



Kenilworth School District No. 38
Educational Delivery Audit
Part II

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Introduction

This audit was prepared by the Administrative Cabinet as a way to capture the information we are gathering about the school, its history and its current reality. This information will be useful for the team in terms of goal setting and informing our work around accomplishing the long-range goals identified by the Board of Education in the Strategic Plan. The information contained here has been ascertained through existing documentation, personal conversations and interactions, focused question and answer sessions with various stakeholders, as well as, our own professional observations. The recommendations have been derived from our experience in education and best practice research. This audit in no way captures every facet of the organization, and is not meant to be taken as anything but our observations, perceptions and recommendations.

Strategic Plan

All decisions made in a school district should be guided by the existing Strategic Plan. Set by the Board of Education with input from the administration, teachers and community, this guiding document outlines the desired outcomes for the entire school and district community, in particular, its students. The new administrative team has spent a considerable amount of time reviewing the plan as it exists now. While the plan has taken some time for the Board of Education to develop, and while they continue to gather community feedback and refine the Vision, the parts of the plan which have already been adopted are being utilized to guide the work of planning for the current school year for staff and students.

Objectives and Indicators

Fiscal and Operational Responsibility

Maintain a solid short- and long-term financial position while investing in resources and infrastructure that align with educational priorities

Utilizing a combination of the performance measures below, the District will measure its progress toward the Fiscal and Operational Responsibility goal for the duration of the strategic plan. Each year new SMART goals will be developed by the Administrative Cabinet based on the previous year's data on each assessment:

- The successful completion of an Educational Master Facilities plan utilizing input from all stakeholders.
- Technology Infrastructure Data (usage, capacity, etc.)
- Finance Data (rating, etc.)

Section 1: Board of Education Governance

Board Governance Training

Over the summer, the Board of Education and the Superintendent participated in a board governance training facilitated by a representative from the Illinois Association of School Boards. Based on individual board member feedback, there were several critical governance issues that the board should address before taking on significant issues of school culture, vision and leadership. Spending the time necessary to address these issues would serve the District well in the long term as a more effective board would be better suited to drive meaningful change. How board members conduct themselves in the community, how they make decisions, and how they foster healthy dialog are crucial to the foundation of a high-performing board. The training covered the following objectives:

- Consider and clarify Board/Superintendent roles and responsibilities
- Teambuilding among the Board and Superintendent
- Discuss working relationships and expectations for the team
- Identify next steps and board development efforts

This was a great example of modeling the District's commitment to creating an environment for continuous improvement.

Strategic Plan

Last spring, the Board of Education approved the District's *Mission, Board Goals, Values and Educational Philosophy*. The process included collaboration between the Communications Subcommittee, the Administrative Cabinet, faculty and staff and community members. The District is currently in the final stages of the Strategic Plan process. The Strategic Plan document is critical to the Sears School as it provides the direction and guidance for our educational programming. Although the District's strategic plan is still in its final development stages, the faculty and staff have already embraced the spirit of the mission and vision statements.

Board of Education Structure

As we strive toward becoming a high performing Board governance team, we continuously review and reflect on current practices to ensure we are operating in the most purposeful and efficient manner. Since the implementation of the Committee of the Whole structure, two years ago, we continue to have discussions centered around the roles and responsibilities of the subcommittees.

In alignment with our efforts to manage and streamline our internal school infrastructure, we thought this same exercise would be helpful for the Board governance team. Each subcommittee established the *Subcommittee Purpose, Roles and Responsibilities and FY19 Areas of Focus*. The *Committee of the Whole Structure* outlines the overall operating structure, as well as the individual subcommittees. This document will be an excellent resource for new board members

to gain an understanding of the committee structure, as well work behind each of the individual subcommittees.

