

ISD 769 STRATEGIC PLANNING

Introduction

Many people have terrific ideas about how to continuously improve our district and what it means to offer the best possible education for our students. Unfortunately, there is often limited coordination of the ideas. In turn, this creates a limited common sense of direction and dedication of resources. In other words, many people know where we should go as a school district (and we may even be going in that direction), but we do not have a plan in place that would help us get there.

Recognizing the benefits that planning for the future can have, the Morris Area School Board contracted with Big River Consulting in 2007 to help our district through the process of developing a Strategic Plan. It was important that this process and the outcome reflect input from a variety of stakeholders, and Dr. Bruce Miles (from Big River Consulting) assisted with the development of a 5-stage process for developing a Strategic Plan for ISD 769.

Step #1 – Pre Process Survey

The initial step in the strategic planning process involved an inventory, of sorts, regarding what is going well, what needs improvement, and what needed to be included in a strategic plan.

A survey was developed for [staff](#) and for [community members](#) to complete either online or on paper. Staff and community members had an opportunity to complete the surveys until February 2008. There were 51 responses to the staff survey and 27 responses to the community survey.

[Staff survey results](#) and [community survey results](#) were used by Dr. Miles to develop an agenda for meetings with staff members and a meeting with community members.

Step #2 – Staff and Community Sessions

Utilizing results from staff and community surveys, Big River Consulting facilitated two staff meetings on February 13, 2008. All staff were invited and encouraged to attend, and over 110 staff members participated in the sessions.

VISION: *To become the **FINEST SCHOOL DISTRICT** in Western Minnesota, based on academic excellence, co-curricular involvement, and student and staff pride, emphasizing lifelong learning together with community support.*

A community session was also held the evening of February 13, 2008, and over 30 community members (parents, business owners, and citizens) attended.

VISION: To become the ***FINEST SCHOOL DISTRICT*** in Western Minnesota, based on academic excellence, co-curricular involvement, and student and staff pride, emphasizing lifelong learning together with community support.

The basis for discussions during staff and community sessions focused on three questions:

1. what do we do well and what needs to be improved?
2. what do you want the district to look like in five years?
3. what do we need to take on as priorities to get there?

The results from the [first staff session](#), [second staff session](#), and [community session](#) were summarized and reviewed in each session and used to lead a discussion about what participants envisioned the future of the school district to be and what priorities would need to be tackled to accomplish this vision. Several items were identified, listed, and discussed.

After group activities, participants were asked to vote on the vision statement and priorities they felt strongest about. The [visions and priorities](#) identified by staff and community members were tallied, shared with the groups, and saved for use by the School Board.

An [overview](#) of the process to this point and next steps was developed by Dr. Miles.

Step #3 – School Board Work Session

The Morris Area School Board held a special meeting on February 28, 2008 to review information and results from staff and community surveys and meetings. After several discussions and activities (similar to what staff and community members participated in), the School Board chose a new [vision statement](#) and decided on [initial priorities and goals](#) for the district. In addition, a list of [additional priorities](#) was established for future reference.

The [vision, initial priorities and goals, and a process](#) moving forward were finalized later that month.

Step #4 – Post School Board Work Session

A [draft of the Strategic Plan](#) was read for the first (of three) time at the March School Board Meeting.

[Committees for each priority area](#) were established – staff, School Board, and community members were invited to participate in one or more of the committees. The Board continued to hear input from these committees at each

VISION: *To become the **FINEST SCHOOL DISTRICT** in Western Minnesota, based on [academic excellence](#), [co-curricular involvement](#), and [student and staff pride](#), emphasizing [lifelong learning](#) together with [community support](#).*

monthly School Board Meeting, and committees continued to meet throughout the spring.

The [Strategic Plan](#) was approved by the School Board on May 19, 2008.

Step #5 – Strategic Planning Committees

Committees for each priority area continued to meet over the summer months. Information from each committee was reviewed by the School Board at their monthly meetings and the [recommendations and action items](#) from each committee were approved on August 18, 2008.

