



Montgomery Township School District



Strategic Plan

Board Approved February 23, 2017

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Board of Education and Superintendent



(Left to Right): Shreesh Tiwari, Dale Huff, Minkyo Chenette, Christine Witt, Charles F. Jacey, Jr., Richard T. Cavalli (BOE President), Phyllis Bursh, Nancy Gartenberg (Superintendent), Amy Miller (BOE Vice President)

**Not seen in picture: Dharmesh H. Dhoshi*

Background

Montgomery Township School District (the “District”) serves more than 4,700 students in Skillman, New Jersey, located in Somerset County. The District includes two elementary schools, one lower middle school, one upper middle school, and one high school. The District has a strong reputation for educational excellence in the state of New Jersey.

Stakeholders described the District as high achieving; a place where students can excel in academics and acquire the skills necessary to be successful in their desired college and career pathways. The community is predominantly affluent, highly educated, and stakeholders place a high value on quality education. The District is an essential component of the community’s attractiveness to new families and businesses.

During the 2016-2017 school year, the District partnered with ECRA Group, Inc. (ECRA), a third-party research firm, to develop a strategic plan to document the current state of the District and determine a future direction based on stakeholder values and best practices. Involvement of stakeholders from every corner of the community resulted in the establishment of a strategic plan to support decision making and align the workforce and resources around student outcomes.

The strategic planning process was designed to authentically engage stakeholders including parents, students, teachers, administrators, staff, and community residents in articulating organizational priorities and stakeholder values. Stakeholders participated in interviews, focus groups, and surveys. Over **3,800** stakeholders provided input during the process. Additionally, a range of archival reports and student achievement data were analyzed.

ECRA based its findings upon themes that emerged across data sources collected in the research phase of the strategic planning process. Results across data sources were synthesized to support the development of a framework for planning and decision making.



Strategic Planning Process

The figure below is a visual representation of the strategic planning process.

Engage

✓ Indicates Completion

Engage stakeholders in a research-based method of inquiry to articulate organizational priorities and values.

- ✓ Conduct School Board and Superintendent interviews (10).
- ✓ Conduct focus groups with key stakeholder populations (203 participants).
- ✓ Review archival data and reports provided by the District.
- ✓ Administer surveys to key stakeholders (3,614 respondents).
- ✓ Perform rigorous analysis of student achievement data.

Focus

Create a focused and actionable strategic plan aligned to stakeholder priorities.

- ✓ Develop a draft strategic plan to serve as a broad framework to guide the future direction of the District. The strategic plan contains:
 - Mission, Vision, and Guiding Principles
 - Global Findings
 - Strategic Goals
 - Objectives
- ✓ Facilitate School Board work sessions to review research findings and finalize the strategic plan.

Execute

Develop specific action plans to accomplish the goals and objectives identified in the strategic plan.

- Facilitate a planning meeting to guide implementation.
- Provide templates and guidance for action plans.

- Facilitate administrator action planning meeting and document the implementation plan, which contains the following:
 - Objectives
 - Strategies/Actions
 - Timelines
 - Resources
 - Metrics
- Develop a district dashboard with key performance indicators to monitor progress toward goals.

Methods of Inquiry

The strategic planning process engaged stakeholders from the classroom to the community, providing an opportunity to learn what works well in the District and identifying areas for improvement. Research findings were triangulated from data collected across multiple methods as detailed in the tables below.

Table 1: Archival Reports Reviewed

Archival Reports (Sorted Alphabetically)
Bond Referendum 2016
Comprehensive Audit Financial Report (2014-2015)
Demographic Study of Montgomery Township (2014)
Montgomery Township Goals (2014-2015)
Montgomery Township School District Goals 2016-2017
MTSD Student Achievement Review (2014-2015)
PARCC Presentation January 9 2016 FINAL
Proposed Budget (2016-2017)
Somerset County Energy Audit Summary
User Friendly Budget (2015-2016)

Table 2: Interview Participants

Stakeholder Group	Number of Participants
MTSD Board of Education Members	9
MTSD Superintendent	1
TOTAL	10

Table 3: Focus Group Participants

Stakeholder Group	Number of Participants
Parents	53
Students	37
Administrators	33
Teachers	41
Support Staff	21
Community Leaders	18
TOTAL	203

Table 4: Survey Respondents

Stakeholder Group	Survey Responses	Number of Invitations	Response Rate
Parents	1,199*	3,235	36%
Students	1,779	2,427	73%
Employees	527	766	69%
Community	109	----	----
TOTAL	3,614	----	----

*Parents with multiple children in District schools may have taken the survey more than once.