Committee of the Whole Structure

Under the Committee of the Whole model, all seven Board members are present at each Committee of the Whole meeting for full Board discussions. Within the Committee of the Whole structure there are several subcommittees:

Building and Finance Subcommittee

Communications Subcommittee

Education Subcommittee

Personnel Subcommittee

Policy Subcommittee (Audit recommendation to re-instate this subcommittee)

Each subcommittee has two designated Board liaisons. Board liaisons are not decision-makers. The role of the Board liaison is to research and gather information between Committee of the Whole meetings. Subcommittees share relevant information at the Committee of the Whole Meetings to ensure the full Board discussions are useful and productive.

Board of Education Governance Recommendations

- While we are still wrapping up the final stages of the strategic plan, the process of updating the plan for future years is not too far away. Now that we have established a solid strategic plan for the future, perhaps the next time around, we might consider using a consultant to facilitate the strategic plan process. While we recognize the Board's fiscal concern for using consultants, the strategic plan may be a good investment.
- Since the process of developing subcommittee purposes, roles and responsibilities and current year areas of focus is new, we should continue to monitor this structure. Specifically, we should ensure the overall structure of the Committee of the Whole is operating as designed. Additionally, we should monitor the consistency and continuity among subcommittees and the fidelity of each subcommittees with their purpose, roles and responsibilities.
- We should continue to develop a comprehensive New Board Member Orientation. With each onboarding of a new board member, there are improvements to the training process. Through exiting board member interviews and continued research in best practice, the New Board member training should continue to evolve.

Section 2: Policies and Procedures

Business Services

The District continues to improve upon District policies and procedures. In FY14, the Chief School Business Official conducted an audit of the Business Services Department. Over the next two years, FY15-16, the Department received a significant overhaul, including several Request for Proposals (RFP) to facilitate integral operational improvements. Included in these RFP's were new Architectural Services, Banking Services and Financial Software.

Human Resources

The District continued its effort to improve policies and procedures. Over the next two years, FY17-18, the District focused on the Human Resources Department. Working collaboratively with the Kenilworth Association of Education Co-Presidents to address systemic personnel issues, procedures were created and/or existing procedures were modified. Additionally, the Administration and KEA implemented an annual spring review of the employee handbook to discuss any issues that took place over the year and facilitate procedural updates.

To ensure continuous improvement with the employee services offered by the Business Services and Human Resources departments, we offer an annual Employee Fair with the all of the employee vendors and services. This fair is used as an opportunity to address individual service needs, as well as general service needs of the District.

While we have made significant strides in improving consistent practice of District policies and procedures, there continues to be two primary issues:

- 1) A completely new issue that arises with an existing policy/procedure and/or no policy/procedure that has never been identified as an area of improvement.
- 2) Consistent practice of a policy or procedures over the last 5-6 years, that is different and likely less advantageous than the practice(s) in earlier years.

Building

At the building level, policies and procedures have also been an area of focus for the past few years. There has also been significant improvement at the building level. However, there is still room for growth. Part of the building level challenge is the unique JK-8 make up of a one-school district. While we have made intentional efforts to promote autonomy at the building level, there are some challenges that you don't necessarily see in larger districts with a clear designation between district and individual schools. In a larger district, building level policies and procedures are often developed at the District level to ensure consistency between schools. Because we only have one school in our district and there are many instances that can require a case by case assessment, the school principal has been given the autonomy to make these decisions. Unfortunately, as leadership has changed over the last decade, so has the continuity and consistency of administering policies and procedures.

Policy and Procedure Recommendations

Attorney Review of District Policies and Administrative Procedures

The District had a policy review in 2014-2015. It was a comprehensive review of all of the District's policies. The review did not include administrative procedures. The review took several months and included a variety of substantive, as well as insignificant updates to the District's policies. We are recommending that we repeat this process, but with a few modifications to the review process. To ensure efficiency of District's resources and to specifically avoid expenses related to insignificant changes, the policy review should include the following:

- The District shall identify and review all policies that been areas of concern for the District. This will ensure that any problematic policies have been sufficiently addressed and updated as needed and should not resurface.
- The District's attorney shall identify any policies that have been areas of concerns in their field of work with school districts. This will ensure we are being proactive and addressing potential issues before they become problematic in our District.
- In addition to reviewing the above-mentioned policies, the corresponding administrative procedures should also be included in the review process. This will ensure alignment between District policies and administrative procedures.