Work done by each of the committees, including recommendation and action items, include:

- [Embrace accountability](#) at all levels of our organization
 - Board and administration complete the items identified in the Performance and Behavior Expectations document.
 - Board considers adopting the revisions to the Guidelines for Public Comments at Meetings of The Morris Area School Board document. This would be available to visitors when attending board meetings.
 - The board to utilize the Problem Solving Form whenever dealing with public stakeholder concerns on the phone, at board meetings, etc.
 - District policies be posted on the district website and that updated policies be available in the Morris Public Library.
 - Board members should participate in the training opportunities offered through the MN School Board Association.
- Increase [community partnerships](#)
 - Assign one or two Volunteer/Community Partnership coordinators as their duty hour assignment.
 - The coordinator would establish a district wide committee made up of community members and staff to assist with tasks such as planning, creating a data base of resources, providing direction, etc.
 - The coordinator and committee would develop a database of resources found in and around our area. This database would match people's interests to the type of tasks to be accomplished at 769. Examples might be tutoring, wood working, sewing, buildings and grounds, etc. and list people who are willing to volunteer in those particular areas. In some cases the committee may assist with contacts. In others, the information would simply be provided to the instructor and they could make the arrangements.
 - The coordinator and committee would continue to identify strategies and practices that would encourage growth in utilizing community resources and developing partnerships.
 - The coordinator will communicate with the University of Minnesota, Morris Center for Small Towns to explore the possibility of using their expertise and resources to increase partnerships and relationships between District 769 and the community. Programs to consider may be the CAP (Community Assistance Program) or the CST (Connecting Students to Communities).
- Increase [participation in co- & extra-curriculars](#)
 - A new student survey will be given out in the fall of 2008.
 - Opportunities for involvement will be publicized during school-sponsored activities such as 7th Grade Orientation.

VISION: *To become the **FINEST SCHOOL DISTRICT** in Western Minnesota, based on [academic excellence](#), [co-curricular involvement](#), and student and staff [pride](#), emphasizing [lifelong learning](#) together with [community support](#).*

- Increase [trust and communication](#)
 - To implement a communication plan in the district;
 - To utilize a Trust and Communication Committee with representation from various stakeholder groups to monitor and review the communication plan; and
 - To conduct a communication survey and collect information and periodically offer suggested improvements to the communication plan.

VISION: To become the **FINEST SCHOOL DISTRICT** in Western Minnesota, based on academic excellence, co-curricular involvement, and student and staff pride, emphasizing lifelong learning together with community support.

- Prepare our students to be successful in the [21st Century](#)
 - Employer survey results identifying a list of essential skills that students will need to be successful in the 21st Century will be brought before the School Board for review.
 - These skills will be revisited and monitored in an effort to determine that our students are prepared for the challenges they will face in the 21st Century work environment.
 - 21st Century skills may be mapped out by teachers.
- Stay [fiscally stable](#) and plan with our community
 - Administration conducts annual enrollment study and analysis and share information with stakeholders.
 - Ensure the financial impact of each year's budget decisions are considered over a two-year period.
 - Investigate the feasibility of innovative ways to increase enrollment such as new programs, coursework, and technology; monitor any that are implemented and evaluate effectiveness.
 - Review programs and courses by February 1, 2009, to determine which ones are essential, which we would like to maintain, and which we would like to offer that are not currently offered.
 - Study possible methods of energy savings.

Conclusion

Strategic planning is not an event - it is a process that needs to be revisited, updated, and revised to ensure it will be as successful as it can be. The new Strategic Plan for the Morris Area School District is a road map that will help our district reach the vision of becoming the finest school district in western Minnesota. It is the intent of the School Board that our district will accomplish the vision and continue to complete items on a [Strategic Planning Timeline](#).

If you have any comments or questions about the Strategic Plan for the Morris Area School District, feel free to contact Scott Monson, Superintendent at smonson@morris.k12.mn.us or at 320-589-4840.