

# Strategic Planning Public Meeting

April 21, 2009 – Sheraton

## Question 1 – Mission

### Group 1

1. Wording – there’s nothing about business, future jobs, etc. – preparing them for future employment. One of the jobs is to train the future workforce. The future is missing.
2. See lots of action words, but still too general and “pie in the sky”. Needs to be more concrete. Should be something you can measure your progress by. This is vision.
3. Liked many components, especially civic component. But all these actions and academic excellence is at the end. Don’t mean everyone has to get straight A’s, but at the end of the day, school district has to educate. Should start with this. The fundamental seems like an afterthought.
4. Academic excellence – that suggests we’re teaching the A students. What about C students?
5. Use educating for the future.
6. The mission should express how education is being expressed/understood in a new way.
7. In fairness to the mission, it says to.... to..... by..... to make connections. Kind of long.
8. Tying into the concerns of the business community – not a reference to local community and local concerns – global.
9. Need an emphasis on student responsibility.
10. And also empowerment in their own education. Goes along with responsibility so they would go to counselor or teacher to share problems/needs.
11. This needs to be an evolving plan – will change dependent on what’s happening. This is a bit stagnant.
12. Civic engagement suggests responsibility but sustainability, ecological. If we aren’t building a sustainable school district, we’re in trouble.
13. We can talk about these broad issues, but if you are a parent, you will do whatever you need to do for your child.
14. We’re seeing this in the outflow of students and families.
15. We moved here partially because of the schools. People in Madison have myopic vision. It’s a great school district and we need to share it.
16. One of the things Madison has going for it is its size – we can do a lot of things.
17. Can’t ask parents to take a risk with their children. A fifty-fifty chance that your child will come out OK isn’t good enough. We need to be great; a model for other school districts locally, nationally, globally. This is vision.
18. Not cutting edge because then you bleed.

19. Business community will support schools, especially if they are in the mission statement.
20. It says “community.” I read that to mean ethnic community. But there are communities of learning. When you craft this mission statement, have to be sure about what you mean – to most. This use of the word doesn’t mean the arts, etc.
21. Needs to stand alone. Won’t have Dan guiding. Mission statements must be put/read in context.
22. Doesn’t have anything anywhere that the district will look to the business community as an active partner. Maybe use “communities.”
23. Need both a vision and a mission with an annotated section that provides explanation.
24. Community, diversity are code words for race and ethnicity so you need to use other words.
25. Does this mission statement speak to the issues that cause people to seek out other school districts. What we say at the beginning and at the end are the most important. The punch is at the beginning and the end because that’s what we remember.
26. This is a good vision statement. I few send the army on a mission, we know exactly what they are expected to achieve, what they will do. Need to be more concrete and generate a vision.
27. Love of learning – like the generative nature, in other words – love of learning means that learning will generate interest in more learning. But need to convey that it is educational learning (not learning how to rob banks, etc.) that makes the learning special and important.
28. Needs to be a connection between students and teachers. Mission speaks to students, but not teachers.
29. When I think of love of learning – I think of responsibility for learning, not just to pass a test, but for fulfillment, for interacting with the world, for gaining information and skills. Learning is a form of involvement.
30. It also is learning how to learn.
31. Education is progressive, and a process. (Group liked these words.)
32. Capitalizing on technology and access to internet – need to have skills to get and use information.

Notes taken by KL

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## Question 1 – Mission

### Group 2

Like the action words - thrive, love of learning, inspiring

Mission should be short, easy to remember and repeat, find a simpler way to say it.

Is there also a Vision statement that will help clarify?

Global Citizen...what is meant by that?

Citizen of United States first then global citizen...explain what is meant by global citizen.

I want to make sure I am getting the best education for my tax dollar.

District needs to make sure the broad middle range student, B or C student, is reflected in the mission statement.

Civic engagement is huge...hard to get a volunteer base.

Should civic responsibility be the responsibility of the schools? Concern about perspective that is being used in dealing with the political part of civic engagement.

Bring the community more into the schools allowing for greater civic engagement opportunities.

Schools teach about the importance of civic engagement, not a specific perspective.

Achieve Academic Excellence is core to the school district. Hard to define. Make sure we set our standards high enough. The mission statement does show cases of academic excellence.

Notes taken by SH

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## Question 1 – Mission

### Group 3

What is meant by academic excellence? Not all students going to college. What about students going to jobs and the work force?

Does this support students going to technical colleges?

Like the term, supporting every student...district needs to make sure all students have the opportunity. It is up to the student to take the opportunity.

