

# **Dobbs Ferry 2024-25**

## ***Preparing for Their Future, Honoring Our Past***

**Creating the Conditions for Effective  
Teaching and Learning**

# The Pillars of Our Work:

**Our Mission:** The Dobbs Ferry School District strives to develop independent, curious, and open-minded learners who think critically, work collaboratively, act ethically, and are knowledgeable about the world around them.

**Our Vision:** Independent Thinkers Prepared to Change the World.

Critical, interdependent elements of our vision include our *Strategic Points of Focus*.

# But What About the *EXTERNAL* Distractions?

- Executive Orders
- *Dear Colleague Letters*
- Proposed legislation
- NYSED responses
- Professional organization position papers
- Technology

***None of these have the force of law.***

1. We review, reflect, and consult.
2. We make changes when required or needed.
3. We maintain our focus on teaching and learning.

# Preparing for *Their* Future

Category	2002-03	2012-13	2022-23
Enrollment	1,329	1,466	1,514
%White	79.8%	68%	63%
%Black	4.0%	4.0%	3%
%Hispanic/Latino	5.8%	15%	20%
%AAPI	10.5%	9%	6%
Economically Disadvantaged*%	7.5%	10%	16%
Special Education	8.7%	12%	14%
LEP/ELL/FELL	4.8%	3%	2%

***Our students represents 24 countries and AT least 19 different languages***

# Our Strategic Points of Focus:

- **Curriculum Development and Implementation**: By creating, adapting, and/or adopting rigorous Tier 1 curriculum that aligns with the International Baccalaureate standards; contains diverse perspectives and experiences; reflects and develops/enhances students' on grade-level abilities in reading, writing, listening and speaking, mathematical understandings, and, as a result, their ability to think critically, we will continuously work to improve student outcomes.
- **Instruction**: By developing/enhancing our instructional staff's teaching abilities through an understanding of how students learn, research-informed instructional techniques and frameworks including the Response to Intervention (RtI)/Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) model, and effective feedback models from peers and supervisors, we will cause continuous improvement in student outcomes.
- **Assessments**: By developing and enhancing clear understandings of the design and purpose(s) of effective assessments and how they can be utilized to improve instruction, by carefully selecting those assessments that we will use to measure student learning, and by supporting the data literacy of faculty and administration, we will cause continuous improvement in student outcomes.

# Our Strategic Points of Focus:

- **Positive School Climate and Culture**: By developing a welcoming school environment that is reflective of the diversity present in the larger community where all students feel included in what they encounter at school, including in their classroom resources, in differing historical perspectives that they learn about, in equitable opportunities for engagement, advancement and achievement, and the adults they interact with each day; by providing explicit instruction and structured interventions in social-emotional learning and executive functions that have a sound basis in educational research; by aligning our work with the International Baccalaureate Learner Profile; and by developing/enhancing our staff's abilities to identify, understand, and improve positive student behavior, we will cause continuous improvement in student outcomes.
- **Recruitment, Retention, and Development of Personnel**: By investing in promising culturally relevant practices for employee recruitment; by intentionally recruiting well-qualified staff that reflect our student demographics; and by providing ongoing, targeted professional learning opportunities and proven methods of evaluation and feedback, we will cause continuous improvement in student outcomes.

# Our Strategic Points of Focus:

- **Family and Community Communications and Engagement**: By engaging in consistent and meaningful two-way communication with parents and families, and by inviting parents, families, and the community to participate in important initiatives, we will cause continuous improvement in student outcomes.
- **Long-Range Planning for District Facilities and Finances**: By developing long-range financial and facilities plans that allow us to continue to provide excellent programs and opportunities for students in safe, secure, and welcoming environments, we will cause continuous improvement in student outcomes.

# *Learning from Our Past*

- Do we collectively believe that **WE** can cause EACH of our students to learn at high levels and become *An Independent Thinker who can Change the World?*
- As we look to our past, what lessons can we carry forward that help us to **collectively** create *the best possible conditions* to maximize student learning?



# Two Elements of Continuous Improvement

There are two things that can improve educational achievement substantially and with a little additional cost.

- The first is to ensure that the ***curriculum*** in each school is content-rich and it's focused on developing knowledge.
- The second is creating an ***expectation*** that all teachers in the district, even if they are already the best, continue to improve their classroom practice.

