

Township of Franklin Public Schools Strategic Plan Vision: 2026

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Background

The Franklin Township Public School District consists of three schools that currently serve over 1300 students in grades Pre-K through six. As in many school districts throughout New Jersey and the country enrollment has fluctuated downward due to the pandemic. The Mary F. Janvier Elementary School has an enrollment of around 500 students in grades Pre-K- 2. The Main Road School has an enrollment of approximately 400 students in grades three and four. The Caroline L. Reutter has an enrollment of approximately 400 students in grades five and six. The districts middle school and high school students attend the Delsea Regional High School District.

The Township of Franklin has a population according to the 2020 US Census of 16,820 residents in an area encompassing 55.91 square miles. It was reported by the Census Bureau that 5.3% of the population is under age 5 and that 20.8% is under the age of 18. It was also reported that 85% of the population identifies as Caucasian or white, 6.0% as Black or African American, 5.8% as Hispanic or Latino. The school district population deviates somewhat from this demographic of ethnicity/race which according to NJDOE district report is 78.8% white, 4.9% black and 11% Hispanic.

According to Census Reporter there are 294.5 people per square mile in the Township with a median age of 41.8 years. Per capita income is reported as being \$34,468 and median household income is reported as \$83,654. It is noted that 7.2% of the population is reported as being below the poverty line which is just under the Gloucester County level of 7.4%. Approximately 5% of the children under 18 are identified as being in poverty as is 5% of the population 65 and over. The NJDOE reported information shows that 31.7% of the district students are eligible for free or reduced fee lunch. Finally, it is stated in Census Reporter that the language at home for children between five and 17 for 95% of this age group is English only.

In July 2019 a strategic plan/visioning presentation was made to the Township of Franklin Board of Education. In January 2020 the board and leadership team pursued the opportunity to conduct a deep dive strategic review of stakeholder perceptions. Included in the review was an examination of the district strengths, challenges, opportunities, and threats and an analysis of

the data. In March 2020 preparations were underway to share and review the information gathered from the stakeholder input and data analysis with a representative internal and external stakeholder advisory committee.

The initial phase of the strategic planning process was designed to engage stakeholders. This phase of the process included the Board of Education, administrators and supervisors, teachers, support staff, parents, students, and community leaders. The process was designed to articulate the district success, values, challenges, and priorities for the future. Focus groups were engaged, interviews conducted, community meeting schedule, and a customized community survey was offered for community input. Focus groups met between January 28, 2020, and February 5, 2020. All nine board members were interviewed as were the district administrators, principals, and supervisors. Over 200 participants attended the focus groups and between the pre-and post-pandemic strategic plan surveys 908 stakeholders participated.

Further a diverse 24-person advisory group, representative of staff and the community was identified. Do however to the many uncertainties created by the pandemic the strategic plan process and next phase of the process was put on hold in March 2020.

As life returned to somewhat normal or the new normal it was agreed in August 2021 to restart the strategic planning/visioning process in October 2021. Both the makeup of the advisory committee and the need to supplement stakeholder information and the data were discussed. It was agreed the second semi post-pandemic survey would be administered and that the results of this survey would be compared to the results of the pre-pandemic survey. It was also agreed that available updated data would be reviewed and considered.

In October 2021 a 24-person advisory committee was convened. The committee conducted four meetings virtually at both a high level of participation and intensity. The advisory committee comprised of community members, parents, staff, district leadership, and the BOE member utilized the data collected to inform the review of the districts mission and vision. Based on

the data and the stakeholder perception information presented the advisory committee modified the districts mission statement. The advisory committee also utilized this information to develop a recommendation for the districts vision. The goal for the mission statement was to reflect the district to more accurately, reflect what it does, for whom it does it and the benefit. The goal for the vision statement was to develop a preferred picture of what the future should look if the district fulfills its mission. The work was centered on Township students being prepared for success at the next level, academically, socially, and emotionally and for lifelong learning.

As part of their work the advisory committee identified six target areas and 23 goals. From the 23 goals seven primary goals were crafted by the advisory committee and action teams.

Action teams were formulated to develop action plans with measurable outcomes for the target areas. the Target areas included Communication, Curriculum and Instruction, Social and Emotional learning, Talent Acquisition and Retention, Facilities and Finance. A portrait of a graduate action plan will be developed by the leadership team during the 2022–23 school year.

