



EAST HELENA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 9

P.O. BOX 1280 * EAST HELENA, MT. 59635

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The Strategic Plan of East Helena Public Schools Updated March 2022

Overview

The East Helena Public School District (East Helena Public Schools) has created a new direction for the school district to strategically focus its resources on identified needs of students and the East Helena community. As part of this process, East Helena Public Schools has been engaged in visionary and strategic planning and thinking process since 2008. This strategic planning process is intended to help East Helena Public Schools in focusing its resources in a manner that will best benefit the our students and the community we serve.

The East Helena Board of Trustees and Staff Leadership Team began the strategic planning and thinking process necessary to amend its current educational goals to better fit with its commitments to children, to community engagement and to knowledge-based decision making processes now and into the future. The Board and Staff, through this process to date have discussed at length how it could best meet the present and future needs of the students of the East Helena Public Schools and the community.

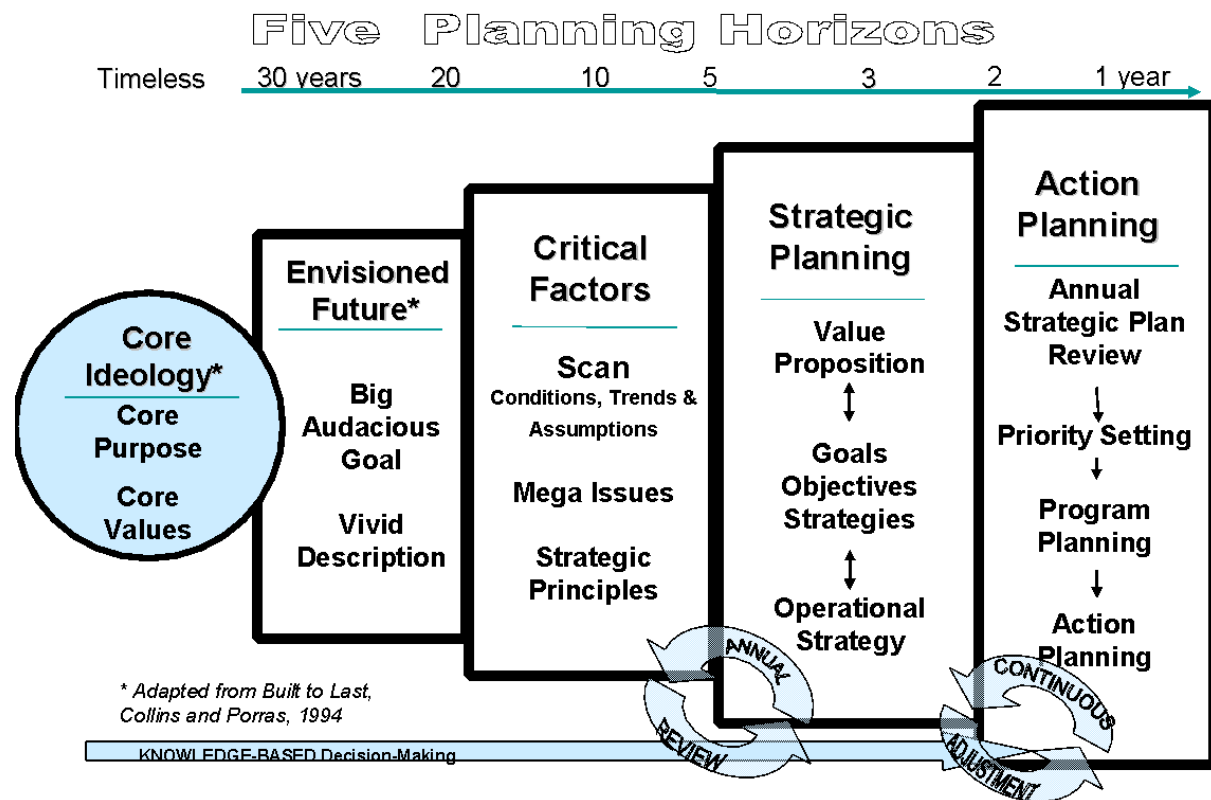
East Helena Public Schools' Board and Staff Leadership Team view the process of strategic planning as an ongoing collaborative process the community. This is not a "strategic planning project" that is completed. Adoption of a plan is an affirmation of the general intent and direction articulated by the Core Ideology, Envisioned Future and Goals and Strategic Objectives. It is understood that progress toward achieving strategic objectives will be assessed annually, and the plan will be updated based on achievement and changes in the needs of the students served by East Helena Public Schools.

