

Strategic Planning: Environmental Scan Report

May 5, 2022







Introduction

On May 5, 2022, the strategic planning team including other invited guests, participated in completion of an Environmental Scan of Duluth Public Schools. Additionally, the team participated in the Leadership Choices exercise identify opportunities for increased partnership and decreased isolation. Those items are listed below and should be evaluated with decisions for implementation of viable options as soon as possible. The session was facilitated by Dr. Ray Queener, COO and Principal Consultant and Christine Wroblewski, Senior Consultant from TeamWorks International.

The session was comprised of two phases. Phase 1 included assessment and evaluation of items that are Established, Ebbing, Edge and Emerging in the school district. Eight teams compiled this assessment. For the second phase, the eight teams were merged into four teams to review the Key Trends and Influences for Edge and Emerging and for Established and Ebbing.

Both summary and detailed information from the session is listed below. The Key Trends and Influences will be brought forward for the strategic planning process.

Shared Messages:

- 1. Great to be a part of teams with people that I don't normally spend time with.
- 2. We did an environmental scan of what is here, going, coming to DPS.
- 3. Focused on work, organization and culture
- 4. A variety of perspectives (but not diverse) in the room safe place
- 5. Identified themes and action steps for the next 90 days
- 6. Started to name some of the uncomfortable truths
- 7. Started broad and narrowed to themes and actions
- 8. I feel like I was heard but I'm not sure if I'll be listened to







Key Outcomes:

Edge and Emerging	Established and Ebbing
Key Trends and Influences	Key Trends and Influences
Student/staff increasing social/emotional needs Influenced by the pandemic Federal funding - ESSER Forced to do things in new ways Technology became necessary Mental health needs magnified Stressors on Staff, Students and Families Greater awareness of social emotional needs, mental health, social justice Societal influences and political landscape impacting district direction Political and cultural polarization is a trend Influence of George Floyd's murder: calls for racial justice Social Media influence Inequities became more apparent Intentionality of addressing equity Continuing divide across district More overt articulation of East West othering (strong comments made at the boundary discussion) Unfinished boundaries work Changes in leadership in the district and community Building and site changes (Sale, building, and renovations) Evolving student options and performance Desire to be more data driven Moving towards 1:1 Chromebooks Students have increased desire to work online Trending to diversify graduate's options after high school Pathways to workforce Influence of the job market	Student choice and shifting approaches to school programming New/Changing technology impacts pedagogy, communication, meeting, PD, Pedagogy-culturally responsive, restorative, research based best practices COVID Challenges established virtual meetings/1:1 tech/etc1 Data drives adjustments/changes to pedagogy Disparities in read by grade 3, attendance, graduation all persist despite frequent reshuffling of how the targeted funding to address the needs are spent Meet the basics needs and the desired experiences of advanced students while failing to meet the basic needs of those struggling It is hard for students to see the different pathways they can go to be successful after high school Outdoor education at immersion programs have been a draw for parents at the school. The students spend a lot of time outside learning School forests have been a huge help in providing space for outdoor education Students with mental health needs have not been properly served and it has been causing issues within schools Much of curriculum is out of date and old Continual divide within community based in shifting political landscape and inequities Societal- global, political Community culture-East/West, neighborhood pride Entrenched racial avoidance & othering by many from dominant culture in the community







Graduation rate of the protected class students continue to be the same

Changing employment trends

- Lack of staff influences certain aspects of what we can offer
- Emerging trend of proactively recruiting
- Work has been done in silos but moving toward universal practices standardization
- COVID-19 has had a huge effect in decreasing enrollment, and we are not sure where all those students went
- In the Duluth area, parents have a lot of choice when it comes to which district or school to send their students to.
- Community views on these items have been negative and really affect the district
 - Education
 - Testing
 - Teachers
- National politics and culture wars have been coming into the schools which makes the buildings not as inclusive as they should be
- Alumni feel attached to their schools in the district which leads to strong generations of alumnus
- Community schools: There are recognized needs in those schools
- We need an awesome event at Bayfront before next year to help bring the district together