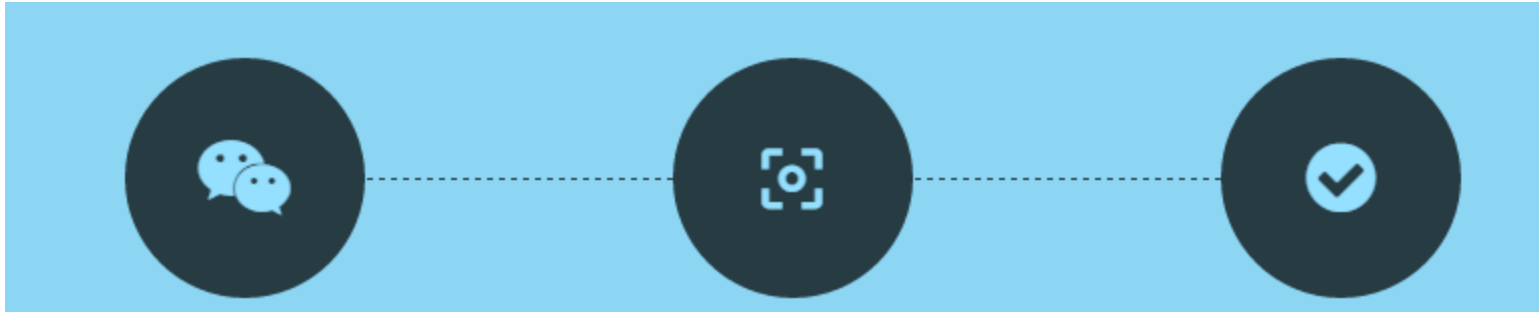
The following chart is used to show a synthesis of the process

Strategic Planning Process

**PHASE I:
Engage**

**PHASE II:
Focus**

**PHASE III:
Execute**



Document the current state of reality and the desired future position of the District.

- Conducted 9 Board of Education and 6 Administrator structured, individual interviews.
- Conducted focus groups with key stakeholder populations (200+ participants).
- Reviewed mission and vision of the district.
- Reviewed archival data and reports provided by the district.
- Administered 2 surveys of key stakeholder populations (313 respondents; 595 respondents).
- Discussed research and best practice around emerging themes from the Engage phase.

Create a framework for broad direction and priorities for the future in a formal strategic plan document.

- Reviewed Stakeholder feedback and themes from Engagement sessions.
- Documented mission and vision, and the future direction desired by stakeholders.
- Initiate discussion regarding Portrait of a Graduate
- Developed a draft strategic plan document to serve as a broad outline to guide the future direction of the district. The strategic plan contains:
 - o Mission and Vision
 - o Global Findings
 - o Strategic Goals & Objectives Identified & Prioritized
 - o Two-year Action Plans

Document specific steps that will be taken in order to accomplish the goals and objectives identified in the strategic plan.

- Facilitated administrator planning meetings to guide implementation.
- Initial Biennial Goals & Plans.
- Identified metrics for monitoring progress.
- Executive Summary.

Global Findings

The survey responses, along with the participation in the interviews and the focus groups, are strong indicators of the support that the community, parents and staff demonstrate for the school district.

DATA	PERCEPTIONS
District Demographic Overview	BOE & Administration Interviews (9 + 6 = 15)
Finance (Personnel/Organizational) Overview	Focus Groups (200+ participants)
Assessments Scores Overview	Online Survey Results (2020: 313; 2021 595; Total: 908)
Facilities & Technology Overview	

Research & Articles

The consultant team based its findings upon themes that emerged from stakeholder and focus group meetings, individual interviews and on input gathered from the survey. The consultants also reviewed enrollment trends, student performance data, the district's 2020 CAFRA Report, technology infrastructure and application, finance and facilities, personnel levels, and the organizational chart. From the perceptions and actual data, it was clear that both the external stakeholders and internal stakeholders place a high value on the quality and reputation of the educational programs and on the students, who are served through the school district. There is a sense of community support, pride and expectations for the school district and students. There appeared to be both a need and desire to celebrate individual successes and/or accomplishments as related to both the students and staff.

There is a commitment to addressing and supporting basic skills and student social and emotional learning for each student. Parents recognized the challenges related to learning loss and social and emotional adjustment because of the limitations placed on the way teaching and learning had during the pandemic. There is clearly a commitment by stakeholders to reach students where they are and to level the playing field for all students regardless of background or challenges. There were also comments from parents and some stakeholders who believed that the needs of transient students and some students in the middle present a challenge that may need more attention. To this end, there appears to be a common belief and commitment by stakeholders to address these challenges.

Financial and facilities support, and needs revealed that the district operates with fiscal fidelity and that facilities are well maintained. It is noted that some of the facilities may not necessarily be suited to the expansion for experiential learning and for the preschool program.

Expenditures, student performance and operating practices were also examined and compared with other New Jersey K-6 school districts with 1,000 or more students. The data, perception information, the examination of district resources and

enrollment trends, was shared with the advisory committee. This information was used by the committee to review and revise the district mission, to develop a district vision and to review and prioritize goals and objectives.

