



**Town Hall Meetings
April 21 and May 1, 2014
Comments and Questions**

Strategic Plan Overall

Comments:

- Simplicity of Strategic Plan is very good.
- The Priority Initiatives drill down to what the district needs to do.
- Need good two-way communication for initiatives for technology or math. Try to be proactive in trouble-shooting.

Questions:

Q: Will the Normandy and Riverview Gardens transfer student situation affect the Strategic Plan?

A: No. The presence or absence of transfer students from unaccredited districts is not anticipated to impact, from either logistical or financial perspectives, the district's ability to implement or fund the initiatives incorporated in the Strategic Plan. During the 2013-14 school year, the district had 88 transfer students who were seamlessly welcomed into our school community.

Missouri Learning Standards

Comments:

- Need to make sure concepts are mastered not just accuracy of answers to problems.

Math Review

Comments:

- The K-12 math curriculum common core is the most important to get integrated.
- Glad to see Math Review, and the intention to do thorough K-12 review.
- Some students at the high school won't benefit from this plan.
- Concerns about the math program--video teaching, homework that consists of filling in blanks on a computer.
- It's not just about learning the content, we need to encourage more positive feelings about instruction.

- Message is that if you aren't at the very top in math you are not valued in upper sphere. There should be more quantitative reasoning and problem solving.
- We need to have more motivation with math. There is pressure to be in top group and keep up.
- There are few teachers who are great teachers. Students need guidance and support to motivate learning.
- Math program is not so wonderful at the high school and we are happy it is being addressed.
- Students who do the best in math go to Kumon. Parents have to pay and go outside to get challenge and rigor.
- Glad that the district is looking at re-vamping the math program.
- Math department at the high school is weak, though good through middle school.
- We've all had to suffer with the geometry program. It's not the best first course for 9th graders.

Questions:

Q: Why can't a student take Advanced Chemistry without Advanced Algebra 2?

A: Advanced Algebra II is essential to a student's success in Advanced Chemistry due to the level of mathematics required. The two courses can be taken simultaneously depending upon a student's schedule.

Q: Can we revisit the geometry course to move away from proofs and bring in more logic and reasoning? How important are some of the concepts? Can it be taught in a way kids can master it? How much will kids be engaged and enjoy their learning?

A: All math courses are under review through our Math Review process. Courses and instruction are being evaluated to ensure they meet the Missouri Learning Standards that focus on high rigor of content and high relevance to real world problems. Any inconsistencies in course content and learning standards will be addressed as recommendations for the Math Program are analyzed and addressed.

Q: Will the math curriculum "Investigations" be maintained or abandoned?

A: The elementary math leaders are currently planning to pilot math materials that align with Missouri Learning Standards and the recommendations of the Math Review in Fall 2014. At this time, the Investigations program will only be considered after reviewing their new edition slated to be available in January 2015.

Technology Support for Instructional Strategies

Comments:

- Glad to hear about iPad minis at the high school.
- Make sure that technology is not the only way we teach...sometimes need to have pencil and paper. Don't penalize student for not having the exact answer in a box, think about the process to solving the problem.
- Concerned with how to maintain balance for kids at the top and the bottom.
- Many other schools have technology in each student's hands. We can pull best practices.
- Your brain remembers the place in physical books where you've seen information. There is evidence this happens with e-readers, as well.
- Concern with less collaboration in person because students are too engaged with their technology.
- Important to make sure educators are having good conversations about digital citizenry with students and parents. Review current technology agreement.
- Send out technology agreement prior to school starting.

Questions:

Q: Where is the balance for kids who struggle with text on iPad? Kids still need to know practical application and how to solve problems on paper.

A: Students will always be able to use hardbound texts, other print resources, or printed handouts, as needed, if iPad text is a challenge. Alternative resources will be provided to any students that need them. The application of concepts learned in class is a main thrust in teaching and learning in our schools today more than ever. Students must go beyond surface understanding to solve complex problems at every grade level. Even with technology as a tool, problem solving can and will involve using paper/pencil tasks, writing paragraphs, documenting supporting evidence, and providing struggling students with the tools that serve him/her best.

Q: How are we educating teachers?