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Strategic Planning Framework

The framework used by East Helena Public Schools for its strategic planning process was adapted from a model developed by Jim Collins, author of “Built to Last” and “Good to Great.” The Board focused on five different planning horizons, starting with the long term issues first to provide focus to shorter term efforts.





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Part I: Planning Horizon: Timeless

Core Ideology¹ of the East Helena Public Schools

Core Purpose of the East Helena Public Schools:

“East Helena Public Schools exists to offer the educational opportunities necessary for our students and community as a whole to achieve their highest potentials. We educate students in an inspired environment to prepare them to pursue their interests, visions, and dreams for today and into perpetuity.”

Core Values of the East Helena Public School District:

- ✓ **Tripod of Students, Staff & Parents:** We are committed to ensuring that teachers and parents are essential contributors in the achievement and success for all students.
- ✓ **Promotion of Positive Social and Communication Skills:** We believe that the promotion of social skills and communication skills are vital to the success of our students and in preparing our students to contribute to society in a productive manner.
- ✓ **Exposure to the Global Environment:** We believe that exposing our students to the Global Environment is necessary in order to prepare our students for the future.
- ✓ **Community Involvement and Support:** We believe that community involvement and support are essential to the achievement of our goals and success for all students.
- ✓ **Safe & Healthy Environment:** We are committed to providing a safe & healthy environment for students to achieve success at their highest levels.
- ✓ **Fiscal Responsibility:** We are fiscally responsible in the management and expenditure of all district resources. We are committed to being innovative in the pursuit of all avenues of possible revenue in order to meet the needs of our District.

¹ **Core ideology** describes a school district's consistent identity that transcends all changes related to its relevant environment. It consists of two elements - **Core Purpose** - the school district's reason for being - and **Core Values** - essential and enduring principles that guide a school district.



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Part II: Planning Horizon: 10-15 Years

Envisioned Future² of the East Helena Public School District

Big Audacious Goal:

Fully develop the potential of our youth and our community.

A Vivid Description of the Desired Future:

- We adapt and personalize the experience for each student in our District based upon the student's needs, skills, and attributes. This is done through a combination of on-site learning, off-site opportunities, on-line learning, work-based and other experiential learning activities, socialization, assigned specialists, extra and co-curricular opportunities, support systems and other strategies that support an individualized and customized approach to learning and supporting each student.
- Through our focus on innovation and technology, our students are well prepared for both the learning and working environments.
- We have made large-scale proactive energy and infrastructure changes that support our students, our community and our environment.
- We have a comprehensive Asset Management System for the replacement and maintenance of our buildings, equipment, software, etc.
- We have life-skills courses integrated into aspects of our learning environment.
- Career and Technical Education (CTE), arts and music opportunities are available district-wide.
- We have expanded our early education program to provide children with the resources they need to be successful in their learning and growth.

² **Envisioned Future** conveys a concrete yet unrealized vision for the school district. It consists of a **Big Audacious Goal** - a clear and compelling catalyst that serves as a focal point for effort - and **Vivid descriptions** - vibrant and engaging descriptions of what it will be like to achieve the big audacious goal.

- We have expanded our programs and resources to meet the needs of our students, staff, parents and community members, including but not limited to, mental health services, child-care services, etc.
- In addition to the funding provided through federal, state and local resources, we have a strong program of financial donations that support our schools and our students.
- We have anticipated the growth in our community and our enrollment and have been proactive to ensure our infrastructure supports this expansion.
- We have a strong collaborative relationship between our District and our community business leaders that mutually supports our District, businesses and our community.
- We have an effective advocacy program that promotes the needs of our school, students and community at the federal, state and local level.
- Through our program of recruitment and retention, we have a staff who are focused on the needs of each student. Our staff know they are trusted, supported and valued.
- We have learned much from COVID-19. We are prepared to respond to future emergencies.



