Portsmouth School District 2014-2019 Strategic Plan

The mission of the Portsmouth Public Schools

To engage all students in rigorous learning opportunities supported by a high quality and challenging curriculum and superior teaching to prepare them to thrive in an ever changing world.

Professional Learning Communities

The Portsmouth Public Schools have embraced ownership of Professional Learning Communities based on a solid body of research that Professional Learning Communities and a culture of collaborative coaching and learning is a powerful way to achieve and sustain a high performing school district (Rick Dufour, 2002; Robert Marzono and Rick Dufor, 2011). It is a shift from a focus on teaching to a focus on learning.

Through our Professional Learning Communities, we will ensure that every student learns. We will, as colleagues, continuously explore four essential questions:

- What do we want each student to learn?
- How will we know when each student has learned it?
- How will we respond when a student experiences difficulty in learning?
- How will we respond when a student already knows it?

Through our Professional Learning Communities, we will build shared knowledge and find common ground on the questions and use the answers for each individual student to ensure high levels of learning.

We will also foster a powerful culture of collaboration embracing the truth that the team is always smarter than the smartest person on the team. We will work in teams engaging one another in the continuous process of using data and student work to help each student reach higher levels of student achievement. We will focus on results and will judge ourselves and our effectiveness based on evidence of improved student achievement and we will work interdependently to ensure every single student is progressing.

Goals

Five goals will guide our work:

- Goal #1: Every student will learn at high levels
- Goal #2: Upon graduation, all Portsmouth Students are well prepared to embark upon their intended college or career pathway
- Goal #3: Effective leadership of Human Capital
- Goal #4: The district will have harnessed stakeholder support to create and sustain an educational and physical infrastructure that will work for the 21st century
- Goal #5: Manage the financial, physical and the technological infrastructure of the Portsmouth district in order to enable it to support Goal 1 – 4.

Goal #1: Ensuring excellence in student achievement across all grade levels.

Clearly continuous improvements in student achievement should be front and center of Portsmouth's strategic plan. Superior academic performance at the lower grades in Portsmouth clearly supports broader student success goals at and after High School. This objective aligns with RIDE's number one objective of "all students achieving."

Portsmouth will judge its progress in improving student achievement across the following categories:

- Increase the absolute percentage of students achieving proficiency and advanced standing
- Narrow achievement gaps for all learners
- Increase the percentage of students achieving distinction
- Measure individual student growth and ensure every student is progressing

In addition, the High School will be measured by: high school graduation rate, PSAT/SAT/ACT scores, number of students taking AP classes, and number of students achieving at least a 3 on the AP exam.

These categories are the same ones used by RIDE currently in assessing which schools achieve Commended Status.

Portsmouth Schools will strive for "High Performing" designation:

- Place in the top 10 percent in the state on state assessments of English Language Arts and Mathematics
- Achieve comparable results for all students tested, including all subgroups

Achieving excellence in student achievement across all levels requires a guaranteed and viable curriculum and the following actions:

- Continue to implement the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and deploy a guaranteed and viable curriculum in the Aspen system.
  - Focus on writing across all levels
  - Integrate technology throughout
  - Foster district wide and building level teamwork through our Professional Learning communities (PLC's) and data based instructional improvement
  - Embed common formative assessments

- Reduce the achievement gaps for all learners
  - Use data and student work to diagnose the learning challenges of each student
  - Implement Student Learning Objectives and the Basic Education Plan through our grade level teams
  - Enhance and strengthen the Response to Intervention (RTI) process
  - Close significantly the achievement gap for students with special needs by 2019

Goal #2: Upon graduation, Portsmouth Students are well prepared to embark upon their intended college or career pathway.

Transform the Portsmouth district into a leading center for Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics (STEAM)

In the 21st century, STEAM fields will offer a wide range of promising careers. Portsmouth will ensure that students intending to embark on professional and technical STEAM career paths will be well prepared by:

- Ensuring that advanced elementary students continue to excel by providing enrichment services in the areas of Math, Science, and Technology
- Establishing a K-12 STEAM program
- Creating a "STEAM Certification" diploma for PHS graduates meeting the requirements
- Enhancing hands on exposure to the excitement in STEAM fields throughout K-12 curriculum, apprenticeships, internships and visiting professionals
- Improving math performance at all grades along with accelerated learning opportunities
- Maintain a vibrant K-12 Arts education program and work to integrate it with the STEM subjects
- Deepening technology education including basic knowledge of computer programming
- Using partnerships to promote STEAM education
- Ensuring students have exposure to career opportunities in STEAM fields through apprenticeships and internships

Ensure Every Student is College Ready

- Require the PSAT for every student eligible in the first year of eligibility
- Increase the number of students taking honors and AP classes
- Increase the average scores on AP exams
- Continuously improve the average Portsmouth SAT scores Any Portsmouth student attending community college would not need remedial math or English
- Ensure all students have received financial literacy training

Ensure Every Student is Career Ready

Ensure all Portsmouth students

- Are aware of post-secondary career and technical education and training opportunities
- Formalize and deepen career exploration opportunities
- Ensure all students have receive financial literacy training
- Ensure every student is proficient in computer programming

A critical component of being college and career ready is being physically, socially and emotionally fit. At each level of education, the Portsmouth School district will address the students' social, emotional and physical developmental needs

- Fully integrate health and wellness into the curriculum
- Reduce drug incidents
- Ensure timely assistance for student referrals for substance abuse
- Increase attendance rates
- Reduce chronic absenteeism
- 100% of PHS students will graduate

Goal #3: Effective Teaching and Leadership

The Portsmouth Strategic Plan recognizes that achievement of Objectives 1 and 2 are dependent upon the effective leadership of educators.

