

# Strategic Framework







▶ We developed our Strategic Framework with over two thousand students, families, community members and staff members, amplifying the voices of those who have been historically marginalized. Through each of our nearly one hundred meetings and deep engagement with a planning team, we worked to gain the perspectives necessary to formulate a plan for the future.

This process led us to a refreshed strategy that builds on what we've learned, draws on our community's experience and expertise and aims to bring our shared vision to life.

**It is shaped by the voices of many and belongs to us all.**



# Vision

**Every school** will be a thriving school that prepares **every student** for college, career and community.

We approach this commitment with a belief that all of our fates are linked. More than half of our 27,000 students are students of color, including **21%** who identify as Latinx and **18%** who are African-American. Over a quarter are students who are learning English, coming from homes where nearly 100 different languages are spoken. **Fourteen percent** are students with disabilities. These bright and beautiful children are the future of Madison. Every single child must thrive if we are all to thrive, and we want them all to graduate with the knowledge, skills and mindsets needed to make their dreams come true.

**> than a quarter**  
and nearing a third are students who are learning English and speak nearly 100 different languages at home.

**> than half**  
of our 27,000 students are students of color



## MMSD Graduate Vision



# Core values

To make our vision a reality, we must be a values-driven organization from the classroom to the boardroom. The values articulated below represent our commitment as an educational institution to anti-racism, inclusion and alliance to all children and their families. These values will drive our decision making at every level.



## **Excellence.**

We will ensure that our youth develop core competencies and engage in deep learning through rich, challenging, inclusive and culturally responsive learning experiences, in academics, the arts, and social-emotional development.

## **Belonging.**

We believe that students, staff and families of all races, ethnicities, faiths, home languages, immigration statuses, disabilities, sexual orientations and gender identities are valuable members of our community. By creating positive supportive relationships, we will cultivate a sense of belonging for all.

## **Racial Equity and Social Justice.**

We will take responsibility for the ways that our current policies and practices serve to reproduce inequities, and we will take action to close the gaps in opportunity that lead to racialized outcomes for children and youth of color.

## **Voice.**

We will seek out and elevate the voices of all in our community, with special attention to the influence and leadership of our students, staff and families of color.

## **Focus.**

We will be accountable to the community for high-quality implementation of practices that produce positive results and dedicate the time and attention necessary to manage complex and sustainable change.

## **Creativity.**

We will make space for new ideas, embracing the creativity of educators and grassroots innovation in and beyond the classroom.



# Goals

To accomplish our vision, we must also strive to meet a new set of ambitious goals for the future. These goals will help us stay focused on what really matters – keeping students on track for graduation and the fulfillment of their dreams, making sure our students experience thriving cultures and climates that lead to healthy identity development and holding high expectations for all. We'll track progress on our goals, disaggregated by all student groups, and report publicly every year.

## Goal 1

**Every child** is on track to graduate ready for college, career and community.

### Measured by:

- Reading Proficiency Level
- Reading Growth
- Math Proficiency Level
- Math Growth
- Four-Year Completion Rate
- High school students with 3.0 GPA or higher
- Percent of students on track to achieve graduate vision using self-reported survey
- Postsecondary enrollment rate

## Goal 2

The district and **every school** in it is a place where children, staff, and families thrive.

### Measured by:

- Student climate survey power question
- Staff climate survey power question
- Parent climate survey power question
- Percent of students with 90% attendance or better
- Percent and number of teachers of color
- Staff retention
- School safety climate survey power question for students, staff and parents

### What is a power question?

In school climate surveys, all questions will be analyzed, but we will focus especially on power questions – one question that is designed to most accurately capture an overall reaction and give us insight into student, family and staff opinions aligned with priorities.



## ► Goal 3

**African-American children**  
and youth excel in school.

**Measured by:**

- Child readiness for school
- Grade 3 Reading Proficiency Level
- Grade 8 Math Proficiency Level
- Advanced Learner participation rate
- Grade 9 On Track
- Advanced coursework participation and success rate
- Student climate survey power question

### **Black Excellence**

We believe in the brilliance, creativity, capability and bright futures of Black youth throughout Madison. Our measures of success as a school system must be aimed at more than narrowing gaps – but focused on cultivating the full potential of every child.

