




Strategic Plan of Action 2020 - 2025



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About Us

For 160 years, Omaha Public Schools has proudly served the students and families of our community. Already the largest school district in Nebraska, we are a growing district of approximately 54,000 students and over 7850 staff members. From early childhood through high school, we welcome students and families at 63 elementary schools, 12 middle schools, seven high schools and 15 educational programs. Design and construction are underway on two new high schools, one new middle school and two new elementary schools expected to open within the next five years, during the focus of this Strategic Plan of Action. A wide range of academic and extra-curricular programs throughout Omaha Public Schools offer students and families choice in their education. We are grateful to serve a diverse community of students and families who represent a range of perspectives, experiences and backgrounds. Families served by the Omaha Public Schools speak a total of more than 120 different languages in their homes. At some point in their education, roughly one-third of all Omaha Public Schools students will receive English learner instruction. Students who are Hispanic or Latino represent the largest racial or ethnic proportion of our student population, approximately 37%. Students who are Asian represent the fastest-growing racial or ethnic proportion of our student population, now at approximately 7%. We love our students and the effort and focus of this strategic plan demonstrates our fundamental belief that we have the power to help every student become the very best version of themselves.

Introduction

A strong K-12 public school system is a make-or-break attribute of a world class city. For greater Omaha and Nebraska to succeed on the world stage, the Omaha Public Schools must demonstrate excellence and be an integral part of a thriving community.

To achieve our mission, this plan addresses four strategic priorities:

Academics: Omaha Public Schools students are prepared to meet post secondary expectations by focusing on early literacy, college preparation, career readiness, instructional resources and a school climate conducive to learning.

Financial Accountability: Omaha Public Schools demonstrates financial accountability tied to student outcomes by aligning public funds and private partnerships with strategic initiatives and stewardship of Earth's resources.

Ethic of Care: Omaha Public Schools demonstrates an ethic of care for its students and staff.

Staff: Omaha Public Schools has highly qualified and effective staff in every division by addressing grow your own, retention, recruitment, professional development, advancement and professional growth.

The *Strategic Plan of Action*, however, is not limited to checkboxes, charts or graphs. It is not a fixed point. Our plan is a fluid, future-focused plan and statement of intent that recognizes:

- » Our efforts must be focused on our core work.
- » Our student body is dynamic.
- » Educational technology and its effects on learning are evolving.
- » Greater Omaha's workforce needs are changing.

The *Strategic Plan of Action* was built from hours of analysis – both internally and externally – plus dedicated effort, discussion and foresight including:

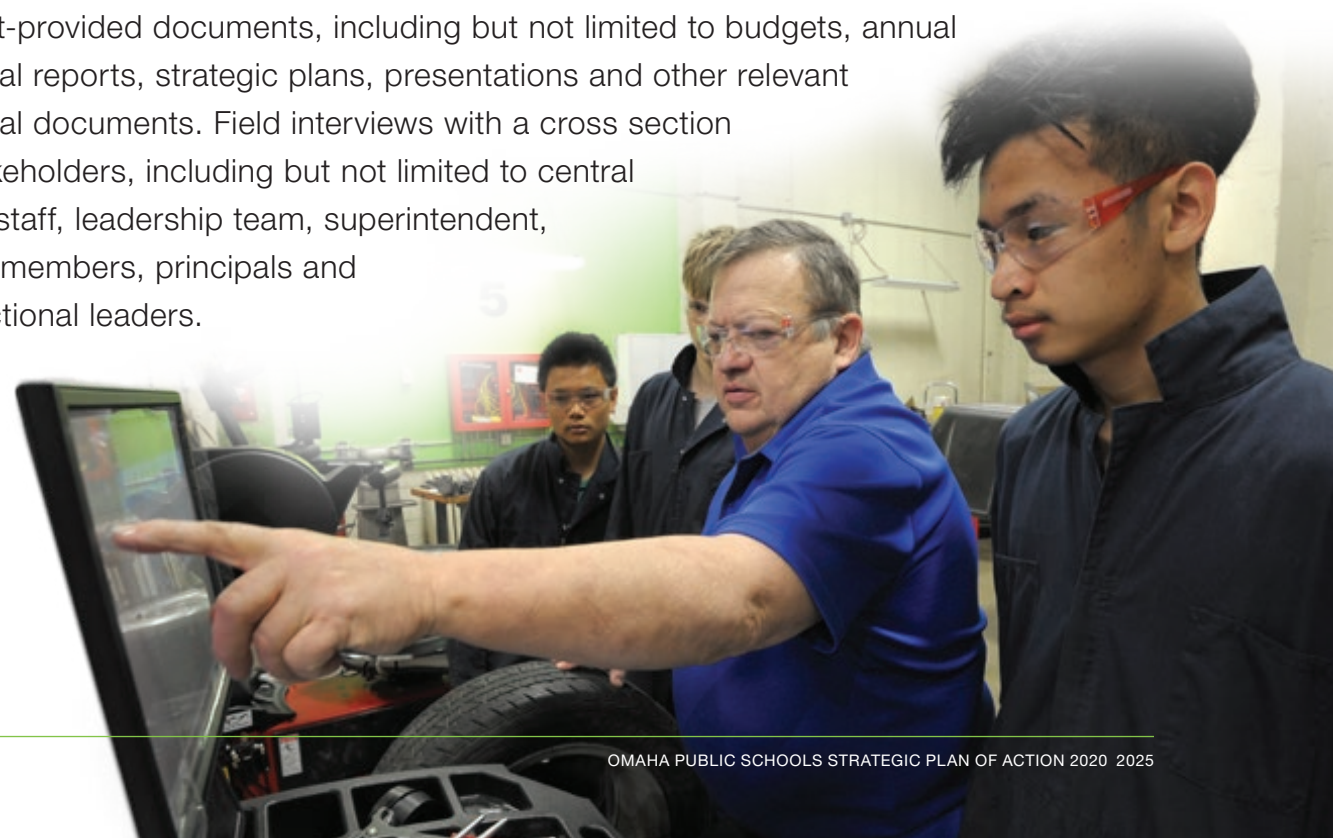
- » 680 hours of input from stakeholders throughout the district.
- » Seven comprehensive reviews of data and results from every level of the K-12 system.
- » A thorough financial audit and budget projections by AlignK12.
- » A comprehensive review of literacy prepared by Children's Literacy Initiative.
- » An audit of current programs and practices prepared by Steele Dynamics.

External Feedback

AlignK12

AlignK12 seeks to provide actionable insights that support financial and aspirational efforts in support of the *Strategic Plan of Action*.

AlignK12 utilizes an entry planning approach (Jentz & Wofford 2012) that included: District-provided documents, including but not limited to budgets, annual financial reports, strategic plans, presentations and other relevant financial documents. Field interviews with a cross section of stakeholders, including but not limited to central office staff, leadership team, superintendent, board members, principals and instructional leaders.



Children's Literacy Initiative

Children's Literacy Initiative feedback provides the district leadership of Omaha Public Schools factors to consider as it designs and implements an early literacy strategy aimed at improving instruction so that 100 percent of eight-year-olds in the district will be able to read at grade level.

The vision proposed for Omaha Public Schools suggests the district should:

- » Establish a clear early literacy vision.
- » Align materials and professional development to vision.
- » Create an ongoing process to maintain coherence and alignment across all stakeholders.
- » Create a staffing structure that supports implementation in schools.

Steele Dynamics

Omaha Public Schools high schools provide a caring and supportive environment for students.

Observations at all schools affirm a welcoming and friendly atmosphere for students and visitors. The audit reveals four areas of promising practices related to programming for students. These practices include a culture of student support, positive school climate, community partnerships and clubs and early post-secondary opportunities.

Omaha Public Schools requested this audit so that they could make informed decisions moving forward to improve programming to better support their students and the opening of two new high schools. The audit reveals four areas for growth related to programming for students' equity and access, vision of program offerings, college and career planning and quality of instruction.



Internal Feedback

Data Walks

Decisions based on data are more effective and result in more measurable outcomes.

To develop the strategic priorities, district and school-level administrators participated in data walks to review student academic data, program specific data from high schools, middle schools, and elementary schools, suspension and expulsion data along with other discipline data and attendance data. Feedback was received by all data walk participants and reviewed by senior leadership to not only develop the strategic priorities but also construct the goals supporting these priorities.

Establishing Values

During the summer of 2019, a representative team from the Omaha Public Schools attended the Public Education Leadership Project (PELP) at Harvard University.