Table 5: Student Assessment Data

Assessment Sources
State of New Jersey Department of Education (NJ.gov/education/data)
2011-2015 Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) assessment data
2011-2015 NJBCT assessment data
2012-2016 Advanced Placement (AP) test data
2015-2016 Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) assessment data
2015 NJASK assessment data
2016-2017 Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) assessment data

Global Findings

ECRA based its findings upon themes that emerged across stakeholders utilizing multiple data collection methods. The results are summarized below. Additional details can be found in a separate document titled *Montgomery Township School District Supporting Evidence 2017*.



Stakeholders are proud of the District's strong reputation for educational excellence and commitment toward high academic success. Cultural diversity in the community and schools is viewed as a District strength. Parents and the broader community value education and are supportive of the schools. Ninety percent of stakeholders rate the quality of education in the District as good or excellent. Stakeholders acknowledge that the District provides rigorous coursework and assessments that prepare students to be ready for their desired college and career pathways. Montgomery schools have received National Blue Ribbon awards and the high school has been ranked among the best schools in New Jersey.

Stakeholders would like to see students graduate with the essential knowledge, skills, and ability to be successful in college, career, and life. The vision for a graduate includes strong academic achievement, good social-emotional skills, excellent communication skills, critical thinking and creative problem solving skills, social awareness, and ethical and responsible citizenship.



Students perform significantly above national and state standards. Further, the District performs similar to other high performing peer districts in the state of New Jersey on standardized assessments. Employees rate the District as a great place to work. District schools are safe and secure, and ensuring a safe school environment for students, staff, and parents remains a high priority for the future. Facilities are well maintained and the District's financial state is in good standing. Stakeholders praised the numerous communication vehicles used by the District to share information about various initiatives.

Global Findings (Continued)

Key areas for strategic focus include alignment of curriculum across grade and building levels, greater classroom differentiation, teacher-parent communication regarding student progress, students' social-emotional well-being, student services, special education, and programs for English Language Learners. Stakeholder feedback suggests that the science program is an area for focus, as well as high school programs and pathways. Within the workplace, employees would like to see better internal communication within buildings, more participative decision-making practices, and greater support related to planning and implementation of new initiatives across the District. Providing more professional development opportunities for support staff is also desired.

Stakeholders were asked to select their highest priorities for the future of the District. The top five priorities that emerged across stakeholder groups include:

- Providing a safe environment for students and employees.
- Hiring and retaining quality teachers.
- Preparing students to be socially responsible citizens.
- Preparing students to be college and career ready.
- Ensuring a well-rounded educational experience for all students.



Portrait of a Graduate

Stakeholders were asked to describe the skills and characteristics that are essential for students to acquire by graduation. The following portrait of a graduate emerged.



College and Career Ready Scholar
Ethical and Responsible Citizen
Creative Thinker
Socially Aware Individual

College and Career Ready Scholar	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• College and career readiness• Strong academics• Good communication skills	
Ethical and Responsible Citizen	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Community service and civic engagement• Ability to work collaboratively and respect different viewpoints• Integrity	
Adaptable	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Innovativeness• Analytical, critical thinking, and problem solving skills• Creative thinker	
Socially Aware Individual	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Good social and emotional skills• Self-awareness• Confidence• Compassion• Resiliency• Respectful	

Mission Statement

A mission statement is a statement of the overall purpose of an organization. The mission should say what you do, for whom you do it, and the benefit. The following mission statement was developed in alignment with stakeholder feedback and approved by the Board of Education.

Mission Statement

To empower every student to succeed in a diverse, dynamic, global society by providing quality educational experiences in a caring environment.

Vision Statement

A vision statement reflects the District's preferred future. Vision statements describe how the future will look if the organization achieves its ultimate aims. The following vision statement was developed in alignment with stakeholder feedback and approved by the Board of Education.

Vision Statement

To be a premier school district in developing confident, compassionate, engaged learners.

Guiding Principles

Guiding principles are the beliefs that set the foundation for how an organization will operate. The principles are accepted guidelines that capture the District's values and priorities and provide direction for employees as they go about their daily work. The following guiding principles were developed in alignment with stakeholder feedback and approved by the Board of Education.



