Two: Teaching for Learning**

(Figure 5)

The district has committed to supporting instructional and adult learning strategies that ensure rigorous, digitally supported pedagogical experiences aligned with the district’s student goals.

| Instruction that depends and focuses less on these elements...   | ...and depends and focuses more on these elements.   |
|--|--|
| <p style="text-align: center;"> <b>Less paper</b><br/> <b>Less about facts</b><br/> <b>Less about single source research</b><br/> <b>Less about rankings</b><br/> <b>Less about memory and volume</b><br/> <b>Less just in case cramming</b><br/> <b>Less about compliance with rigid systems</b> </p> | <p style="text-align: center;"> <i>More pixels</i><br/> <i>More about skills</i><br/> <i>More about synthesis of multiple information sources</i><br/> <i>More about experiences</i><br/> <i>More about judgment and rigor</i><br/> <i>More just in time learning</i><br/> <i>More about creating value for one’s self and others</i> </p> |

(Figure 4)

**Strategic Coherence Outcome Three: Measures of Learning**

(Figure 5)

The district uses and reports on appropriate and balanced measures of student and adult success that are aligned with its student learning goals.

**Measure what you**  
**value, value what**  
**you measure.**

(Figure 5)



**Strategic Coherence Outcome Four: Alignment and Coherence**

(Figure 6)

The district aligns its supporting organizational systems to support the acquisition of its student learning goals (the Yellow Gears – Community Engagement, Policy and Regulation, and Resource Allocations).

*(Figure 6)*

With the four Strategic Coherence Outcomes explained and explored, the Strategic Coherence Planning Team then got a preview of the other phases of the planning process.

**Phase II - Complete a data scan of existing practices compared to those described in the four coherence outcomes.**

**Phase III - Complete a results analysis to determine the gaps between the current state and the desired coherence outcomes.**

**Phase IV - Forge a consensus on which gaps are the most critical to address to set the focus for future work.**

**Phase V - Plan and align work and action across the across the organization to ensure that the coherence outcomes are realized and the associated levels of student success obtained.**

Once the process overview was complete, the group explored the long-term organizational structure that is supported by the Strategic Coherence Planning process. When successful, a school system that has completed the process emerges from it united behind a common pursuit of the key attributes of student success that have been identified by their community. The process should leave behind a system where student learning goals, measures and practices are aligned with adult performance goals, measures and practices, and all are driven and supported by a unified vision of goals, measures and practices at the organizational/building level *(Figure 7)*.

