



Long Range Planning

A CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT MODEL

Sterling, USD 376, February 21 , and March 2, 2022

Long Range Plan Document – This report was prepared at the request of the USD 376 Board of Education. The desire of the board was for the committee to share data and insights for the development of a long-range plan to better serve the students of USD 376.



Submitted by

Gary L. Sechrist

Leadership Services

Notes from the USD 376, Sterling Long Range Planning Committee Sessions, February 21, and March 2, 2022

The USD 376 Long Range Planning Committee was appointed by the Board of Education and consisted of Board of Education members, community leaders, administration, staff, and parents. There were 33 participants the first day and 32 the second day of the long-range planning process. The committee met for its initial meeting on Monday, Feb. 21 at 6:00 p.m. in the Sterling Elementary commons area. The planning committee resumed its meeting for a second date on Tuesday, March 2 at 6:00 p.m. The USD 376 Board of Education provided a meal for the participants during each session. The first meeting concluded at 8:35 p.m. and the second meeting concluded at 7:43 p.m. with most of the work completed.

The Kansas Association of School Boards conducted the meeting and was facilitated by Mr. Gary L. Sechrist, Leadership Services.

The Sterling, USD 376 Board of Education is to be congratulated for making this effort to seek input from its patrons and for selecting a hard-working and determined committee.

The first meeting started with Superintendent Jim Goracke leading a presentation on the state of the district. His presentation included the following:

1. Enrollment Trends
2. Student mental health issues/increased number of counselors
3. Budget and finance
 - Mill levy-the rate is a result of the successful bond campaign
 - Cash reserves have increased
 - State funding has been flat
 - ESSER funds
4. Academic Performance
 - Graduation rate
 - Effectiveness rate
 - ACT scores
 - State assessment scores
 - Vocational programs
 - Concurrent credit opportunities
5. Capital Expenses
 - General maintenance needs
 - New tennis courts
 - HVAC
 - Lighting on the FB field
6. Staff needs and concerns

This information was important to the participants as it was a compilation of needed information that many of the patrons were not aware.

Mr. Sechrist (KASB Leadership) reviewed the process to be used to ascertain the themes for the proposed long-range plan.

The seven (7) groups discussed and wrote a dream statement of what they wished USD 376 to look like (their dream) in three years. This exercise was meant to provide the group with their vision of the school district before the SWOT and the five-focus area analysis was conducted. The dream statements are listed below....

Dream....In three years

What do you want your district to become?

- A. Maintain community atmosphere, excellence of education, and excellence of extra-curriculars by branding Sterling as a “teaching destination” full of opportunities and family resources.
- B. We will continue to uphold high standards and improve in creating career and life-readiness experiences for students
 - work towards financial stability and strength
 - -increase enrollment
- C. In 3 years, we’d like our district to attract families and staff to our community and schools
- D. Commitment to excellence
 - Fostering and environment that promotes hard work
 - Develop self-motivated students, teachers, maintenance, and administration
- E. Creating an inclusive and supportive environment for academic, social, and extracurricular excellence...
 - aligned
 - cohesive
 - family oriented environment
 - unified
 - communication
- F. We want our district to be a place where every young person feels he/she has an advocate/someone to go to bat for hem/her.
 - Increase the number of students in the district(marketing, childcare, other incentives)
 - Excellence in many areas
- G. In three years...Have maintained our standard of excellence in all areas,
Have become competitive with surrounding areas on teachers’ pay/package

The groups were requested to write down their responses to the following question... What do we value for our students, educational program, physical plant, personnel, and communications in USD 376? Each group wrote their responses on a poster paper and then shared to the rest of the participants. Each listening group was asked to delete any response that they heard verbally that was on their poster. The responses to this activity are listed. Mr. Goracke displayed each of these poster papers on the wall in a visible location.