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Part III: Planning Horizon: 5-10 Years

Assumptions Regarding the Relevant Future for the East Helena Public Schools

In order to make progress toward the 10-15 year Envisioned Future, East Helena Public Schools must constantly anticipate the strategic factors likely to affect its ability to succeed, and to assess the implications of those factors. This process of building foresight about the future will help East Helena Public Schools to constantly recalibrate its view of the relevant future, a basis upon which to update the strategic plan on an annual basis. As the outcome-oriented goals that will form the basis of the long-range strategic plan will be based on this foresight, annual review of these statements will be an appropriate method of determining and ensuring the ongoing relevance of the strategic plan.

See Appendix "B" for the Assumptions about the future that impact the success of our District and our students.



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Part IV: Planning Horizon: 1-5 Years

Outcome-Oriented Goals and Strategic Objectives

The following thinking represents goals for the next five years. They are areas in which East Helena Public Schools will explicitly state the conditions or attributes it wants to achieve. These outcome statements will define, "what will constitute future success." The achievement of each goal will move the school district toward realization of its Envisioned Future.

Strategic Objectives provide direction and actions on how the school district will accomplish its articulated goals. All strategies included in the strategic plan should be considered accomplishable at some point in the future. Strategic Objectives are reviewed annually by the East Helena School Board and Staff Leadership Team and those specified below are identified using a 1-2 year timeframe.

Goals of the East Helena Public School District

Goal Area 1: Enhanced and Personalized Opportunities for Each Student.

Statement of Intended Outcome, Five Years: We have implemented strategies and programs that are focused on the individual needs, wants and preferences of each student. As a result our parents are more engaged in their child's education and our students are thriving and excited about their education and their future.

Strategic Objectives: (1-2 year planning Horizon)

1. We will develop a framework to enhance the engagement with students and parents to determine the needs, desires and skill sets to personalize the learning and other opportunities of each student, taking into consideration the age, maturity and other educationally-relevant factors.
2. We will enhance the communication and partnerships with businesses to provide enhanced learning opportunities for students while supporting our community.
3. We will enhance the opportunities for students at the high school level and effectively communicate those options to parents and students, e.g., honors courses, work-based learning opportunities, dual credit, etc.

Goal Area 2: District and Community Unity

Statement of Intended Outcome, Five years: Relationships are the foundation of our community and our schools. We have substantially enhanced our image and our brand by building relationships, unifying our district and community, and celebrating the pride we have in our unique small town culture and environment.

Strategic Objectives: (1-2 year planning Horizon)

1. We will enhance the effectiveness of our communications with parents and community members on our educational offerings, our extra-curricular activities and the pride associated with being Vigilantes, and the great things that are happening in our District.
2. We will rebuild relationships between students, staff, board, parents and community that were negatively impacted by the Pandemic.
3. With the increase in growth in our community, we will effectively promote and preserve our unique, small town culture and environment.

Goal Area 3: Innovation, Technology, and Infrastructure

Statement of Intended Outcome, Five years: Through our focus on innovations, technology and infrastructure, our students have enhanced meaningful opportunities for learning while ensuring personal responsibility for the use of such technologies. We have taken measures to ensure our infrastructure meets the ongoing needs of our students, staff, parents and community members and supports our mission and vision.

Strategic Objectives: (1-2 year planning Horizon)

1. Our use of technology was enhanced, out of necessity, during the Pandemic. We will take some of the lessons learned and will utilize technology and other innovations when it is beneficial to our students, parents and community members.
2. In light of ESSR funding due to expire in September 2024, we will develop a 5-year technology plan to adequately address our technology needs now and into the future.
3. We will begin integrating currently outsourced services and labor in-house taking into consideration the cost-effectiveness and the value of having services and support in-house.
4. We will continue to adequately plan to meet the facility/infrastructure needs of our district and community on a short-term and long-term basis through the work of our infrastructure committee.