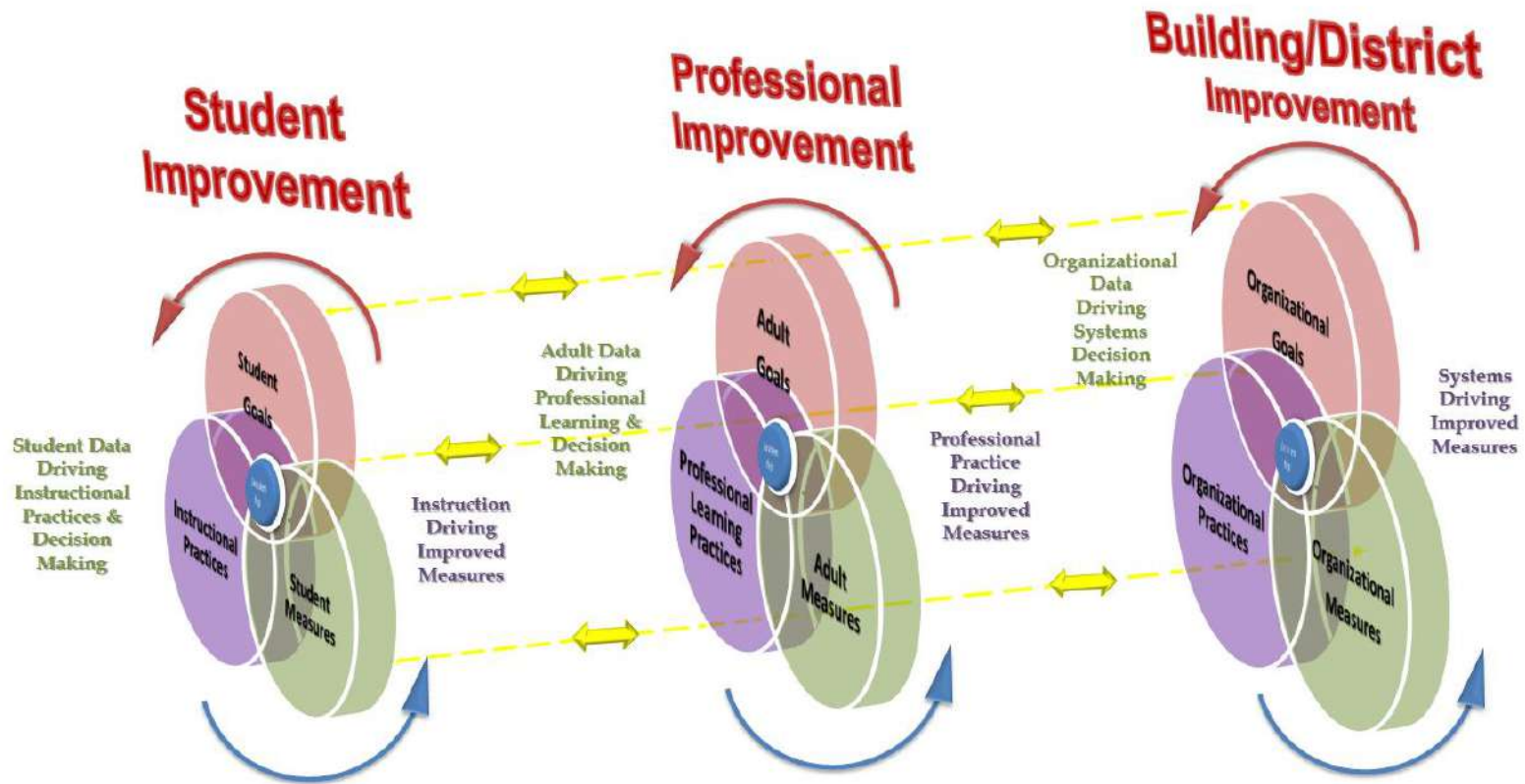


Figure 7

Another task at the start of the process was a rethinking of the district’s foundational assumptions, its Mission and operational beliefs. Over two sessions, the group worked to focus and update the district’s framing documents. The Mission was revised through the lens of a focused statement of what the district’s business is, for whom it is designed to serve, and its purpose. The commitment statements that follow the mission are the group’s articulation of the guiding principles that it believes the district should never violate as it makes decisions on the work to be done in pursuit of the mission. It is the combination of this clearly articulated purpose with associated operational commitments that will create the pathway for success for each Ridgefield student.

## **Mission**

**The mission of the Ridgefield Public Schools is to provide engaging, relevant, and personalized learning experiences so all students can pursue their interests and be prepared for life, learning and work as global citizens.**

**In pursuit of this mission, we commit to:**

- **Academic, social and emotional growth for all students**
- **Wellness of body and mind**
- **An inclusive climate of trust, safety, and respect, with strong partnerships among educators, students, parents and the community**
- **Value diversity by cultivating global competencies**
- **Attract, support and retain talented educators who embrace continuous learning.**

The final element of the preparation stage for planning was a group consensus on the most critical attributes of a successful Ridgefield Graduate. Much as the revised mission provided a foundation for the start of the planning process, Ridgefield was also well positioned to quickly coalesce around a set of student skills and attributes because they had previously identified a general set as part of their previous goal setting and improvement planning as part of Ridgefield High School's NEASC accreditation process. Using these items as a starting point, the Coherence Planning Team spent time exploring a variety of resources that contained the best available thinking about what will be required for student success in the near future. Participants reviewed articles by leading academic and business leaders, viewed and listened to speakers, videos and other items curated by the planning facilitator. Everyone had a chance to add their own thinking and resources to the process as well.

In reviewing the results of the group's work, the numbers that follow each item show the weighted priority votes that each item garnered during the group's deliberations – the yellow highlighting is used to point out the most important item in each list while the light blue shows the second tier priorities. It should be noted that no item was on the list unless it was deemed to be very important in its own right and the prioritization activity was completed as a way to identify starting points for the work that will eventually be done to ensure that every Ridgefield student acquires these skills.

### Profile of a Graduate from Ridgefield Schools

| Cognitive Attributes   | Non-Cognitive Attributes  |
|--|---|
| <p>A. Critical and creative (innovative) thinking 23</p> <p>B. Higher order, rigorous, complex, authentic problem solving (design thinking) 36</p> <p>C. Collaborative, interpersonal and cooperative working skills 18</p> <p>D. Clear and precise communication for a variety of purposes, audiences, and media 9</p> <p>E. Digital, information, and media literacy 4</p> | <p>A. Self-directed, independent learners 25</p> <p>B. Empathy and respect for others 30</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Global awareness, cultural proficiency, understanding of multiple perspectives 13</li> <li>○ Leadership, service, and working with others (Mentoring and tutoring skills) 13</li> </ul> <p>C. Resilience in the midst of failure or frustration 24</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Adaptability and flexibility 10</li> <li>○ Intellectual risk taking 0</li> </ul> <p>D. Self-reflection, self-awareness, self-advocacy, healthy decision making 31</p> |