As part of the process to analyze both perceptions and the data collected, the consultants identified overreaching strengths (S), challenges (C), opportunities (O) and threats (T) to the district and the belief that the district will continue a path from good to greater.

The SCOT analysis revealed that the community itself is probably the single most overreaching strength of the district along with financial stability, resources, district pride and the commitment of staff and teachers. Challenges included the movement of all children to proficiency at grade level, parental involvement in helping their children to get to the next level, addressing the basic skill level of each student and the district's internal reputation versus the reputation outside of the community. Opportunities identified included building on the new collaborative communication culture birthed in the pandemic for both internal and external stakeholders and building on pre-pandemic initiatives. Other opportunities included expansion and development of programs to provide academic, life and character skills for all students. Threats identified included defining the new norm, identifying student academic and mental health needs in a timely manner and the perception by some of inconsistencies across schools.

The complete list of strengths, challenges, opportunities, and threats based on the analysis performed by the consultants follows.

Overarching Strengths of the District

The students

Stable district leadership

Knowledgeable, committed, and caring teaching and support staff

- o Children first philosophy
- o Emphasis on demonstrating the growth of the “whole child”

Demonstrated achievement in reading assessments by 6th grade

Introduction and emphasis of early elementary reading program

Core community group with some changing demographics

Well-maintained (aging) facilities

- o Building infrastructure upgrades are projected with an implementation plan

1-1 Devices for grades 3-6; 1:2 devices in K-2

Strong short-term financial position

Progress on absenteeism goal

Flexible and nimble: Ability to adjust to remote/hybrid learning

Overarching Challenges

Changing demographics including increase in special education environment and its impact on class size, revenue streams and facilities use.

Teaching staff turnover/competitive salary challenges/boot camp for teachers

Larger elementary classroom size by comparison

Agility to adjust on a dime to meet and address environmental/emotional/learning needs

- o Ability to identify learning challenges efficiently and effectively

Student state assessment scores average - below average

Fidelity of instruction across grades and schools

Gap in communication and/or understanding of the standards grading system – (parents/students)

Lack of a comprehensive & collaborative decision-making process to address complex community and educational challenges

- o Gap in communication and/or understanding between BOE and frontline educators

Grade level configuration & school transitions – especially transition to middle school

- o Grading
- o Time management
- o Organization
- o Culture

Overarching Threats

Talent turnover

Transition challenges

- o Inconsistencies across grades and schools

Larger class sizes

Discipline

- o Inconsistencies across grades and schools

Agility – changing/modifying to meet emotional/environmental/learning needs (new normal)

Pros and Cons of Consolidation (Threat or Opportunity/Need to know?) - 2020

Overarching Opportunities

SEL program to help address surfacing discipline issues and transition challenges – 6th grade

Scaffold and articulate curriculum across grade levels, schools, and content areas ~ Creative Collaboration!

Partnerships and/or shared services to help address transition challenges to middle school ~ Creative Collaboration!

Creative Recruitment of diverse teaching and leadership staff

Monitoring of school configuration including increasing size of PK program

Ongoing emphasis of reading program in early grades

Maximize online/e-learning crisis initiative. What did we learn? Where can we go from here?

Consider more effective school transition planning and goals

Continue to expand ways to reduce absenteeism

- o Compare to individual student achievement
- o Understand root cause(s) of absenteeism
- o Compare to e-learning crisis initiative

District Mission and Vision

During October 2021, the advisory committee met on four separate dates to discuss the process, review information, and to review and develop a mission and vision. They also reviewed the current mission and vision and were apprised of the difference between a mission and vision statement.

It was agreed that the mission is a statement which describes the overall purpose of the organization and includes:

- What You Do
- For Whom You Do It
- The Benefit

It was agreed that the vision statement would be defined as a picture of the preferred future which describes how the future will look if the organization fulfills its mission.

The work began with big picture concepts that included:

- Globalization
- Student Centered/Life Ready Learning
- Social-Emotional Learning
- Applied/Experiential Learning

The process and the resultant agreed upon mission and vision statements follows.

MISSION STATEMENT

A mission statement is a statement that reflects the overall purpose of an organization. The mission should say what you do, for whom you do it, and the benefit.

Mission Statement

In partnership with students, families and the community, the mission of the Township of Franklin Public Schools is to foster the unique potential of each individual student by providing an inclusive, safe, and supportive learning environment.

VISION STATEMENT

A vision statement reflects the district's preferred future. Vision statements describe how the future will look if the organization achieves its ultimate aims.

Vision Statement

To be a child centered community that empowers students and equips them with the academic, social & emotional foundation needed to become responsible citizens and lifelong learners.

