



Milpitas Unified School District Strategic Plan

Draft

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Executive Summary

In developing a strategic plan for the Milpitas Unified School District (MUSD), a four-pronged approach was used to incorporate the voices of a diverse set of stakeholders, inclusive of students, parents, leadership, staff and community members.

1. Analysis of Existing, LCAP Data
2. Facilitation and Analysis of Interviews with Board Members
3. Facilitation and Analysis of Community Meetings
4. Observation of Convening on “Visioning the Life of a MUSD Student”

Five strategic themes emerged, reflecting a strong orientation towards the critical role that Culture, Communication, People, Programming & Service, and Growth & Transformation play in setting forth the direction and future of the Milpitas Unified School District.

Students, parents, teachers, and the community appreciate what MUSD is today, and they shared aspirations of what they would like MUSD to be known for in the community. The MUSD brand Embraces Diversity, Uniqueness & Inclusion; Develops Balanced Leaders; Promotes Quality, Support to Students, and Achievement; and Encourages Progressive and Inclusive Leadership.

To enhance the student, parent, and staff experiences, various recommendations were offered.

1. Improving communication with parents will lead to a better experience for all.
2. Having an engaged parent community creates more engaged students and vice versa, and the District should explore ways to involve both, such as in joint forums and activities.
3. Options for career and college should be introduced and nurtured early on and throughout the educational experience.
4. Further relationship-building with the City and business leaders is mutually beneficial in achieving growth potential, and can nurture and envelop the Culture of WE between these entities.
5. The socio-emotional well-being of students is an integral part of student, family, and community success, and special attention and support are necessary given current social and political realities.
6. The District should explore funding opportunities to transform learning models and spaces, and accommodate to current and future expectations.
7. Onboarding parents provides an entryway and foundation to understand and navigate the school system, while also introducing school culture, expectations, and resources.
8. The strategy for communicating with and engaging parents and the community must be examined to ensure broader reach, inclusion, and sustained participation.
9. Efforts should be directed at furthering a culture and environment where parents can be leaders.

10. Emphasizing that “every opinion matters and counts” is instrumental to parent engagement, as well as involvement of personnel from all levels of the District and Schools, such as directors and teachers.
11. Academic programming at MUSD must be geared towards the 22nd century (and not the 21st) to reflect our changing society.
12. To further equip teachers and staff members in confronting an array of issues - from academic to the socio-emotional well-being of students and families - more support is needed for teachers and staff to have a place and space to debrief and receive guidance.
13. As MUSD grows and hires more staff from the “outside”, staff onboarding helps embrace, acclimate, and synergize team members, thus leading to higher performance.
14. District-wide relationship-building and more opportunities for collaboration across schools creates important connections, and can be transformational.

In conclusion, this document represents an overview of the ideas and themes that most resonated with your community. Throughout the process of listening to the MUSD community, there is a clear and general sentiment of appreciation for what MUSD is today. Furthermore, there is acknowledgment of the important strides have been made in becoming a unified school district in purpose and leadership.

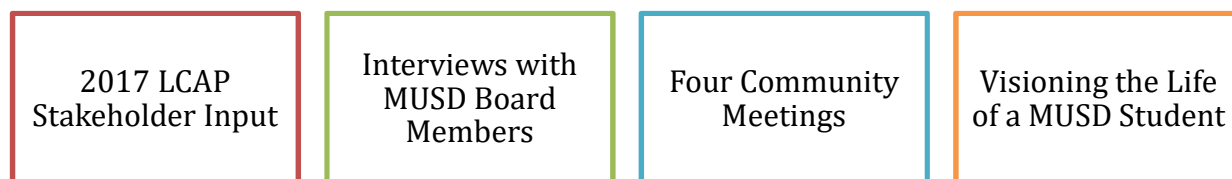
This document is intended to serve as a roadmap for the District as it creates a plan for the future. An in-depth of analysis of your resources and priorities will set the stage for defining specific goals and outcomes for MUSD into the future.

Some of the questions that the District will need to address are: What items are actionable today? What will be our top priorities for the next 5-10 years? How do we obtain the resources needed to succeed to reach our goals?

Methodology

Project Components

In developing a strategic plan for the Milpitas Unified School District, a four-pronged approach was used to incorporate the voices of a diverse set of stakeholders, inclusive of students, parents, leadership, staff and community members.