Increasing challenges with current and future resources

- Funding-sustainability, staffing, resources,
- Governance-MDE, statutes, NCLB
- Zero technology budget
- Having a tight budget has hampered the district for a long time
- The district does not accept donations electronically. It has to be cash or check only

Increasing employment challenges impacting diversity and experience of staff to fill positions

- Job market: challenges in attracting and keeping qualified staff, candidates have many other options
- Staff population that doesn't reflect the student population
- We do not have a lot of people applying for our para and teacher jobs
- The district and its employees don't sell ourselves positively in the community enough
- There is a lack of teachers who are fluent in our Immersion language programs in the area or willing to move to the area





	 There has not been enough opportunity for teachers and staff to receive culture and inclusive based professional development COVID-19 and teaching in a pandemic has Increased stress at all levels and has left emotionally and physically drained people We need to be in charge of our story and celebrate the good things and recognize the opportunities
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Whole System View

Part of the FrameWorks Series

Used For Assessment of:

- . Situations "In the Moment"
- Relationships of Issues and Data
 - Opportunities
 - Conflicts

Culture

(Purpose, Story and "Right Ways")

- Mission and Purpose
- Vision and Values
- · Images and Intents
- Norms and Attitudes
- Relationships

Seeing the Whole and Interdependency of the Parts

Organization

(Structures, Systems, Networks, Policies)

- · Systems and Structures
- · Policies and Procedures
- · Viability and Sustainability
- Communications and Linkages
- Networks: Internal and External

Work

(Resources, Processes, Products/Services)

- Resources: Human, Financial, Physical
- Products, Services, Programs
- Raw Materials
- Distribution of Goods and Services





Key Strategies	Edge	Emerging	Established	Ebbing
Culture	 DEI (Diversity, Equity, Inclusion) SEL (Social Emotional Learning) Implicit bias training (is this ebbing?) Restorative justice practices New city of Duluth affinity group commissions (African Heritage and LGBT+) Personalized PD Climate Refugee City Native American Language Immersion Online Youth Culture, Social Media Partnerships with Local Colleges Recruiting and retaining staff of diverse background Improve Climate and Culture through Athletics and Activities Increasing programs for inclusion of all students 	 Restorative Practice EEAC (Education Equity Advisory Committee) SEL (Social Emotional Learning) - Second Step Community Building within schools the restorative model, morning meeting How students are heard at the building through student organizations, RP, Use of the TEA Tool Asynchronous, student choice, multiple ways of assessment eBooks and online research resources 	 More traditional approach to education, Cultural & linguistic approaches at Myers-Wilkins Ojibwe Immersion at Lowell Spanish Immersion at Lowell School specific approaches to responsive teaching practices. Lack of trust with community partners/families/broader Duluth community Siloed from community serving organizations - perception/reality of difficulty to access district and unwillingness to partner Bottlenecked (centralized) decision making with top admin Socioeconomic/geographic divide Established school identities over district 	 Healthy Mental Health Whole group instruction Lecture style teaching Face to face Synchronous in classroom Teaching to the middle Families who make time for each other Group outcome turning to individual- me, me, me rather than us Independent thinking Physical activity among children Time out in nature Willingness to work hard Delayed gratification Huge library print book collections Focus on MCA scores/importance Teacher morale Positive respect for teachers from community





	wide identities (mascots, etc.) Lack of diversity. White perspective. Acceptance of racial and economic disparities by many from dominant culture Systemic Racism in disciplinary action, learning, extra-curricular Conflict between the district and teacher union Clashing between teachers Lack of a helping hand: "Not my job" Deep pride in neighborhood schools Seniors go back to their elementary schools before graduating Denfeld Traditions	
	graduating	







Organization

- Structure of district leadership related to personnel and positions.
- Varied work with multiple consultants
- New service animal policy
- New smudging policy
- Career Pathways CTE or EMC
- Online Options AEO
- Standardization of Curriculum
- Creating our own digital curriculum
- Return on investment strategies / financial plans / data analytics
- Implementing New State Educational Standards
- Secondary Scheduling Changes
- Including Early Childhood in common language (i.e., "prek-12" or "B-12" instead of K-12)
- Including preschool in vertical collaborations (thoughtful preschool to kindergarten transitions, cohesive language used in classrooms, same building wide rules)