Guiding Principles

We believe:

- **Every student can learn and grow academically and social-emotionally.**
- **Each student is entitled to an excellent education that meets his or her individual needs.**
- **In upholding high academic standards for every student.**
- **Hiring, developing, and retaining outstanding staff is essential to student success.**
- **Decisions should be made in the best interest of students, using evidence and research-based best practices.**
- **Effective, transparent communication is essential for the District's success.**
- **Our diversity is a strength that creates resilient, socially aware, global citizens.**
- **Collaboration with all stakeholders enriches teaching and learning.**
- **Sound financial stewardship strengthens our organization and community.**
- **Accountability is essential to ensure excellence.**

Strategic Goals and Objectives

The strategic goals are organized in four broad areas: Student Success, School and Work Environment, Collaboration and Communication, and Resources and Operations. The objectives under each goal area

are based on the research findings and are in alignment with the District’s mission, vision, and guiding principles. The following objectives under each goal area were developed in alignment with stakeholder feedback and approved by the Board of Education.

GOAL 1: Student Success

Maximize the social-emotional and academic growth of every student.

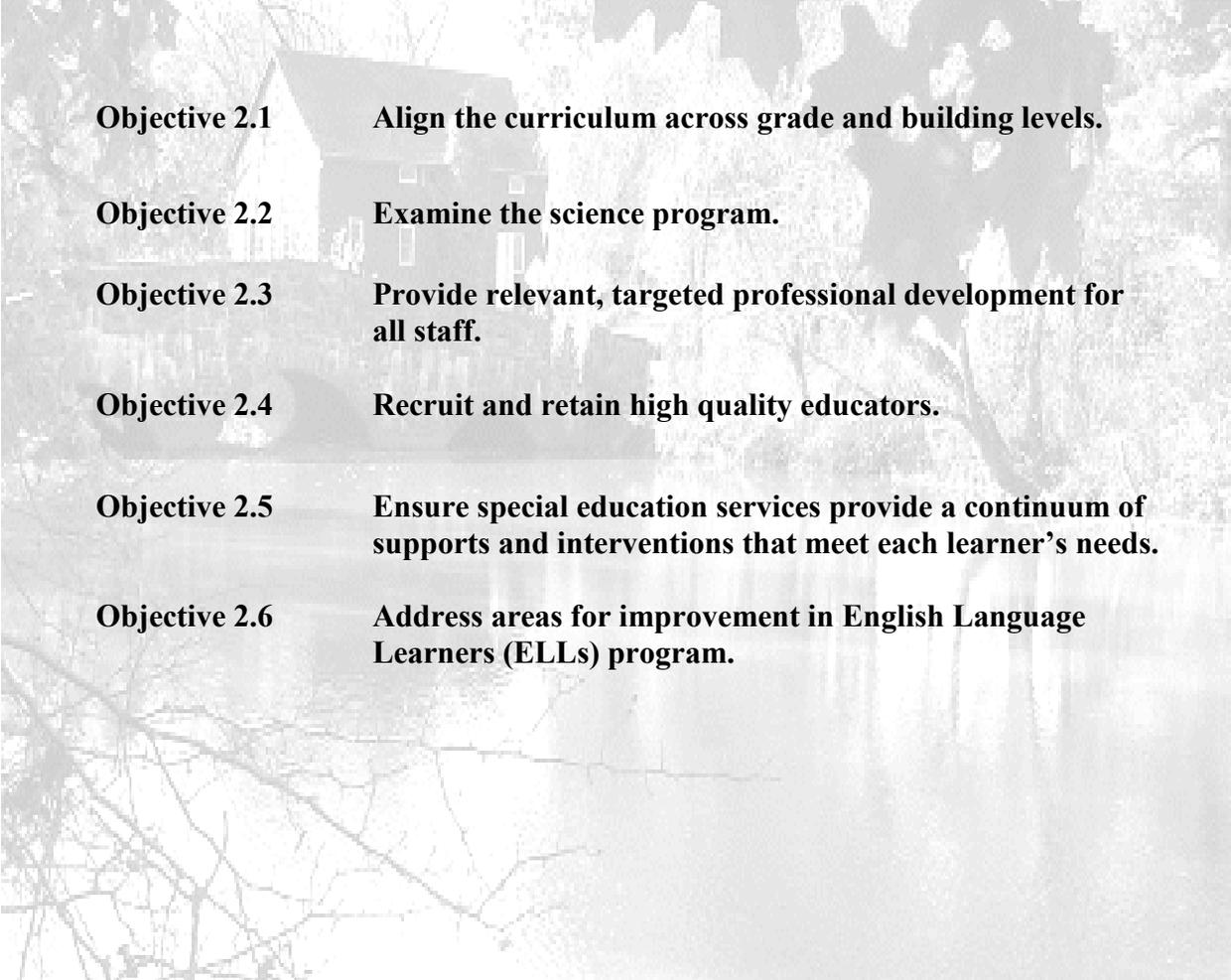
Objective 1.1	Differentiate instructional strategies to support each student’s unique learning needs, interests, and aptitudes.
Objective 1.2	Enhance student services.
Objective 1.3	Ensure students’ social-emotional needs are being addressed.
Objective 1.4	Increase teacher/parent and teacher/student communication regarding student progress.
Objective 1.5	Expand high school programs and pathways.
Objective 1.6	Ensure a balanced assessment system to support the portrait of a graduate.
Objective 1.7	Branch out guidance into two sections: one for college experience and one for student services.
Objective 1.8	Reduce achievement gaps.