A: A certain amount of professional development time and materials are built into the district's annual budget each year. Each year, a relatively small percentage of these resources are used for technical training and some of the technical training this past year and going forward have been (and will be) utilized for familiarizing teaching staff, as needed, with new technology, applications, and other tools that are available to them. The iPad is one of these tools and no additional time or material resources are required for incorporating this training into the overall technical training provided.

The vast majority of professional development time is dedicated to curriculum development and instructional practices. Leveraging the benefits of students having iPads as an instructional resource will be included in this training.

However, *additional* training hours and resources are not anticipated to be necessary.

Q: What if my kid struggles with the technology?

A: Understanding how to use technology for learning is integral in today's world and is part of the reasoning behind using it as an instructional tool. However, students will continue to be encouraged to discover and leverage their own learning styles to their best advantage.

Q: What is the process for embedding good digital citizenship?

A: Digital citizenship is a key component in the district Strategic Plan currently in development. It is an integral component to students being prepared to function well in post-secondary work, as well as society in general. The teaching of digital citizenship, including what it means and the responsibilities involved, take many forms. Similarly to how the district addresses character education in general, digital citizenship is incorporated into curriculum, events, activities and student expectations. In addition, there are specific disciplinary consequences, which can be quite significant, for students who do not comply with these responsibilities and expectations.

Q: Can the teachers see the students' iPad screens?

A: Students will have the ability to share their iPad screens individually with the teacher's laptop through a program called "reflector." There is no software currently available for teachers to monitor multiple students' iPad screens.

Q: What about keyboarding and ways to be efficient in the high school?

A: High school students will sometimes have the need to use a keyboard in conjunction with their iPad, just as there will be occasions when they will need a laptop or desktop device for projects requiring special applications not suited to a tablet device. These devices will still be available to students.

Q: Are all of the high school textbooks being preloaded?

A: Not at this time. Textbooks across the district are ordered in cycles, with anticipated and budgeted "life expectancies." The biology textbook is the first to be ordered because the Science Department anticipated having to make this purchase for the 2014-15 school year and had included the possibility of being able to use e-Texts when analyzing their options. Other departments are currently in similar research phases and are anticipated to take advantage of this opportunity as their replacement cycles permit. For instance, our English Language Arts department is currently considering an e-Text for a compilation of required readings for their students.

Q: What if power is out?

A: The iPads have a 10-hour continuous-use battery life. As long as the iPads are charged in the evenings, this should not be an issue.

Q: How do we prepare for when the Internet goes out? Can iPads be taken off network?

A: A loss of Internet connectivity does occur on occasion, albeit rare and

short in duration. Fortunately, the majority of the apps on an iPad do not require an Internet connection to function. Those that do, including Google Drive, do have offline capabilities and allow for document synching when network connectivity is restored.

Q: What will be done about theft of technology?

A: We will be working with an insurance company specifically focused on insuring large electronic projects. Parents/guardians will be asked to purchase a \$40/yr. plan with no deductible. Accommodations will be available for families who need financial assistance. This plan provides coverage for a device regardless of how many times it is broken, lost or stolen. In addition, the district will have over 100 "spare" devices available for use when a student has a lost, stolen or broken device.

Q: How are we funding technology?

A: The Board of Education has set a 2% spending increase limit in any year over the past year for the district overall and for every department. As a result, any technology purchases must be accommodated within this parameter. The purchase of the iPads is being done with the dollars available for replacing devices at the end of their life cycles. Specifically, iPads are replacing laptops at the end of their lifecycle. With iPads being significantly less expensive than laptops, more devices can be purchased.

Q: What about infrastructure? Can we handle it?

A: The district bandwidth was doubled during the 2013-14 school year from 100Mbps to 200 Mbps. Also, additional wireless access points were added in the 2013-14 school year to handle increased density of mobile devices at the high school and two of the elementary schools and to allow for a backup wireless controller at the high school. These upgrades would have been necessary regardless of the iPad deployment.

Q: How often will technology be turned over?

A: The life cycle for the iPads is anticipated to be four years. The district plans for five-year lifecycles for laptops and desktops.

Q: Will students be allowed to take the iPad Minis home?

A: Yes. In fact, they are encouraged to do so, as it is an integral instructional tool provided for their use. In addition, students will be encouraged to charge their device at home, rather than at school. Although, students will be able to charge their iPads at school, if necessary.

Q: Will apps maintain use each year?

