



TO: Board of Education

FROM: Dr. Philip Bender, Superintendent 
Bernadette Tramm (Strategic Plan Internal Facilitator) 

DATE: April 25, 2011

SUBJECT: Recommendation on District 64 Strategic Plan 2011-12 Implementation

At its core, the Strategic Plan is intended to help District 64 accelerate the positive changes that will help us do more for students – by improving classroom instruction through the advanced use of technology and focusing on priority standards, by helping every student set personally challenging goals, and by strengthening connections within our partnership through authentic service learning tied to our civil behavior initiatives. The plan offers an unparalleled opportunity for District 64 to focus staff expertise and resources on those strategies we know will have the greatest benefit to improving education for current and future students. The plan has had an impressive start in 2010-11, with more than 400 staff members fully engaged in activities. This report identifies the activities and budget needed to build upon this momentum as we move into Year 2.

Background

The Board of Education officially adopted a Strategic Plan for District 64 on May 10, 2010, which included beliefs, mission, objectives, parameters, strategies, and action plans designed to implement the five strategies. (Attachment 1) This was the culmination of more than two years of effort by more than 120 volunteers representing all stakeholders in our vital partnership, including staff, administrators, Board members, parents and other community members. The plan was named a “Journey of Excellence” to highlight the minimum five-year schedule to implement all facets of the plan. Also in May, the Board authorized the first year of activities on a set of action plans for 2010-11 along with a budget of \$195,000.

Both informal and official progress reports have been made to the Board this year on the specific steps accomplished on these activities. All District 64 certified teachers, curriculum specialists and administrators – about 400 employees in total – are participating in Strategic Plan activities this year. Because of this “all in” engagement, the plan truly has become a shared “journey” for all District 64 staff.

Second Year of Implementation 2011-12

As envisioned when the plan was adopted, the Board will be asked to consider a schedule of implementation activities and budget for the upcoming year each spring. This cycle allows the Strategic Plan budget to be smoothly integrated into the District’s tentative budget draft. This cycle also allows an appropriate Staff Development calendar to be arranged for the year ahead to accommodate Strategic Plan meeting needs.

The ESC administrative team, Administrative Council and the strategy leadership group have been meeting regularly this spring to plan activities in light of the work that has been accomplished thus far on the action plans, other District initiatives, and budget impact.

The administration now recommends implementation of a set of action plans for 2011-12. In all, 21 of the total 26 action plans are being scheduled for activity in the second year. The chart in Attachment 2 identifies the sequencing of each action plan over the five-year period 2010-11 through 2014-15. The color-coding indicates how each plan moves from readiness activities, implementation with support, and full implementation. This attachment also shows the other initiatives that are already in place or foreseen that will impact both teaching staff as well as building and District administrators in 2011-12 and future years. Most of these activities are directly related to specific parameters within the Strategic Plan, such as maintaining safe learning environments, fulfilling financial commitments, and supporting high student performance.

Attachment 3 presents a detailed overview of the five strategies, with the action plans and budget identified for each. A more detailed report on the proposal for a Technology Coach Pilot (Strategy I, Action Plan 3) is included as Attachment 4. In all, administration is requesting a budget of \$325,990 for Strategic Plan implementation activities in the coming school year.

Plans for Staff Involvement

Based on the success of this year's approach, administration plans to continue for a second year having all District 64 certified staff and administrators work on implementation of some aspect of the Strategic Plan. We again propose utilizing a combination of some Staff Development Wednesdays and Institute Days to be dedicated to Strategic Plan work. Although some tasks by some groups will occasionally require release time for teachers during the day, we hope to continue using this sparingly to reduce the amount of time teachers are out of the classroom.

Budget Implications

As established when the Strategic Plan was implemented, a budget will be developed each year to cover the action plans being scheduled. This allows the activities and budget to be considered within the District's overall financial needs and in light of other existing initiatives. This gives the Board maximum control over Strategic Plan expenditures and the pace of activities to be undertaken year-by-year.

The budget recommended for 2011-12 is \$325,990 and is detailed by strategy as noted on Attachment 3. This cost includes personnel included in the Technology Coach Pilot as well as supplies and other expenditures for all strategies.

The District's long-range financial projections update prepared by the District's outside consultant and Business Manager Becky Allard was presented to the Board on February 14. The projections included a "strategic staffing case" scenario that incorporated new, annual expenditures of up to \$400,000 for four years for Strategic Plan implementation with no adverse impact on the long-range financial forecast and the Board's fund balance policy objectives.

In addition, the 2010-11 strategic plan budget of \$195,000 will be significantly underspent. It is likely that almost \$100,000 will not be used, due to a combination of factors. First, some funds projected to be needed for supplies, release time and other support instead were reallocated from within the 2010-11 District budget. In addition, the all-District work sessions that were included as part of the District's Staff Development schedule were used extremely effectively by the strategy committees; this reduced the need to release teachers

from classrooms to complete tasks. Finally, some funding that was conservatively set aside for activities proved not to be needed during the first year, and has been moved into later years of the plan.

Based on this substantial underspending for 2010-11, the long-range projections, and conservative estimates for the upcoming year, administration believes that the requested budget for Year 2 strategic planning implementation can be added to the 2011-12 District budget now being prepared with no significant impact.

Looking Ahead

A unique feature of the Strategic Plan is the change protocol (Attachment 5), which identifies eight steps that are critical to the successful implementation of changes proposed in District 64. The protocol is being used by all the strategy teams as well as administrators when thinking about changes emanating from the Strategic Plan as well as for school and existing District initiatives. Its use will continue to expand in coming years as leaders and staff members further appreciate how easily it can be applied to a wide variety of situations.

In addition, as recommended in the Cambridge Strategic Services model initially used to draft the Strategic Plan in 2009, the Strategic Plan should be holistically reviewed after about two-three years. This formal review allows the plan to be adjusted based on the experiences to date in implementing the action plans and to reflect changes in educational standards, mandates, funding and other societal changes that may have impacted the District since the plan was developed. The administration recommends working with the newly reorganized Board of Education later this spring to consider the timing and scope of such a review.

Monitoring Progress and Next Steps

During the 2010-11 school year, administration provided frequent updates about implementation activities as well as formal, detailed progress reports each trimester to the Board on activities in each action plan. The District's website remains a focal point to collect information on the plan. A regular schedule of both informal and formal progress reports will be maintained during the second year of implementation.

Following the in-depth discussion at the April 25 meeting, and any needed follow up to Board questions, administration intends to bring forward a motion to adopt the implementation schedule and budget for the 2011-12 school year at the May 9 meeting.

District 64 has begun a transformative journey that focuses the District's resources and energies on implementation of its Strategic Plan. Administration would again like to thank the members of the current and previous Boards for support of the strategic planning effort, the many volunteers who so willingly contributed their expertise to help shape the plan, and all District 64 staff members who have participated in implementation activities this year.