Replace Academic Excellence with:

Ensure all students reach their potential

Prepared for life after high school

Replace Inspire Love of Learning with:

Life long learning

Give Tools for Life Long Learning

5 years from now, will this still be relevant?

Where is there support for the basic core of teaching reading, writing?

Missing is language around successfully preparing students for the work world.

Diversity language is good. Worried about some companies not sending recruiters to UW because there is not enough diversity. Diversity is important.

Need more language around community, families and business. Too much academic language focusing on schools and staff.

Could there be multiple mission statements?

Notes taken by SH

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## Question 2 – Beliefs and Parameters

### Group 1

(Belief #7) Questions regarding what do we mean by “resources?” Families can be a resource, culture can be a resource. Resources are different from school-to-school. Too often we think of resources monetarily, but people are a big part of a school’s resources.

(Belief #3) Should be changed to “...the right (**and responsibility**) to contribute.” There needs to be language about parental responsibility and the need for more parental involvement. Children have a right to a good education even if their parents aren’t responsible. Taxpayers are responsible for payment, parents responsible for children and the need for involvement in their child’s school life. There needs to be mention of the “resources” of the community (e.g. given that an individual had personal knowledge of Native American art, but wasn’t allowed to teach a class because wasn’t “certified.” – we lose community resources this way).

(Belief #8) Shouldn’t define something with a negative (“is not predicated on race...”). Another offered, “...academic achievement (**should not**) be predicated on ....”

**Parameters** – general note: there is no mention of taxpayers’ ability to pay for programs. Yes, there are wonderful things we would like to do, but lack the resources

(Parameters #4, #8) Group talked about these two parameters in relation to district budget. Need to make the budget more understandable to the average citizen. You can be transparent, but if no one understands what you’re doing the transparency is irrelevant.

(Parameter #13) It wasn’t clear to the group if this meant “individual” or “group.” People at the table believed strongly that individual goals, responsibilities were important. The group is important, but individual goals imp., too.

Notes taken by JQ

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## Question 2 – Beliefs and Parameters

### Group 2

(Belief #8) Just saying this doesn't make it so. For too many in the schools and our community, a student of color has low expectations. If we set the bar low, that's as high as an individual will reach. Schools don't exist in a vacuum...teachers are part of the community and embrace many of the community's attitudes. (Individual told story about how child of color whose father was a lawyer was told where the "free coats" were, assuming she was poor.)

There was some sentiment that the beliefs were somewhat vague/ambiguous and some suggested the need for more concrete language.

Words that are missing in the belief statements: college, university, career, job, skills, sustainable.

Missing belief: teaching kids how to make independent judgments, be more self-guided and ultimately be responsible for *their* education.

### Parameters

(#5) this needs to say "business." The word community is too vague for business folks to feel that this is talking to them.

(#9) AND responsibility "is expected throughout..." There needs to be a more "personal" aspect to #9. Accountability should be expected...you can't carve out select groups that can't meet standard and say, 'well, this doesn't apply to them.'

(#10) What does this mean??!

(#11) You can do/prove anything with "research." What does this really mean?

Notes taken by JQ

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## Question 2 – Beliefs and Parameters

### Group 3

1. Very well done. Some that have not received consensus are very important. Document isn't as strong without that.
2. #5 are the most difficult to achieve.
3. It is important to speak with everyone – don't single out any groups.
4. The word "creativity" does not appear until the end of page 3. Should be more centrally focused. Relates to problem solving. 21<sup>st</sup> Century skills focus is creativity. Creativity is extremely broad-based.
5. Creativity can be an adjunct to the basics – reading, writing, etc. Many times we use crutches for learning (calculators, etc.). The basics need to drive the criteria (such as creativity). When you focus on creativity, you sometimes ignore the basic requirements.
6. Need to entertain more accountability within the teacher ranks. Recognize good teachers and hold on.
7. #12 – it is helpful to inhibit creativity.
8. #1 priority should be to teach. Adaptation is giving the kids the right tools.
9. Kids coming out of school sometimes have more technology expertise than business expertise. Discussion about technology in school vs. at home. Moving skills forward with difficult backgrounds.

Notes taken by EK

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## Question 2 – Beliefs and Parameters

### Group 4

1. #8 English Language Learners may be an issue – perhaps reword.
2. Suggest change to #8 – We will not allow should be predicated. All kids can learn and will learn, and we will make sure of that. Make the connection (I believe and therefore...). Too little of making these connections. Maybe just good ideas that are too easy to be put in a drawer.
3. #1 – what is excellent? (ambiguous) Find something more specific (nationally competitive). You can then measure yourself against that.
4. Beliefs are not very empowering. #4 only speaks to this. It doesn't get to what we can actually do. We can affect this in this school district.
5. Missing – Maybe another belief that speaks to “we can do these things”
6. Beliefs – missing the word “equality”.
7. New – Talk about the student's responsibility, and the teacher's, and the parents'. A belief around who/what – is accountable? All kids need to come to school ready to learn. Make sure they are productive members of society when they leave the MMSD.
8. Parameters – How do you decide what the best practices are?
9. Look at Kipp to see what they are doing with lower achieving schools.