A: Applications will automatically be upgraded as newer versions become available. E-Texts are purchased on an annual per student basis and are updated each year, as additional information and/or activities and interactive capabilities are available. In addition, unlike physical textbooks, this gives departments the ability to change textbooks when a preferred tool becomes available without having to wait for a specific book's budgeted replacement cycle.

Q: Could students and parents show up to learn how to help the students access the technology?

A: Yes. Prior to school beginning, and at the beginning of the 2013-14 school year, opportunities will be provided for both parents and students to learn more about the devices, how they will be used, and what their responsibilities are in relation to the devices.

Q: What do students do who do not have wireless Internet access?

A: Currently, homework assigned to students often includes the need for research or access to the Internet for other reasons. Therefore, the small percentage of students that do not have wireless access at home have likely already had to find a solution to this challenge. While we are researching possibilities to provide wireless access to these students in their homes, free wireless service is very widely available, including at the school.

In addition, we actually hope the iPads will make it easier for some students who do have wireless access at home to get their work done more efficiently, as they will have a device of their own that does not need to be shared with other siblings or family members.

Q: How do we ensure cross platform agility between Microsoft Word and Google Drive?

A: The transition from one platform to the other is seamless and already very familiar to our high school students who use it regularly to share and collaborate on documents.

Q: Who will monitor the teachers who monitor the students?

A: An application called FileWave will be used to manage all district iOS devices. It provides the capability to upgrade, and install applications, as well as monitor their use. In addition, Internet access and some device functions, such as use of the camera, can also be controlled.

Q: Why were iPads chosen?

A: They provide the functions most often needed by students in the classroom at a reasonable cost. They provide textbook use and applications for all ages, grades and achievement levels, as well as access to many other instructional resources. In addition, programs are available which can help teachers integrate and customize the information used for lessons. There is also a significant need for additional technology access for required online testing which is accomplished by all high school students having access to an iPad.

Q: Were iPads chosen, over laptops, due solely to expense?

A: No. Weight, ease of use and maintenance needs were also taken into account. iPads simply provide the most efficient way to have the right tool in students' hands most of the time. Laptops will still be available for writing lengthy documents and for the specialized purposes for which they are more appropriate.

Q: Will there be in-class note taking and printing capabilities with the iPads?

A: Yes. Note taking can be done by typing or by using a stylus. Printing will be done through a program called "PaperCut".

Access to Early Childhood Education

Comments:

- Preschool for students could be a good area for philanthropy to support as we try to seek more opportunity for kids.
- Early childhood education should not be a priority.

Question:

Q: Can we make offer preschool to more students who need it but can't afford it? Not just one class of 15 students?

A: We believe so. Until recently, the Ladue Early Childhood Center (LECC) did not qualify for grants to provide funding for families that cannot afford the tuition-based programs provided at the LECC. The new early childhood center is accessible to those with disabilities and all teachers are certified. With a new permanent director for the Ladue Early Childhood Center joining the district on July 1, 2014, the district will have the opportunity to explore and take advantage of many more opportunities than ever before.

Class Size

Comments:

- Adjusting class sizes is good for kids.
- Class size is a major issue. I'm not happy with class size at the high school.
- We need to look at the high school master plan of classes. Foreign language and math should be every day. Block scheduling throws things off.
- Would love to see a modified block schedule.

Questions:

Q: Was any consideration given to leveraging new technology to allow for the possibility of additional student(s) in a classroom?

A: Additional technology does not necessarily equate to smaller class sizes, particular in the early elementary grades.

Q: Does block or modified block scheduling tie into STEM?

A: Scheduling at the high school level is under review during the 2014-15 school year. This will include the research and discussion of best practices for all courses including those in STEM. At this time, no particular schedule has been recommended though block and modified block may certainly be considered.

Q: How much space do we have in our schools now?

A: Current classroom availability is as follows:

- Conway Elementary School has four available rooms. Two are currently computer labs.

