

# FLOODWOOD PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT 698

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## Strategic Plan Final Report School Board May 24, 2021

*Ensuring Educational Excellence for Floodwood Students*



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## Executive Summary

The school board began a new phase of planning for the future by engaging in a strategic planning process and creating a key question to help maintain focus during the process. The key question, "***How do we ensure access to an excellent education for all Floodwood students?***" became the focal point as the community task force revisited the vision, mission and belief statements created during the last strategic plan. The task force consisted of students and staff, business leaders, faith-based leaders, parents and community members with and without children in school.

Facilitators began the process of collecting data from the district. The data reviewed included a current enrollment study, student achievement data, and financial information. After reviewing the data, a number of focus groups were gathered to include students, staff and community members who gave more insight into the past and current reality of the district.

Task force members began the process by revisiting the vision, mission and belief statements from the current plan. They then began digging into the data and learning about the district's progress since the last plan was created. Considerable time was spent reflecting on the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges impacting the district. Task force members then began dreaming about the future of Floodwood district and what might be important as they began to plan for the future. Using a facilitated Mind Mapping process, the task force was able to identify the priorities moving forward.

After approval of a strategic plan by the school board, the administration will develop the strategies to meet the goals of the plan. They will then spend the next several years on implementation of the identified strategies to meet those goals, taking time to reflect annually on their progress towards the goals. They will identify areas that may need to be adapted to meet student needs based on changes due to current events and local or state initiatives.

### **I. Rationale for engaging in strategic plan process**

Strategic planning is an organizational management activity that is used to provide direction and focus for organizations and is the roadmap for success. By setting overall goals for the organization and creating a plan to achieve them, the organization can improve its efficiency and effectiveness. It allows the organization to take a step back from the day-to-day operations to reflect on the current reality and plan for the future. Engaging in the strategic planning process promotes innovation, improves decision making, helps to set the right goals, promotes clarity for the community, reduces overlapping of services and ensures efficient use of resources. The strategic planning task force refines the vision, mission and belief statements and prioritizes the objectives to move toward that vision. Administration then takes direction from the vision, mission

and belief statements and creates the strategies and approach to achieving those goals, typically over a five-year period of time.

## II. Current Reality

The Floodwood community participated in the strategic planning process five years ago. Many of the goals have been achieved or will continue to be on-going. In addition, due to the recent COVID 19 pandemic, schools have changed their instructional methods to include distance and/or hybrid models of learning. There are components of these options students, staff and community members hope to see remain in the future.

Declining enrollment has had a significant effect on the Floodwood School District. Because school district's are funded in a per pupil manner, fewer students mean less money for schools to operate. This is partly due to the graduation of larger class sizes compared to the size of incoming kindergarten classes. In addition, by contacting families that chose to enroll elsewhere, there was not one consistent reason for leaving. Many families are choosing schools that are closer to their place of employment or cited lack of housing options as a concern. As a result of the decreasing revenue, significant budget cuts have taken place over the past several years in order to match expenses with revenue. Some of the reductions included; not replacing teachers when they move or retire, restructuring administrative positions, combining grade levels, reducing academic program offerings, and making adjustments to extra-curricular activities.

There is not an operating levy in place, having failed attempts to pass an operating levy in 2018, 2019 and 2020. This has resulted in more than \$420,000 in reductions over the past 5 years.

Significant gains in student achievement were made in elementary reading since the last strategic plan was created. This was a priority in the last strategic plan and was accomplished through updating materials and providing the necessary training on best practice strategies for reading and mathematics. In addition to focusing on reading and math, the school began implementation of a multi-tiered system of support that enhances the academic and social/emotional resources for students. These are solid foundations to support student learning for all students.

During the coronavirus pandemic, the school district seized the opportunity through additional state funding to increase access to technology for students by providing basic access to devices, software and, on occasion. While support for technology is available to maintain infrastructure, devices and software, the part time model is not sufficient to provide reliable technology.

### **III. Identified Needs**

As we examined the current reality through conversations with students, staff members and community task force members, a list of needs emerged.