Notes taken by EK

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## Question 3 – Strategic Priorities

### Group 1

Things that need more focus:

1. #5 - Facilities: Is this represented in #5?
2. #5 – We need real opportunity for schools to be lighthouse schools so they are accessible 24/7 for the kids and community.
3. #5 – Building meaningful partnerships means being accessible.
4. #3 – It is going to take time, so we need to have professional development to work with our current workforce to be competent.
5. Structure of the school day needs to be more visible, not just having the calendar on the web site. Can this be addressed in #5?
6. #3 – Staff accountability is needed. Can we reward the best teachers and do something with those who are not performing? The district does not do this well. They drag the issue out. Schools need to be more transparent in this process. The evaluation process needs to be more rigorous.
7. Is mentorship out there? The students need at least five adults they can connect with.
8. Parent involvement needs to be increased in a more meaningful way. Let's share the strategies of those schools that are successful.
9. How can we foster business relationships to work with our students? We need to find organizations that will support schools. What percentage of adults have children in school? How can we get those adults involved? Challenge the baby boomers with meaning and purpose in retirement for folks.
10. Engaging the community also brings in people of color. This supports the teachers in being more flexible in working with students because they get more support.
11. Civic engagement needs to be developed in students. It's happening at the college level.
12. Preparing students for real world challenges. There are many areas lacking in this area.
13. How do we prepare students for the next step in life? Whether it is work force or college or tech? Do we have a program for everyone? More of the "partnership" in the schools. This is what needs to happen.
14. Do we give credit to the partners in the community publicly? Give the community a sense of pride and ownership. Give them the recognition they need when they get involved in schools.
15. Engagement – MMSD is in a community where people can get more involved. We as businesses do not know how to get involved. Please tell us how to get involved. Use the newspaper; use the media to give us information on how to get involved. We will participate. The Foundation needs to focus more.

### Positive Attributes

1. Mirror community with representatives (staff of color).
2. #1 – Student and adult relationships are necessary and good to see this. Kids have trouble learning without this component.
3. #4 – Assessment is excellent. Does the staff use the information once they know the results? What are those assessments and how can we communicate this to the public?
4. The mission statement is all inclusive. What systems are going to be put in place to make this come alive?

Notes taken by SA

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## Question 3 – Strategic Priorities

### Group 2

Positive Attributes:

No information from this group.

Areas to be worked on:

1. Observation: Staff needs to be a priority, and that seems to be missing in the rest of the document (beliefs – values).
2. What does revolutionize mean?
3. Cultural relevance needs to be more defined.
4. What are the outcomes for each of the goals? Are they defined and measurable?
5. Every student needs to have a place to go to when they need to go. Do we have staff who support this need?
6. Technology – Are all of our teachers trained for the future? How do we address this?
7. Is there more interactive learning to engage students in technology learning? Connect with different classrooms across the country or world. We need to teach to the next generation that multitasks. Teachers need to stop the traditional way of teaching. How do we compete with technology?
8. How do we create partnerships? There are some barriers to this. The district does not have the resources to put in place what they need (offering a wider range of courses).
9. Is there collaboration with the university? Be more transparent? Is there still a community partnership between the schools and community?
10. Teach cultural competence and sensitivity with the current work force. Embrace all ethnicity.
11. Emphasis on the national culture. Business tends to not care about color, but competence. There needs to be recognition to succeed in the reality in which they live. Emphasize literacy in the language in which they speak.
12. Elaborate more on the SAFETY of students.
13. Was there discussion on students being entrepreneurs? My daughter has been trained in how to be a good employee, not how to be a good business owner.

Notes taken by SA

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## Question 3 – Strategic Priorities

### Group 3

#### General comments

All Strategic Priorities are worded in a more ambiguous way.

"College, university, career, job" – all words not seen here and they should be included. These SPs don't address more of these career oriented phrases. Not mentioned in a tangible way.

"Citizens of the world" (sic) - not sure what it means.

U.S. in the last quarter century has lost the edge in technology and education. What are we going to do?

There are a lot of terms in here that have resonance in some groups but not in others.

"Cultural" – not sure what terms are meant to evoke. Specific methods to get there are not here. Gaseous phraseology is endemic in strategic planning. The core questions are: how do we get our kids to \_\_\_\_\_ (read, write, etc?)