There, the team focused on identifying a problem of practice for the Omaha Public Schools that supported the creation of a strategic plan of action. The problem of practice identified is: The District does not have an established set of organizational values, norms and attitudes that **UNITE ALL** constituents to prepare **ALL STUDENTS FOR POSTSECONDARY SUCCESS**. Where a child attends school within the Omaha Public Schools determines the quality of their overall school experience, including but not limited to: instructional quality, leadership quality, teacher/staff quality, conditions of facilities and overall access to resources and educational opportunities. As a result, students and families have inconsistent experiences with the Omaha Public Schools.

Based on the problem of practice, the team devised a plan to develop district values and norms. Stakeholders involved in the work included members of the Board of Education, district leadership, Omaha School Administrators Association, Omaha Education Association, student ambassadors (fifth grade students from Central Park Elementary and kindergartners from Saddlebrook Elementary), Public Education Leadership Project team and District Citizens Advisory Committee. Each group prioritized values and those discussions informed the values outlined later in this *Strategic Plan of Action*. The values were foundational to the creation of our strategic priorities and will continue to guide our work.

Developing the Strategic Plan of Action

The Omaha Public Schools *Strategic Plan of Action* deliberately and creatively addresses the trends Omaha Public Schools faces and reimagines a 21st century education ecosystem that prepares all students for a successful life after high school. A broad spectrum of data were used in the development of the *Strategic Plan of Action* that reflects consensus among stakeholders.

The strategic planning process included extensive outreach with stakeholders invited to participate in both focus groups and surveys. Community member, family, staff member and student input provided the basis for the development of the plan. The *Strategic Plan of Action* is the result of research and represents the shared values and priorities of the Omaha Public Schools.

Contained in this report is an overview of the planning process, data sources and a summary of findings. With a clear mission, vision and values the *Strategic Plan of Action* describes the district's priorities in the ongoing work to achieve continuous improvement.

To be future-ready – to prepare today's kindergartners through twelfth graders for the lives they'll lead – requires an all in effort.

Board of Education

The Board of Education plays a key role in the monitoring and implementation of the District's *Strategic Plan of Action*. This includes implementing policy reflective of the plan and allocating appropriate funds within the district budget to support the plan. Twice a year, the administration will report on the progress of the *Strategic Plan of Action*. The administration will make adjustments based on Board of Education feedback. The *Strategic Plan of Action's* goals will be updated at 18 month intervals beginning in July 2021. Departments will complete tactical plans to support their areas of responsibility upon approval of the *Strategic Plan of Action*.

Omaha Public Schools'

Mission, Vision, Values and Norms

Omaha Public Schools' Mission

To prepare all students for success in college, career and life.

Omaha Public Schools' Vision

Every student. Every day. Prepared for success.

Omaha Public Schools' Values

Entering the third decade of the 21st century, there are many reasons to be joyous in the Omaha Public Schools, chief among them are our amazing students. Bright, curious, engaging and unique – each student in the Omaha Public Schools has the right to and deserves a world class education. While no school can ensure equal outcomes for all students, our public schools are our community's chief vehicle for working towards equal opportunities for all our children.

This plan is driven by our values. Values ground us, even when the winds of change blow. Our values inform the culture we build and what we hold ourselves accountable for.

Omaha Public Schools continues to be an important and vital institution for our youngest residents in the city of Omaha, serving more than 54,000 unique students. Omaha Public Schools' *Strategic Plan of Action* provides a focus for the work of the district on its fundamental promise to the community it serves: *To prepare every student, every day, for success*. We strive to fulfill this promise by embodying our five foundational shared values in our work – *Equity, Results, Leadership, Accountability and Joy*.

Our first shared value, *Equity*, is central to our work to deliver on our promise to our community. Within the Omaha Public Schools, *Equity* means making sure every student has the support they need to be successful. Significant portions of this *Strategic Plan of Action* focus on delivering equity through our schools.

Results is one way we bring *Equity* to our schools. That is, we look to results – meeting standards and goals for students – across their entire Omaha Public Schools experience. For example, to ensure students graduate with the attributes we collectively believe are needed for young adults to thrive in this century, all students must learn to read well by the end of third grade. Thus, direct reading supports for struggling readers and others who may need more support will take precedence over all other programming priorities. The human and financial resources of the district will follow this priority. We will look to results when evaluating program success in Omaha Public Schools.

District staff will be empowered with the *Leadership* skills they need to understand both what they must support or start doing, and also to understand what we must stop doing – skills that include the courage to recognize what we must change in our work and in our schools.

Shared *Accountability* in the Omaha Public Schools will allow us to report and focus on local school accountability, as well as district-wide results. This means we must be honest with our community when looking at our results. *Equity* means families of students attending schools where results reflect a need for change should be assured the Omaha Public Schools believes that *every* school and *every* student matters.

Joy is our final foundational shared value, and it must suffuse our work every day. It first does so through our ethic of care for all who work in our schools. As one of our community's largest employers – operating in the context of a nationwide teacher and workforce shortage – we will treat our employees with an ethic of care that supports retention of our very best employees and provide a path for career enhancement that allows them to remain and grow within the organization, while helping all staff members find greater successes than they have in the past. This is critical to delivering *Equity* for our students. Enabling *Joy* also requires us to address the social-emotional needs of our students through thoughtful school-wide systems that take note of each and every child. Thus, we create the conditions for success for all who work in our schools – be they children or adults. When we celebrate the authentic successes of children, we create joyful schools.

Choice programming within the Omaha Public Schools should embody our five foundational values. This will require an honest examination of the quality and outcomes of current programming. As we augment programming to represent what our families want and children need, we will need to ensure *Equity, Results, Leadership, Accountability and Joy*. For example, specialized career-focused high school programming will prepare students for living-wage careers, as well as the workforce needs of the city of Omaha and state of Nebraska. While we will focus on our core, we will explore innovative, evidence-based promising practices to ensure every school in Omaha Public Schools is a choice option for families.

Values

Embracing the richness of the diversity of our students and staff allows the Omaha Public schools to serve our students with the *fierce urgency of now*. This ensures each child has a daily opportunity to be the best version of themselves. Furthermore, we look to the future with our foundational values as we build five new schools. Our new inviting and welcoming facilities will provide additional value to our students' experience in our schools.

Every day, we are excited about our schools. Every day, we are inspired by the adults who work within them. Every day we are devoted to the children and community we serve. We look to the mid-21st century confident we can build on *Equity, Results, Leadership, Accountability* and *Joy* to support the future of our students, greater Omaha and Nebraska.



Omaha Public Schools' Norms

Equity

We value equity as the focused practices, policies, academic support, curriculum, ethic of care, and resource allocation to support students with what they need to be successful. Acknowledging that like the individuality of each of our students each school is unique, we must support each school with what it needs to be successful.

Equity Norms

We know we are focused on *equity* when:

- >> We provide students, families and staff the support they need to demonstrate success.
- >> We recognize, identify and celebrate the variety of strengths of each student.
- >> We align resources with district priority needs.
- >> We routinely monitor student data and surveys for disproportionate experiences, outcomes and other trends to take action.

Results

We value sharing and using results to inform our decisions about instruction, resources, curriculum and program development to help us realize higher levels of student achievement. In the Omaha Public Schools, administrators, teachers and students measure progress toward meeting and exceeding defined standards and goals. Through the ongoing and collaborative analysis of student work and data, we hold students and each other accountable for continuous improvement.

Results Norms

We know we are focused on *results* when:

- >> We protect instructional time.
- >> We use real-time data to inform instruction.
- >> We embrace individual contributions of students, staff, families, and community toward helping students achieve success.
- >> We align resources with student needs.
- >> We keep our commitments.

Leadership

We value leadership and we are committed to building leadership at all levels of the organization through professional development in data-driven decision making, effective communication and participation in collaborative teams.

Leadership Norms:

We know we are focused on *leadership* when:

- >> We provide clear vision and expectations.
- >> We develop leaders and support them with high performing teams.
- >> We demonstrate consistency.
- >> We demonstrate respect.
- >> We are honest.
- >> We engage and empower everyone to lead through their strengths.
- >> We have diverse representation in leadership.

Accountability

We value accountability and hold ourselves accountable to high standards for the outcomes of student achievement and operational, instructional and fiscal performance. Accountability is clearly defined ownership at the individual, school and district levels.

Accountability Norms:

We know we are focused on *accountability* when:

- >> We outline realistic, attainable objectives.
- >> We use clear communication to define our expectations.
- >> We use common metrics to measure our successes and opportunities for improvement.
- >> We remain focused on the goal at hand.

Joy

We value joy. A healthy balance of work and play is invaluable for students and adults alike. Joy at school and at work makes us more productive because when we create, innovate and imagine, our motivation grows. We want to ensure that everyone knows the excitement that comes from working deeply on a problem, task or concept and experiencing breakthrough moments. Joyful faces and places help enhance a positive experience for our staff, students and families. We are proud to be a member of the Omaha Public Schools family.