- Full-Service Community School Collaborative
- Data monitoring in relationship to system accountability
- Building Assets Resilience and Relationships (BARR) program at Denfeld
- AEO
- Check and Connect
- Integration Specialist in some elementary schools
- Revised MTSS Handbook with support from the U of M
- Teaching, Learning and Equity team
- Zones of Regulation

- Approach/innovation specific to schools rather than district-wide
- School schedules school calendar
- Northwoods at some schools, Co-located mental health services
- Community Schools at Myers-Wilkins, Lincoln Park Middle, and Denfeld High School
- Declining enrollment, competition from private/charter schools
- Lack of community support/advocacy for district
 seen as 'bad'
- Hiring process confusing and difficult - tenure, how and when jobs are posted, response time
- Responsible for providing special ed services in charter schools
- Scheduling/Testing/Assessment
- Organizational chart
- School Board
- Declining enrollment within the district
- Inconsistent practices & programing across schools

- Zero Tolerance
- District level administration structure
- Traditional Discipline policy
- Memos
- Traditional parent teacher conferences
- Change in communicating with families
- Self-Contained Classrooms
- Transition from more restrictive programming to less restrictive programing
- Face to Face meeting with parents/IEP
- Time for kids to be kids
- Arts/Electives
- Transparency in budgeting process has decreased
- Better Technology plan
- District-wide grade level collaboration, meetings haven't happened
- number, variety of administrative positions has increased





	 Mascots Newer buildings and renovated buildings Full-Service Community Schools at MW, LPMS, and Denfeld Generational schools at Elementary, Middle and High School A lot of course offers (maybe too many) East-West Divide Alumni attached to their buildings Scholarship Opportunities Ordean East Climate Club WIN time in Middle and High School 	
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Work

- Conflict resolution center at Denfeld
- 1:1 Technology
- Exploring alternatives to Suspension
- Exploring alternatives to SROs
- Lack of adequate Staffing
- Building space needs
- Fund balance that is growing
- Bilingual SEALS assessment cohorts
- Dean positions district-wide
- Behavior-Intervention Positions
- Modern Classrooms Project self-pacing, mastery based, blended learning
- New Medical, Aviation, Petroleum Facilities
- Blended Learning Options
- Micro Credentialing, Principal Supervision and Support
- Phase 2 of ALC / AEO
- New District Office / Transportation
- Check and Connect
- CTE Materials / Perkins Grant

- Technology (1:1 device)
- ClassWise
- Curriculum Directors at the secondary and elementary level
- New Transportation Center
- New District Services Center
- Renovation of the District Facility Center
- IXL
- Reading Plus at the middle schools
- Ojibwemowin Language classes in HS
- AWARE Grant
- Nature Playscapes for Preschool
- Differentiation, students choice, asynchronous learning
- Blended learning
- Tablets in K-2
- Google for Education

- Short-staffed
- Limited PD Days
- Partnerships at the school level rather than the district level
- Inadequate after school care
- Allocate funds per building based on assessed need intentional weighting of funds
- ALC and Duluth Adult Ed treated as separate silos
- Online School
- Strong partnership with teacher training programs, but student teaching placement process is school-by-school
- 11 bargaining contracts
- PBIS at Piedmont, Lowell, Denfeld
- Lack of diversity among staff and certain schools
- District Weekly Newsletter
- BARR (Denfeld)
- Check and Connect (Denfeld)
- Immersion Programs (Lowell)
- Late Start times

- Textbooks/Printed Materials
- Fully staffed buildings/programs
- Small class sizes
- Availability of Substitutes
 Time
- Technology (i.e., Smartboards/bulbs for Smartboards)
- Choice
- Community access to provide support to sites has decreased
- Enrollment is decreasing less yearly (lately)