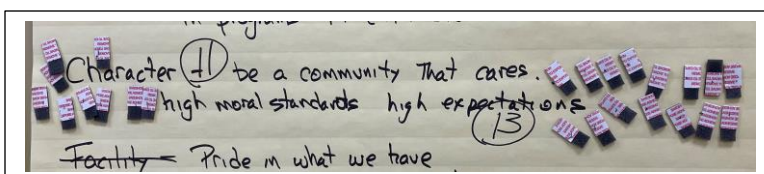
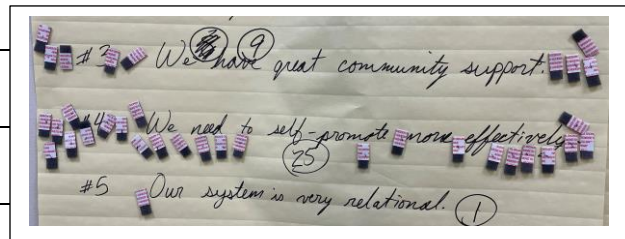
<p>Students</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enjoy life-long learning • Interpersonal relationships • Show-up and attend • Effort • Respectful kids • Gratitude • Caring/cared for • Drive for success • Pride in community and culture • Well-being • Safe environment • Value that students are challenged • Commitment • Interests met • Hunger for meaning 	<p>Educational Program</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promoting excellence • Diverse opportunities and study plans • Aligned curriculum • Program consistency from start to finish • Relevance • Cohesiveness • Variety of opportunities and versatility • Provide what students are excited about • Grade school to SHS/JH transition • Admin goals/follow-up • Accountability • Implementation
<p>Physical Plant</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Junior High Bathroom • Keep repairs up(ongoing) • Lawn care • Secure at GS/HS has many doors • Tornado shelter • Turning point is approaching • Owners by staff • Top-notch facilities • Well-maintained • Dignified • Safe • Vision • Current to progressive resources and facilities 	<p>Personnel</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Qualified • Driven and engaged • Increase pay(competitive) • Resourceful • Involved • Good • Aging • Youth movement • Love kids • High standards • Reflective • Passion • Students first
<p>Communications/Culture</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaboration between buildings(curricular/grades) • Communication between school and parent/family • How do we brag more effectively? • Staying power • Pride/consistency • Mutual respect • All working toward same goal • Culture of excellence • Mr, Mrs., MS, and Miss 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professionalism • Caring • Experience/buy-in • Character • More custodians • Willing to openly communicate with parents and each other
	<p>Communications/Culture Continued</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safe and nurturing • Accountability • Supporting School and kids • Increased expectations and accountability

Mr. Sechrist requested each group discuss the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of their district. The groups had lively discussion and were directed to write 3- 5 strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats on a large poster paper. Each group was requested to report to their peers their responses. The groups not reporting deleted any common responses on their poster they heard during the public reporting sessions. Mr. Goracke displayed each of the group's responses on the wall for future consideration. The responses in each category are listed below.

<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expectation for success • Students are seen and cared for • Arts Program is excellent • Strong academic recognition • Athletics • Staff • District is attractive in general • Physical plant • Community support • Relationships • Tradition/identity • Sterling College • Corporate headquarters and business support • Caring teachers • Welcoming • Increase behavior expectations • Teachers willing to communicate with parents 	<p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “good enough” • Kind and compassionate • Bubble • Regulations-hoops • “Loosey Goosey” Non-confrontational • Numerous activities • Streamlined open communications • School pride • Accountability • “Joint” Jr High and high school • Marketing • Promoting our students and staff • Maintaining quality staff • Community service opportunities • Not addressing issues quick enough • Communication between staff and administration • Communication between staff and parents
<p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Great community support • Dual credit • Retiring teachers • Support local • Growth • Involvement in many things • Bypass • Strong industry • Business that are willing to partner with us • Caring/Strong community • Faith based organizations • College partnerships • Marketing • Incoming business • College 	<p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retiring teachers • Enrollment decrease(online/home) • Growth • Losing local income sources • Shrinking rural community • Bypass • Divisive political environment • Pandemic • Dropping enrollment • Retirements • Community vulnerability • Teacher shortage • School budget • Lack of housing • College

The participants then conducted a gallery walk to decide on the items of which seems to be most common throughout all the activities. The participants were requested to identify 3-5 common themes. Once back at their group, the individuals came to consensus on the 3-5 themes of which would be reported to the large group. Each table reported their themes, and the other tables deleted any common themes. Everyone was given dots to then put on the common themes that were most important to each participant. Here are the results. A tally represents one dot.