Joy Norms:

We know we are focused on *joy* when:

- >> We create positive and connected environments for working and learning.
- >> We celebrate accomplishments together as a community.
- >> We enthusiastically promote our schools and programs.
- >> We authentically live out our shared, owned mission and vision.

A Future-Focused Omaha Public Schools

Early in Dr. Cheryl Logan's tenure at the Omaha Public Schools, she was on a listening tour with students throughout the district. At one meeting a high school student raised his hand and asked, "Are you really preparing us for the jobs we're going to have in the future?" The student's question was valid, and the answer lies at the heart of this plan. How can we re-imagine a public school district that helps all students prepare for life, careers and advanced education in a future that many people can't imagine?

The Omaha Public Schools chose the *strategic foresight* process to power its *Strategic Plan of Action* because it wanted to take a proactive look towards what's coming and build a strategy that's responsive to its future, not beholden to its past.

Strategic foresight is a professional framework used by Fortune 500 companies, the U.S. Military, NATO, the World Bank and other leading institutions to anticipate what's coming and identify issues and methods to shape a better future. In addition, the Greater Omaha region has experience with strategic foresight. In 2017, the Greater Omaha Chamber of Commerce, United Way of the Midlands and Urban League of Nebraska used strategic foresight to build it's Omaha 2040 plan. A core component of that plan was a thriving public school system that would attract and keep young professionals, people of color and employers.¹

¹ Learn more about Greater Omaha 2040, a partnership between the Greater Omaha Chamber of Commerce, United Way of the Midlands, and the Urban League of Nebraska: <https://www.omahachamber.org/greater-omaha-2040/>

What is strategic foresight?

Imagine you're taking a road trip from Omaha to Seattle. You choose your dates, plan your route, and on the appointed day, you start driving. But instead of looking through your windshield, you use your rearview mirror to navigate. How far would you get before you'd have an accident?

Most of us would never put our car in *drive* while looking at what's behind us, but that's what many schools – and other organizations – do. If we look around or ahead of us, we can see that students, technology, jobs, families, teachers, the economy are all changing. But many school systems focus on what's in their rearview mirror – the techniques, curriculum, and processes they've always used.

Strategic foresight is different: it creates a plan by looking at what's happening and what's coming.

The strategic foresight process identified two sets of data that will drive the strategic plan:

- » The STEEP trends (Society, Technology, Economy, Environment and Politics) that Omaha Public Schools must be prepared for (see **Table 1** on the next page).
- » The strategic initiatives Omaha Public Schools must undertake to ensure that the district is meeting its challenges and vision. These are included throughout the *Strategic Plan of Action*.

Table 1: Top Trends Through 2030

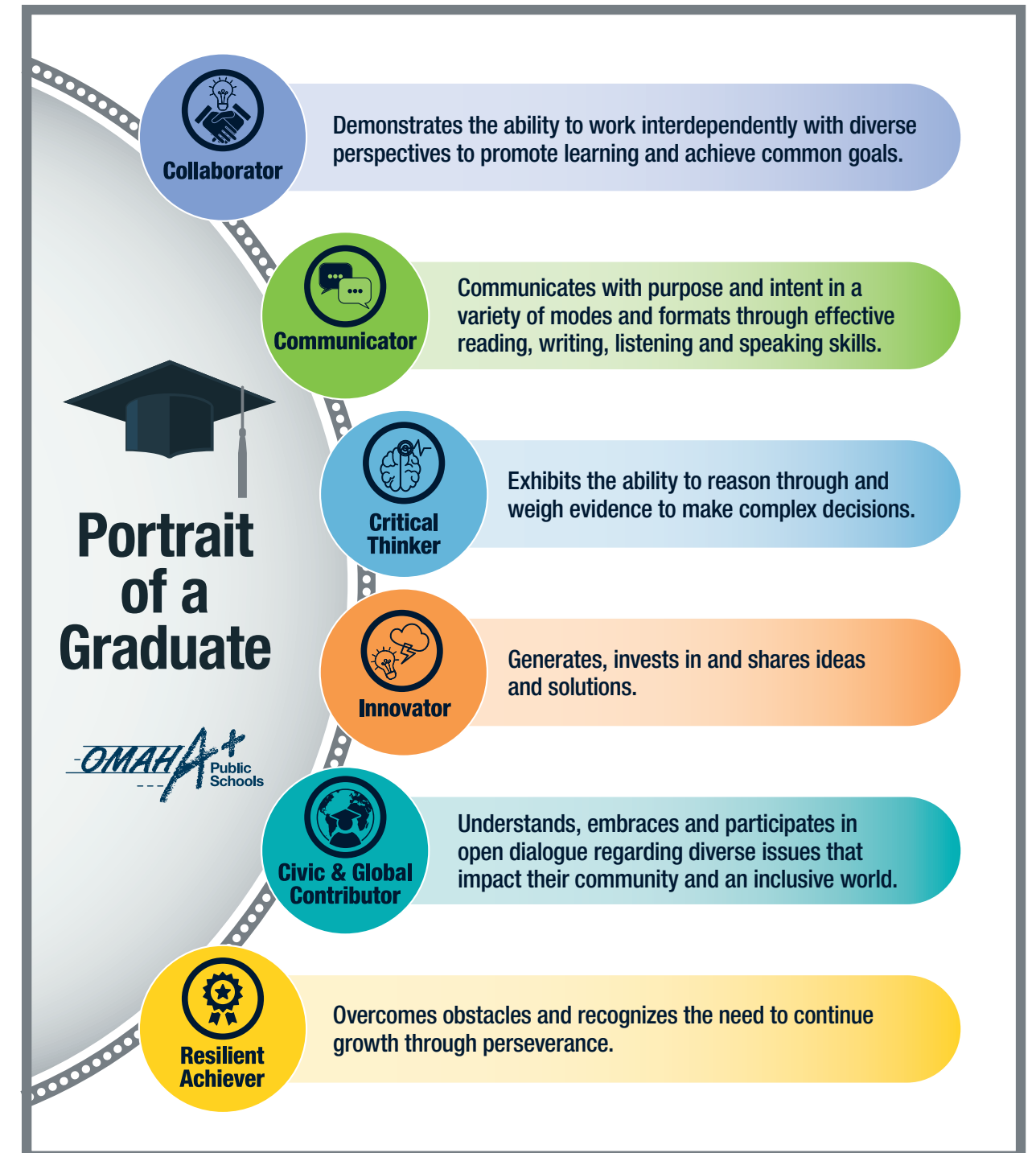
The following table lists high-impact and high-certainty trends that are expected to affect the Omaha Public Schools through 2030. The list was compiled by 13 teams who gathered at the Learning Community North Omaha Center on Sept. 10, 2019 for the first of two Futures Labs.

Total FQ ²	Trend	Variability in Readiness Ranking ³													
13	Increasing Teacher Shortage	1	2	2	2	3	3	3	3	3	4	5	6	6	
13	Rising Poverty	0	3	4	4	4	5	6	6	6	6	6	6	8	
12	Advancing Job Automation	1	1	1	2	3	3	3	5	5	6	6	7		
11	Growing Racial and Ethnic Diversity	3	3	3	5	5	5	6	6	7	8	8			
10	Increasing Rate of Mental Health Incidents	1	2	4	4	5	5	5	5	6	6				
8	Growing K-12 Funding Challenges	0	1	2	3	4	5	7	9						
8	Growing Food Insecurity	5	6	6	8	8	8	8	8						
6	Increasing Population, Especially 65+	0	4	5	6	7	8								
6	Rising Educational Equity	1	4	4	6	6	6								
5	Increasing Use of Behavioral Insights to Drive Change	3	4	8	9	10									
5	Growing Artificial Intelligence in the Classroom	0	2	5	5	6									
5	Increasing Use of Public-Private Partnerships	5	10	10	10	10									

² Total FQ (Frequency) indicates the number of teams that selected the trend as high impact and high certainty. With 13 teams participating, a score of "13" indicates that all teams chose that trend.