We know more today about what works in schools than ever before, and there is a solid body of research concluding that the only way to achieve and sustain high performing schools is through Professional Learning Communities (Rick Dufour and Robert Marzano, 2011). A Professional Learning Community develops the collective capacity of the members of a learning community through an environment of collaborative coaching and learning. It is a collaboration of teachers, administrative and support teams, parents and students to ensure every student learns at high levels.

Professional Learning Communities embrace three big ideas:

- The fundamental purpose of our schools is to ensure all students learn at high levels
- We must work collaboratively in a collective effort to meet the needs of each student
- We must create a results orientation in which we are hungry for evidence of student learning and we act on that evidence to drive continuous improvement

The members of the Portsmouth Learning Community believe we must also ensure there is a caring adult in the life of every student irrespective of what is happening at home. The caring adult might be a teacher; however, is just as likely to be a member of our custodial, information technology or cafeteria team.

A school is people and the excellence of education cannot exceed the excellence of its people (PISA, 2009). It is our belief that one of the critical factors in student achievement is ensuring that we have high performing teachers running our classrooms. There is no system in the world or any school in the country that is better than its teachers.

We must recruit and develop the members of our Portsmouth Learning Community. We must:

- Foster an environment of collaborative coaching, feedback and learning for teachers and leaders
- Provide first year and untenured teachers with an induction and mentoring program that supports professional practice and foundations

- Ensure common planning time for teachers to have the opportunity to work together using data and student work to improve student outcomes
- Provide professional development and training that is tailored to student and teacher learning needs
- Provide opportunities for teachers and leaders to improve their practice

Goal # 4: The district will have harnessed stakeholder support to create and sustain an educational and physical infrastructure that will work for the 21st century.

Recognizing the synergistic relationship between the schools and the community, Portsmouth must fully engage the parents and guardians of our students in the process of educating Portsmouth children.

Parents and Guardians

We will lead an effort to enhance communication and involvement of parents and guardians in their children's education. We will:

- Ensure more timely communication when students are struggling
- Increase school and district support of the Parent Teacher Organizations' visibility and efforts
- Ensure a district culture that welcomes and provides opportunities for parent involvement in the schools
- Offer an outreach and training program for parents of young children to establish a strong foundation for learning
- Strengthen outreach to military families, DCYF, and group homes to ensure full integration of transitional student populations during their time in the district.
- Improve online communication with the community using district website and appropriate social media
- Develop an online menu of enrichment or tutorial resources for after school or summer opportunities that parents may want to take advantage of

The STEAM initiatives will require:

- Strengthening existing relationships with RI colleges and universities to develop opportunities for collaboration on STEAM and advanced opportunities for PHS students and teachers
- Broadening and deepening mentoring and internship relationships with businesses, non-profit, government, and institutions of higher education

Community

- Maintaining transparent communications with community stakeholders including town officials with regards to finances and programming needs
- Work collaboratively with the Town Council to explore areas for shared services
- Establish an information campaign and a district communication strategy to inform all stakeholders about developments, progress and remaining obstacles to provide a quality education for Portsmouth children

Goal #5: Manage the financial, physical and the technological infrastructure of the Portsmouth district in order to enable it to support Goals 1 – 4.

Financial Stability: Maintaining financial stability in an era of declining state resources and a shaky economic recovery is Portsmouth's major administrative challenge. In order to meet this challenge, the Portsmouth district shall focus its efforts in the following areas:

Long-term oversight:

- By the end of 2014, establish rolling three and five year financial projections.
- Establish a Long-term Financial Subcommittee responsible for vetting and approving the rolling three and five year financial projections. Require an annual presentation of the plan to the full school committee and the public for discussion, comment and adoption. This plan should serve as the backdrop and lens through which the SC makes important policy/spending decisions such as entering into labor contracts, capital expenditures, and other spending requirements
- Engage in regular outreach to the Town Council and other stakeholders regarding the financial projections

Operations:

- Starting in 2014, identify $200,000 in savings and cost avoidance per year for each of the next three years. This represents 0.5% of the budget and represents a reasonable target.
    - Savings might be found by creating shared administrative services between school and town such as accounts payable, payroll and other options or across communities with other school districts
    - In addition, there may be opportunities to expand on volume procurement, virtual regionalization for the purchase of oil, healthcare, and other supplies
- Review Special Education organization, operations and funding levels. Is there a better way to provide quality, cost effective special education?
- Undertake a review of the facilities rental policy
- Undertake a district review of the stipend policies and amounts
- Task the Finance Director to do a comprehensive review of the Salary, Benefits, Health Care and Retirement offerings.

New Revenues:

- Create $100,000 per year in new revenue sources. Options include pursuing grants and potentially hiring a grant writer, shared services with the town, fees and so on.
- Create an endowment fund. (Utilize outside stakeholders)

Physical plant and infrastructure

- By 2014, establish a facilities' priorities list that would designate maintenance and improvements needs and classroom modernization
- Undertake a formal prioritization process to guide spending
- Continue work with District Safety Committee, in order to ensure that all buildings and procedures meet the current safety standards

Technology

- Ensure adequate infrastructure to meet the demands of PARCC
- Fully implement Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) to help meet technology at the High School by 2015.
- Provide training and professional development to staff to increase their knowledge of and comfort with the variety of tools technology has to offer to enhance the educational growth of students
- Implement technology to facilitate communications, increase operation efficiency and realize cost savings
- Support district technology plan