Strategic Goals

Generally, the mission of an organization does not change, but may be restated. On the other hand, the vision, because it reflects where an organization wants to be in three, five, seven or even ten years may change. Goals to reach the vision are usually crafted in biennial two-year segments with quarterly reviews and adjustments, annual assessments, and modifications. Usually the goals are prioritized, and the highest priority goals are included in the first two-year plan. The focal point of this advisory committee was on six target priority areas.

The six major areas that surfaced as potential categories for both short and long-range goals and/or objectives are as follows:

- Social & Emotional Learning
- Curriculum & Instruction
- Communication
- Talent Acquisition & Retention
- Finance & Facilities
- Portrait of a Graduate

After consultation with the leadership team, it was determined that the Portrait of a (six grade) Graduate information that was gathered through the consultants, advisory committee and action team would be turned over to the leadership team for pursuit and completion during the 2022-23 School year. The Superintendent will initiate this process with the leadership team at the beginning of the 2022-23 school year.

The goal setting process follows.

Social & Emotional Learning

- Enhanced emphasis on students and staff emotional well-being
- Demonstrate growth of social & emotional well-being
- Identify and address learning challenges of students
- Enhance and build Morning Meeting goals & objects

Curriculum & Instruction

- Analysis of impact on class size/mobility. Plan for addressing results of the analysis.
- Analysis of impact on curriculum and program offerings – including community-based programs.
- Further develop a scaffolded and articulated curriculum across grade levels and content with special emphasis on school transitions
- Increase articulation with Delsea and Elk
- Identify & address the necessary social, organizational, communication skills needed for school transitions
- Research and investigate the feasibility of expanding the Pre-K program

Communication

- Further develop a district culture of adaptability, flexibility, and resilience
- Review of current collaborative, decision-making process to address complex community and educational challenges. Evaluate current communication input channels, assess for gaps, and increased opportunities for input.
- Plan for identifying, addressing, and implementing a comprehensive and consistent district-wide discipline policy for all grade levels and schools
- Development of effective student communication and inclusion of student voice

Talent Acquisition & Retention

- Identifying and implementing initiatives to creatively acquire and maintain diverse talent.
- Increasing FT BSI Positions
- Foster positive collegial relationship through social events
- Health and wellness challenges

Finance & Facilities

- Investigate the feasibility of expanding the PreK program in terms of facilities and finance.
- Assessment of safety, cleanliness, and efficiency of district infrastructure & facilities.
- Investigate alternative funding sources

Portrait of a Graduate

- Refine definitions of Portrait of a Graduate Characteristics/Competencies
- Develop graphic of the Portrait of a Graduate

Top Priority Goals

The following goals are the top priority goals by category identified and revisited by the Action Teams.

Social & Emotional Learning

- Primary Goal:** Enhanced emphasis on students and staff emotional well-being
- Secondary Goals/Objectives:**
 - o Demonstrate growth of social and emotional well-being*
 - o Identify and address learning and behavioral challenges of students*
 - o Enhance and build Morning Meeting goals & objects*

Curriculum & Instruction

- Primary Goal:** Research and evaluate the changing mobility/transitory rate of students and how the mobility impacts curricular and instructional needs of Franklin students. Develop a plan based on review and research for addressing results of the analysis; options may include:
 - o Further develop a scaffolded and articulated curriculum across grade levels and content with special emphasis on school transitions*
 - o Identify & address the necessary social, organizational, communication skills needed for school transitions*
 - o Increase articulation with Delsea and Elk*
 - o NJ Tiered System of Support – Early Reading*
 - o Data-Driven Instructional Coaching Model (DDICM) grant for ELA*
 - o Formalized Math tiered system of support*
 - o G&T Math and ELA identification and differentiation in the classroom*
 - o STEAM integration into Computer Literacy programs*
 - o Smaller learning communities (clusters/themed schools)*
- Secondary Goals/Objectives:** Analyze the need to include community-based programs to identify the potential effectiveness of onboarding, orientation, and support for the mobile population; options may include:
 - o Parent education*
 - o Social support*

Communication

- Primary Goal #1:** Review the current, collaborative, decision-making process to design a plan to address complex community and educational challenges.
- Secondary Goals/Objectives:**
 - Evaluate current communication input channels, assess for gaps, increase opportunities for input, and engage stakeholders to foster positive messaging on behalf of students.*
- Primary Goal #2:** Determine successful methods of communication and integrate new communication platforms that address gaps found in a comprehensive review of current communication methods.
- Secondary Goals/Objectives:**
 - Refine and enhance district and school communication methods based on feedback of the multi-stakeholder surveys and the research of effective strategies implemented by neighboring school districts and communities.*
 - Integrate additional communication strategies to reach all stakeholders.*

Talent Acquisition & Retention

- Primary Goal:** Identifying and implementing initiatives to creatively acquire and maintain diverse talent.