- Old Bonhomme Elementary School has two available rooms, but would need to shift intervention space if they were used for regular classrooms.
- Reed Elementary School has two available rooms, but would need to shift Spanish and Special School District space if they were used for regular classrooms.
- Spoede Elementary School has no available rooms. To add regular classroom space, Spanish would have to “travel” and the sensory lab would need to be eliminated or relocated.
- Fifth Grade Center has three available rooms. (Two of these rooms are currently configured as science labs. This would pose challenges in utilizing them for other instruction.)
- Ladue Middle School has no available space. (Significant internal rearrangement would need to occur to accommodate additional classroom space capable of holding the desirable number of students.)
- The high school has no available space. (Several teachers share classrooms/offices and some teachers currently travel from classroom to classroom.)

High School Renovation

General Comments:

- Renovation of the high school needs to happen. These things are needs not wants.
- I feel good about the feasibility study.
- Multiple parents in the group have had “wayfinding” issues in the school.
- Last vote we had, there were lots of shenanigans of teachers who were for or against the bond. Signs were stolen out of yards.
- You can see the difference between Ladue School District and other, more up-to-date districts.
- It’s interesting when looking at the Mackey Mitchell presentation. Our current classrooms were not configured for collaboration among students. Kids need to learn to work with others.

Funding Comments:

- Be sure the district explains how corporate sponsorship works and the parameters and decision processes that would be put around it.
- A bond levy would be too big to pass. There are always going to be aging buildings.
- It’s a good idea to work on other district resources for funding a high school renovation before going to taxpayers.
- If/when we go to the community for a bond levy, the district needs to show they have utilized the resources available in order to have to ask for as little as possible.

Funding and Cost Questions:

Q: How would a high school renovation be funded?

A: The property on Clayton Road in Frontenac, where the early childhood center was previously located, is currently under contract. Proceeds from the sale of that property would be used to fund a portion of the renovation. In addition, the district will be seeking private and corporate donations. Once these efforts have been completed, it is anticipated that a bond levy request will be put to the community. The timing and amount of such a request is not yet known.

Q: We needed to fund the Fifth Grade Center and operate the Fifth Grade Center in past years. Are plans done responsibly as we go to taxpayers?

A: The operating levy increase requested prior to opening the Fifth Grade Center was due to an unprecedented decrease in property assessments in the district which resulted in a significant decrease in revenue to the district. Had property assessments not decreased to such a degree, opening the Fifth Grade Center would not have required an operating tax levy increase.

Q: Where are we in the lifespan of other bonds?

A: These are outlined on page 87 of the [2012-13 Budget](#). It should be noted the Ladue School District has significantly less debt than most public school districts.

Q: Is a "no tax increase" bond a possibility?

A: A "no tax increase" bond is a term used to describe a bond levy request which, when approved, results in the debt service levy remaining the same. However, it generally also results in repayment of any existing bonds being repaid over more years than anticipated when they were originally sold.

Q: When would the high school renovations begin?

A: The scope and anticipated funding of the project have yet to be determined. These conversations will take place in the coming months, with opportunities for community discussion. Once the scope and funding mechanisms are determined, it would likely take several years between the decision of putting a bond levy request on a ballot and renovations being completed.

Q: Do we save for building projects?

A: The only way for the district to do this would be to withhold operating funds from their intended purpose which is to pay for the day-to-day operation of the schools including salaries, transportation, utilities, instructional resources, etc. Generally speaking, public school districts request separate funding for major capital projects, such as new buildings and major renovations, through bond levy requests.

Q: How much will it cost to upgrade the systems at the high school?

A: Specific cost estimating has not yet been done. However, it is important to note that the major systems at the high school are at about 95% of their lifespan. This does not mean they will begin to fail immediately. However, they will begin to be out of their warranty periods, making major repairs relatively expensive.

Other Questions:

Q: When will the high school be accessible?

A: Whenever a portion of the high school is renovated, building code will require the district to make the renovated space handicap accessible.

Q: Where would students go during a renovation?

A: As much of the work as possible would be done during summer breaks. During the school year, trailers will be utilized for classrooms, as required, and the project will most likely be done in phases so some portions of the existing and new building will be in use at any given time.

Q: How does the final decision for high school renovation get made?

A: The Board of Education makes the final decision after receiving input from the community and recommendations from district administration.

Q: How does the community give input?

A: There will be a number of ways for the community to stay involved in the discussions surrounding a high school renovation.

- The Board will continue to discuss the topic in their meetings held twice each month. These meetings are open to the public and Public Comment periods are always incorporated into the agenda.
- As the discussions evolve and information regarding potential configurations and costs are more defined, public meetings will be held to present potential plans and get community feedback.