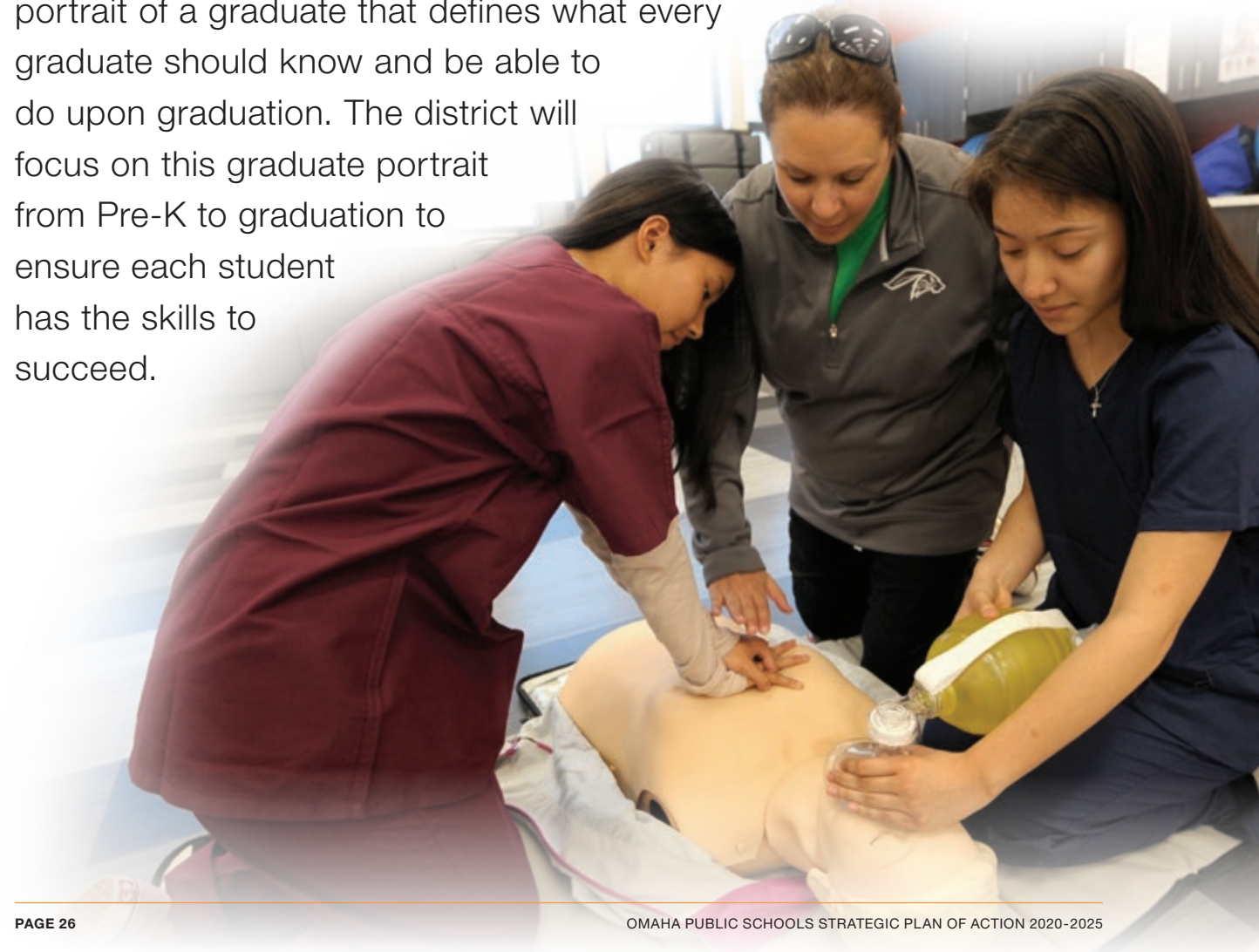
³ Variability in Readiness Ranking uses a color scale to convey team's readiness ranking, from white which represent zero or "Not Ready" to dark orange, which indicates 10, "Completely Ready."

Portrait of an Omaha Public Schools Graduate



College and career readiness have a national emphasis today in K-12 education. Most districts conduct surveys to assess student career interest and then design their K-12 programs toward those interests. Other districts work with their chamber of commerce and workforce development offices to determine what current needs are for workforce and how to design programs to meet these needs.

This plan looks into the future of a community and its workforce and designs a school district that will have students ready for whatever the future holds. To that end, Omaha Public Schools created a portrait of a graduate that defines what every graduate should know and be able to do upon graduation. The district will focus on this graduate portrait from Pre-K to graduation to ensure each student has the skills to succeed.



Strategic Priorities

The trends identified in the Futures Labs, along with the portrait of a graduate and feedback from data walks provide context and guidance to formulate goals and action steps for the plan. The values and norms provide a foundation for the work and the strategic priorities provide direction.

The strategic priorities were solidified by triangulating the trends, the values and norms, and disaggregated student-centric data related to academic growth and achievement, program evaluation, student engagement and the perceptions of students, families, teachers and staff about the educational climate of their schools.

Priority 1: Academics

Omaha Public School students are prepared to meet postsecondary expectations.

Priority 2: Staff

Omaha Public Schools has highly qualified and effective staff in every division.

Priority 3: Financial Accountability

Omaha Public School demonstrates financial accountability tied to student outcomes.

Priority 4: Ethic of Care

Omaha Public Schools demonstrates an ethic of care for students and staff.

Strategic Priority 1: Academics

The portrait of a graduate outlines the expectations for all Omaha Public Schools graduates. To that end, the academic strategic priority will focus our work on early literacy, program redesign and establishing a high quality portfolio of school programs. Omaha Public Schools prepares each student to meet postsecondary expectations.

Goals

- » By June of 2021, develop, field-test, train and deploy Research's Academic/Intervention Indicator Dashboard to meet the district's current and future needs.
- » By June 2025, each school will have 4% more kindergarten through third grade students that will read on grade level as measured on standardized district assessments.
- » By June of 2025, each school will increase the percentage of ninth through twelfth grade students identified as on-track for graduation by 5%.
- » By June of 2025, student groups in each middle school participating in advanced academic middle school courses will increase annually.
- » By June of 2025, all students will have equitable access to technologies necessary to support learning.

Strategic Priority 2:

Staff

Recruiting and maintaining a highly qualified, developed staff is the most essential component of a successful school district. Omaha Public Schools has highly qualified and effective staff in every division.

Goals

- » By June of 2025, a pipeline of teachers will be developed so that 95% of teaching positions are filled in each school by August 1 of each year with highly qualified candidates.
- » By June of 2025, a pipeline of employees will be developed to assume leadership roles so that 98% of administration positions in each school and 95% of district leadership positions are filled prior to the start of the school year.
- » By June of 2025, create employee development programs including grow your own programs for each department to support succession planning and employee retention.

Strategic Priority 3:

Financial Accountability

School district budgets across the U.S. are challenged daily to be funded and many districts are unable to fund their highest priorities. Omaha Public Schools understands the challenges of developing and adhering to an approved budget and recognizes the need to be accountable to the funding provided and supported by the community it serves. Omaha Public School demonstrates financial accountability tied to student outcomes.

Goals

- » By June of 2021, all major initiatives included in the *Strategic Plan of Action* will have an associated evaluation plan that allows leaders at all levels of the organization to actively maintain a continuous improvement cycle.
- » By June of 2021, audit existing systems and technology contracts to increase fiscal responsibility, eliminate redundancy in technology purchasing and create a schedule for procurement of technology infrastructure, planned obsolescence and security needs through 2030.
- » By August of 2022, the Omaha Public Schools implements a participatory budget process aligned to student needs, District priorities and school improvement planning.
- » By August of 2021, establish financial processes to manage all funding streams to align to student needs and District priorities.
- » By August of 2025, private partnership funding streams align to District priorities.
- » By June of 2022, the district will have a schedule of future facility needs and deferred maintenance through 2030.
- » By June of 2025, all Phase 2 Bond Projects have been completed.

Strategic Priority 4: Ethic of Care

Fostering a caring, inclusive culture assures all feel value, support, and joy. Everyone benefits as a result of students, staff and the community being served with care. Omaha Public Schools demonstrates an ethic of care for students and staff.

Goals

- » By June of 2025, each school and program in the Omaha Public Schools will demonstrate annually an increase in the percentage of students missing less than nine days and demonstrate annually a reduction of the percentage of students identified as chronically absent.
- » By June of 2025, each school/program in the Omaha Public Schools will demonstrate annually improved outcomes on the climate survey of at least 25% of parents/guardians and that there is evidence in the data that they are equitably improving interactions with students and families.
- » By June of 2025, proactive efforts focused on improving social/emotional skills at each school/program in the Omaha Public Schools will decrease annually the number of student disciplinary events.
- » By June of 2021, all Omaha Public Schools facilities will meet a consistent standard of quality of facility condition, cleanliness and accessibility.
- » By June of 2021, a district plan for improved environmental stewardship will be created for presentation to the Board of Education.
- » By January of 2025, upgrade digital platforms to reflect prevailing technology to provide two-way communication and promotion of Omaha Public Schools with stakeholders.
- » By June of 2022, reflect an ethic of care for Omaha Public Schools stakeholders by communicating with authentic and accessible language, supporting staff in creating welcoming environments and empowering team members to serve as positive, knowledgeable ambassadors for Omaha Public Schools.