	Class sets of Oakie rain suits for all district preschool rooms	
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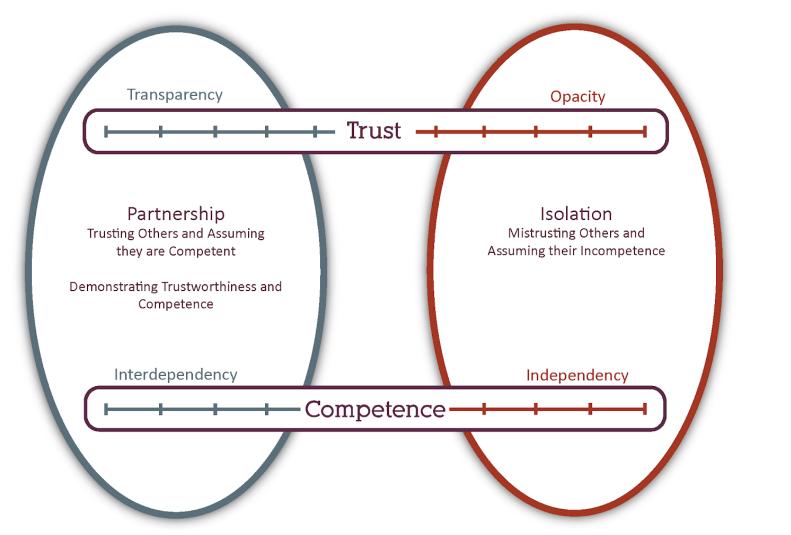






Leadership Choices

Part of the FrameWorks[™] Series







3-5	key words / events / actions / decisions that occurred in the past 12-24 months	3-5	key words / events / actions / decisions that occurred in the past 12-24 months
tha	: led to more partnership?	tha	t led to more isolation?
•	Settling teachers' contract	•	Distance Learning
•	Culture discussion at Boat Club amongst administrators	•	Remote work
•	The community stepping up while needing to add days to winter break because COIVD-19 was surging	•	COVID-19
•	Going back to in-person learning	•	Polarized perspectives related COVID-19
•	Learning to together to do distance learning and being creative in distance learning	•	Decision making and needing to make decisions quickly due to COVID-19
•	Stepping up and being a vaccine site for elementary students	•	Distance Learning
•	Settling teachers' contract	•	Remote learning-easy to disengage
•	Use of video meeting tools	•	Work for not 100% fill, individuals are stressed
•	Esser Funds to provide ways to reach out and connect with the community	•	Social distancing and masking
•	The commitment for strategic planning to bring	•	The fear and unknown
•	Working with the county to provide resources for the community	•	Political difference dividing families and community
•	Meeting with UMD and the school district to discuss shared interests and goals. Learning together and helping each other	•	Distance learning and affecting student outcomes disproportionality
•	Covid lead team whether we kept our students in school partnership with the state and the health department	•	Boundary study - community didn't want to be told where to go to school
•	School board work on staff development to do their governing work	•	Now follow through after all the work surrounding the boundary study - lack of commitment to make a decision. No decision was made. Facebook group Kids Choice
•	Partnered with the Be Smart around gun safety to inform parents through school publication	•	Diverse perspectives get drown out by the majority group think and/or not being invited to the table
•	Food service providing food for students while distant learning	•	Teacher Contract (process)
•	Provided childcare for front-line workers	•	COVID - not in building/remote learning, wearing masks, social distancing, more difficult to build relationships
•	Teacher Contract (end results)	•	Delayed or no response from district to community partner (examples Farm to School, Children's Dental Service). Unclear partnership guidelines. No point person for partnerships.
•	COVID - united struggle	•	Inability to have gatherings - pep rallies, community events, family nights, etc.
•	The SRO process brought community voice into decision making through Marnita's Table process.	•	Slow or no email reply





 Moving to UHG has created closer proximity and relationships for some of the staff who work there. 	Clarity in role
Extended winter break partnership with community groups	COVID-duration, screen-time, personal connections, networking
COVID-forced use of technology	Rate of change
New community leadership leads to new partnerships	Not feeling safe / Climate and culture
Shared experiences and struggles	Decision to continue SRO contract despite strong concerns by students
Time for partnerships	• Pandemic
•	Handling of contract negotiations
District covid advisory committee	Lack of media info on negotiations (for community members) - salary increases have levy/tax implications
New district leadership - both internal and community relationships	No action on discipline and academic discrepancies
Pandemic	SRO Process
Strategic Planning Process	District Leadership Transition
• EEAC	Pandemic. Isolation with students, staff, and community
New Leadership has increased partnership with community	Aborted boundaries discussion
Pandemic has brought new community partners to work with school district	Denfeld and Administrative Restorative Circle Event