## Phase II Data Collection and Analysis

With the district Mission and desired student skills identified, Phase I was complete and it was time to begin the Phase II data collection. This process is designed to determine the gap between the current state and the four articulated Coherence Outcomes as well as completing an analysis of a series of external data points that may have an impact on planning. To accomplish this task, the Strategic Coherence Planning Team was divided into five research and data collection groups. Assignments were determined by participant interest and a requirement that the groups be balanced between community representatives and district staff.

| <b>Group One</b><br>Goals for Learning | <b>Group Two</b><br>Teaching for Learning | <b>Group Three</b><br>Measures of Learning | <b>Group Four</b><br>Supporting Systems | <b>Group Five</b><br>External Factors |
|--|---|--|---|---------------------------------------|
| <i>Karen Baldwin</i>                   | <i>Kimberly Beck</i>                      | <i>Keith Margolus</i>                      | <i>Melinda Violante</i>                 | <i>Karen Sulzinsky</i>                |
| <i>Margaret Stamatis</i>               | <i>Prajakta Oppel</i>                     | <i>Tricia Winkler</i>                      | <i>Shaun Gallagher</i>                  | <i>Deirdre Basile -</i>               |
| <i>Christine Hopkinson</i>             | <i>Alison Villanueva</i>                  | <i>Fran Walton</i>                         | <i>Mike Hougasian</i>                   | <i>Mike McNamara</i>                  |
| <i>David Cordisco</i>                  | <i>Rob Miller</i>                         | <i>Stacey Gross</i>                        |   | <i>Paul Sutherland</i>                |
|  | <i>Doug Silver</i>                        |  |   | <i>Tina Malhotra</i>                  |

Once formed, each group was tasked with collecting data that would explore the status of the district for each of the above identified challenges as framed through lens of the goals, measures, and practices required to meet these needs. Provided with guiding questions, these groups worked with volunteers and other district staff over a ten-week period to collect information, identify what the district was already doing to meet these challenges, and finally to report back to their peers about what was needed to close the gap between what was desired and what was actually happening in the district.

For common frames of reference, each of the first four groups was additionally asked to rate the performance of the district for their areas of focus. *Figure 9* on the next page shows the scale that each group used to determine their respective ratings. A group’s choices ran from a 0 that would indicate “no evidence” of the desired practice to a 4 that would show systemically improving performance. Because Group Five was dealing with only external data, they had no ratings to ascribe, rather they reported their findings as prioritized trends and implications in the following areas: Economics/Demographics, Mandates/Legislation, Historical Achievement Data Trends, Impact of Digital Tools for Learning, Local Context, and Other.

| <b>Score</b>          | <b>Description</b>  |
|-----------------------|---|
| <b>0 –Not Present</b> | <b>The Desired Coherence Outcome is non-existent</b>  |
| <b>1 - Beginning</b>  | <b>There may be some individual efforts or minimal group attempts, but there is no systemic evidence or process in place to support the existence of the Desired Coherence Outcome.</b>   |
| <b>2 - Emergent</b>   | <b>There have been systemic efforts to create the Desired Coherence Outcome, but its implementation is uneven and has yet to deliver meaningful changes in student or adult performance.</b>  |
| <b>3 - Proficient</b> | <b>There has been a systemic effort to create the Desired Coherence Outcome and it is generally working. It is regularly creating evidence of meaningful changes in student and adult performance.</b>  |
| <b>4. Excellent</b>   | <b>There has been a systemic effort to create the Desired Coherence Outcome and it is functioning effectively. There have been meaningful changes in student and adult performance and there is evidence that data is driving further improvements in the system.</b> |

*Figure 9*

In addition to the group specific work, the district embarked on a community wide survey and focus group effort to gather supporting perception data. Over the data collection period, parents took the parent/community survey, teachers took the teacher survey, and students grades 7-12 took the student survey. Three different student focus groups were also held. Finally, a few of the individual data collection teams ran their own focus groups and many conducted interviews with administrators and board members.



## **Phase II Data Collection Outcomes and Phase III Results**

At a data collection review gathering held on January 9<sup>th</sup>, each group presented their findings. While their peers listened, reflected and asked follow-up questions, groups shared the results of the work done over the previous two months. Each set of findings is presented starting on page of this report in the same format; first, there is an outline of the specific questions each group was tasked with answering, then a summary of their ratings, a description of the evidence they found that supports their rating and a determination of the current state and finally a statement about what the gaps between current practice and desired coherence outcomes are. It is the items identified in this last section, the gaps between current practice and the desired coherence outcomes, which will be prioritized and carried into Phase IV and V action planning. All the Group Five local data is listed as reported and is designed to be used to guide the deliberation and selection of the tactical strategies used to plan the gap closing efforts.