~ Dylan William

*Creating the Schools Our Children Need*

# Time...

- The resource that we need the most, but have the least of.
- Our most important choices are how we use the time that we have in providing opportunities to learn.
- Making informed decisions minimizes opportunity costs to students and their learning.
  - But what informs our decisions?
    - Our experience
    - The experience of others who have been created the conditions for successful student learning
    - Research

# Our Theory of Action

## *9 Principles of Teaching and Learning*

- *IF* the primary purpose for schooling is to teach children ***how to learn*** across a variety of targeted domains, *THEN* we must make this an explicit area of focus of improvement and training of our faculty and staff.
- *IF* the **process of learning** is based on consistent principles from cognitive science related to attention and memory - sensory, short-term, working, and long-term - *THEN* we must ensure through explicit expectations and targeted training that students, faculty, staff, and families have a deep understanding of these principles.

# Our Theory of Action

- *IF* the **effectiveness and longevity of learning** relies heavily upon evidence-based and evidence-informed practices in instructional design, delivery, and assessment, including the analysis and application of assessment data that have been shown to consistently cause learning, *THEN* we must know, understand, and systematically apply these practices and provide specific training for faculty and staff on current and new evidence.
- *IF* the time that we have to provide instruction that will *cause* students to learn so as to meet and exceed grade level standards is limited, *THEN* our **instructional choices must be informed** by a body of evidence that best supports our work.

# Our Theory of Action

- *IF* there are countless instructional methods that work to cause learning, *THEN* as educators and educational leaders we must act with urgency to find those **methods that work better** based on consistent evidence.
- *IF* our students require **an ever-increasing amount of content knowledge** to further their learning, *THEN* we must be intentional in choosing the best-known learning opportunities and experiences that systematically build knowledge through our evidence-informed instruction and assessment.

# Our Theory of Action

- *IF* systematically building knowledge is to happen consistently across classrooms and grade-levels, *THEN* we must intentionally develop and adhere to **knowledge-rich curricula** that help to achieve this outcome.
- *IF* there are known practices, beliefs, and curricula that do not have a supporting body of evidence and serve as **distractions from or obstacles to effective teaching and learning**, *THEN* we are obligated to discontinue these practices and curricula in favor of those that are shown to consistently have a positive impact on learning.

# Our Theory of Action

- *IF*, through our instructional practices in the delivery of curriculum, we expect to cause each of our students to learn and achieve high-level outcomes in their academic, behavioral, and social lives so that they are more fully prepared to be excellent future citizens, ***THEN* our work must increasingly be intentional, explicit, and systematic.**

# Goal 1

- **Goal 1:** The district will reduce **chronic absenteeism to 6% or less** in each school by using key strategies including:
  - Providing parents/guardians information on what constitutes chronic absenteeism and why we are monitoring it
  - Providing consistent communications with parents/guardians about the importance of daily school attendance and their child(ren)'s attendance
  - Utilizing our building-based MTSS teams to monitor and intervene when students have multiple absences
  - Implementing and monitoring the impact of Primary Project on school attendance for students in grades K-3

*The building block that must be in place to meet student achievement and high school graduation goals is attendance. Physically being present in school is one of the most basic conditions for a student's success – if students are not in school, they are not learning what is being taught and could be falling behind in earning the course credits needed to graduate.*

***Student Attendance: A building block of student achievement***

***The Brookings Institute***



# Goal 2

- **Goal 2:** The district will improve our processes for retention of **personnel** in all areas of operations by using key strategies including:
  - Applying lessons learned from exit interview data
  - Improving the quality and effectiveness of professional learning support
  - Providing remuneration for additional duties related to experience
  - Providing effective mentoring for new teachers and administrators
  - Monitoring the implementation of bargaining agreements to determine if changes are needed to improve working conditions
  - Including personnel in district decision making (professional learning plan, district strategic planning, etc.)
  - Collaborating with regional colleagues on strategies that they are finding success with

*Improving teacher retention serves to improve the education system as a whole. Teacher turnover is costly, as new teachers must be recruited and trained. If fewer teachers were replaced, then, instead of financing recruitment and training, school districts could spend money on new programs or technology for students. Higher teacher retention means less financial strain and more investment in the tools children need to learn.*

*Retention disparities can also result in differences in public education that leave select students behind. Low-income students tend to be particularly impacted by this disparity.*