Curriculum: After conducting focus groups with students, staff and the community, it became clear that at over 20 years old, both the science and social studies curriculum are out of date. Additionally, resources and experiences are needed that expose students to various cultures and that provide a greater global perspective.

Professional Development: Professional development for teachers and administrators on the new standards mandated by the state department of education and best practice teaching strategies needs to be a priority in order to ensure an excellent education for all students.

Early Childhood: The task force recognized the need to engage families early in the process of choosing their educational provider. Much care and consideration is used to currently locate families that will have children of preschool age, but a plan to increase communication and marketing in this area is necessary. The current position is a shared position with Nashwauk, which makes communication and outreach more challenging.

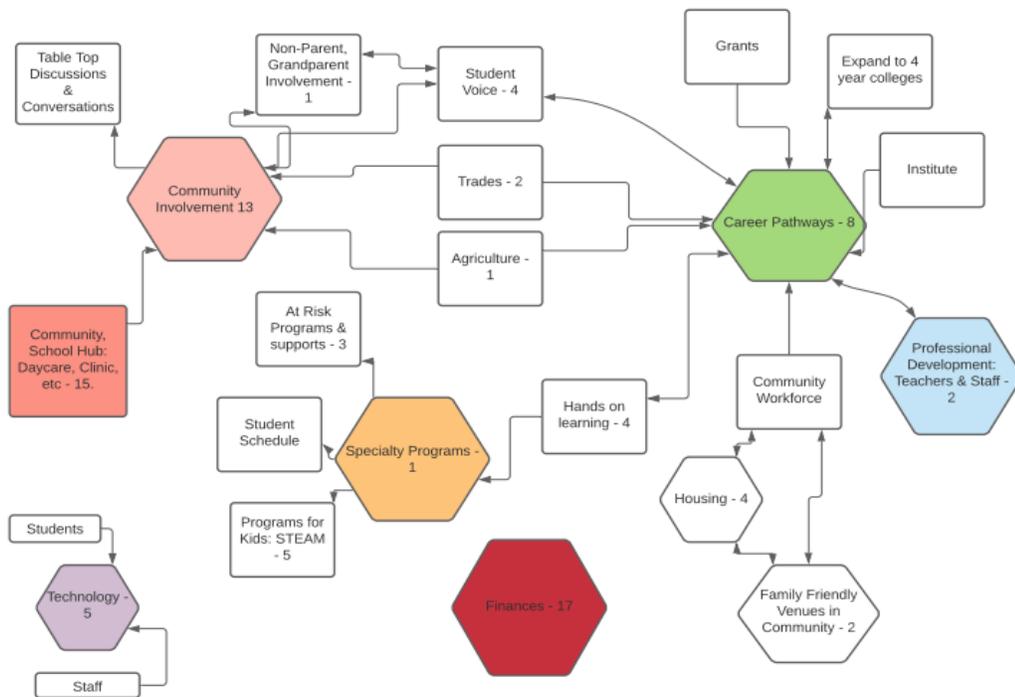
Technology: While there have been improvements with technology in the past year, there continues to be a need for focused attention, particularly because reliable access to technology will be necessary for future education options. District staff members have done an incredible job providing access to technology in creative ways through the coronavirus pandemic and using resources efficiently and effectively to this point. However, the ability to promptly access professionals who support technology within the district is limited. The district must be able to utilize technology in a reliable and relevant manner in all areas including infrastructure, hardware and software.

Community Engagement: Community engagement is demonstrated in many ways. Students view community support through the eyes of school spirit, attendance at school events, and by seeing community members actively supporting their learning experiences. For staff and community members, it means support through conversations, sharing of time, resources and talents. The need to increase community engagement was evident from all participants.

#### IV. Desired reality

***“How do we ensure access to an excellent education for all Floodwood students?”***

The following diagram shares the focus areas identified by the task force to answer this question. The number associated with the focus area indicates the level of priority identified by the group.