BOE Footnote: Under 1.1 integrate technology into instructional strategies; under 1.1 to 1.3 include middle performing students; 1.5 includes but not limit current programs in existence, for example CTE, including explanations of those programs; transition between buildings; guidance; social-emotional embedded in all goals and in the classrooms; examine the number of assessments; develop and implement a systematic process for collection and reporting of data for evidence based decision making; consistency and equity of discipline.

GOAL 2:

School and Work Environment

Ensure a learning environment that promotes excellence.

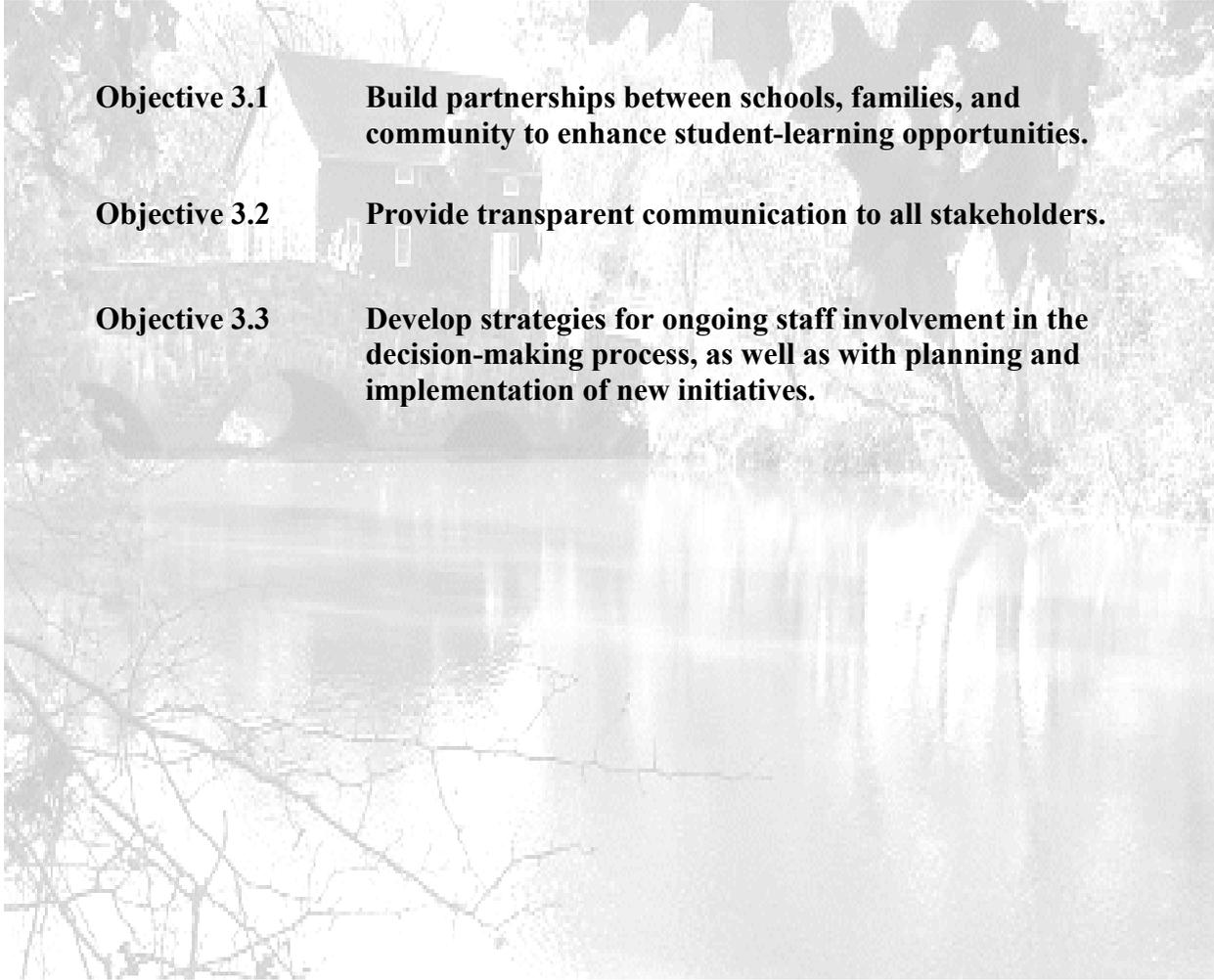
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- Objective 2.1** **Align the curriculum across grade and building levels.**
 - Objective 2.2** **Examine the science program.**
 - Objective 2.3** **Provide relevant, targeted professional development for all staff.**
 - Objective 2.4** **Recruit and retain high quality educators.**
 - Objective 2.5** **Ensure special education services provide a continuum of supports and interventions that meet each learner's needs.**
 - Objective 2.6** **Address areas for improvement in English Language Learners (ELLs) program.**