Finance & Facilities

- Primary Goal:** Investigate the feasibility of expanding the Pre-K program with regard to facilities and finance

Portrait of a Graduate

- Refine definitions of Portrait of a Graduate Characteristics/Competencies
- Develop graphic of the Portrait of a Graduate

Executive Summary

The strategic planning process spanned a 2-year period commencing in January 2020 and finishing in March 2022. The process included a review of stakeholder perceptions of the district, an analytical review of district educational opportunities and services and a review of district data. The data review included a five-year look back at district budgets, revenue sources, enrollment, student performance, community demographics, facilities, and personnel.

The Board of Education's mission was reviewed and recommendations for modification were proposed by a broad-based advisory committee of 24 diverse internal and external stakeholders. The advisory committee participated in 4 meetings of approximately 2 hours each throughout the month of October 2021. The advisory committee also reviewed and proposed a vision for the future. Both short and long-term strengths, challenges, opportunities, and threats were considered. For the long-term vision and planning, the discussion centered on the type of skill sets that will be required of current pre-Kindergarteners when they graduate from high school in 2035. Additionally, the long-term vision was predicated on requirements across grade levels to move toward achievement of the vision. In the short term, immediate steps were discussed for implementation of the vision for the sixth-grade class of 2023 and beyond.

The mission, which describes the district's purpose and responsibilities, was developed, and agreed to. The vision statement which reflects the district's preferred future was also developed and agreed to by the advisory committee.

The agreed upon recommended mission is as follows:

“In partnership with students, families and the community, the mission of the Township of Franklin Public Schools is to foster the unique potential of each individual student by providing an inclusive, safe, and supportive learning environment.”

The vision statement agreed to and recommended by the advisory committee for consideration by the Board of Education is as follows:

“To be a child centered community that empowers students and equips them with the academic, social & emotional foundation needed to become responsible citizens and lifelong learners.”

The next phase of the advisory committee work involved the selection of goals that were identified as an outcome of the interviews, focus group meetings, review of the district data, and on educational research. The survey results were also used to identify and highlight potential goals. Further, the selection process included a review of current district goals and initiatives. The proposed categories/target areas from which measurable goals and objectives were to be forged centered on the following areas:

- Social & Emotional Learning
- Curriculum & Instruction
- Communication
- Talent Acquisition & Retention
- Finance & Facilities
- Portrait of a Graduate

Twenty-three actionable items were identified for the six action categories. To assist the advisory committee in prioritizing the actionable items and to further define the categories into goals, a survey was developed. Fifteen of the original advisory team members participated in the survey.

After discussing and reviewing the survey results, the committee determined and established fourteen primary strategic goals to implement the vision through six action categories. Social and Emotional Learning; Curriculum and Instruction; Communication; Talent Acquisition and Retention; Finance and Facilities, and Portrait of a Graduate.

Phase two of the process required the establishment of six action teams led by key internal stakeholder leaders to develop action plans for the first two years of implementation. The action teams consisted of a diverse, broad-based representation of internal and external stakeholders with various backgrounds and expertise.

The challenge to each team was as follows:

- Define primary goal for each category
- Define secondary goal as may be applicable
- Identify objectives to be measured
- List action or strategy steps
- Identify metrics for each objective
- Resources needed
- Responsible staff member
- Timeline

From mid-December 2021 to February 2022 the action teams developed action plans to fully implement the mission and to begin to achieve the vision. Each of the completed action plans is submitted in a separate folder. The following is a brief overview of each action plan and implementation challenges.

Social and Emotional Learning

Prior to the pandemic the district recognized the importance to both the learning and well-being of each student and their social and emotional support and growth. Thus, several steps and initiatives were pursued to address student social and emotional needs and their impact on student success. For many students, families, and staff, social and emotional needs were exasperated by the pandemic and prolonged remote learning. Initially as part of the strategic plan, the focus was going to be solely on the healing process to address student, family and staff anxiety stress that resulted from the pandemic. Wisely, both the advisory committee and action team took a broader approach to address the social and emotional support needed day-to-day regardless of the norm or crisis.

To achieve this, the Action team identified the following broad-based primary goal:

- Enhanced emphasis on student and staff emotional well-being.

The secondary goals/objectives identified by the action team are as follows:

- Demonstrate growth in social and emotional well-being
- Identify and address learning and behavioral challenges of students
- Enhance and Build Morning Meeting goals and objectives.