- Prior to a decision to put a bond levy on a ballot, the district will conduct a community-wide survey of registered voters to gauge community support.

Other Topics

Comments

- Diversity training could be increased. Expansion of educational equity should be a focus.
- Merit pay is not significant enough to be meaningful to teachers.
- Students have exceedingly high GPAs and are not challenged enough. You need to look at more rigorous assessments.
- The MICDS building is phenomenal, as are their diversity initiatives and college/world readiness programs organized by their counseling department.

Questions

Q: How do you define high educational standards?

A: Ladue School District defines high educational standards based on the achievement needs of our own student population as well as state and national organizations for core content areas. Ladue Schools' curriculum embeds Missouri's standards and also integrates standards from national curriculum organizations. These may include but are not limited to the Missouri Learning Standards, the Common Core State Standards, the Next Generation Science Standards, and the National Standards for Social Studies.

Q: How are we compensating teachers?

A: The Board of Education makes the final determination of how much increases will be from one year to another. This is done after multiple discussions with teacher leaders through what is called the "Meet and Confer" process. In most years, teachers in the Ladue School District receive a percentage increase in addition to an increase based on performance as determined through evaluation by building principals.

Q: Is there financial help for teachers who are pursuing their master's degrees?

A: Yes. Tuition assistance up to \$7,000 is available for approved degree programs. Once a master's degree is obtained, a one-time \$3,000 salary increase is also provided.

Q: How does the salary cap apply to maintaining staff and impacting allocations in salary?

A: At this time, no salary ranges, minimums or maximums have been set. Salary parameters will be discussed during the 2014-15 school year. One purpose of these discussions will be to determine how setting salary ranges might impact the allocation of salary increase dollars for different employee groups.

Q: Is teacher collaboration part of their evaluations?

Yes. Relationships between colleagues are considered during the evaluation process. Teachers are expected to be team players who help themselves, their colleagues, and our students grow as individuals. They are expected to have “courageous conversations” with each other and resolve conflicts in a responsible, professional manner.

Q: If a teacher is struggling, who helps?

Colleagues within a grade level or department are often the first to assist a struggling teacher. Beyond this more general support, and depending on grade level, the principal or a department chair might be the “go to” person for assistance. In addition, administrators are available who can offer more specialized assistance and support.

Q: Why do we not have a summer program?

A: District budgets were cut significantly several years ago as a result of a significant decrease in property values, and therefore district revenue. Since that time, the district has provided only credit recovery programs and intervention programs for struggling students in the summer. These intervention programs are provided through external funding sources.

Q: Why not collaborate with other districts for summer programs?

A: Very few, if any, neighboring districts provide district-sponsored summer school. Collaboration could be considered. However, district funding would still be necessary. Currently, we are only able to offer summer school to students eligible for federally funded Title I programming.

Q: What do we do in terms of online education?

A: Students at the high school and middle school levels may be referred to online learning opportunities when the student has individual needs that do not fit our current programming. Other online opportunities are being explored for certain needs such as math acceleration.

Q: What is the point scale for calculating Grade Point Averages?

A: Following is the scale used:

Scale Used for Grade Point Average Calculation

H	100	4
A	92.5	4
A-	89.5	4
B+	86.5	3.7
B	82.5	3.3
B-	79.5	3
C+	76.5	2.7
C	72.5	2.3
C-	69.5	2
D+	66.5	1.7
D	62.5	1.3
D-	59.5	1

Q: What does professional development mean to the teachers?

A: This is an opportunity for teachers and other staff members to receive additional training on a wide variety of topics. This training occurs before the school year begins for students, on Early Release days, as well as during the full days set aside during the school year for specific training purposes. Teachers often meet with colleagues to share knowledge, skills and ideas in their Professional Learning Communities. At times, consultants are brought in to do training, or teachers leave the district to take advantage of learning opportunities elsewhere.

Q: How does STEM fit in with SAT's and ACT's?

A: Science Technology Engineering and Math (STEM) courses combine the use of these disciplines to provide for practical problem-solving approaches to teaching and learning. The SAT and ACT currently focus on the assessment of knowledge in single subjects (English, Math, Reading, Science, and Writing) and, at this time, do not incorporate questions that require cross-discipline application of knowledge.