# Goal 3

- Goal 3: The district will increase **family engagement** with school activities and initiatives using key strategies including:
  - Providing consistent communications, opportunities for workshops, and structured meetings on district planning for parents/guardians
  - Working with district partners including Spring, PTSA, Trailguides, the Dobbs Ferry Schools Foundation, and other community groups on topics related to improving student academic and behavioral performance
  - Engaging a professional consultant to study our current communications and engagement strategies and process to assist us in developing an action plan for improvement

*For decades, research from around the world has shown that parents' involvement in and engagement with their child's education—including through parent-teacher conferences, parent-teacher organizations, school events, and at-home discussions about school—can lead to higher student achievement and better social-emotional outcomes.*

***Does parent involvement really help students? Here's what the research says.***

***Education Week***

# Goal 4

- Goal 4: The district will improve academic **outcomes for all students** with a specific focus on accountability subgroups (ELL, Students with Disabilities, Economically Disadvantaged, Latinx) by using key strategies including:
  - Establishing a consistent Tier 1 literacy curriculum for all students in grades K-8
  - Establishing consistent MTSS processes and intervention cycle between school that address specific areas of student performance based on valid and reliable assessments
  - Identifying additional opportunities for learning, remove barriers to accessing those opportunities, and providing evidence-based supports for success for students
  - Developing a district-based Pre-K program and coordinating with existing providers to ensure a strong start for all students
  - Establishing summer jump-start, remedial, and enhancement programs for identified students
  - Establishing consistent MTSS processes and intervention cycle between school that address specific areas of student performance based on valid and reliable assessments
  - Improving our data literacy so as to quickly analyze and apply the lessons learned from our assessments to improve teaching and learning
  - Improving our understanding of the requirements of CR parts 154 and 200, Section 504 and IDEA through professional learning and establishing instructional practices that best meet the needs of students
  - Identifying evidence-based technology tools that will improve student learning and providing specific training to instructional staff on how to best use these tools

# Goal 5

- Goal 5: The district will develop a **comprehensive K-12 literacy plan** that improves the outcomes for students by using key strategies including:
  - Providing training to all teachers and administrators on reading instruction (that includes writing and spelling) across K-12 and developing specific plans for integrating this understanding into our classroom practices
  - Providing ongoing training on the effective implementation of Tier 1 curriculum
  - Defining the specific roles of instructional personnel related to the MTSS plan and provide specific training
  - Establishing data collection, analysis, training, and action planning
  - Establishing specific growth targets for students at each grade level
  - Developing horizontal and vertical alignment of curriculum, core instruction (T1), differentiation, acceleration(T2), intervention (T2&3) and assessment
  - Establishing consistent time on task for reading in master schedules
  - Establishing a 5-year implementation timeline for K-5 literacy
  - Evaluating and developing a plan for changes needed for 6-8 ELA curriculum

*The most fundamental responsibility of schools is teaching students to read. Because reading affects all other academic achievement and is associated with social, emotional, economic, and physical health, it has been the most researched aspect of human cognition.*

# Goal 6

- Goal 6: The district will complete the **Professional Learning Plan** by using key strategies including:
  - Establishing a districtwide representative team to assist in the development of the plan
  - Aligning the plan to the NYSED CR-SE framework, evidence-based practices defined in research
  - Developing support for the district's CEEP (ENL), Special Education, Physical Education, Comprehensive School Counseling, DEI, New Educator Mentor, and Literacy plans
  - Identifying key principles in the plan that will bring focus to improving educator knowledge of evidence-based instructional, assessment, and support practices for all students with a specific focus on student subgroups
  - Establishing consistent, evidence-based practices for peer and administrator feedback

*Teachers make a difference. No matter the phase or school setting, it is the quality of teaching that can make the biggest difference to children's learning and to their ultimate success in school. As Rauch and Coe explain, it is 'arguably the single most important thing that teachers and school leaders can focus on to make a difference in children's learning'. What's more, the quality of teaching is not fixed: teachers can be improved, and they can be improved via effective professional development.*