The secondary goals/objectives were also examined by the consultants in terms of the singular objective stated as follows:

- Enhance demonstrated growth in social and emotional well-being by identifying and addressing learning and behavioral challenges of students by more effectively using and building upon the morning meeting goals and objectives.

The strategies and action steps are both reasonable and doable. Responsibility for accountability, resources and timelines were identified. The timeline for the student mentoring program at Main Road and Janvier is exceptionally long for a program that is needed now. Some work needs to be done on budgeting regarding specific costs for the resources identified. The budgeting timeline is out of sequence with the district budgeting calendar. Community resources should be identified. The plan relies heavily on budgeting for SEL team members and for a possible coordinator. The need for benchmarks and assessment was addressed. Timelines for the assessments should also be established.

The greatest challenge will be the allocation of staff resources and funds for full implementation and an accelerated timeline. This will be critical to the successful return of students, families, and staff to the post pandemic new norm in 2022-23 and beyond.

Curriculum and Instruction

The action team for Curriculum and Instruction did a deep dive examination at the changing mobility/transitory rate of students and the impact of this mobility on learning, curriculum, and instruction. The plan is well thought out and includes triennial reviews, barriers and challenges and specific steps and methodology to address curricular and learning gaps. The team also examined and proposed steps to address school transition challenges.

The primary goal as refined by the action team follows:

- Research and evaluate the changing mobility/transitory rate of students and how the mobility impacts curricular and instructional needs of Franklin students. Develop a plan based on review and research for addressing results of the analysis; options may include:
 - Further develop a scaffolded and articulated curriculum across grade levels and content with special emphasis on school transitions
 - Identify & address the necessary social, organizational, communication skills needed for school transitions
 - Increase articulation with Delsea and Elk
 - NJ Tiered System of Support - Early Reading
 - Data - Driven Instructional Coaching Model (DDICM) grant for ELA
 - Formalized Math Tiered system of support
 - G&T Math and ELA identification and differences in the classroom
 - STEAM integration into Computer Literacy programs
 - Smaller learning communities (clusters/theme schools).

The secondary goal/objective for this action team is:

- Analyze the need to include community-based programs and to identify potential effectiveness of onboarding, orientation, and support for the mobile population; options may include:
 - Parent education
 - Social support.

Notwithstanding the ambitious steps outlined in the primary goal, this action team recognized the immediate need for the development of instructional and support plans to address student mobility, school transitions and for successful transition to the regional district middle school. The team recognized that addressing this challenge will require the establishment of a framework with a focus on grade level material infused with the identification of prerequisite skills and remediation strategies.

Although ambitious, the plan is solid. The barriers and challenges to success are recognized. Additionally, accountability is assigned, and resources identified. Achievement of this action plan will require the budgeting of resources and patience. The timelines are both realistic and necessary to make progress toward achievement of the district vision for all students.

Communication

Based on review of the data and perceptions the advisory committee recognized the complexity of both internal and external communications. Thus, the communication action team was challenged to establish clear and precise communication to/from parents/schools. The team recognized that information is being disseminated in multiple ways and that there is a need for a defined messaging plan. They observed inconsistency both in the methods and messaging across the district including the central office and in individual schools. Based on this analysis the action team outlined a strategy for success in two action plans.

Further the team identified strategies to ensure consistency and implementation of the solutions roadmap that was offered. Finally, the team considered implications for both internal and external stakeholders.

The focus of the first plan is to improve communication with parents and guardians of students and to address breakdowns and anomalies that cause inconsistency and in some cases inequities to access. Further, the plan focuses on consistencies and messaging.

Primary goal one identified by the team is to:

- Review the current, collaborative, decision-making process and to design a plan to address complex community and educational challenges.

Secondary goal/objective is to:

- Evaluate current communication input channels, assess gaps, increase opportunities for input, and engage stakeholders to foster positive messaging on behalf of students.

For the second strategy/plan primary goal two was identified.

Primary goals two is to:

- Determine successful methods of communication and integrate new communication platforms that address gaps found in a comprehensive review of current communication methods.

The secondary goals/objectives are:

- Refine and enhance district and school communication methods based on feedback of the multi-stakeholder surveys and the research of effective strategies implemented by neighboring school districts and communities.
- Integrate additional communication strategies to reach all stakeholders.

Plan one was centered on identifying current communication methods and their effectiveness. The accountability and assessment measures are solid. The steps outlined in the plan are both doable and practical with realistic timelines.

The second plan is focused on determining successful communication methods and to integrate them into a communications platform to address gaps found in the comprehensive review as outlined in plan one. The steps here are both realistic and achievable. The methodology outlined is solid as is the analytics for assessment. In addition, the need for community partnerships, multilevel communications platforms and messaging was recognized and is noted as a strength in the plan.