Synthesis of all four components served to elevate key themes, and identified areas for District action.

- *Analysis of Existing, LCAP Data*

Earlier this year, the 2017 LCAP Stakeholder Input/Thought Exchange process generated a wealth of ideas and feedback from 768 people, representing over 1,701 thoughts. Analysis of this data informed a strategic discussion during interviews with Board Members and community meetings.

- *Facilitation and Analysis of Interviews with Board Members*

In-depth, in-person interviews with the Board Members captured their perspectives on issues affecting the District and community, as well as areas where there are opportunities for continued growth and improvement.

- *Facilitation and Analysis of Community Meetings*

To create face-to-face opportunities for in-person engagement, four community meetings were held in July, August, and September. Three meetings were facilitated in English and one in Spanish, and a total of 105 students, parents, teachers, staff and community members participated. These meetings revealed various themes, and identified specific recommendations.

- *Observation of Convening on “Visioning the Life of a MUSD Student”*

A special convening took place during the time of this strategic planning process that explored what MUSD students, parents, teachers, staff, school leaders, community leaders, and business leaders envision for the future. Documentation of this session allowed additional input about what the participants viewed as the next frontier of learning at MUSD.

Strategic Themes

Five strategic themes emerged, reflecting a strong orientation towards the critical role that **Culture, Communication, People, Programming & Service**, and **Growth & Transformation** play in setting forth the direction and future of Milpitas Unified School District.



Culture

1. Across the different stakeholder groups, there was an emphasis on identifying, articulating, and sharing a ***philosophy and commitment towards each other***.
 - The Culture of WE was either directly referenced or surfaced in concept as an embodiment of strength in unity and purpose.
 - There is a student-centered philosophy and a dedication to students and each other that goes above and beyond the call of duty and employment classification.
 - Parents, teachers, and staff who felt connected (to the School or District) shared a strong sense of community culture in Milpitas. For many, school is the center of the neighborhood, and a symbiotic relationship exists between community and educators.
2. There was recognition of the ***value and power of diversity***, and it was described as a strength that could be leveraged more fully to enrich the interaction and experiences of students, parents, teachers, staff, and community.
 - Many examples of diversity were noted – from race, ethnicity, national origin, spoken and written languages, socio-economic status, age, sexual orientation,

abilities, educational attainment to employment. In addition, there was mention of the rich diversity of thought and experiences.

3. Awareness of diversity and *a culture of inclusion and equity* were viewed as priorities, and make MUSD exemplary.
4. *Innovation and out of the box thinking* are highly encouraged, and have led to new and different ways of doing things.

Some examples were provided, such as the creation of pathways beyond traditional pre-K to high school, dual immersion programs, and mind maps at the elementary school level.

Communication

1. Communication with the public is vital to *creating awareness and visibility of the strengths and accomplishments at the Milpitas Unified School District*.

There are opportunities to further promote MUSD's brand, develop a compelling narrative, and garner voter support for initiatives.

2. *Proactive communication and cohesive messaging* can unify the community and be empowering to all.
3. *Communicating with the many audiences that MUSD touches* can be challenging; however, the District recognizes the benefits of making those connections.

Communication in-language and employing innovative tactics that are target-specific are necessary to improve its reach and effectiveness, as well as create a foundation of trust, loyalty, and rapport.

4. *Effective communication* combined with *a culture of openness and inclusion promote and sustain community input and involvement*.

People

1. The *people of MUSD are its greatest assets* – from its students, parents, teachers, staff, Board of Directors, and District Leadership.
 - The diversity among its people set the District apart – and there was mention of how MUSD could be known for its Excellence through Diversity.
 - There is an active parent community that “shows up,” and there is a desire from the District and parents to find ways to strengthen and expand parent participation.

- There is a deep appreciation for the teachers and staff at MUSD – for their enduring commitment to providing high quality instruction and support to students. In addition, teachers and staff “take care of students by working through the challenges and nurturing their talents”.
- The Board and District leadership are taking necessary steps to forge stronger partnerships with the City and Business community.

Progressive leadership and out of the box thinking are qualities that the leadership embodies and promotes, and they help realize MUSD’s potential.