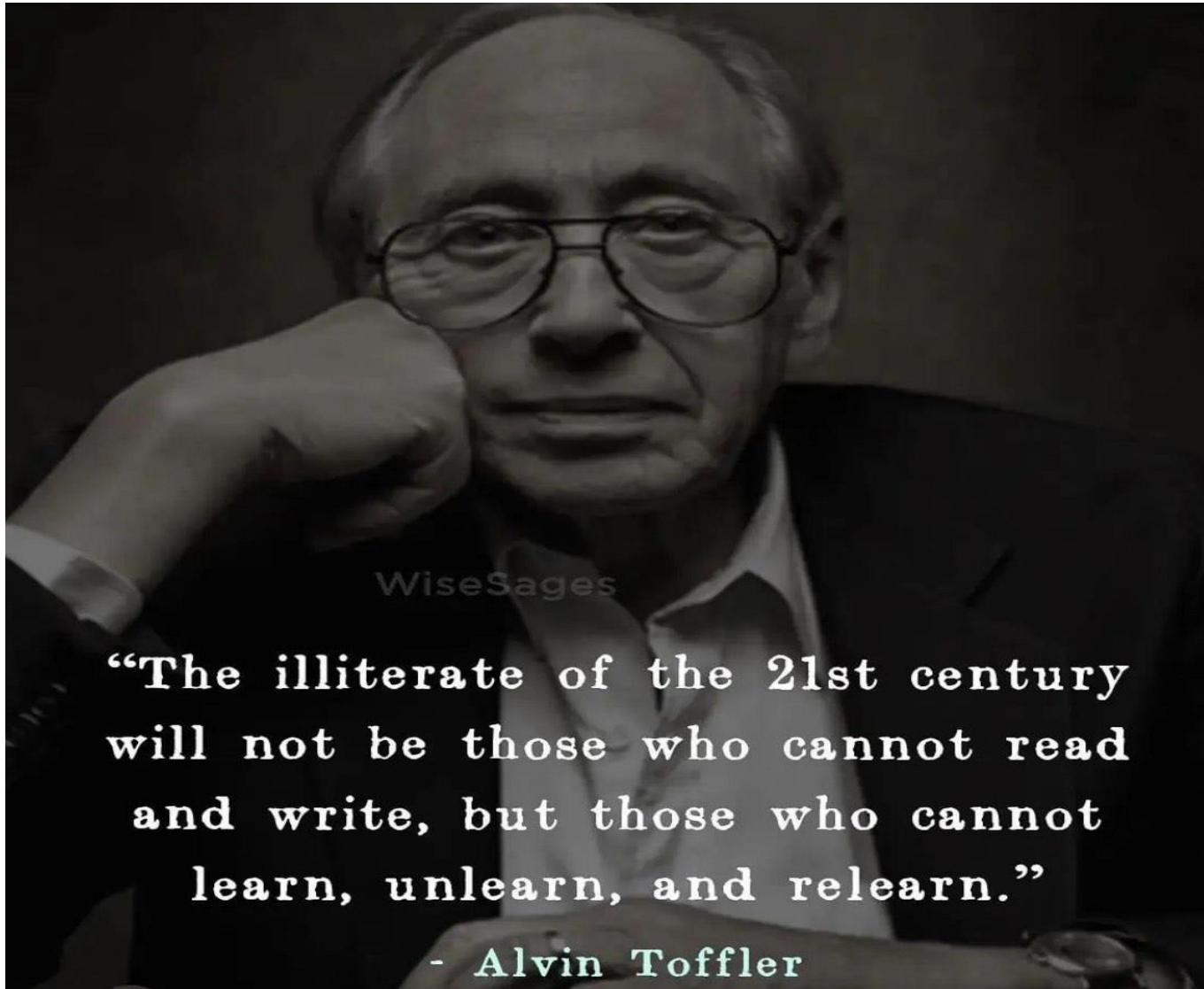
***Effective Professional Development Guidance Report  
Education Endowment Foundation***

# How Do We Conduct Our Work?

To create *Independent Thinkers who can Change the World*, we must work ***intentionally*** to:

- Create and maintain safe, secure, and welcoming buildings, classrooms, and cultures.
- Ensure through ***explicit*** instruction that EACH of our students can read and achieve at or above grade level.
- ***Systematically*** maximize instructional time with each of our students.
- Commit to continuous improvement each day.
- Commit to their future while honoring our past

# How Do We Conduct Our Work?



# Two Commitments from Each of Us

- ❑ Commit to continuous improvement each day.
- ❑ Commit to *their* future while honoring *our* past.