We believe that our strategy, informed by Black students, staff and families, has great potential to benefit Black youth. We also believe that we don't have all the solutions, which is why we must rally together as a community, working in deep and ongoing partnership with students, families and community members to disrupt the barriers that stand in our students' way. What does this mean? Creating space for healthy identity development, strategies to support academic excellence and new narratives about Black youth in Madison.

We'll start by creating a community coalition to support us in making this goal a reality. We believe that by designing new ways to care for and meet the social-emotional and academic needs of Black students, we will make our district and our community better for all.



# THE STRATEGY

To achieve our goals and make our vision a reality, we will rely on **five major levers for change**. Each of these levers builds on where we've been but proposes a shift in our strategy, one that we believe will propel us forward. Related to each lever are actions that we will further develop as we learn together over time.





# #1 WE WILL EMPOWER SCHOOL COMMUNITIES

We will empower principals along with school teams, providing them the resources, flexibility and integrated support necessary to collaboratively create strategies with students, staff and families that accelerate student progress.

## Why?

Gaps in achievement are stubborn but not impenetrable. Over five years, we have made consistent gains in academic achievement and are narrowing gaps. We've learned that it takes a disciplined way of working to make progress. But to make more transformative change, it also takes a community. Schools that have made the most progress in our district have worked together with their entire community to create a strategy that builds on the school's unique strengths and addresses its needs. Lifting voices is the key to unlocking the inherent brilliance that lies in every adult and every child.

## How?

Within parameters based on research and best practice, we will create more flexibility and make space for more creativity for schools to be responsive to their students' strengths and needs. We will also improve our processes for school-based shared leadership to ensure staff, parents and students have a voice in decision making.

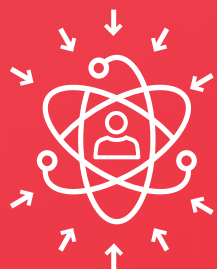




We will do that through:

- ▶ **The School Improvement Plan:** The School Improvement Plan (SIP) is the document and process schools use to choose and implement a targeted set of strategies to accelerate progress toward goals. A re-designed SIP and streamlined process will ensure that schools are using their limited time and energy on the strategies that their school community deems most impactful.
- ▶ **School Instructional Design:** Schools will also work annually to align their resources (time, people and money) to the needs of their individual students. A school's "design" is the way it chooses to organize itself – who is working with which students on what, when and how in alignment with our district-approved plans for Students with Disabilities, English Language Learners and Advanced Learners within inclusive schools. By creating more flexibility to use resources based on the strengths and needs of students, we believe schools will be better able to support all learners holistically.
- ▶ **Integrated School Support Teams:** To support a school's unique improvement plan and instructional design, cross-functional school support teams that include expertise from key departments, will support a small portfolio of schools and meet at least quarterly to problem solve and build capacity to support the school in meeting its goals.





## #2 WE WILL INVEST IN PEOPLE

We will commit to investing in and fully supporting our staff, with a focus on anti-racist, culturally responsive and inclusive teaching and powerfully aligned hiring, placement, induction, professional growth, coaching and evaluation practices.



### Why?

Our highly qualified, committed staff are among our greatest assets, and to do their best work, they need tools, resources and our full support. That includes investing in their ability to grow and learn in a trusting environment where they can bring their full selves to work each day and celebrate their identities as educators. It also means investing in not just individuals but the collective power of their teams to make decisions, every day, in uncompromising alliance to children and families.

### How?

We believe that investing in our staff means investing in their collective knowledge and skill, in their ability to function efficaciously in teams and in forging career paths designed for positive impact.

We will do that through:

- ▶ **Culturally Responsive Teaching:** Our Great Teaching Framework describes high-quality teaching in our school district and puts culturally and linguistically responsive teaching at the center – all in service of deeper learning for all students. We will more tightly align our systems for hiring, placement, induction, professional growth, coaching and evaluation for teachers to this Great Teaching Framework.

While educators must be well versed in culturally responsive teaching practices, every employee needs to function from a common understanding about the history and effects of racism, structural racism and implicit bias. This work will be embedded in induction and professional learning district-wide.