As noted, while each group presented, all members of the Strategic Coherence Planning Team were asked to track their own thinking and reactions to the data as they encountered it. Each of these reflections were recorded, shared, sorted and prioritized to identify additional context to guide action planning in the next phase. The results of this activity demonstrated that Strategic Coherence Planning Team believed that the Ridgefield Public Schools embarked on this planning effort on a foundation of strength. Among the district strengths identified by the group through this process included:

- A. Strong PTA and Parent Involvement
- B. Ridgefield is a high performing district
- C. SLOs are data driven
- D. PD is high quality and time is increasing
- E. Technology is being utilized for instruction
- F. Increase in inquiry based learning
- G. Successful instructional models at the elementary level
- H. Uniform definition of student engagement is being developed
- I. 5-6, 8-9, transition meetings being explored
- J. Alignment and accessibility of BOE and central office
- K. Assessment literacy of staff

- L. Positive learning environments
- M. Equity of materials and resources

The group also tallied what they believed would be the most important barriers to success that they anticipated may block efforts for moving forward. The identification of these items will be critical when strategies are designed for the gap closing work in the next phase. The Strategic Coherence Planning Team has recognized that if these barriers are not addressed, the likelihood of success moving forward is greatly diminished. Unlike the district strengths which were listed above in no particular order of importance, after identifying these barriers, the team took the time to discuss and prioritize the predicted impact of each of the identified barriers.

**Concerns – Areas of Systemic Challenge** (*numbers indicate priority - higher numbers are more important*)

- A. Budgets and resources - 31
- B. Tech integration staffing - 2
- C. K-12 alignment of academic expectations - 62
- D. Time constraints - 3
- E. Establishing and communicating goals
- F. Why change? 10
- G. Consistent definitions of rigor and engagement -20
- H. Communication with all stakeholders - 41
- I. PD – Time allotted and goal alignment - 1
- J. Pacing vs. mastery of learning - 5
- K. Re-imagining assessments - 26
- L. Inconsistent use of data collection warehouse (with access to all personnel. - 2
- M. Teaching and supporting social and emotional well-being. - 24

Finally, the group identified open questions it either wanted answered or explored before moving forward on Phase IV and V planning. District administration and the planning consultant will provide support for the Strategic Coherence Planning Team in answering these questions as the plans develop over time.

**Questions – Areas in which more information is needed** (*numbers indicate priority - higher numbers are more important*)

- A. Professional learning and challenges of time/structures for collaboration? 47
- B. Clarifying roles of related service personnel and leaders to effect student learning goals? 14
- C. Communication and outreach strategies to inform all stakeholders? 29
- D. Are we measuring what we value and can what we value be measured? 47
- E. Community perception of the link between property values and school system? 0
- F. Implications of transitioning to digital learning environment? - 6
- G. Building two-way communication/engagement with parents? 15
- H. What models of systemic improvement can we look to? 1

## **Strategic Coherence Outcome One: Goals for Learning**

**The district has identified, defined and committed to supporting a focused set of appropriate student learning goals that will ensure student success in life, learning and work beyond school.**

1. **Goal Setting Context and Philosophy** – there is a learning environment cultural emphasis that focuses on what is learned rather than simply what is covered or taught. Timelines and calendars are less important than having every child acquire the skills they need for success.
2. **Goal Setting Processes** – district, building/course and professional - they are focused, manageable, clearly tied to a data based need, and aligned through the Pre-K-12 system for both students and adults.
  - a. The school/district has a history and practice of setting a focused set of appropriate student learning goals and working PreK-12 to achieve them.
  - b. Grade level and/or course curriculum materials have clear and manageable observable goals for learning that are clearly described and are prioritized to encourage mastery for success (emphasis on engagement and learning) for all students.
  - c. The school/district ensures that annual professional goals for all staff are set as a result of a process that is informed by an alignment with a focused set of appropriate student learning goals.
  - d. The school/district ensures that annual school/district goals for performance are set as a result of a process that is informed by an alignment with associated appropriate student learning goals and collective professional learning needs.
3. **Goal Setting Support and Engagement** – students, parents, staff and other constituents are well informed regarding the rationale that inform the district’s student learning goals at every level.
4. **Materials and Resources** – there is consistency and transparency in the materials that support the district’s student goals for learning.
  - a. Focused student goals for learning are consistent in all Pre-K-12 curriculum and program materials and have aligned expectations at the elementary, intermediate, middle and high school levels.
  - b. There are easily accessible electronic curriculum and instructional resources for staff, parents and community in all academic areas that support the implementation of the district’s student learning goals.
5. Other items or questions raised by the group...