Programming & Service

1. Milpitas Unified School District offers a ***unique model with a TK-16 pathway that creates opportunities for career and college for its students and their parents.***
 - As designed, this model promotes community development and capacity building.
 - Parents expressly valued the model in making education more accessible.
2. ***Music and athletics programming contribute to a well-rounded education,*** and there is acknowledgment and support to build and strengthen these areas for their children’s development.
3. ***Customer service is an integral part of the student and parent experience, and each touch point matters.*** Each teacher, staff person, and leader in the school influence their children’s education, and contribute to the ultimate goal of supporting a thriving student.

Growth & Transformation

1. Growth was a recurring theme for all groups, and there was a ***desire to influence and respond more proactively to the changes that are happening within the District and beyond its physical walls.***
 - The City of Milpitas is experiencing population growth, and housing development is impacting the community and MUSD. Being at the table as an active participant in decision-making and influencing changes at the City level were deemed as important.
 - Overcrowding was a concern expressed by parents given its impacts on learning and the quality of life of students.

More learning spaces, such as a new high school, was offered as a potential solution.

- Transformation of existing physical spaces and developing innovative models for learning are an important frontier to pursue.

Aspirations and Branding MUSD

When students, parents, teachers, and the community were asked what they would like MUSD to be known for in the community, many aspirations were noted that speak to core values and behaviors, as well as specific outcomes.

Embracing Diversity, Uniqueness & Inclusion

Historically, Milpitas is known for its acceptance of diversity by being the “first to have integrated housing” in the area. “We need to bring that back into the community, so that neighbors understand neighbors, etc.”

“We want to be the first District in the United States that teaches all of its citizens about each other, and educate students about how to be a global society.”

“The District supports all students of different racial backgrounds and nationalities, and is known for not discriminating against anyone.”

“We want to honor different cultures,” and acknowledge the diversity that exists within groups.

Learning about each other is “an aspect of humanity, and broadens your mind”.

“We want to be inclusive of all students, parents, staff...whomever walks into our schools.”

Within inclusion, there is expressed value in self-care and concern for others.

Through our practices, we reflect multilingualism – including but not limited to English, Spanish, and Vietnamese.

Developing Balanced Leaders

We want to develop students that will make a difference in the community. “The world needs a lot of healing, and we want to be known for going out into the world and doing that.”

We also aspire for our students to be recognized for “thriving in whatever avenue they go on, and that “they are academically prepared and can regulate their emotions and others’ as well”.

Promoting Quality, Support to Students, and Achievement

We want “our District is known for its teaching quality, and that we reach the highest levels of academic achievement.”

“Our teachers are receptive to students and accessible to listening to parents.”

“There is a balanced education, with a strong focus on academics, community, culture, and physical education.”

With the pre-K to college pathway at MUSD, our District graduates more students, and their parents go to the university.

“I want to my child who is in preschool to finish high school with a two-year degree.”

Progressive and Inclusive Leadership

“Regardless of role, we are all leaders.”

“I want our District to be flexible to the changing needs of the community.”

“My wish is that more parents – including those from the Spanish-speaking community – who are involved in the school - become elected Board Members at MUSD.”

Recommendations

“Milpitas is a gold mine. We have a real opportunity to be a role model for the country. We must stop using tradition as a barrier, and create new traditions.”

Enhancing the Student Experience

1. ***Improving communication with parents*** will lead to a better experience for all.
 - In addition to technology-aided communication tools, there should be other available in-person mechanisms or support for English and non-English speaking parents and families.
 - There is an expressed need for written communications in languages other than English, such as in Spanish, Chinese, and Vietnamese.
2. Having an ***engaged parent community creates more engaged students and vice versa***, and the District should explore ways to involve both, such as in joint forums and activities.
3. In recognition of the multiple pathways that students can take while at MUSD and beyond, ***options for career and college should be introduced and nurtured early on and throughout the educational experience***. Students need to be able to see what school “creates” in terms of career and professional opportunities and lifestyle.
 - Academic counseling from counselors and teachers must be timely, more personalized, and readily available.
 - Strengthening partnerships with the city and business community can enhance exposure to different internship and employment options.
4. Further ***relationship-building with the City and business leaders*** is mutually beneficial in achieving growth potential, and can nurture and envelop the Culture of WE between these entities.
5. The ***socio-emotional well-being of students is an integral part of student, family, and community success***, and special attention and support are necessary given current social and political realities.
 - There is a need for socio-emotional counseling services and educational programs (specifically anti-bullying and stress management) for students. Parent education in these areas would also be beneficial to counteract negative influences and pressures, and empower parents and their children.