Strategic Plan Reporting and Monitoring

Twice a year, the Board of Education and the community will be provided an update/report on the *Strategic Plan of Action* that outlines the work accomplished and the results achieved. The action steps for each goal are in 18 month timelines. Each year the action steps will be revised to reflect progress in the plan. Twice yearly reports will provide a comprehensive review of one of the strategic priorities including essential updates in the goal areas.

Summary

Omaha Public Schools took an incredibly unique approach to developing this strategic plan by first identifying future trends of the community and then identifying and following agreed upon norms as stakeholders reviewed data and established strategic priorities with strong and measurable goals. The outcome of this plan will be a district focused on the future needs of the community and dedicated to preparing students for that future. By increasing the number of high school graduates, developing more rigorous middle school programs and committing to literacy at all levels – especially elementary students. Omaha Public Schools pledges to the community that it will provide students the knowledge and skills they will need to graduate, ready to take on the future.

Academic excellence leads this plan but would not be possible without the structures supporting the work. Hiring the most qualified and prepared staff yields a high return for student success. Student support and operational structures along with a financial and technology infrastructure make learning possible in updated, clean and well resourced buildings.

Establishing a culture that nurtures academic excellence requires all participants to be well informed and highly supported. The dedication to our ethic of care highlights the commitment of Omaha Public Schools to meet these goals first and foremost by focusing on the students, staff and community.

Metrics, Targets and Aspirations

Each division established goals and actions steps aligned with the four strategic priorities and designed to meet the mission of the district. Twice a year goals and action steps will be reviewed and progress will be reported to the Board of Education. Adjustments to the overall plan content and timeline will be made each year, if necessary.

Strategic Priority 1: Academics

Omaha Public Schools students are prepared to meet post secondary expectations by focusing on early literacy, college preparation, career readiness, instructional resources and a school climate conducive to learning.

what

By June of 2021, develop, field-test, train and deploy Research's Academic/Intervention Indicator Dashboard to meet the District's current and future needs.

how

- >> Develop a permissions structure for the tool; database management and development and provide technical support.
- >> Hold development meetings with key district staff to identify use models, unmet needs and efficiency opportunities.
- >> Field-test the dashboard, deploy the dashboard and collect feedback to support revisions.

success

- >> Increase the percentage of staff who are trained, able to access the dashboard and find the tool useful.

what

By June 2025, each school will have 4% more kindergarten through third grade students that will read on grade level as measured on standardized district assessments.

how

- >> Select high quality instructional materials for kindergarten through fifth grade English Language Arts (ELA), aligned to current college and career ready standards.
- >> Explore open educational resources for additional ELA resources.
- >> Develop a detailed timeline for implementation of Children's Literacy Initiative and proceed with implementation.
- >> Create a research-based district school turnaround model for elementary schools.
- >> Complete an analysis to determine the need for additional early childhood programming and consider an expansion in the Omaha Public Schools.

success

- >> high quality instructional materials kindergarten through fifth grade ELA in all schools
- >> implementation of CLI recommendations
- >> turnaround model for elementary schools
- >> early literacy plan for expansion

what

By June of 2025, each school will increase the percentage of ninth through twelfth grade students identified as on-track for graduation by 5%.

how

- » Provide schools with best practices of effective transitions to implement for elementary to middle, middle to high and high to post-secondary based on the work of Association of Middle Level Educators and University of Chicago.
- » District-wide implementation of quality instruction as identified in the Freshman Success Framework by Network for College Success, Steele Dynamics, and Best Instructional Practices Handbook (e.g., content area look fors, use of data, content/instructional coaching, instructional framework, progress monitoring and intentional resource allocation).
- » Develop a system-wide plan for college and career readiness.
- » Determine modifications to programming and master scheduling in district secondary schools to remove barriers and provide equitable access to educational and extracurricular activities for all students and provide time for needed teacher collaboration.

success

- » best practices document for schools, which clearly outlines transitions
- » review quarterly progress of implementation of the school improvement plan
- » plan of action for strengthening ACT readiness for schools, district, students and families

what

By June of 2025, student groups in each middle school participating in advanced academic middle school courses will increase annually.

how

- » Effective use of scheduled intervention time to support students in “real time”.
- » Support teachers in utilizing guaranteed, viable curriculum to design lessons that are rigorous, engaging, relevant and aligned to college and career ready standards.
- » Review of course placement guidelines to remove barriers while setting students up for success.
- » Establishing a school growth mindset that values quality courses and effective instruction for all.
- » Create a research-based district school turnaround model for middle school.

success

- » master schedule reflects intervention along with process for flexible scheduling to support student needs
- » professional learning opportunities for teachers to support the diverse learners in the classroom
- » increase of student groups enrolled and grade distribution in advanced middle school courses
- » evidence of individual student goal setting during advisement of MAP growth
- » schools analyze and use disaggregated data of climate survey responses
- » implementation of turnaround model for middle school

what

By June of 2025, all students will have equitable access to technologies necessary to support learning.

how

- » Establish a comprehensive review of the current inventory of student devices in all schools and programs.
- » Establish appropriate ratios of students to devices that support the curriculum and best practices of instruction.
- » Identify reliable and dependable devices that will be covered under warranty during the intended time of use.
- » Establish efficiency in device deployment, management and security and software.

success

- » a comprehensive inventory will be available for all technology in schools
- » all devices will be inventoried and managed
- » integration between building technical support, help desk technicians and network and data sync teams
- » elementary schools will have an equal number of computers and devices based on an established student to device ratio
- » middle or high schools will have an equal number of computers and devices based on an established student to device ratio

Strategic Priority 2: Staff

Omaha Public Schools has highly qualified and effective staff in every division.

what

By June of 2025, a pipeline of teachers will be developed so that 95% of teaching positions are filled in each school by August 1 of each year with highly qualified candidates.

how

- » Create and staff two positions to focus on recruiting talent.
- » Develop a social media recruiting plan.
- » Develop an interview toolkit.

success

- » hiring of two positions by August 1, 2020
- » development of social media / online recruiting plan by August 2021
- » development of interview toolkit by October 2021

what

By June of 2025, a pipeline of employees will be developed to assume leadership roles so that 98% of administration positions in each school and 95% of district leadership positions are filled prior to the start of the school year.

how

- >> Analyze current administrative positions to build an effective administrative organizational structure that considers student needs, succession planning, equity in the workforce and efficiency of the system. Once determined develop pathways including internships that develop leaders into positions of need.

success

- >> complete analysis of administrative structure with recommendations
- >> develop screening process

what

By June of 2025, create employee development programs including grow your own programs for each department to support succession planning and employee retention.

how

- >> Create a toolkit for principals and department leaders that provides retention strategies, tools and ideas that can be completed at each individual school or department and provide this annually to all principals and supervisors.
- >> Create systematic professional/personal learning opportunities for staff to grow themselves in the areas of classroom management, safe work activities and health.
- >> Create grow your own programs for each department.
- >> Reimagine onboarding to address the needs of new hires.
- >> Provide online content for training needs to reduce the amount of face to face time needed in onboarding.
- >> Provide time for new hires to network and get to know each other as a part of onboarding.
- >> Provide classroom management coaching through the Classroom Organization and Management Program for all new teachers.

success

- >> develop retention toolkit
- >> development of revised onboarding process

Strategic Priority 3:

Financial Accountability

Omaha Public School demonstrates financial accountability tied to student outcomes.

what

By June of 2021, all major initiatives included in the *Strategic Plan of Action* will have an associated evaluation plan that allows leaders at all levels of the organization to actively maintain a continuous improvement cycle.

how

- » Identify upcoming major initiatives and those already underway.
- » Identify metrics and timelines for the measurement of both progress and growth.
- » Develop tools that allow department leaders access to current data related to their strategic initiative.

success

- » execute evaluation plans

what

By June of 2021, audit existing systems and technology contracts to increase fiscal responsibility, eliminate redundancy in technology purchasing and create a schedule for procurement of technology infrastructure, planned obsolescence and security needs through 2030.

how

- » Analyze existing contracts and conduct cost comparisons to identify potential savings.
- » Include technical experts in review of costs of goods services to provide guidance on pricing negotiations.
- » Establish communication and a regular meeting schedule with other District departments to identify areas of redundancy in systems.
- » Establish a long term sustainable financial plan to support ongoing technology infrastructure and security needs.
- » Establish a data governance policy to address overall security of technology systems.
- » Establish a data governance/security team to formulate guidelines, practices and procedures.

