

## Our Path to First Choice No. 11

Everyone,

Here is Path Note No. 11. The topic is a bit long and detailed, but it is a very important part of the framework. Great organizations know where they are going, and know how to figure that out how.

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### Our Path Topic

Category 2 in Our Path to First Choice framework focuses on *Strategy*. Again, there are seven categories or criteria areas WASH will begin to study and work to improve in an ongoing manner. *Leadership* (last week's topic), *Strategy*, and *Customers* (next week's topic) are considered the "brains" that run the framework. The reason is these three are critical to the planning for ongoing improvement. It is more about focusing on our students' and parents' needs strategically. Without good leadership practices leading that process, it won't likely happen district-wide and consistently.

The biggest question that needs answered by an organization in regards to strategy is "How do you develop your strategy?" Seems simple, but let's look at questions that need answered and expanded.

The school district needs a process for strategic development. What is that process? Who are the key people who participate in the planning? What are your short- and long-term planning horizons? One year? 3-5 years? Both? How are they addressed in the planning process? How does your strategic planning process address the potential need for transformational change and prioritization of change initiatives, organizational agility, and operational flexibility?

Innovation is another area of concern. How does your strategy development process stimulate and incorporate innovation? How do you identify strategic opportunities? How do you decide which strategic opportunities are intelligent risks for pursuing? What are your key strategic opportunities?

How do you collect and analyze relevant data and develop information for your strategic planning process? In this collection and analysis, how do you include these key elements of your strategic challenges and strategic advantages, risks to your organization's future success, potential changes in your regulatory environment, potential blind spots in your regulatory environment, potential blind spots in your strategic planning process and information, and your ability to execute the strategic plan?

A good organization knows its work systems and core competencies. It needs to be able to answer what are its key work systems? How do you make work system decisions that facilitate the accomplishment of your strategic objectives? How do those decisions consider your core competencies and the core competencies of potential suppliers and partners? How do you determine future organizational core competencies and work systems?

Strategy is one of the more challenging areas for an organization. You likely can see that after reading up to this point the questions that need answered. Nevertheless, we are a long way from having a solid footing on this area. Let's look at it a little deeper.

Strategic objectives are the aims or desired achievements that the organization sets to meet in order to improve to meet demands. An organization needs to determine the key strategic objectives and timetable for achieving them. What are the most important goals for these strategic objectives? What key changes, if any, are planned in your educational programs and services, customers and markets, suppliers and partners, and operations? What are your strategic objective considerations like how do your strategic objectives achieve appropriate balance among varying and potentially competing organizational needs? How do your strategic objectives address your strategic challenges and leverage your core competencies, strategic advantages, and strategic opportunities? How do you balance your short- and longer-term planning horizons, and how do you consider and balance the needs of all key stakeholders?

The next element that needs considered is strategic implementation—how do you plan to put it into action? How do you develop and deploy your action plans? What are your key short- and longer-term action

plans? What is their relationship to your strategic objectives? How do you develop your action plans? How do you deploy your action plans to your workforce, key suppliers, partners, and collaborators, as appropriate? How do you ensure that you can sustain the key outcomes of your action plans?

How do you ensure that financial and other resources are available to support the achievement of your action plans while you meet current obligations? How do you manage the risks associated with the plans to ensure your financial viability? What are your key workforce plans to support short-term and longer-term strategic objectives and action plans? What about the potential impacts on your workforce and changes in workforce capability and capacity needs? This is an area that many organizations in Education do not address well.

What are the key things you will measure to see if your strategic objectives are being met? How does your action plan measurement system reinforce organizational alignment? Will it assure things are working together? What projections for short- and longer-term performance on the measure or indicators compare with your projections of the performance of your competitors or comparable organizations and with key benchmarks, as appropriate? If there are gaps in performance against your competitors or comparable organizations, how do you address them?

A world class organization must figure out how it establishes and implements modified action plans if circumstances require a shift in plans and rapid execution of new plans. This is part of being an agile organization by adjusting to external changes or things that just are not working?

This particular topic is difficult to understand, to determine, and to put into action. Nevertheless, when a school is more strategic, it becomes less reactive and more focused on desired outcomes that will improve the organization or, most importantly, students' lives.

Next week we will look at the things we need to ask ourselves about our students and parents. Hopefully, you will find that there is so much more that we can do to improve. Next weeks will hopefully be a little easier to relate to from your position's perspective.

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### Review for You

- What is our mission statement? Check below to see if you are correct.
- What does our vision? Where do we want to go? Check below.
- What are WASD values? Check below.

### Boro Pride

The year for (the first time in WASHS history, I hear) Golf, Cross Country, Boys Soccer, Girls Soccer, Volleyball and Varsity Football all made district playoffs. The football team has 1 game left. If they beat Mifflin County Friday night, they will be in the 7<sup>th</sup> playoff spot for District 3. The district takes the top 8 teams for playoffs.

### Events

- The middle school open house and ribbon cutting will be held on Sunday, November 5<sup>th</sup> from 2 PM to 4 PM. Tours will be available after the ceremony. You are all invited!
- The varsity football team is in the 7<sup>th</sup> seed right now, but we won't know until our final game in Mifflin County on November 3<sup>rd</sup>.
- Scholastic Aptitude Tests (SATs) are being held at the high school on Saturday.
- Election Day is Tuesday, November 7<sup>th</sup>.

- Veterans' Day is November 11<sup>th</sup> on Saturday. Our schools are hold programs throughout next week.
- November 10<sup>th</sup> is a Professional Development day. \*\*\*

### Piece of the Puzzle

• This week's Piece of the Puzzle is a team of people. On October 13<sup>th</sup>, Mowrey Elementary held a Grandparents Day. Over 450 grandparents to put in perspective. The Mowrey Dream Team of faculty, paras, cafeteria staff, custodians, Ruth Helman and Becky Hess all made the day possible. Under the direction of Tina Carbaugh the cafeteria ladies served over 600 delicious turkey dinners to students and grandparents. They worked collaboratively to make it a great and memorable day for the students. Thank you to our Mowrey team members!! You deserve high fives!

### Review Answers

- Mission
  - "Educate and Empower Students for Future Success"
- Vision
  - Educational Opportunities
  - Students to think critically, problem solve, accepts responsibility, and demand exemplary citizenship
  - Connect School to Career
  - Graduates prepared for success
- Values
  - Students are unique and ability to learn
  - Provide a diverse curriculum
  - Research-based engaging teaching strategies
  - The Use of Emerging Technology
  - Families are essential to student success
  - Early Childhood Education Preparation
  - Community Involvement
  - Our Schools are a place for everyone
  - Safe and Secure Environment

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### Final Thoughts

"Play is often talked about as if it were a relief from serious learning. But for children, play is serious learning. Play is really the work of childhood." *Fred Rogers*

"If a child can't learn the way we teach, maybe we should teach the way they learn". *Ignacio Estrada*

"Do not train children to learn by force and harshness, but direct them to and by what amuses their minds, so that you may be better able to discover with accuracy the peculiar bent of the genius of each". *Plato*

"If you have told a child a thousand times and he/she still does not understand, then it is not the child who is the slow learner". *Walter Barbie*

"When children learn to walk and fall down 50 times, they never think to themselves, "Maybe this isn't for me?" *WisdomQuotes*

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Have a great rest of the week. Can you believe it is November?  
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