There's no mention of competitiveness and there should be. Are our kids going to be competitive with other students in the U.S. and the world? I am concerned that we are underdeveloped in terms of sending kids to the best schools. We have the potential to have a strong student base here and I don't see that well-developed. Competitiveness is missing.

There should be something in here that speaks to engaging parents, or re-engaging parents.

The 5 SPs could be presented in an order top to bottom by importance.

Some things fit in but are not specifically stated, e.g. technology. These SPs don't have the specificity that we need.

#### SP #1 Student

Do we have the metrics to assess the gaps that come forth during each student's K-12 period? We need to continually assess these areas and develop new strategies to address the gaps.

First sentence sets the bar lower. Something about the language says that we are not trying to lift all. The sentence should be flipped. "Gap" being first categorizes that priority.

#### SP #2 Staff

Personal experience - I didn't sense enthusiasm for teaching among middle school staff – saw it among elementary staff. This needs to be addressed.

A study between student results with top quartile teachers and bottom quartile teachers – differences are stunning. There's an achievement gap among faculty. One ought to demand at least a level of achievement among staff as well as among students.

The quality of the teacher has strong effect on student success. Roots of the achievement gap should be "What are we not providing in the classroom, why is this student not learning what he should learn? Focus on what needs to be changed instructionally to address the actual causes of the gap. Teachers need to figure out how to teach every kid.

How children are taught is not included here. My kids didn't learn in the traditional manner. It comes down to learning styles – got to find different ways to teach kids because some kids don't connect to the one learning style.

#### **SP #4 Curriculum**

Interesting to me that there are successful learning models out there, and it's good that we are going to do different teaching styles. "Revolution" should come from the stakeholders – esp. the parents. Allow for the development of choices within schools, which we do not have now. Different ways for different kids so they can learn in different ways. The choice piece for the school district is to try to develop school choices that are different from one another; try to improve even if some of the schools fail at first.

#### **SP #5 Organization/Systems**

Kids learn in different settings - this needs to be built into the SPs.

Continuous improvement cycle needs to be part of the educational processes.

All parents need to feel engaged in order to help students succeed. There needs to be an open communication between schools and homes. It's important that families are involved.

Notes taken by KS

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## Question 3 – Strategic Priorities

### Group 4

#### General comments

A preliminary comment to the SPs needs to show that this is about the future, and that this is an ongoing process. Words – “sustainability” needs to be included in resources.

Also the business community needs to be represented. There needs to be an engagement with the business community. The school system ought to be reaching out more to the business community. Ought to actively engage the business community more.

Business community is a resource. It should be included here.

If people don't see themselves in these documents they're going to feel left out. Take advantage of the community we live in.

People here do reach out and think about the whole community. Take advantage of that.

If you engage those business leaders, they will feel a part of the schools. They will feel they have a stake in the community.

We're focusing on so much that we're losing our focus. The basics need to be focused on. Education has gone down because we've lost sight of the basics.

What are we teaching that we don't need to teach any more? Are we preparing students for the technology of tomorrow?

We should be doing future think. All education needs to prepare kids for what's coming FAR down the road.

There's nothing in here that says the district should bring parents in and connect to families.

Are the foundational concepts being taught? Slide rule and abacus should be used. Calculators should be banned from schools. Brain needs to be trained to think logically and use deductive reasoning.

Build to students' strengths should be in here. I'd love to see it in here. Find students' strengths and build to them. Instead of getting them to do things they will never do in life.

Community should be a 6<sup>th</sup> SP. It's important enough to be its own SP.

There needs to be an educational component in here about the district - call it marketing. Educate the community about the schools. There are a lot of misconceptions out there about the schools. Some kind of outreach needs to be done to all stakeholders.

Madison Schools have to show that if you have the affluence, it's the place to go.

Look at all the citizens in the community. The entire community should feel it has a stake in the schools. The entire community is a resource. And draw them into the process to see that they have a role.

Where does it have that we are focusing on preparing kids for all the careers? It's not represented here.

#### SP #1 Student

It has “prepare for kindergarten” but doesn't have “prepare for post-high school. Pre-kindergarten is important. It's consistently missed. Pre age 5 is an important time for learning.

**SP #5 Organization/Systems**

3<sup>rd</sup> bullet – should have a creative learning environment. We can do more if our schools are reflective of the dynamism of the community.

It's been difficult to build sustainable partnerships with the school district. My organization can build partnerships with schools and teachers. We would like to work more with the district. (He works for Madison Children's Museum). The district needs to support partnerships with the business community.

Notes taken by KS