success

- » costs in all new contracts will be negotiated with terms that are within industry standards when compared with market peers
- » regular meeting schedule will be established between key department contacts
- » consistent review cycle will be established between departments to ensure we are eliminating redundancy
- » publish long term spending plan for technology purchases

what

By August of 2022, the Omaha Public Schools implements a participatory budget process aligned to student needs, District priorities and school improvement planning.

how

- » Provide effective education and training to department and division leadership.
- » Establish an environment of accountability for operating results and budget management.
- » Implement proactive reporting to ensure leadership has the tools necessary to effectively manage their budgets and understand financial performance within their departments and divisions.

success

- » accounting and finance to hold planning sessions with key leaders in these areas to ensure priorities are established and agreed to prior to launching the budget process each year
- » accounting and finance to hold educational sessions and develop relevant reference materials to be used by leadership to be able to understand and manage their ongoing financial performance
- » accounting and finance to develop new reporting tools that leadership can use to monitor ongoing financial performance
- » accounting and finance to “partner” with leadership to help them manage profit and loss and assist with solutions to issues

what

By August of 2021, establish financial processes to manage all funding streams to align to student needs and District priorities.

how

- » Review current Accounting and Finance organization structure, staffing model and staff skill sets.
- » Identify gaps, best practices and implement a more effective organizational structure to handle future demands and needs.
- » Identify policies, procedures and practices that need to be reviewed. Review and identify opportunities to strengthen existing practices.
- » Research best practices, leverage what other top Districts are doing and propose revisions to existing policies.
- » Ensure adequate public transparency on financial matters, results, budgets, policies, and activities of the District.

success

- » accounting and finance organization structure reviewed, future state identified, and gap analysis performed on current staff skill sets in relation to the future state
- » policies and practices identified, reviewed and changes changes approved by the Board of Education and new practices implemented
- » websites updated to bring clarity and transparency to all financial aspects of the District

what

By August of 2025, private partnership funding streams align to District priorities.

how

- » Review the goals and functionality of the Grants Accountability Task Force.
- » Restructure and realign the group to ensure the group provides proper oversight, direction and approval of private grants activities.
- » Establish controls and processes around private grant submissions.
- » Ensure requestors are properly funneling requests and ideas through the Grants Administration and Grants Accountability Task Force for vetting and validation the request is in line with District priorities.

success

- » committee structure and membership reviewed and changes implemented
- » committee charter developed and implemented
- » new guidelines and processes for the submission and approval of new private grant requests
- » ensure centralized controls bring standardization and consistency to the request process

what

By June of 2025, all Phase 2 Bond Projects have been completed and a schedule of future facility needs and deferred maintenance through 2030 is completed by June 2022.

how

- » Establish a protocol for outreach to Small and Emerging Businesses for maintenance, operations and facility needs.
- » Consolidate Capital Facilities Studies conducted in 2014 and 2016 with information from bond work completed in 2014 and being worked on in the 2018 bond with information in the work order system.

success

- » establish a database of Small and Emerging Businesses to be updated on a regular schedule based on feedback from the community to assure an equity focus throughout the district
- » a capital facilities study will be completed for every school
- » a rank order list of capital needs of schools and other Omaha Public Schools facilities with a line item budget for each facility/school
- » action plan for current buildings and communities

Strategic Priority 4:

Ethic of Care

Omaha Public Schools demonstrates an ethic of care for students and staff.

what

By June of 2025, each school and program in the Omaha Public Schools will demonstrate annually an increase in the percentage of students missing less than nine days and demonstrate annually a reduction of the percentage of students identified as chronically absent.

how

- » Every school will have a structure to monitor school-wide attendance and identify barriers, align support, improve attendance and celebrate the successes of students.
- » Each year, every school and program will include an attendance goal in their school improvement plan.

success

- » each year, every school will decrease their percentage of chronically absent students from the previous year

Ethic of Care

what

By June of 2025, each school and program in the Omaha Public Schools will demonstrate annually improved outcomes on the climate survey of at least 25% of parents/guardians and that there is evidence in the data that they are equitably improving interactions with students and families.

how

- » Train all school principals/program directors on the expectations for collection for survey completion, how to access the measure and how to respond to the results of the Parent Voice and climate surveys.
- » Provide cultural responsiveness training to all staff to improve interactions with students and families.
- » Educate stakeholders on the importance of Parent Voice and how to use it.

success

- » staff, families and community partners will be trained on the process and use for Parent Voice
- » each year, every school and program will improve by 5% or more in clearly defined outcomes with improving equitable interactions with students and families on the climate survey
- » each year, the district will improve by 5% or more in clearly defined outcomes with improving equitable interactions with students and families each year on the climate survey
- » the district will improve by 25% or more in clearly defined outcomes with improving equitable interactions with students and families each year on the climate survey

what

By June of 2025, proactive efforts focused on improving social/emotional skills at each school/program in the Omaha Public Schools will decrease annually the number of student disciplinary events.

how

- » Conduct a root cause analysis to determine the reasons for student discipline to align trainings and supports.
- » Explore alternatives to suspensions that are beneficial to student engagement and retention.
- » Provide classroom management professional development offerings to school staff.

success

- » each year, at every school and program, the proactive efforts and emphasis on social/emotional skills will decrease the percentage of students being suspended from the previous year
- » each year, all school staff will receive classroom management training to improve positive relationships with students and minimize behavior disruptions
- » each year, every high school will utilize data and implement strategies to ensure these students successfully remain on track to graduate
- » each year, every school and program will participate in Multi-Tiered Systems of Support for Behavior (MTSS-B) professional development to incorporate social emotional learning strategies and supports for tier I and tier II behaviors

what

By June of 2021, all Omaha Public Schools facilities meet a consistent standard of quality of facility condition, cleanliness and accessibility.

how

- » Establish a protocol for outreach and inclusion of Small and Emerging Businesses for maintenance, operations and facility needs.
- » Cleaning Industry Management Standard (CIMS) assessment to include square foot per custodian, time to clean per square foot, cleaning quality, supplies and equipment and the effectiveness of the equipment.
- » Training will be provided to housekeepers, relief engineers and engineers based on the recommendations of the assessment.
- » Housekeepers will identify key staff members to train and be experts in the field.
- » Building assessment and evaluation tool created based on the Cleaning Industry Management Standard (CIMS) assessment and standards established.

success

- » inclusion of Small and Emerging Businesses as a regular district practice
- » establishment of a training manual and process
- » establishment of a grow your own process and criteria
- » assessment tool for housekeepers and leadership team to evaluate school cleanliness and facility condition

what

By June 2021, a district plan for improved environmental stewardship is created for presentation to the Board of Education.

how

- » Establish baseline data to include energy consumption, water consumption, waste production and recycled materials for every school.
- » Select schools to lead efforts for individual school-based environmentally-focused goals.
- » Establish opportunities for curriculum outreach in sustainable energy sources such as wind, solar and geothermal.

success

- » baseline consumption, waste production and recycled material data will be shared with district and school leadership
- » data-driven outreach to school communities results in increased awareness about environmentally-focused goals

what

By January of 2025, upgrade digital platforms to reflect prevailing technology to provide two-way communication and promotion of Omaha Public Schools with stakeholders.

how

- » Assess, select and implement a webpage and mobile platform that will support promoting Omaha Public Schools and informing students, families, staff and other stakeholders while providing an opportunity for two-way communication.
- » Train webmasters within the central office and at each school on using the new digital platform to engage stakeholders and foster two-way communication using new technologies.
- » Review current digital resources for effectiveness and develop new tactics within the platform to support student success.

success

- » successful district-level website development and launch by June 2022
- » successful school-based website development and launch by June 2023
- » communications surveys for families reflect an awareness of information they deem useful in increasing school-family engagement and supporting their student's success

what

By June of 2022, reflect an ethic of care for Omaha Public Schools stakeholders by communicating with authentic and accessible language, supporting staff in creating welcoming environments and empowering team members to serve as positive, knowledgeable ambassadors for the Omaha Public Schools.

how

- » Assess the voice and language used in district, school and program communications throughout Omaha Public Schools.
- » Measure the degree to which staff members feel prepared and aware of district and school information to assist stakeholders.
- » Identify and develop district voice, updating both digital and print materials to reflect our ethic of care.
- » Educate and support staff in school communities on conveying information using district voice, centralizing information that would be of use to them in their roles and celebrating the critical work they accomplish for stakeholders.

success

- » communications assessment and surveys completed
- » develop district voice, shared language, and recommended tailoring for school communities
- » deployment of a centralized communications materials repository and completion of communications training for school community leaders and staff members

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On Monday, Feb. 3, 2020, the Omaha Public Schools Board of Education unanimously approved the Strategic Plan of Action, powered by Foresight. Members of the Board of Education include: Marque A. Snow, *President*, Shavonna L. Holman, *Vice President*, Tracy Casady, Lou Ann Goding, Nancy Kratky, Ben Perlman, Amanda L. Ryan, Ricky Smith and Kimara Z. Snipe.