Talent Acquisition and Retention

The primary goal of the action team for talent acquisition and retention is to identify and implement initiatives to creatively acquire and maintain diverse talent.

The team wisely began the process by recognizing the current barriers and challenges. These include financial resources of the district which impact the ability to raise current levels of compensation and to adjust salary guides, the need to better market the district, both pre-pandemic and pandemic challenges impacting the ability to retain teachers and staff, expanded local, state, and federal pressures/expectations and the perception of education as a profession.

This systemic examination of resignation data points proposed by the action team is a positive step to examining the tipping points for retention and how to address these pressure points. The staff diversity analysis and involvement of Stacey Leftwich at Rowan University was also reflective of a positive outreach step to assist with the diversification of staff employment practices.

The marketing of the district to the community and the use of community perks for staff making purchases or using services in the community is another forward-thinking approach recommended by the action team for follow-up.

The plan has actionable steps that if pursued should have a positive impact on both staff recruitment and retention. The challenge for both staff recruitment and diversification of staff will be tied directly to the availability of qualified/certified specialty area candidates across the board that are entering the field of education. This makes having and following this action plan for talent acquisition and retention even more important.

Finance and Facilities

Overall district facilities are well maintained, and projected needs planned for. The focus of the finance and facilities plan was on the investigation of the feasibility for expanding the Pre- K program. To this extent, it was recognized by the action team that further demographic information regarding birthrate cohorts and projections were needed as well as a space and facilities analysis. Several resources to begin the feasibility analysis were identified. The five action steps recommended are both reasonable and appropriate starting points.

These include:

- Research the availability and eligibility for Pre-K expansion grants
- Review of specifications and requirements for expansion of the Pre-K program
- Preliminary discussions with an architect/engineer about current and potential new space options and cost
- Demographic studies to determine current and future needs
- An analysis on the impact for transportation, food service and ancillary services

Each of the steps are prudent to fully examining the potential benefits, challenges, barriers, and cost of expanding the preschool program. The six barriers pointed out by the action team are real and should be considered in any analysis.

Portrait of a Graduate

From the data and perceptions, the advisory committee discussed and considered six potential measurable descriptors for the portrait of a sixth grade Franklin graduate and their preparation for success in the regional middle school, high school and beyond. The six characteristics are as follows:

1. Creative Problem Solver
2. Outside the Box Thinker
 - Critical Thinker
 - Flexible Thinker
 - Empathy

3. Respectful to Others and Self

- Acceptance of self and others*
- Value diversity
- Considers other points of view
- Self-advocacy*
- Self-efficacy
- Confidence
- Empowered
- Self-awareness
- Self-motivated

*These were considered primary to the list from the advisory committee.

4. Future Minded

- Goal driven
- Identify challenges
- Ability to create plan to address challenges
- Ability to find and secure resources to implement plan

5. Lifelong Learner

- Perseverance
- Curiosity
- Passion for learning - what you love to do, interest
- Finding strengths in oneself
- Career readiness

6. Self-awareness

- Knowing and understanding your own personal learning style
- Knowing how to demonstrate learning

- Knowing one's limitations
- Effective communicator

Initially it was agreed that an action team would be established to write the actual portrait of a sixth grade Franklin graduate and to develop a graphic to reflect the portrait. Because of the importance of the portrait of a graduate to the strategic plan and to driving future curricular and instructional decisions it was determined that the district leadership team would pursue this challenge during the 2022-23 school year as a priority initiative.

The next recommended step, once the portrait is finalized by the leadership team and approved by the Board to actualize and implement the plan, will require the identification of deliverables for each of the characteristics and subcomponents at each grade level beginning with preschool through grade 6. The exit skills at each level should include academic/basic skills, social and emotional expectations and life skills. This will require considerable curricular work and is a challenge that should be considered if the mission and vision of the district is to be achieved for every student regardless of where each student is or begins. A sample curriculum implementation document that was developed by the Washington Township (Gloucester County) School District will be provided to the district staff to assist with initiation of this step if pursued. This document provides a solid starting point to assist in implementing and achieving the vision for the portrait of a Franklin graduate.

Each of the action teams spent considerable time and members contributed their expertise in developing doable yet challenging action plans. Implementation will require a commitment that includes the governing body, the leadership and supervisory teams, the teaching staff and support staff. It will also require parental, student and external community stakeholder advice and buy-in.

The goals are ambitious, but achievable if they are supported by stakeholders at all levels. Resources will also have to be prioritized and committed to achieving the mission and vision as proposed.

The consulting team found that the Board of Education and staff are committed to excellence for all students who are served through the school district. Further, the Board is keenly aware of the resources and mindset needed to continue to reach the next level of excellence. The leadership team and Board understood the need for the strategic plan/vision process and how the plan and vision could assist in the allocation and commitment of resources and the identification of future resource needs to achieve the vision for all students and families served through the district.