**Coherence Outcome One Findings Heat Map:**

**Coherence Outcome One Findings Summary:**

| Indicator                              | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Goal Setting Context and Philosophy |   |   |   |   |   |
| 2. Goal Setting Processes              |   |   |   |   |   |
| 3. Goal Setting Support and Engagement |   |   |   |   |   |
| 4. Materials and Resources             |   |   |   |   |   |

**Key Gaps:**

- A. External barriers or pressure from parents who perceive that only one type of environment or structure can lead to entry to highly competitive colleges or universities.
- B. Lack of agreement on goals and alignment
- C. Dependent upon leadership of individual building
- D. Goal setting for teachers and leaders is established through the evaluation process and SLOs.
- E. A clear link to school and district goals is not evident
- F. School goals level to level, building to building reflect the leaders’ SLOs and there is no alignment between these goals (C,D, F) 11
- G. Tension between pacing guides vs. mastery 4
- H. Data, communication, systemic processes to monitor fidelity of implementation (R) 11
- I. Measuring what we value and establishing goals aligned with them (M, I) 25
- J. We present standardized test, AP, SAT, etc. results, but they are not tied to any improvement goals – to be true to our vision we may need to communicate other data points and set goals for improvement in those areas

- K. Ingraining in all stakeholders what our vision is for the graduate so that it becomes part of our district's culture (A, N) 25
- L. Systems of curriculum and goal setting silos need to be overcome
- M. Develop a goal and results orientation to the work to gauge whether we are succeeding
- N. Are there cultural constraints regarding engagement between parents and the school system?
- O. We need a teaching and learning framework (buildings/levels) that drives the vision of the graduate and identifies core standards students need to know and be able to accomplish (B, P) 58
- P. Clear alignment between (Curriculum) levels and buildings is key to reaching this vision of the graduate (B)
- Q. (Time for) cross-curricular and vertical alignment articulation pre-K to 12 (L)11
- R. Structures to monitor fidelity of implementation

## **Strategic Coherence Outcome Two: Teaching for Learning**

**The district has committed to supporting instructional and adult learning strategies that ensure rigorous, digitally supported pedagogical experiences aligned with the district's student goals.**

### **1. Student Engagement in Rigorous, Higher-Order Thinking Activities**

- a. There is a high degree of faculty (staff) and administrator knowledge/understanding of higher-order thinking, the requirements of a positive culture for learning, and the importance of engaging students in extended rigorous learning experiences.
- b. There is an emphasis in the observation, feedback and evaluation processes that demonstrate the importance of student engagement and a positive learning culture and the associated elements of the observational practice rubric are weighted or focused on these elements as a priority in those processes.
- c. There is data and evidence that illustrate the degree to which all students have the opportunity to be engaged in rigorous, higher-order thinking experiences in every classroom.
- d. There is evidence that parents have had the opportunity to learn about what the district's expectations for instructional excellence are and are invited to be part of the conversation about how to maintain and support them.

### **2. Digital Learning Practices**

- a. The policy and practices of the district are aligned with a digitally supported learning environment where all stakeholders have ready access to age appropriate tools.
- b. There is a high degree of faculty (staff) knowledge and understanding of how to design and facilitate digitally supported instructional experiences for students that support rigorous, higher-order thinking and sustained engagement.

**3. Professional Learning Practices**

- a. Professionals have the opportunity to pursue their own practice improvement goals (district, building or personal) through a variety of learning strategies that are consistent with standards of professional learning (job embedded, aligned with developing capacity in high-leverage instructional strategies).
- b. School/District professional learning plans provide for a variety of learning strategies that are consistent with standards of professional learning (job embedded, aligned with developing capacity in high-leverage instructional strategies).

6. Other items or questions raised by the group...

**Coherence Outcome Two Heat Map:**

**Coherence Outcome Two Findings Summary:**

| Indicator                             | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|---------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Student Engagement in Rigorous HOT |   |   |   |   |   |
| 2. Digital Learning Practices         |   |   |   |   |   |
| 3. Professional Learning Practices    |   |   |   |   |   |

