



Dobbs Ferry School District Strategic Planning Framework: 2024-2025

Creating the Conditions for Effective Teaching and Learning

Our Purpose: The purpose of a school district’s strategic plan is to provide a framework for how we will continuously work to create the best possible conditions for effective teaching and learning that lead to improved student outcomes in their academic work, behavioral development, and social impact. Each goal and associated strategy will be grounded in our District’s Mission, Vision, and *Theory of Action*; will be based on research and experiential evidence; will connect directly to this purpose; and will have a clear method for measuring progress towards its completion. Where measurements fall short of or exceed expectations, deadlines and strategies may change. To that end, the Strategic Plan is intended to be a living document that will adapt to our collective progress.

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 Core Values:

- Providing a high-quality and challenging curriculum with the depth, breadth, and relevance appropriate to each learner.
- Respecting the unique abilities of each student.
- Utilizing the most effective and evidence-based instructional approaches and technological advances.
- Encouraging students to meet their challenges – whether academic, athletic, or artistic – with openness, enthusiasm, and a willingness to take risks.
- Recruiting, retaining, and developing high quality teachers and staff.
- Celebrating and learning from the diversity of our students and the greater Dobbs Ferry community.

Our Theory of Action:

1. *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 in the recruitment and training of our faculty and staff.
2. *IF* the **process of learning** is based on consistent principles from cognitive science related to working and long-term memory, *THEN* we must ensure that students, faculty, staff, and families have a deep understanding of these principles.¹
3. *IF* the **effectiveness and longevity of learning** relies heavily upon evidence-informed practices of instruction and assessment, *THEN* we must know and understand these practices and establish habits of staying attuned to new evidence.^{2,3}
4. *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* as educators and educational leaders we must act with urgency to find those **methods and assessments that work better** based on consistent evidence.⁴
5. *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 and the associated skills and dispositions that our students need to succeed.⁵
6. *IF* there are known educational practices and beliefs that do not have a supporting body of evidence and serve as **obstacles to effective teaching and learning**, *THEN* we are obligated to discontinue these practices in favor of those that are proven to cause learning.⁶
7. *IF* we expect to cause each of our students to achieve at 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.**

¹ See, for example, *Learning in the Brain* by Efrat Furst at <https://sites.google.com/view/efratfurst/learning-in-the-brain>

² There are practical and contextual considerations that must be made when reviewing evidence for improvement. See, for example, *Teaching not a research-based profession* | Tes Magazine <https://www.tes.com/magazine/archive/dylan-wiliam-teaching-not-research-based-profession>, *Why you can't (completely) trust the research* | Tes Magazine <https://www.tes.com/magazine/teaching-learning/general/why-you-cant-completely-trust-research>, *Toward an Ecological Science of Teaching*, [Toward an ecological science of teaching. \(apa.org\)](https://www.tes.com/magazine/teaching-learning/general/why-you-cant-completely-trust-research), and *Translating research into classroom practice: Cognitive science and beyond* https://my.chartered.college/impact_article/translating-research-into-classroom-practice-cognitive-science-and-beyond/

³ See, for example, *A Model for the Learning Process and Why It Helps to Have One* at <https://teacherhead.com/2020/03/10/a-model-for-the-learning-process-and-why-it-helps-to-have-one/>

⁴ For an excellent discussion on leadership's role, see *What It Will Take to Improve Evidence Informed Decision-Making in Schools?* <https://www.aei.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/What-it-will-take-to-improve-evidence-informed-decision-making-in-schools.pdf?x91208>

⁵ See, for example, *Knowledge and Practice: The Real Keys to Critical Thinking* at <chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://knowledgematterscampaign.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Willingham-brief.pdf>

⁶ See, for example, Daisy Christodoulou's [Seven Myths About Education - Daisy Christodoulou](#)

Our Strategic Points of Focus: We will continuously work to create the best possible conditions for effective teaching and learning by focusing on the following areas:

- **Curriculum Development and Implementation**⁷: By creating, adapting, and/or adopting rigorous Tier 1 curriculum that aligns with the [NYS](#) and [International Baccalaureate](#) standards; contains diverse perspectives and experiences; reflects the and develops/enhances students' 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**⁸: 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**⁹: 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.
- **Positive School Climate and Culture**¹⁰: 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.

⁷ See, for example, *High Quality Curriculum and System Improvement* [Quality-curriculum-and-system-improvement.pdf \(learningfirst.com\)](#)

⁸ See, for example, *Principles of Instruction: Research-Based Strategies That All Teachers Should Know*, by Barak Rosenshine; [American Educator Vol. 36, No. 1, Spring 2012, AFT, But That's Just Good Teaching! The Case for Culturally Relevant Pedagogy \(econedlink.org\)](#), and *Liberatory Education Integrating the Science of Learning and Culturally Responsive Practice* [EJ1305167.pdf \(ed.gov\)](#)

⁹ See, for example, *Criteria for High Quality Assessments* [criteria-higher-quality-assessment_2.pdf \(stanford.edu\)](#) and *What Every Teacher Needs to Know About Assessments* [Bing Videos](#).

¹⁰ See, for example, *The Intersection of School Climate and Social and Emotional Development* [The Intersection of School Climate and Social and Emotional Development \(air.org\)](#) and *School Culture and Climate* [untitled \(msu.edu\)](#)

- **Recruitment, Retention, and Development of Personnel**¹¹: 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.
- **Family and Community Communications and Engagement**¹²: 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**¹³: 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.

¹¹ See, for example, *9 Strategies for Recruiting, Hiring, and Retaining Diverse Teachers* [9 Strategies for Recruiting, Hiring, and Retaining Diverse Teachers \(ed.gov\)](https://www.ed.gov/9-strategies-for-recruiting-hiring-and-retaining-diverse-teachers) and *To Attract Great Teachers, School Districts Must Improve Their Human Capital Systems* <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/to-attract-great-teachers-school-districts-must-improve-their-human-capital-systems/>

¹² See, for example, *Understanding the Connection Between Family-School Engagement and Education System Transformation: A Review of Concepts and Evidence* [Understanding The Connection FINAL.pdf \(brookings.edu\)](https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Understanding-The-Connection-FINAL.pdf)

¹³ See, for example, *The Importance of School Facilities in Improving Student Outcomes* – [Center for Evaluation and Education Policy Analysis \(psu.edu\)](https://www.psu.edu/cepa/research/the-importance-of-school-facilities-in-improving-student-outcomes), *The Impact of School Facilities on Student Learning and Engagement* https://issuu.com/buildhealth/docs/impact_of_school_facilities, and *Local Government Management Guide: Multi-Year Financial Planning* [Multiyear Financial Planning - Local Government Management Guide \(state.ny.us\)](https://www.state.ny.us/external/management/multi-year-financial-planning)

Structuring Our Goals

- In line with District's Vision, Mission, and Strategic Points of Focus; [Board Policy](#); our [Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Plan and policy](#); the [NYS Learning Standards](#); and the [NYS Education Department Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Education Framework](#), the Dobbs Ferry School District and Board of Education is in the process of developing goals to guide our work in the 2024-25 school year.
- The work on each goal will be guided by the work of one or more of the Board's Committees, and the Board's Policy Committee will monitor the work on all goals to determine policy implications.
- Some goals will be extensions or refinements of prior year's goals.
- Each goal is based on the documents above and data regarding student and district performance.

Structuring Our Strategic Plan

- The district's last strategic plan was established for the 2018-23 school years. For the 2023-24 school year, the district utilized this framework and associated goals as the transition to a new strategic plan that will be developed during the 2024-25 school year.