Appendix

Photos and results from Futures Labs are available by contacting:

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1. Increasing Population, Especially 65+



Between 2010 and 2040, the region's population (Douglas, Sarpy, and Pottawattamie Counties) is projected to increase by over 240,000 residents, reaching a total of 1,009,600. The majority of this future growth is expected to occur in Douglas and Sarpy Counties.

Along the way, all age groups are expected to increase in number but the average age is expected to grow as the share of residents age 65 and over increases from 11% to 16%. In contrast, the youngest age groups are projected as follows: age 0-4 to decline by 1% to 7%, age 5-14 to remain at 14%, and age 15-24 to decline by 1% to 13%.

Source: MAPA Long Range Transportation Plan 2040 – As Amended April 2019

2. Growing Racial and Ethnic Diversity



By 2050, 41% (or 479,600) of the eight-county Omaha-Council Bluffs region population is projected to be people of color, up from just 10% (or 63,500) in 1980. This includes Douglas County becoming majority people of color in 2050. (In comparison, the nation is expected to become majority people of color around 2044.)

While all racial and ethnic groups will grow, particularly Hispanic residents are expected to drive population growth, rising from 9% (or 77,500) to 23% (or 270,300) of the population between 2010 and 2050.

Source: "Equitable Growth Profile of the Omaha-Council Bluffs Region, 2018 updated analysis," Heartland 2050 Equity and Engagement Committee, PolicyLink, and USC PERE, Jun 2018

3. Increasing Rate of Mental Health Incidents



If current trends persist, more and more American teens and young adults are expected to report struggling with mental health issues. A national study found that the rate of teens age 12-17 reporting symptoms of a major depressive episode within the last year grew from 8.7% to 13.2% in 2005-17. Additionally, the rate of young adults age 18-25 with suicidal thoughts, plans, attempts, and deaths by suicide increased from 7% to 10%. The study found less consistent and weaker increases among adults ages 26 and over. Nebraska and Iowa report fewer cases of mental health conditions than the national average, but there is not enough data to say how Omaha compares.

Source: "Schools Grapple With Student Depression as Data Show Problem Worsening," Education Week, Mar 2019; "Health in the Omaha-Council Bluffs area: Behavioral Health," The Landscape, accessed Aug 6 2019

4. Rising Educational Equity



More of the region's youth are getting high school diplomas, though racial gaps remain. Between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of residents age 16-24 who are neither in school nor have a high school diploma declined significantly, most dramatically (from 60% down to 33%) among Latino immigrants.

More work remains to be done, however. As of 2015, a third of the region's Latino immigrant youth are neither in school nor have a diploma. Additionally, Black, U.S.-born Latino, and Asian or Pacific Islander youth are at least twice as likely to not have a high school diploma as their White counterparts.

Source: "Equitable Growth Profile of the Omaha-Council Bluffs Region, 2018 updated analysis," Heartland 2050 Equity and Engagement Committee, PolicyLink, and USC PERE, Jun 2018

5. Increasing Use of Behavioral Insights to Drive Change

A growing number of organizations and local governments are gaining experience with “nudging,” applying insights from behavioral science to reframe choices and become more efficient, effective, and inclusive. This approach, coupled with growing data collection and analytics, is expected to have increasing impact. Examples include using this approach in primary and secondary public education to improve academic performance; raise feelings of social belonging or enrollment in math and science classes; increase home literacy activities and parental involvement; shape education choices with respect to potential employment prospects; increase healthy eating; and facilitate greater interaction between high- and low-performing teachers to work together to improve their skills.

Source: “Explainer: What is a behavioral ‘nudge?’”, Bloomberg Cities, Apr 2019; Damgaard and Nielsen, “Nudging in education,” Economics of Education Review, Vol 64, Jun 2018

7. Advancing Job Automation

By 2030, when our current kindergartners are high school graduates, many current career paths are expected to be redefined or phased out by automation and computing advances. In the Omaha-Council Bluffs metro area, approximately 61% of jobs are projected to be impacted – particularly routine clerical work such as cashier and food service jobs but also jobs with more cognitive and analytical tasks such as software development and financial analysis. As a result, employers are expected to place increasing value on higher cognitive (e.g., creativity, complex information processing and interpretation), social and emotional (e.g., entrepreneurship and initiative taking, leadership and managing others), and technological skills.

Source: “The Outlook for Automation and Manufacturing Jobs in Seven Charts” Desjardins, J World Economic Forum, Feb 2019; “Small cities face greater impact from automation,” Frank, Sun, Cebrian, Youn, and Rahwan, Journal of the Royal Society Interface, Feb 2018

6. Growing Cities, Shrinking Rural Areas

If current trends persist, the rural-urban population divide will continue to grow in Nebraska. Between 2010 and 2017, Census figures show Douglas, Lancaster and Sarpy Counties grew by more than 96,000 people or 10% while the other 90 counties lost about 2,300 people total. The fastest-growing counties were home to Omaha and Lincoln, the state’s two biggest cities, or their suburbs.

Source: Olberding, “Census: Nebraska’s big counties growing, rest of state not,” Lincoln Journal Star, Mar 2018

8. Growing Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the Classroom

As AI and its supporting technologies continue to advance, their applications in areas like education are expected to increase exponentially. Depending on adoption rates, AI could completely transform education by as early as 2036, including helping students receive the additional support they need to complete their education, find jobs, and earn more and higher wages. AI could also improve the training provided to teachers while reducing costs over the same time horizon, releasing funds to be reinvested into the school system.

Source: “Value of data: Teaching the future with AI,” Western Digital and Accenture, Apr 2019

9. Increasing Data Use in Civic Engagement

Fueled by well-financed efforts like Bloomberg Philanthropies’ What Works Cities initiative, more public sector data is being collected and analyzed by researchers, students, developers, businesses and others. In Nebraska, for example, the City of Lincoln has launched a new website giving the public better access to City data and information on performance management. This is expected to help members of the public more clearly understand how local government works, how city resources are used, and how important decisions were reached. This trend allows, among other things, more data-based evidence of what works in the public sector and greater citizen oversight of public performance.

Source: “City Launches Open Data and Performance Management Website,” City of Lincoln Mayor’s Office, Mar 2017

11. Decreasing Relative State Support for Public Higher Ed

Nebraska is leaning increasingly on local property taxes and student tuition rather than state dollars to fund the operations of its public colleges and universities. Between 2009 and 2019, the proportion of state support of the University of Nebraska’s operating budget shrunk from 68% of \$722.9 million (approximately \$492 million) to 59% of \$966 million (\$570 million). Relative state support for the state college system shrunk from 64% to 57%, while tuition revenue rose to 43%. The two could converge in 2025. In 26 states, tuition revenue already exceeds state appropriations for public university budgets.

Source: Dunker, “In Nebraska, colleges relying more heavily on tuition to pay costs,” Lincoln Journal Star, Jun 2019

10. Increasing Teacher Shortage

The projected national teacher shortage has been growing sharply in just a handful of years — from around 20,000 in 2012–13, to 64,000 teachers in the 2015–16 school year, to over 110,000 in 2017–18. The supply of teachers is dwindling because of high turnover rates, retirement, and a decline in the number of students choosing a teaching career. Some experts suggest that teacher shortages may lower student outcomes, reduce teachers’ effectiveness, and hamper school and district efforts to implement technologies meant to address a variety of education challenges, including learning outcomes and operational efficiencies.

Source: “Teacher Shortage is ‘Real and Growing, and Worse Than We Thought’” NEA Today, Apr 2019; “Why solving the teacher shortage is critical for edtech,” Edsurge, May 2018

12. Growing Employment Opportunities

Between 2016 and 2026, employment across Cass, Douglas, Sarpy, Saunders, and Washington Counties is projected to increase by 12% or 57,240 jobs, reaching 547,730. Along the way, the greatest number of jobs are expected to be added in:

- Food preparation and serving (+5,780 jobs)
- Healthcare practitioners and technical (+5,520), especially registered nurses
- Office and administrative support (+4,570), esp. customer service representatives
- Business and Financial Operations Occupations (+4,250), esp. business operations specialists

In terms of earnings, if current trends persist, middle-wage jobs are expected to continue growing but earnings growth will be faster for high- and low-wage jobs.