Goal Area 4: Safety/Health/Well-Being

Statement of Intended Outcome, Five Years: We know that in order for each student to be successful, they need the necessary resources and supports to address issues that negatively impact our youth. We have focused our efforts on improving the lives of our students, staff, parents and others through a concerted effort of focusing on the overall safety, health and well-being of individuals in our community.

Strategic Objectives: (1-2 year planning Horizon)

1. We will enhance the systems and resources to address unhealthy, at-risk factors that impact individual student success.
2. We will enhance the systems and resources for identifying and addressing the mental health needs, social and emotional needs of our students, staff, parents and community.
3. With the enhanced use of and reliance on technology by society, we will integrate digital citizenship (i.e., the appropriate use of technology) into our curriculum.
4. We will improve the physical safety of students and security of our facilities, including but not limited to, the drop-off and pick-up points of students.

Goal Area 5: Financial Stability

Statement of Intended Outcome, Five Years: The District and the community have historically been responsible stewards of our financial resources needed to move the District forward to support our youth. It will be vital to our future success that we continue to maximize financial and other resources with a focus on developing the full potential of each student.

Strategic Objectives: (1-2 year planning Horizon)

1. We will explore all options for maximizing the resources needed to move the District and the community forward with a commitment to remaining fiscally responsible.
2. As we implement the priorities set out in our Strategic Plan, we will effectively communicate our mission, vision and needs to the community, consider the most cost-effective manner and ensure quality-control on all initiatives.

APPENDIX “A”
INSTITUTIONALIZED

APPENDIX “B”

5-10 Year Planning Horizon

Creating the Assumptions – On an ongoing basis, the East Helena School Board and Staff Leadership Team made many assumptions about the future. While many different assumptions are made, what follows are those assumptions that are likely to have the greatest influence on the development of East Helena Public Schools' strategic plan.

Assumptions

Technology

- ✓ We expect to experience a continued growing need for technology in order to be competitive in a global environment.
- ✓ We expect to experience continued challenges in keeping abreast of technology improvements to ensure that we maximize the opportunities for use of technology by everyone in our schools.
- ✓ We will need to invest time, resources, and research into alternative energy supplies and conservation and technology will play a vital role in the development and delivery of energy sources. The supply of energy sources and development costs will undoubtedly drive the cost of such resources which is unknown at this time.
- ✓ Technology is and will continue to enhance the problem-solving and critical thinking skills of students.
- ✓ The gap that currently exists between technology available at school versus the technology that is available at home will continue to close.
- ✓ Students are far more proficient in technology than are adults. As a result, educators are going to have to become as or more proficient than students if the use of technology is going to continue to be used as a tool for enhancing student learning.
- ✓ The need to maintain a balance between technology and teaching basic skills will continue to be a challenge for our district.

- ✓ The use of technology will allow a more interactive and expansive approach to learning.
- ✓ Technology will change the way that teachers teach and students learn. We anticipate that teaching students will be much more collaborative and take place in a “team” environment. At the same time, technology will allow teachers to take on the role of a facilitator and will allow for great 1-on-1 interaction with students.
- ✓ With advancements in technology, teachers will have to teach and students will have to learn how to sort through and synthesize large volumes of information. In addition, teachers will need to have a global understanding of many topics.
- ✓ We will need to incorporate processes and procedures to preserve what students are learning and the progress they are making in order to ensure that, as a society, we can continue to build on what has been learned and accomplished.

Legislation/Regulation

- ✓ We expect to have challenges in funding a quality education for Montana children. We also anticipate that our funding structure will be completely overhauled.
- ✓ The current restrictions (moratoriums) on the creation of new school districts will be relaxed as a result of changes in school system structures and technology.
- ✓ We expect to experience obstacles of under-funded federal mandates and denigration of local control in funding allocations at both the state and federal levels.
- ✓ Legislation is slow to adapt to needed changes. Legislators also see that Montana’s public schools continue to make do with the current system; it will likely take a crisis or some significant event to initiate needed changes.
- ✓ We will see charter schools and additional options for students in Montana and our district.
- ✓ In order to best serve our students, we want and need to be innovative and flexible in our approach to education and we need laws to support our innovation and flexibility.
- ✓ We need to break down the walls where artificial boundaries exist that do not support the needs of our students.
- ✓ The primary focal point of any legislation/regulation needs to be on what is best for students.