Tallies	Common Theme
24	High Expectations of staff, students, community
13	37 High Moral Standards/ High Expectations
25	We need to self-promote more effectively
25	Communication /accountability
11	Character-be a community that cares
9	20 We have great Community support
9	Destination district
6	Possibilities
4	Individualized relevancy
3	Great teachers! Staff
2	Excellent Education
2	Excellent Facilities
2	People
1	Our system is very relational



The Long-Range Planning Committee reached consensus on the attached items as part of the processes and procedures used during the first and second days of planning. These items are indications of the current climate of the Sterling, USD 376 School District, and community.

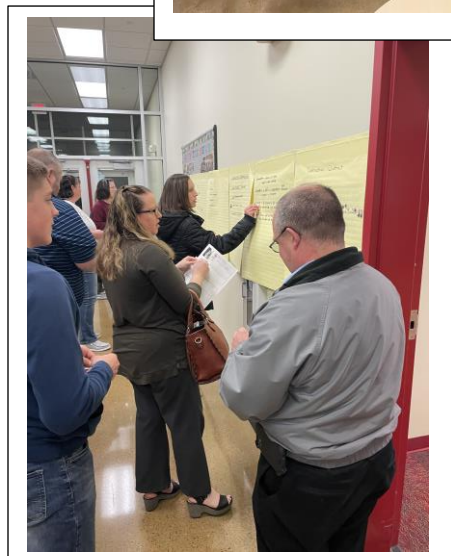
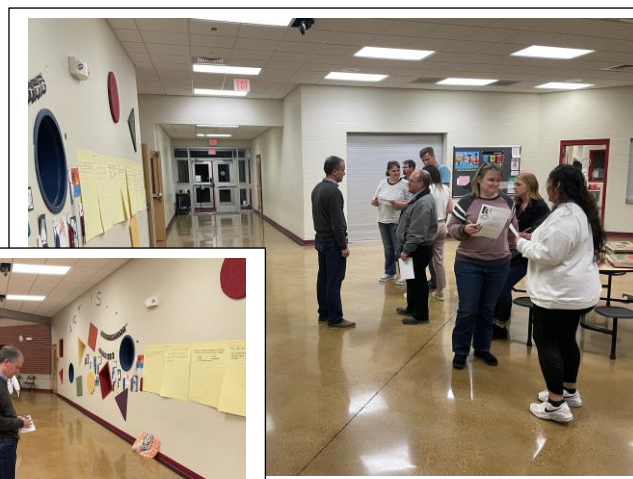
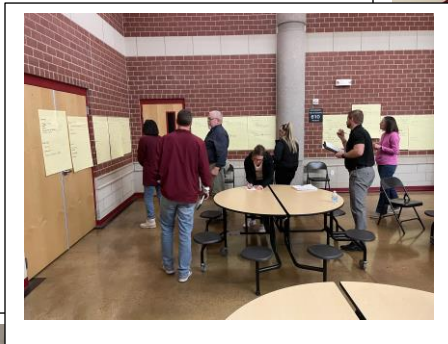
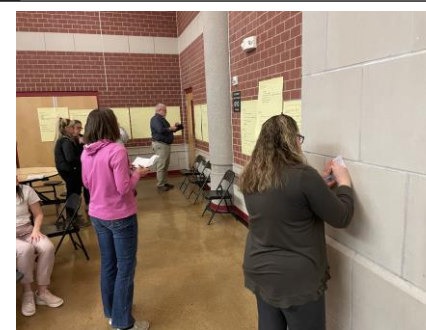
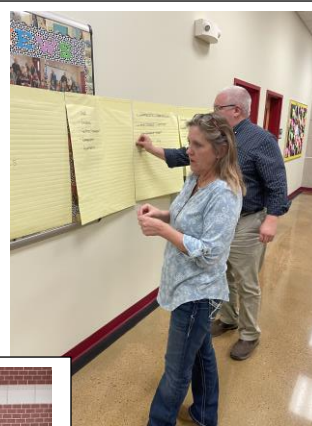
The group returned for the second session on March 2. The second session began with a review of the process during the first planning session. Facilitator Sechrist compiled the information gathered from the first meeting and reviewed the common themes/goals that were identified during the first session. There was a consensus that the themes identified would be emphasized by the district. The first four themes with the most tallies will be given the attention necessary for achievement. Each of the possible themes/goals was matched to the following researched concepts: “What Matters Most, The 11 Influence Areas and the 5 Key Goal Areas, and the local KESA R’s.” This exercise emphasized that the Four(4) themes/goals selected were outstanding choices.