“Real issues” happen in families, and they can affect students’ ability to perform and be fully present in school.

6. For further positioning and to lead, the District should explore ***funding opportunities to transform learning models and spaces.***
 - Transformation is about improving current facilities, as well as building spaces that are more conducive to 22nd century learning and preparation.
 - Building a new high school was a recommendation made in the three community meetings to combat overcrowding and improved quality of life.

Enhancing the Parent Experience

1. ***Onboarding parents*** provides an entryway and foundation to understand and navigate the school system. It also introduces school culture, expectations, and resources, while also elucidating any questions or concerns.
 - Parent onboarding is important at all grade levels; however, the quality of onboarding is often better in the elementary school level than in middle school and high school, and it varies across the District. As such, some parents often take on an informal role to onboard others.
2. The ***strategy for communicating with and engaging parents and the community*** must be examined to ensure broader reach, inclusion, and sustained participation.
 - While the District makes concerted efforts using many channels (from phone, e-mail, text, and written documents), many challenges remain.

Communication strategies must account for problems due to changing phone numbers, language barriers, and a sense of overwhelm among parents regarding issues pertaining to school bureaucracies (i.e., forms) and other competing matters.

- “Out of the box” strategies might work better for certain parents and groups, as well as targeted outreach to parents whom may not be involved. Direct feedback from parents on what might work for improved engagement would be beneficial.

Some specific ideas include: providing incentives to children for parent participation; establishing parent cohorts; and holding forums to bring parents together on a range of topics.

At the community meeting with Latino parents, there was an appreciation for the forum that exists to speak about issues in their language.

- In language resources, such as bilingual office staff, teachers, and counselors would enhance parents' ability to participate in various aspects of their children's educational experiences, such as address any administrative, academic, and psychosocial issues or needs.
3. Fostering ***a culture and environment where parents can be "leaders and not just followers"*** was mentioned in at least two community meetings – one in English and Spanish.
 - Parents possess qualities, talents, and skills that they can and would like to contribute to improve the student experience; however, they may feel confined to traditional ways of volunteering or participating in school activities. As an example, they may not be part of the PTA, but they can offer tutoring in math.

Within MUSD's parent and community pool, there are engineers, scientists, and professionals in many fields that could lead to greater student exposure and involvement.

4. Emphasizing that ***"every opinion matters and counts"*** is instrumental to parent engagement, as well as ***involvement of personnel from all levels*** of the District and Schools, such as directors and teachers.
5. ***Academic programming*** at MUSD must be geared towards the 22nd century (and not the 21st), thus reflect a changing society and expectations.

This reality requires learning at an accelerated pace and a wealth of information, as well as employing different strategies to do the work. Parents can support this transformation, if they are aware of the changing learning tactics and tools.

In addition, it is important to be mindful of the whole student and the imposed stress and effects on well-being in this fast-moving world.

Enhancing the Staff Experience

1. To further equip teachers and staff members in confronting an array of issues - from academic to the socio-emotional well-being of students and families, ***more support is needed for teachers and staff to have a place and space to debrief and receive guidance***. In addition, ***caring for self*** helps to serve the public, and avoids burnout.
2. As MUSD grows and hires more staff from the "outside", a ***staff onboarding program*** can help to embrace, acclimate, and synergize team members, thus leading to higher performance.

- In acknowledgment of promoting a Culture of WE, further emphasis on team, respect, constructive dialogue, as well as continuous improvement and professional development should be integrated into staff onboarding.
3. ***District-wide relationship-building and more opportunities for collaboration across schools*** creates important connections, and can be transformational.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this document represents an overview of the ideas and themes that most resonated with your community. Throughout the process of listening to the MUSD community, there is a clear and general sentiment of appreciation for what MUSD is today. Furthermore, there is acknowledgment of the important strides have been made in becoming a unified school district in purpose and leadership.

This document is intended to serve as a roadmap for the District as it creates a plan for the future. An in-depth of analysis of your resources and priorities will set the stage for defining specific goals and outcomes for MUSD into the future.

Some of the questions that the District will need to address are: What items are actionable today? What will be our top priorities for the next 5-10 years? How do we obtain the resources needed to succeed to reach our goals?