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#### EQUITY FELLOWS

Utilizing a growing cohort of Equity Fellows who work in different capacities all over the district, **we will offer ongoing specialized facilitation support for school-based and central office staff on implicit bias, structural racism, racial identity and racial equity.**



► **Building Collective Efficacy:** Teams that engage in clear and disciplined cycles of reflection, planning and action can clearly attribute the impact of their actions on student outcomes. We'll move from relying on mainly large group or district-wide professional development to more school-based learning, drawing on the expertise of principals, teachers and educators within and across schools. In doing so, we'll build on the work of many successful teacher teams, as well as student services teams, across the district and focus on creating the conditions for these ongoing cycles of action and reflection to take place.

► **Talent Development:** We will also continue to strive for a more diverse staff and a talent development model that helps every staff member forge a path to grow professionally and increase their positive impact. We will continue to enhance efforts to engage employees through the establishment of affinity groups and the articulation of clear individual promotional paths and development opportunities aligned to social justice and racial equity.

## MINDFULNESS

We believe in empowering, encouraging, and supporting staff and student well-being. One way to do that is by offering a network of opportunities for staff to explore and experience mindfulness-based practices. Mindfulness practices can help us regulate and respond to the challenging and complex realities of our work as educators. Learning to pay attention to the present moment, without judgment, nurtures personal well-being and supports us in bringing compassion and efficacy to our relationships with colleagues, students and families.

**This full presence is associated with reducing implicit bias, a key condition for our continued efforts to become anti-racist practitioners, and supports us on our life-long personal and professional journey as educators.**





## #3 WE WILL STREAMLINE PRIORITIES

We will focus the work of the central office team on breaking down systemic barriers and filling gaps in access, services and resources.



### Why?

In addition to providing support to schools, central office must also take on work that paves the way for student success district-wide. While individual schools are best positioned to make decisions for their students, the central office is often best positioned to address systemic barriers or gaps that stand in the way of schools' success.

### How?

We will focus on three major areas and explore key actions in those areas:

#### ► Deeper learning experiences that engage, challenge and support all learners

- Deepen early literacy and math instruction
- Strengthen our tiered Pre-K-12 Intervention System (academic, social/emotional/behavioral and accelerated learning options)
- Establish historically accurate, inclusive and culturally relevant curriculum and assessment tools and resources

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#### WHAT IS DEEPER LEARNING?

Deeper learning means **moving beyond the basics to more ambitious instruction and engaging, authentic learning that requires the skills and abilities articulated in our graduate vision.** It also means never withholding ambitious instruction from students who are still working on basic skills.



► **Positive, trusting relationships that foster safe and thriving cultures and climates**

- Develop district-wide systems to lift up youth voice and leadership
- Develop district-wide systems for parent leadership development and advocacy
- Strengthen teacher leadership opportunities and principal pipeline
- Strengthen our restorative mindsets and restorative justice practices within each school
- Strengthen proactive behavior support, classroom management and student response systems

BEHAVIOR EDUCATION PLAN

We've learned an incredible amount about behavior support and what it takes to make sure every school and classroom is a safe and supportive one. We'll take what we've learned and work with students, staff and families to strengthen our approach.

**We know that our move to proactive behavior support and restorative practices is the right direction, and by taking a step back to improve our policy and systems, we can ensure we have the right district-wide support for implementation while fostering school-based strategies and innovations aimed at strengthening relationships and students' sense of belonging.**

► **Personalized opportunities that lead to post-secondary success**

- Redesign middle school to strengthen student engagement and relationship building
- Coordinate student-centered case management and options to support and re-engage Opportunity Youth, youth put significantly at risk by the system, especially those who are justice-involved, have dropped out or are significantly off track to graduation
- Develop high school pathways, including the Early College STEM Academy at Madison College

**All students should see themselves represented in curriculum.** This means curriculum that makes visible the rich identities and histories of all. From LGBTQ+ students and families, to students with disabilities, to Native American students to students of all races, faiths, immigration statuses, our curriculum must represent all.





## #4 WE WILL PLAN FOR THE FUTURE

We will think and plan long-term in partnership and collaboration with our students, families, staff and the larger Madison community.





## Why?

Our long-term success depends on addressing long-standing, structural barriers that stretch beyond MMSD. This work must be long-term and can be accomplished only in partnership with our city, community partners and our families.

## How?

In collaboration with our community, we will engage in long-term planning in the areas that are most important to support student and family success through a multi-generational lens. This means our focus isn't just on students, but also on their future children, their parents, their grandparents.