BOE Footnote: Under 2.2 emphasize high school science program AND sequence of the science courses and additional offerings of the science courses; consider recess for all schools; consider start and dismissal times; bias in teaching, education, and training; evaluate the entire school day.

GOAL 3:

Collaboration and Communication

Strengthen stakeholder relationships to support and enhance student learning.

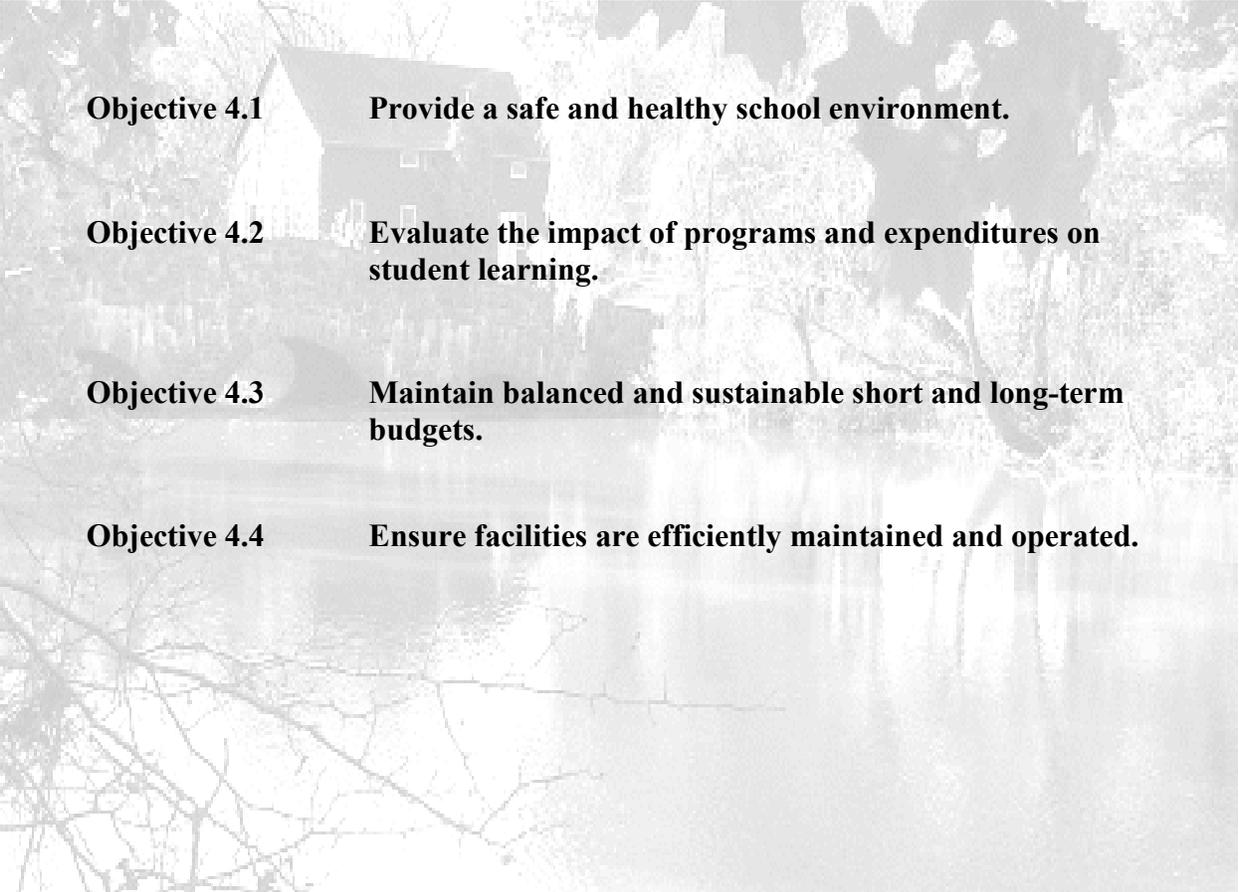
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- Objective 3.1** **Build partnerships between schools, families, and community to enhance student-learning opportunities.**
 - Objective 3.2** **Provide transparent communication to all stakeholders.**
 - Objective 3.3** **Develop strategies for ongoing staff involvement in the decision-making process, as well as with planning and implementation of new initiatives.**