**Key Gaps:**

A. Need for common and consistent definitions of engagement

- B. Need for common understanding of what engagement, rigor and high-order mean, imply and demand at all levels of the organization (A, D)
- C. Time and structures for systematic and effective professional learning for leaders and teachers (L) 32
- D. Build parent and community understanding of established definitions of engagement, rigor, and higher-order
- E. A framework that outlines desired academic and social emotional outcomes for students (A, B, D)\* 59
- F. Continued community and faculty information sessions as new policies are modified and/or added. 13
- G. Additional time to analyze patterns and trends as our new initiatives become more ‘regular’ across the district 1
- H. Time and structures to support meaningful (like digital/information learning) integration within the learning day (i.e. lack of time across periods creates obstacles to use technology to its fullest – for example K-5 Library Instruction structure and schedule do not allow for time to collaborate with classroom teachers. 24
- I. Additional support for digital learning and technology integration (We currently have 1 part-time tech integrator for a high school of 1,700 students and 150 staff, 1 middle school tech integrator for two middle schools, 1 tech integrator for six elementary schools. The middle school and elementary integrators do not have a digital learning or educational technology backgrounds)
- J. Time and structures for systematic professional learning for leaders and teachers’ related to digital and information literacy (i.e. Move beyond using technology as replacement of an existing tool/instrument and rather consider what technology has to offer to make teaching moments more efficient, effective, organized, collaborative, or multi-modal) (I) 16
- K. Digital literacy and media literacy curricula 4
- L. Time, structures and resources to provide coherent, job-embedded professional learning

**Strategic Coherence Outcome Three: Measures of Learning**

**The district uses and reports on appropriate and balanced measures of student and adult success that are aligned with its student learning goals.**

**1. Assessment Philosophy:**

- a. There is a unified Pre-K-12 assessment philosophy and system that is primarily focused on student learning growth and the student’s attainment of the district’s primary goals for learning.



- b. There are transparent differences and clarity between the formative and summative assessment instruments used in the district and general agreement on the purposes, needs and differences between them.
- c. All organized formative/summative assessments support either growth or accountability and are appropriately balanced (80/20) in their application.

**2. Assessment Capacity:**

- a. There is a system for capturing standardized and non-standardized data related to the district’s primary goals for learning.
- b. There is evidence of the effective use of data collection and analysis tools which inform changes in practice to improve student learning.
- c. District staff can construct effective rubrics (measuring what you value), designing rubric aligned tasks (connecting it to instructional practice), and use scoring protocols (build capacity to judge student work) to ensure that non-standardized measures are useful in the improvement process.

3. **Performance Data:** all appropriate performance data is easily accessible to all interested stakeholders, is reflective of district priorities, and is used regularly to improve practice at the classroom, building and district level.

4. **Professional Measures of Learning:** The data collected and used as part of the teacher evaluation and support processes reflect current student performance on critical goals for learning and other established district student learning priorities.

5. **School/District Measures of Learning:** The data collected and used as part of district and building improvement planning reflect current student performance on critical goals for learning and other established district student learning priorities.

6. Other items or questions raised by the group...

**Coherence Outcome Three Findings Summary:**

| Indicator                | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|--------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Assessment Philosophy |   |   |   |   |   |
| 2. Assessment Capacity   |   |   |   |   |   |
| 3. Performance Data      |   |   |   |   |   |

|   |  |  |  |  |  |
|---|--|--|--|--|--|
| 4. Professional Measures of Learning    |  |  |  |  |  |
| 5. School/District Measures of Learning |  |  |  |  |  |

**Key Gaps:**

- A. There is currently no unified, coherent statement/philosophy to guide our assessment practices and balance of formative and summative assessment. (B) 46
- B. Improve the clarity between the formative and summative assessment instruments used in the district and general agreement on the purposes, needs and differences between them . The balance between formative and summative assessments varies significantly between elementary, middle and high school
- C. There are various practices and places data is housed depending on the subject area, building, and level.
- D. There are various meetings (data teams, eit, prt, conversations between interventionists and teachers, ppt) and processes (isp, iep, conferring notes) used to use data to improve student learning. 13
- E. There is variability on the triggers for intervention depending on building. There is reliance on a benchmarking system at the elementary level.
- F. There are many kinds (teacher created and publisher made) of rubrics used to measure skills aligned with desired outcome. This varies level to level and subject area to subject area. There are areas with great detail on what is assessed and the purpose of the assessment. 12
- G. Need clear understanding of Tier 1, 2 and 3 intervention/differentiation according to standardized and non-standardized data scoring protocols (E) 37
- H. There is no standardized district or building strategy/mechanism to store and retrieve data or a way for either staff or parents to access other than progress reports and grades (C) 23
- I. The professional measures of learning does not yet align with the vision of the graduate and RPS mission statement. 21
- J. The district learning priorities need to be well defined, articulated and understood and assessments need to be aligned. (Already selected in Area One)

**Strategic Coherence Outcome Four: Systems Alignment and Coherence**

**The district aligns its supporting organizational systems to support the acquisition of its student learning goals.**

- 1. Leadership/Mission Focus-

- a. There is a well-articulated Mission (and other possible supporting statements) that guide not only regular goal setting and instructional improvement processes but also systems decision making and organizational evaluations.
  - b. There are aligned and coherent leadership connections that bring all of the systems of work together to support the pursuit of the Mission and priority student learning goals from the individual, to the building, and to the district level.
2. Policy & Regulation - The Board of Education works with the Superintendent to craft and apply policy that supports the district’s pursuit of its Mission and priority student learning goals.
  3. Community Engagement - The district’s many stakeholders believe that they are meaningfully involved, engaged and respected by the leadership structures in the district.
  4. Resource Deployment – District budgets and resources are developed and defended based on alignment with articulated goals for learning and demonstrated Mission-based need.