We will do that through exploring solutions in the following areas:

- ▶ **Early Childhood:** Working with the City of Madison, Dane County, our Early Care and Education sites, the United Way of Dane County, potential funders and other key community partners, we will explore full-day four-year-old kindergarten options, stronger links to early learning for birth to age three and more wrap-around care for our earliest learners.
- ▶ **Neighborhood Needs:** We will continue to explore and expand models like Community Schools in support of our highest-needs neighborhoods and partner with agencies, like the Madison Out-of-School Time coalition, to increase access to the services families and students need to thrive.
- ▶ **School Buildings:** Through long-range facilities planning, there is potential to not only improve the quality of facilities across our district, but align our investments in school facilities with our values of racial equity and social justice. By working together with our community, we can address inequities that have existed in our community and invest in facilities that serve our community well.

**This means our focus isn't just on students, but also on their future children, their parents, their grandparents.**



## #5 WE WILL EMBRACE INNOVATION

To address challenges without clear solutions, we will adopt new mindsets toward risk-taking and support people in bold, new and innovative work within the classroom and beyond.

### Why?


We do not have all the answers. We need to build a skill set and a mindset that supports innovative work and design at every level of our organization focused on equity-based problems that have been hard to budge. This means better identifying problems, talking with those who experience the problem to better understand them, brainstorming to surface possible solutions, trying something and learning from it. As a school district, we believe we've learned a lot about continuous improvement, but we need a stronger skill set around innovation.

### How?

We will more intentionally mine for current innovations, guide small groups of leadership, staff and teachers through innovation sessions when facing significant equity-based problems and build capacity to innovate throughout the district, including innovation in the classroom. As we identify innovations that produce results, we will make sure to codify them and consider them for implementation at a larger scale.







We will do that through:

- ▶ **Cultivating MMSD's Strengths in Innovation:** We know educators are already problem solving and innovating, but we haven't yet captured this expertise. We'll begin by mining for innovation already in our schools and classrooms, learn from it and make resources available in an online repository for staff across the district.
- ▶ **Facilitating Innovation in MMSD and Beyond:** We'll create an innovation team whose expertise is not in the subject matter of specific issues, but in design thinking and the process to develop and test ideas. This team will help facilitate the process of innovation and design with educators throughout MMSD.
- ▶ **Developing Innovation Skills and Capacity among MMSD Staff:** We'll also provide professional development and training opportunities for school-based and central office staff that feature hands-on skill development, highlights of successful innovation and opportunities to collaboratively solve problems.



A young boy with dark skin and curly hair, wearing a blue long-sleeved shirt, is lying on his stomach on a wooden desk. He is smiling and looking up at the camera while his hands rest on an open book. The background is a blurred classroom with fluorescent lights and a whiteboard.

# WAYS OF WORKING

To ensure effective execution of our strategy, together we will utilize several crucial ways of working that build on our past practice but are in better alignment with our core values.



**Ongoing Advocacy:** The Superintendent will work with our Board of Education other elected officials, school districts and institutions to advocate for change at the local, state and national levels to ensure policy and funding that support teachers and the teaching profession, public education, children and families.

**Teacher Voice:** We will be more intentional about utilizing a range of diverse teacher voices when making decisions – both at the school and district level. That includes thoughtful representation of teachers on school-based leadership teams as well as on central office cross-functional teams tasked with priority projects.

**Gaining Perspectives:** District leaders will continue to meet with several key advisory groups to gain their perspectives on how our work is unfolding and with what effect. This will require that we deepen our ongoing engagement with staff, students and parents who too often are marginalized in our school system.



**Continuous Improvement:** Through quarterly reviews of progress and regular school and classroom visits, schools and central office will continue to be held accountable for progress, but with more attention toward the complexity of our work, which will require asking more questions and staying attuned to learning from emergent strategies.

**Scaling What Works:** We will sharpen our processes for piloting and determining what needs to be brought to scale and at what pace. We will ensure that new ideas address clear gaps or needs, determine metrics for success at the outset and discontinue what doesn't work. Most important, will ensure that ideas brought to scale are sustainable and supported by the community we serve.

Scaling is when we increase the number of teachers or schools using a particular strategy, program or intervention.

**As a community and a school district, we are more capable now than ever to take the next step.**

We will need your support every step of the way - believing in the potential of every child, fully supporting our teachers and leaders and sticking with us as we learn. We invite you to join us on this journey.

Together, we can ensure that every school is a thriving school that prepares every student to be ready for college, career and community.