Theme	#	“What Matters Most”	Influence Area	5 Focus Areas
1. High Expectations	37	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Guarantee Challenging, engaging and intentional instruction Ensure Curricular pathways for success Provide whole child student supports Create high-performance school cultures Development data-driven “high reliability” systems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Guaranteed and viable curriculum Challenging goals and effective feedback Instructional strategies Classroom curricular designs Home environment Motivation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students Personnel Educational Program Physical Plant Communication/ Culture
2. Self-Promotion	25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create high-performance school cultures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Guaranteed and viable curriculum Challenging goals and feedback Instructional strategies Classroom curricular designs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students Personnel Educational Program Physical Plant Communication/ Culture
3. Communications	25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create High Performance school cultures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Challenging goals and effective feedback Parent and community feedback Collegiality and professionalism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students Personnel Educational Program Communication/ culture
4. Community Support	20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create high-performance school cultures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Challenging Goals and Effective Feedback Parent and Community Involvement Safe and Orderly Environment Collegiality and Professionalism Home Environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students Personnel Educational program Communication/ Culture



Common Theme	Relationships	Relevance
1. High Expectations	X	X
2. Self-Promote	X	
3. Communications	X	X
4. Community Support	X	X

These themes/goal areas were used by the planning committee to guide the development of specific strategies for consideration by the USD 376 Board of Education. The second day of the planning session centered on the task of defining the “why” (the purpose) and possible strategies for each theme that needs to be addressed to benefit the Sterling, USD 376 school system and community. The information produced by the participants about the common themes are listed here:



Common Theme: High Expectations

PURPOSE/WHY? Groups 1-7

1. Best quality district/Set the bar high/Produce well-rounded young adults
2. Pride in Faculty; Pride among faculty; Pride among students
3. Good environment/life readiness/opportunities/Well-rounded
4. Continue to move the goal posts to avoid becoming complacent
5. Be a leader, not a follower
6. Driven towards EXCELLENCE and SUCCESS/life-long learners
7. Because we should desire to be part of something great

GROUPS 1-7	ACTION PLAN STRATEGY
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare students for any path forward (college, VoTech, military, work) • Be Blue Ribbon school again • Continue real-world pathways • Continuity of expectations between each level of school system • Finding appropriate ways to challenge students • Facilitate problem solving/intrapersonal communication skills/Accountability-enforce deadlines
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual survey of new-to-district families • Hire highly qualified teachers and retain • Be encouraging/flexible/supportive of side hustles
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standards(maintain) • Evaluation of performance • Accountability for work • Ownership • Retention
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use accountability <p>Incorporate a wider range of people in administration evaluation surveys, also in large enough numbers to give a good picture of what majority sees-(teachers, staff, students, parents)</p> <p>Questions asked need to be geared appropriately to give a clear picture</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve collaboration between specialize departments and grade-to-grade to ensure each is supporting the other in academic areas • Continue to encourage all teachers to self-monitor student growth with benchmarking individual student's test scores.
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meaningful professional development that makes teachers/staff better. • Staying current with curriculum • Honor's curriculum • Promote career exploration • Recruit the best teachers, staff • Accountability for administration, staff, and students • Keep up with food trends
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rigorous curriculum • Consistent expectations in the classroom(grading/no cell phones) • Hiring qualified teachers • Holding each other accountable for student/teacher success
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expectations are clearly communicated • Expectations are attainable and tailored to individual student needs • Expectations are fair but not equal • Vertical alignment of expectations

Common Theme: Self-Promote

PURPOSE/WHY? Groups 1-7

1. Attract people who value quality in education and community
2. Alignment & prioritization
3. Attractiveness (Staff and families)
4. Ensure continued excellence by remaining attractive for recruiting high quality staff and new families
5. Grow school and community
6. Add overall value to the students, and community through the school environment/encouraging greater involvement of all
7. Show/see what our expectations are accomplishing