**Coherence Outcome Four Findings Summary:**

| Indicator                          | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|
| <b>1. Leadership/Mission Focus</b> |   |   |   |   |   |
| <b>2. Policy and Regulation</b>    |   |   |   |   |   |
| <b>3. Community Engagement</b>     |   |   |   |   |   |
| <b>4. Resource Deployment</b>      |   |   |   |   |   |

**Key Gaps:**

- A. Clearly focused Mission Statement should be articulated (and referenced) to administration & staff and stakeholders (B, I)
- B. All development committees, meetings and agendas should refer back to Mission Statement to ensure all meetings going forward support the mission statement.
- C. Need to vertically align curriculum, instruction, assessment (D) (Area One)
- D. More horizontal and vertical awareness of past and present committee work to support the pursuit of the mission at individual, building and district level. (communication is key for staff awareness of ongoing efforts)
- E. Communication to employees regarding District (Board) Policies being online.
- F. More opportunities to encourage stakeholder involvement and support level of engagement at the district level
- G. Communication to all stakeholders and more accessibility for stakeholders to participate and connect with district leadership and measure its effectiveness (F, H)
- H. Additional opportunities to measure Stakeholders beliefs.
- I. Continued use of Mission as it applies to budgets and requested resources.
- J. Coherent budgetary process across all levels that is communicated to all members of the community (I)

**Area Five: Local Context**

**A. Economics/Demographics**

- **Town budget history, education budget history, economic prospects, enrollment history, enrollment projections.**

| Challenges   | Opportunities   |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People don't like change</li> <li>• Budget only passed by 16 votes</li> <li>• Tax burden vs. performance in education</li> <li>• Concern over school closures/enrollment</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be proactive and communicate positives</li> <li>• Educate more voters</li> <li>• Financial and educational benefits</li> </ul> |

**B. Mandates/Legislation**

- **Responding to existing legislation, potential legislation at the local, state or federal level**

| Challenges   | Opportunities   |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2.5 cap on everybody's budgets</li> <li>• State not contributing what it did</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Present changes in positive fashion</li> </ul> |

**C. Historical Achievement Data Trends**

- **Trends, strengths, weaknesses**

| Challenges   | Opportunities  |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Too many APs/kids take too many</li> <li>• Always on list of top schools</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stay on list-property values</li> </ul> |

#### D. Impact of Digital Tools for Learning

| Challenges  | Opportunities  |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social media.</li> <li>• Impact on verbal skills and interpersonal skills</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proactive and more community engagement via social media</li> <li>• Benefit to RISE students</li> </ul> |

#### E. Local Context

| Challenges   | Opportunities   |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ridgefield doesn't like change</li> <li>• Top school - why should we change?</li> <li>• Part of strategic plan?</li> <li>• Public Perception of RPS administration</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Very strong PTA</li> <li>• Academic and financial benefits of change</li> <li>• School start times</li> <li>• Support communication, but not exclusive source</li> <li>• Staffing</li> </ul> |

#### F. Other

| Challenges  | Opportunities   |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the financial and academic benefits of these changes</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proactive communication</li> </ul> |

**Improving Coherence:**

**Strategic Coherence Outcome One: Goals for Learning - Potential Five Year Gap Closing Needs:**

**Strategic Coherence Outcome Two: Teaching for Learning - Potential Five Year Gap Closing Needs:**

**Strategic Coherence Outcome Three: Measures of Learning - Potential Five Year Gap Closing Needs:**

**Strategic Coherence Outcome Four: Aligned Systems of Support – Potential Five Year Gap Closing Needs:**

**Priority Strategic Five Year Coherence Needs/Strategies:**

**Strategy One:**



**Strategy One:**



| I - Present State | II - Beginning | III - Progressing | IV - Accomplishing |
|-------------------|----------------|-------------------|--------------------|
|                   |                |                   |                    |