Priorities in rank order to ensure an ***excellent education for Floodwood students:***

1. Finances/Budget
2. Community Involvement/Community School Hub
3. Career Pathways
4. Technology
5. Professional Development

As a result of combining the needs that were listed above with the priorities established through the *desired reality* conversation, the foundation for our recommendations emerged. These recommendations are presented for your consideration and approval.

## V. Strategic Plan Recommendations

Academic achievement standards are set by the state of Minnesota. All school districts are obligated to set goals to meet the World’s Best Workforce and the Due North plan guidelines. The strategic plan was created using these plans as the foundation for recommendations moving forward, blended with the priorities established through the strategic planning process. Specific strategies to achieve these goals will be developed by the staff.

### Focus Areas:

<b>World-Class Education</b>	Increase student engagement and achievement by revising WBWF goals and strategies.
	Conduct curriculum audits to update science and social studies resources.
	Provide professional development for staff to maintain ongoing best practice instructional strategies.
	Ensure sustainable and reliable technology infrastructure, software and devices.
	Reimagine and redefine the student learning experience (i.e. defining pathways, expand learning locations outside the school, community service, community mentors, expanded internships, etc.) Embed life skills into current courses.
	Expand coursework options via rigorous and/or hands-on based classes.
<b>Safe and Nurturing Environment</b>	Provide educational experiences that value student culture and identity.
	Expand and enhance Multi Tiered Systems of Support to address academic, social, emotional and behavioral needs.
	Ensure access to mental health providers
	Explore flexible scheduling to support individual student needs.
<b>Opportunities for Students</b>	Expand Career Pathway Opportunities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Explore options through IASC and IRRRB</li> <li>● Develop authentic learning experiences in the workplace within the community.</li> <li>● Create partnerships with community organizations for students through mentorship, internship and/or capstone-like experiences</li> </ul>
	Expand Early Learning Programs

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Examine current and best practice strategies</li> <li>● Identify potential areas for growth</li> <li>● Refine options for students and families</li> <li>● Expand marketing plan</li> </ul>
<b>Fund a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Education</b>	Plan for sustainability of budget and operations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Increase revenue through an operating levy</li> <li>● Refine long term facility maintenance Plan</li> <li>● Restructure administrative staffing model</li> </ul>
	Seek grant writing opportunities to support any new initiatives
<b>Community Engagement</b>	Partner with community leaders to create plan to increase engagement opportunities for students and families.
	Develop partnerships with appropriate Floodwood entities to develop community services model (Possibilities may include: community daycare, clinic, co-located mental health services.)
	Create mentorship opportunities for community members with students.
	Identify internship opportunities for students.
	Explore Community Schools Service Model <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Invite Floodwood community leaders to examine opportunities for partnership.</li> <li>● Determine desirability, feasibility and sustainability of options</li> </ul> Create a plan to study and determine a course of action for what’s possible in areas such as: onsite daycare, school-age childcare, community fitness center, mental health services, etc.
<b>Communication &amp; Marketing</b>	Develop and implement “key communicator” strategy
	Host coffee/conversations with superintendent
	Maximize push and pull communication strategies
	Create marketing video for Early Education

**VI. Closing Thoughts**

Floodwood is an amazing community. Although there are many challenges for rural communities, it is clear that for every challenge, the Floodwood community and adjoining townships have continued to work together to provide resources for the families who are fortunate to call Floodwood their home.

Any and all changes and improvements to the school system must be viewed through a lens of desirability, feasibility and sustainability. If a program cannot be sustained over a length of time, it is difficult to measure the impact on student achievement and time and resources are wasted. One must recognize that the school district is responsible for the education of children. This must remain the central focal point for all commitments of time, energy and resources.

Schools are an important part of the community. The continued success for Floodwood will depend on the ability for leaders and community members to come together to develop solutions to the various challenges they are faced with. The ability to do so was evident as we learned about the history of Floodwood and the many challenges and opportunities over the years. It truly does take a village to raise our children. When families and children are thriving, the community thrives.

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