Politics and Social Values

- ✓ We expect technology will facilitate the ease of traditional methods of voting and will improve voter participation in school elections.
- ✓ We expect to continue to struggle with building educational programs to adapt to changes in family dynamics.
- ✓ We expect to have to engage on a more effective and concerted level with our local legislators to ensure a proper understanding of and support for our needs.
- ✓ We will need to respect a family's right to teach their children their own morals and values.
- ✓ Polarization of our political system will continue and it will be difficult to find common ground on issues that impact our students.

Business/Economic Climate

- ✓ We expect East Helena's tax base to remain residentially-based, unless substantial efforts are made to entice commercial/industrial growth.
- ✓ We expect the taxpayers in East Helena will remain fiscally conservative in nature while at the same time supporting programs/services/initiatives that help our students achieve.
- ✓ We expect East Helena to maintain its identity or to redefine its identity. Our district will need to take a strong leadership role in order to make this happen.
- ✓ We expect that the community of East Helena will continue to be identified by the school district as our schools are the hub of our community.
- ✓ Community redevelopment is and will continue to be vital to the success of our community.

Demographics

- ✓ The community of East Helena expects to see a younger population of both adult couples and families.
- ✓ We expect East Helena to continue to have a loyal retirement-aged population. As our population continues to age, we expect to have to ensure the involvement and support of people in our community without children in our public schools.
- ✓ We expect that the working population of East Helena will be made up of a mix of service-related workers and government employees.
- ✓ We expect that East Helena will continue to see a more diverse population in the future.
- ✓ We will continue to have students and families in lower socio-economic status.

- ✓ We will continue to be challenged by polarization of those that are engaged and understand the importance of education versus those that are not engaged and/or do not or cannot place education as a high priority.
- ✓ We will continue to see an increased need for substance abuse intervention and mental health assistance services for students and families.
- ✓ We anticipate that we will see an increase in students whose primary language is not English. We will need to consider this factor when hiring staff.

Mega Issues facing the East Helena Public School District

Mega issues are issues of strategic importance, which represent choices the school district will need to make in defining the ultimate direction of its long-range plan. These issues represent potential impediments to achievement of the Envisioned Future, and form a basis for dialogue about the choices facing the school district. These questions can serve as an ongoing "menu" of strategic issues that, using a knowledge-based approach in gathering insights relative to East Helena Public Schools' strategic position and directional choices for each of the issues, can be used by the Board to create regular opportunities for strategic dialogue about the future issues facing the school district.

Mega-Issue Questions:

Technology

Mega Issue: How can East Helena Public Schools best achieve enhancements to its technology over the next 3-5 years to ensure that students and teachers of the district are provided with the opportunities necessary to compete with their peers around the world?

Legislation/Regulation

Mega Issue: What are the most effective means that East Helena Public Schools can utilize to bring public attention to and find solutions for the problems created by unfunded or underfunded state and federal mandates and denigration of local control? How can we best balance the time we spend in pursuing solutions to these issues while also working with what we have and learning to better maximize the positive impact of all resources we receive on behalf of the children in our public schools?

Politics and Social Values

Mega Issue: What strategies and structures can East Helena Public Schools put in place to ensure that we are meeting the needs of students to reflect changes in family dynamics?

Mega Issue: What can we do to be more effective in communicating with legislators to ensure a proper understanding of and support for our needs?

Business/Economic Climate

Mega Issue: What can East Helena Public Schools do to help draw commercial/industry into the District to ensure a stronger, more sustainable economic base?

Mega Issue: What can East Helena Public Schools do to maintain its distinct and autonomous identity?

Demographics

Mega Issue: What can East Helena Public Schools do to educate both our younger population and our retirement-aged population about the needs of our District to ensure that we provide the best educational programs for our students and the value of the District in our community? How can we translate that understanding into greater involvement and support by the community at large?

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Updated December 2012

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