What are 3-4 themes evident from above?	What are 3-4 themes evident from above?
Labor Management	COVID-19
Being in-person and having personal connections	Being apart
Working hard to say yes, we can!	Politics
A higher level of awareness of need of more interdependence	Health and Safety
Political interest	The fatigue of the unknown duration.
Collaboration	Politicization of the issues divided
 Proximity and relationships (accessibility, communication, value of face-to- face communication) 	Misinformation
 Adaptability and expanded opportunities for growth in those environments 	Protecting my own turf
Don't waste a good crisis	Fear of changing the status quo
Collaboration	Privilege
Empathy	 COVID has impacted the entire organization at every level.
New leadership wants to reach community	Burnout/Limited capacity of district staff, educators, families
Increased opportunity for improvement	 Crisis response and survival mode decreases opportunities for growth and relationship building which can be long/slow work
Willingness to expand the circle	Change can be overwhelming
Optimism/Hopefulness	Broken relationships/Trust
Fresh Start	Empty buckets
	 Hard for marginalized communities to participate - don't feel safe and/or barriers to participate
	Safe space needed to provide grievances.
	 District leadership doesn't know best way to reach marginalized communities
	Need equitable lens including all stakeholders.
	Decisions have not been made. Unwillingness to make unpopular decisions
	Stay with the status quo
	Fresh Start





Wh	at are 3 actions you could take in the next 90 days to have more partnership?	Wh	at are 3 actions you could take in the next 90 days to have less isolation?
•	COVID-19 debrief with staff	•	Meeting in-person and being mentally present
•	Building relationships in-person	•	Get parents and families into the elementaries
•	Exploration and work done with employee	•	Willingness to have those hard conversations and listen
•	What are the needs right now	•	Transparent intentional about what is
•	Reach out with intention for particular tasks	•	Identify the best storyteller of the situation. Student leadership/opinion
			shapers(influencers)coach them to use their words
•	Develop a diversity, inclusion, equity, statement with action	•	Increase stakeholder opportunities to engage
•	Look at hiring practices and how hiring is done to attract more diverse	•	Be brave and make hard decisions
	applicants		
•	Collaborate with families to create opportunities for summer support (How to	•	Develop affinity groups
	monitor student technology)		
•	Hold a community event to bring together all stakeholders - have fun and	•	Going to underrepresented communities instead of expecting them to come
	connect in a positive environment. All district in one place.		into our spaces
•	Strengthen mentor/mentee relationships	•	Appoint a "point person" for district partnerships
•	On-boarding/Personalized PD	•	Update district partnership manual to streamline process for identifying
	Make personal connections		Develop a contract with DTA for free bus passes for high school (and
•	wake personal connections	•	potentially middle school) students
•	Give power	•	In person celebrations
	Do more than listen - act on issues facing the community	•	Summer Reset
-	Meeting where the community is at (go to them)		Sulliller reset
÷	Increasing communication with marginalized communities	•	Breaking Barriers - provide transportation, food and childcare
-	Use an advisory committee with diverse community members during the	•	Invest in students and parents by assisting in breaking historical barriers
	planning process for a DEI initiative so that ideas can be considered before a		(healthcare, jobs, food access, etc.)
	consultant is hired		(incattricare, jobs, rood access, etc.)
•	Ask for input but tell people how it is going to be used.	•	School board meeting cliff notes
•	Make a decision or date it	•	School news sent to community in addition to families with active students
•	Who's going to do what? And how will others know it's done?	•	Contact/listen to families whose students have been ticketed and/or
	O - O		suspended
•	Be clear about who is making decisions and why they are making it.	•	Asking for evaluation of experiences to determine completeness