Staff were extremely cooperative in providing the voluminous amount of information that was requested for review. The consultants also found a dedicated leadership, teaching and support staff, who are committed to excellence. In particular, the consultants were impressed with the Franklin students who contributed through participation in the survey, as well as their contributions in a focus group.

Despite the challenges of the pandemic, and the year of a hiatus between the start of the strategic plan process and its completion, significant and meaningful work was achieved. This is no small part was due to the commitment and diligence of the leadership team to believe in and support the process.

Throughout the process the consultants tried not to interject personal observations that were not directly supported by stakeholder input or from the data that was reviewed. Most of the recommendations that are presented for consideration, action and implementation are contained in the action plans, some are not, but are supported by the data.

These recommendations are as follows:

1. Adopt the mission and vision statements as proposed and finalized by the advisory committee.
2. Adopt the action plans for the first two years with the caveat that the status of action plans will be reviewed quarterly, based on the agreed to metrics and timelines that are reflective of progress and the commitment level of resources. This will also require additional work to be completed on several of the action plans relative to budget, resources and metrics.
3. Be prepared at the conclusion of the first year to modify the objectives and to consider those objectives that were identified through the process, but not included in the initial biennial action plans.
4. To complete the Portrait of a Graduate in 2022-23 and to embed it in the district culture. This will require the identification of academic/basic skills, social, emotional, and life skills for each grade level. Thus, this may drive future modifications in the curriculum at each grade level.
5. Communication and staying connected with stakeholders at all levels is imperative to the success of moving the vision forward. One of the initial priorities should be to get the communications plan in place and operational. Although not supported by the data, the governing body may want to consider a communication/community liaison position.
6. Each of the five action plans are interconnected with each other and will require coordination and commitment from the governing body, the district leadership team, building level leadership and buy in from all staff.
7. Professional development priorities and needs should be driven by the six action plans goals and objectives.
8. As part of every regularly scheduled Board of Education meeting, a brief update should be provided on one of the action plan primary goals or objectives.
9. Decisions on the allocation of resources should be based on mission, vision and priorities identified in the strategic plan.

The following are additional considerations presented by the consultants:

1. Based on both the level and diversity of stakeholder participation and interest, there is an opportunity to begin to further address the social and emotional needs of students beginning with the early childhood education program.
2. For some of the action plan primary goals and objectives, the metrics will require further identification or defining of starting benchmarks and desired levels of success.
3. Student engagement and experiential learning opportunities can be utilized to further develop student problem-solving skills and the application of knowledge across the curriculum.
4. The work of the Curriculum and Instruction action team has the potential to significantly increase experiential learning opportunities and student engagement. This could have implications for curricular, facilities use and/or modifications.
5. Experiential learning and project-based learning opportunities could also be utilized to address the sometimes forgotten or missed students in the middle.
6. The power of student voice, through an examination of all current and potential options for student voice and input, should be considered as part of the next steps in the implementation of the strategic plan.
7. The Board and community can utilize the work that was done on the strategic plan to guide the development of future instructional spaces, facilities modifications, and curriculum revisions.
8. Given the work that was performed on the strategic plan and the strengths and challenges that were identified, it is suggested that the organizational structure be reviewed and possibly tweaked to specifically pursue the vision for the district.
9. It is recommended that the strategic plan and strategic plan updates be included in a prominent and regularly updated section of the district website as a part of the communications plan and strategy.
10. It is recommended that as part of the process moving forward the board and district consider a continuing assessment the following:
 - Review safety and security throughout the district.
 - Review special education programs and services based on increasing numbers of students and the impact on staff resources, facilities resources and budget.
 - Consider the current leadership pipeline for potential future assignments, retirements that may impact the district's stability and the pursuit of district initiatives. (Grooming and growing leadership capacity and succession planning).
 - Continuing efforts for sharing services and resources should be pursued.
 - The pros and cons of the financial impact and educational impact of further consolidation will likely need to be examined in the next five years.

Next Steps

In the execution phase, the district will need to take complete ownership of the process. This will require the implementation of the action steps to execute the proposed goals and objectives and to achieve the mission and strategic vision. The action teams have developed implementation plans for the first two years. For the most part these plans contain metrics, action steps, timelines, an accountable person or position and the stated required resources.

W.H. Adams & Associates, LLC thanks the Board of Education, the Township of Franklin leadership team and staff for the opportunity to provide assistance in the examination and restatement of the mission statement and development of the vision, goals, objectives and resulting action plans for the first two years of what could be a 3-to-7 year or beyond vision. Congratulations and Good Luck!