GROUPS 1-7	ACTION PLAN STRATEGY
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be Blue Ribbon school again • Recruit quality staff • Maintain quality staff • Teachers need to network with teacher in other districts • Teacher network within district, between buildings
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BHAG/moon shot goal • Outsource marketing • Unifying icon (i.e., Wichita flag brand) • Billboard signage on new K-96
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share successes • Volume of opportunities • Partnerships (City, college) • Quality of life (small town living) • Reputation/tradition/culture • Quality of staff • Family values • Marketing company
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilize students to provide “real world” experience in building a marketing campaign for the school in multiple venues (informational program, social media, marketing, etc.) • Tie back to the community with encouraging local business sponsorships, theme nights, etc.
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal marketing program for students • Community-wide targeted marketing plan
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More information on school website • More school information in the paper • Weekly Friday Focus K-12 online through texting for all parents • More promotion in KS. Town website, work with the city to promote both community and school
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using technology to communicate what we are doing Facebook, website • Use of newspaper to help promote school • Teacher to parent training • Communication seems to be essential in four areas

Common Theme: Communications

PURPOSE/WHY? Groups 1-7

1. Reduce frustrations at all levels/students, staff, and parents
2. A binder, and connect
3. Know what's going on, alleviate frustration, send, and receive(2-way)
4. Communication is EVERYTHING
5. Lifeblood of all relationships
6. Provide a cohesive education grades K-12
7. Provide clarity to all stakeholders

GROUPS 1-7	ACTION PLAN STRATEGY
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuity of expectations and curriculum between each level of our school system • Easily accessible district calendar and information • Improved teacher to parent/student communication technology • Interpersonal communication skills for students • Results evaluation follow-through on school programs/meetings
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use text blasé as a consistent and effective communication method • Communication student (report card) and district progress at all grade levels
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Streamlined (same format) • Multiple media (print, text, email) • Newspaper cooperation/partnership • Targeted (by stakeholder) • Training • Signage • Celebration
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on clearly explaining/communicating situations, events, etc. Example: Adding a short explanation that there were not students due to for test-to-stay on the social media post for the Thursday late start would have saved headaches created by misunderstanding.
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote importance of listening • Needs to be top down/reach all stakeholders • Targeted methods of communicating (remind, Instagram, email, mail, etc.) • Clarity and simplicity and timely communication
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allow collaboration grade to grade and cross curriculum • Cohesive curriculum • Inservice's K-12 based together • Top down and down up communication
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mode of communication (text, Facebook, e-mail, social media, paper) • Hierarchy -channels -who-communicate what? • Website needs funding and professional help

Common Theme: Community Support

PURPOSE/WHY? Groups 1-7

1. School and community success are not independent of each other
2. Resources and pride, economic development
3. Strengthen and maintain Sterling
4. The more “buy-in” from the community, the stronger the school will be
5. Vital
6. Ensure continued success of the district
7. Necessary to achieve high expectations

GROUPS 1-7	ACTION PLAN STRATEGY
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community service without a reward • Black Bear Love (love Sterling) • Students see what community has to offer-coffee shop/coffee making, college farms, ethanol plant, etc.... • Continue job shadowing/mock interviews/Other programs by Tina
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain physical plant to a high level of presentation(urgent!) • Reverse recognition of businesses at district events(JACAM night at basketball) • Police officer presence/relationship
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Donors – invest in our kids • Bond issue support/facilities • Job shadowing • Site council • Shop local/regional • Sponsorships • Mock interviews
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bring community speakers into classroom more often and/or “field trips” to business in local area • Have them nights at activities(recognize veterans, first responders, etc.) • Incorporate more community service and job-shadowing into educational activities
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community service • Student involvement with local business/industry(internship, job shadowing, etc.) • Promoting our events • Appreciating events for community
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Through our self-promotion component • Through kids giving back/S-Club, Community service projects • Awareness of success and activities/homecoming and state send-offs
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Getting classroom into local business • Not all support needs to be financial. We can’t bleed our business by always asking for money • Getting business into the classrooms • Work to learn

Next Steps

The included strategies in this report need to be discussed, refined, and organized into a long-range plan before the Board of Education will be able to act on any of these ideas. Critical discussion must be had by the district administration to determine a feasible sequence of implementation of the defined strategies. Consistent monitoring of the completed plan is crucial for goal accomplishment.

The selected committee understands it served in an advisory role in this initial phase of the long-range planning process. It is likely that additional study and work will need to be done on certain areas that were proposed. The committee also understands that these themes/goals are only recommendations and will not necessarily be accepted by the Board of Education.

The KASB facilitator believes the processes used to establish the four common themes is an authentic reflection of the challenging work of the chosen committee that represented the community.

Sincerely,

Gary L. Sechrist

Leadership Services, KASB