**Impacted Systems: Cross Building (staff), students and parents**


| Driving | Restraining |
|---------|-------------|
|         |             |

**Actions for Moving Forward:**

| Step # | Action | Outcome | Who | When |
|--------|--------|---------|-----|------|
| 1      |        |         |     |      |
| 2      |        |         |     |      |
| 3      |        |         |     |      |
| 4      |        |         |     |      |
| 5      |        |         |     |      |
| 6      |        |         |     |      |
| 7      |        |         |     |      |
| 8      |        |         |     |      |
| 9      |        |         |     |      |

**Strategy Two:**

*Outcome Definition/Innovation Configuration:*



| I – Present State | II – Beginning | III – Progressing | IV - Accomplishing |
|-------------------|----------------|-------------------|--------------------|
|                   |                |                   |                    |

**Impacted Systems:**

1.


| Driving | Restraining |
|---------|-------------|
|         |             |

**Actions for Moving Forward:**

| Step # | Action | Outcome | Who | When |
|--------|--------|---------|-----|------|
| 1      |        |         |     |      |
| 2      |        |         |     |      |
| 3      |        |         |     |      |
| 4      |        |         |     |      |
| 5      |        |         |     |      |
| 6      |        |         |     |      |
| 7      |        |         |     |      |

**Strategy Three:**

*Outcome Definition/Innovation Configuration:*



| I – Present State | II – Beginning | III – Progressing | IV - Accomplishing |
|-------------------|----------------|-------------------|--------------------|
|                   |                |                   |                    |

**Impacted Systems:**

1.


| Driving | Restraining |
|---------|-------------|
|         |             |

**Actions for Moving Forward:**

| Step # | Action | Outcome | Who | When |
|--------|--------|---------|-----|------|
| 1      |        |         |     |      |
| 2      |        |         |     |      |
| 3      |        |         |     |      |
| 4      |        |         |     |      |
| 5      |        |         |     |      |
| 6      |        |         |     |      |
| 7      |        |         |     |      |

**Strategy Four:**

***Outcome Definition/Innovation Configuration:***



| I – Present State | II – Beginning | III – Progressing | IV - Accomplishing |
|-------------------|----------------|-------------------|--------------------|
|                   |                |                   |                    |

**Impacted Systems:**

1.

| Driving | Restraining |
|---------|-------------|
|         |             |

**Actions for Moving Forward:**

| Step # | Action | Outcome | Who | When |
|--------|--------|---------|-----|------|
| 1      |        |         |     |      |
| 2      |        |         |     |      |
| 3      |        |         |     |      |
| 4      |        |         |     |      |
| 5      |        |         |     |      |
| 6      |        |         |     |      |
| 7      |        |         |     |      |

## Glossary of Terms

**AYP – Adequate Yearly Progress** – AYP is a component of No Child Left Behind and is defined in Connecticut as meeting the goals set for Ridgefield by the Connecticut State Department of Education.

**BLT – Building Level Team** – Teams of teachers, parents and administrators who develop annual plans for addressing building level academic and program goals.

**Community Expectations for Learning** – goals for learning (usually related to very important skills like problem solving or communication) that are generally regarded as the most important attributes that students should be able to master as a result of attending the Ridgefield Public Schools – this term is used by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges in their accreditation process.

**Curriculum and instructional alignment** – degree to which the materials and teaching used to educate students are focused on the same things from grade level to grade level, year to year, and school to school.

**Differentiation** – A strategy of providing different teaching strategies for different children – in essence trying to match instruction to the interests or learning styles of individual students.

**DLT – District Leadership Team** – Comprised of staff and community members.

**DOK** – Depth of Knowledge

**Formative Assessment** – an assessment of student progress that is done as part of a regular lesson so that it does not interrupt instruction and can guide teacher action in the moment to improve student performance.

**IEP – Individualized Academic Plan** – A written and legal document that describes the services that are designated for students with disabilities. An IEP is required by Federal Law for identified students with disabilities.

**Indicators of Success:** The data or measures that will be used as evidence that the plan has been successfully implemented.

**LEP – Limited English Proficiency** – The study of the English language by students with a different native language.

**Ridgefield Instructional Practices Rubric** – The framework that administrators use to evaluate the instructional practices of Ridgefield teachers through the teacher evaluation process.

**Mission** – a statement of who we are, what we do and why.

**Multiple Measures** – When gauging a student’s performance in an important area, more than indicator or measure are used to ensure that the report is fair and representative of what the student is actually doing.

**Rubrics** – descriptors that show students and parents how well a skill must be performed to meet the district’s expectations

**Summative Assessment** – a measurement of learning that is designed to gauge where a group of students are in comparison to other students. These assessments are completed apart from instruction and serve as accountability measures for both students and teachers.

**Vision** – a description of what it would be like if the district mastered its’ Mission