BOE Footnotes: Under 3.1 building partnerships and collaborating with businesses in relation to STEAM; building more community collaboration on initiatives; consider better web development; easier to navigate.

GOAL 4:

Resources and Operations

Optimize operational and financial resources to enhance student experience.

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- Objective 4.1** **Provide a safe and healthy school environment.**
 - Objective 4.2** **Evaluate the impact of programs and expenditures on student learning.**
 - Objective 4.3** **Maintain balanced and sustainable short and long-term budgets.**
 - Objective 4.4** **Ensure facilities are efficiently maintained and operated.**

BOE Footnote: Analyze plant layout (physical layout of each school, ex: parking, bus lot, and traffic flow); storage for busses; optimize use of technology and/or investment in technology; identify opportunities for new sources of revenue.

<p>Goal 1: Student Success Maximize the social-emotional and academic growth of every student.</p>	<p>Goal 2: School and Work Environment Ensure a learning environment that promotes excellence.</p>	<p>Goal 3: Collaboration and Communication Strengthen stakeholder relationships to support and enhance student learning.</p>	<p>Goal 4: Resources and Operations Optimize operational and financial resources to enhance student experience.</p>
<p>1.1 Differentiate instructional strategies to support each student’s unique learning needs, interests, and aptitudes.</p> <p>1.2 Enhance student services.</p> <p>1.3 Ensure students’ social-emotional needs are being addressed.</p> <p>1.4 Increase teacher-parent communication about student’s educational progress.</p> <p>1.5 Expand high school programs and pathways.</p> <p>1.6 Ensure a balanced assessment system to support the portrait of a graduate.</p> <p>1.7 Branch out guidance into two sections: one for college experience and one for student services.</p> <p>1.8 Reduce achievement gaps.</p>	<p>2.1 Align the curriculum across grade and building levels.</p> <p>2.2 Examine the science program.</p> <p>2.3 Provide relevant, targeted professional development for all staff.</p> <p>2.4 Recruit and retain high quality educators.</p> <p>2.5 Ensure special education services provide a continuum of supports and interventions that meet each learner’s needs.</p> <p>2.6 Address areas for improvement in English Language Learners (ELLs) program.</p>	<p>3.1 Build partnerships between schools, families, and community to enhance student-learning opportunities.</p> <p>3.2 Provide transparent communication to all stakeholders.</p> <p>3.3 Develop strategies for ongoing staff involvement in the decision-making process, as well as with planning and implementation of new initiatives.</p>	<p>4.1 Provide a safe and healthy school environment.</p> <p>4.2 Evaluate the impact of programs and expenditures on student learning.</p> <p>4.3 Maintain balanced and sustainable short and long-term budgets.</p> <p>4.4 Ensure facilities are efficiently maintained and operated.</p>