Source: “Occupational Projections for Omaha Consortium in 2016-2026,” The NE Dept of Labor, July 2018; “Equitable Growth Profile of the Omaha-Council Bluffs Region, 2018 updated analysis,” Heartland 2050 Equity and Engagement Committee, PolicyLink, and USC PERE, Jun 2018

13. Rising Poverty

Poverty is on the rise in the 8-county metro area, growing from about 8% to 12% in 2000-15. It increased disproportionately among Latino (by 8% to 24%), Asian or Pacific Islander (by 9% to 19%), or mixed-race or “other” (by 5% to 18%) residents. Working poverty (working full-time with income below 200% of the federal poverty level) grew disproportionately among Latino (by 15% to 30%) and Black (by 2% to 20%) residents.

Along the way, the share of children under 18 years in poverty grew especially in Washington (by 9%, reaching 16% or about 750 children) and Saunders (by 3%, reaching 16% or about 850 children) counties.

Source: "Equitable Growth Profile of the Omaha-Council Bluffs Region, 2018 updated analysis," Heartland 2050 Equity and Engagement Committee, PolicyLink, and USC PERE, Jun 2018; "Poverty Rate for Nebraska Counties: 2008-2012 to 2011-2015," UNO Center for Public Affairs Research, accessed Aug 6 2019

15. Growing K-12 Funding Challenges

State aid for rural school districts has been declining because of soaring farm and ranchland values. In turn, these districts increasingly cover their costs by raising property taxes. Farmers say they're shouldering an unfair share of the burden because they own valuable land but their incomes have fallen due to low commodity prices.

State lawmakers are looking for ways to help rural school districts while lowering property taxes. One possibility is to increase the share (from 2% to potentially up to 20%) of income tax dollars that automatically flow back to each taxpayer's school district – in effect reducing funding for urban schools. A winning proposal, though, is expected to deliver benefits to both urban and rural Nebraska to win support from at least 33 of 49 senators — the number required to overcome a filibuster.

Source: Schulte, "Nebraska senators struggle to fund schools and cut taxes," AP News, Sept 2018

14. Increasing Disintermediation and Decentralization

In a range of industries, leaders in technology and applications like blockchain, data science, and artificial intelligence are driving the growth and spread of marketplaces and value chains that disrupt traditional service providers by cutting out historical middlemen or replacing them with new digital intermediaries, and putting more and more decisions directly into the hands of consumers. In education, for example, school districts might sell off their facilities to a group like WeWork to gain flexibility. Ride share services and autonomous vehicles might help districts develop lean transportation systems. Such developments are expected to increase the influence of virtual gatekeepers, decision tools, and technological ecosystems that steer consumers' decisions.

Source: PwC, "Blurred lines: How FinTech is shaping Financial Services," Mar 2016; "Digital health and the challenge of health systems transformation," Journal of mHealth, 2017; Vander Ark, "What's Next In Learning? Four Future Trends," Forbes, Aug 7 2019

16. Growing Food Insecurity

Food security means having reliable access to a sufficient quantity of affordable, nutritious food. In Nebraska, the estimated share of children living in food-insecure households has been growing from 16% to 20% in 2005-17. In Douglas County, an estimated 18% or 25,590 children are living in food-insecure households as of 2017

Food insecurity is expected to grow with rising climate variability and weather extremes impacting the agro-ecosystems and the region's economy. In children, food insecurity is linked to lower reading and mathematics test scores, and they may be more likely to exhibit behavioral problems, including hyperactivity, aggression, and anxiety.

Source: "Share of Children Living in Food-Insecure Households, by State (2018 Update)," Brookings Institute, Nov 28, 2018; "Child Food Insecurity in The US," Feeding America Map the Meal Gap project, accessed Aug 8 2019

17. Increasing Use of Public-Private Partnerships

There is renewed interest in public-private partnership (P3) projects, where businesses supplement public investment in return for earning rewards such as fees. School districts in DC, Houston, and Rensselaer (NY) have used P3s to, for example, build new schools. In Omaha, the new VA Ambulatory Care Center (to open for use in 2020) is funded through a P3 allowing for private contributions to VA projects. Additional P3s are considered to fund large investments such as new buildings for the Omaha Public School and to modernize the transportation system. Research suggests that the success of P3 projects varies by the level of trust among contracting parties and effective management of the effort.

Sources: Structuring effective public-private partnerships for infrastructure," Deloitte, Tiffany Dovey et al., 2013; Omaha World-Herald, "New Omaha VA clinic 'on track' to open in 2020," Mar 2019; Maltin, "What Successful Public-Private Partnerships Do," HBR, Jan 2019

19. Growing Public Transit

Omaha's first bus rapid transit line is set for an April 2020 debut and will run from downtown west to Westroads Mall. In other cities, similar setups have shown success in drawing riders. Furthermore real estate developers drawn by the riders have a record of investing into new shops and housing within walking distance of the stations. Growing public transit is also expected to reduce the number of people driving alone for their commute and parking demand, as well as improve access to employment opportunities for residents in all parts of the city and help the metro area remain competitive with regional peers in recruiting and retaining young talent.

Source: Omaha World-Herald, "Omaha's biggest mass transit investment in decades moves closer to reality," Apr 2019 and "Editorial: The Omaha area needs to make public transportation a regional priority," May 2019

18. Increasing Extreme Weather

By 2036–65, the number of extreme heat days (above 100°F) in the Omaha region is projected to grow to an average of 35 days per year, up from 6 days in 1971-2000. As average temperatures rise and the atmosphere contains more moisture, flooding from massive rainfalls and snow-melt is expected to grow more frequent and severe.

These trends are expected to shape health, social, energy, water, economic, and emergency response costs and resources for households as well as businesses and government. Low-income households, children, older adults, outdoor workers, and persons with preexisting or chronic medical conditions are expected to be disproportionately affected.

Source: "Climate Choices and the Future of Dangerously Hot Days," Union of Concerned Scientists, July 2019; Mollenkamp, "Climate Experts Say March Floods Fit With a Pattern of More Frequent Weather Extremes," NET News, May 2019

20. Rising Support for Gov Activism, Racial Equity, Climate Change Mitigation

While younger Americans share some views with their elders (e.g., both generations favor more women running for political office), current generational differences offer some clues for how their views may impact the nation's political landscape.

Majorities in Generation Z (ages 6-21 in 2018) and Millennials (ages 22-37 in 2018) say:

- Government should do more to solve problems, rather than that government is doing too many things better left to businesses and individuals.
- Blacks are treated less fairly than whites in the US today.
- The earth is getting warmer due to human activity, as opposed to mainly due to natural patterns.

Source: "Generation Z Looks a Lot Like Millennials on Key Social and Political Issues," Pew Research Center, Jan 2019

STEEP Trends Affecting Omaha Public Schools’ Future

21. Increasing Pressure to Transform Community Engagement

Over the next 20 years, Millennials and Generation Z will become the next generation of parents, school board members, and faculty, and their demands for digital engagement will be far different. They don't “show up” to place-based events in traditional ways. Therefore, resident engagement—how it’s planned, executed, incorporated and measured—will be key.

Future-ready communities are experimenting with a broad range of resident engagement techniques, including “participatory budgeting” projects which have been growing in the US since 2009, counting at least 33 in 2015, 53 in 2018, and at least 51 in 2019 so far. Participatory budgeting is a democratic process where ordinary residents decide directly how to spend part of a public budget.

Source: “Engaging Citizens: A Review of Eight Approaches to Civic Engagement,” User Experience Magazine, Nov 2015; Map of PB Processes, The Participatory Budgeting Project, accessed Aug 7 2019

22. Increasing State Fiscal Foresight

New legislation (LB 713) signed in April 2019 by Governor Ricketts is expected to strengthen the state’s fiscal health and budgetary foresight. The law creates a four-year cycle of proactive fiscal assessments that will give legislators and other officials greater ability to consistently match ongoing revenue and expenditures over the long term. These studies will extend revenue and expenditure projections from 1-2 year windows to generally looking 3-5 years ahead. In the process, budget stress tests will analyze state tax collections and spending under a range of economic and fiscal conditions, both optimistic and pessimistic. Such stress testing is expected to provide a clearer idea of how much officials should put aside for the future.

Source: “New Nebraska Law Puts Focus on Future State Budgets,” Pew Charitable Trusts, Jun 2019

23. Growing Politicalization

Between 2014 and 2018, Republicans, Nonpartisans, Democrats and Libertarians all added voters to their party registrations, demonstrating Nebraskans’ increased politicalization. Republicans made their gains in primarily rural areas while Democrats increased their rolls primarily in Omaha and Lincoln.

Party	Added, 2014-2018	Total registrants
Republican	24,800	584,150
Democrat	4,400	362,200
Nonpartisan	22,600	258,500
Libertarian	9,000	14,700

Source: “Nebraska Republicans widen lead in latest registration stats, though Democrats gain in cities,” Omaha World-Herald, Nov 2018