We have consulted our District attorney regarding the policy review process. The expected timeframe to conduct the review process is two months. The process should be completed by the April Board meeting. The District anticipates receiving an estimate for scope of work and cost by mid-February.

First Read of Time-Sensitive District Policies

Although it is our recommendation to conduct a comprehensive District policy review, there are two policies that are time-sensitive:

- Student Residency 7:60 (Existing Policy) – Concerns regarding valid residency continues to be raised by a variety of District stakeholders. Our current residency policy only requires residency verification upon entering the District. In effort to monitor the residency process more closely, many districts require an annual verification of residency. The District attorney has made a recommendation for annual verification of residency. On any given year, we have 0-3 families that pose questions regarding valid residency. Based on the handful of families in question each year, an annual verification process that impacts every Sears family and requires additional District resources does not seem appropriate for our District, at this time.

In lieu of an annual verification, we requested District attorney recommendations for policy and procedural improvements. While our policy and procedures are in good shape, the attorney did have a few recommendations. Included along with this audit are both a clean and red-lined copy of the revised *Student Residency Policy* for the Board of

Education first read. In summary, the policy language has been improved to narrow room for interpretation and scope of non-resident exceptions. Additionally, the attorney has suggestions for narrowing the timeline for residency verification process. Changes to the verification process will fall under the administrative procedures, which are still in under the attorney review process. Although administrative procedures do not require Board approval, we will follow up with an update to Board once the review is completed.

- Military Leave of Absence (New Policy) – The District has recently approved requests for military leaves of absences. We have supported and administered military leaves under the general guidelines of the Family Medical Leave. To ensure continuity and consistency of how military leaves are administered, we are proposing a *Leaves for Military Service Policy* for the Board of Education first read. In summary, the policy language is in alignment with the new Military Leave of Absence Act that went into effect on 1/1/19.

- Accelerated Placement (New Policy) – The Accelerated Placement Act (Public Act 100-0421) took effect on July 1, 2018. To ensure compliance with the new act, we are proposing an *Accelerated Placement Policy* for the Board of Education first read. In summary, the policy requires Illinois public school districts to adopt and implement policies on acceleration that, at minimum, provide opportunities for early entrance to kindergarten and first grade, opportunities for accelerating a student in a single subject area, and opportunities for “whole grade” acceleration (sometimes referred to as “grade skipping”). The law requires that districts acceleration policies include:
 - A provision that states that participation in accelerated placement is not limited to those children who have been identified as gifted and talented, but rather is open to all children who demonstrate high ability and who may benefit from accelerated placement;
 - A fair and equitable decision-making process that involves multiple persons and includes a student’s parents or guardians;
 - Procedures for notifying parents or guardians of a child of a decision affecting that child’s participation in an accelerated placement program; and
 - An assessment process that includes multiple valid, reliable indicators.

Currently, we have a procedure for identifying students for placement in accelerated classes for mathematics only. The procedure includes a variety of math assessments. Scores on these assessments are placed on a matrix and students are placed into “Core Plus” classes based on the criteria outlined on the matrix. We have also rarely accelerated students beyond this course, on a case by case basis when assessments indicate a student presenting as an outlier.

In order to fulfill the requirements of the policy outlined, which the administration recommends that we adopt as it meets the requirements of the new legislation in the state of Illinois, our district would need to outline a process for early entrance to kindergarten and first grade, as well as, whole grade acceleration. With the newly adopted strategic plan’s emphasis on personalized learning, it is our recommendation that we research and outline a “competency- based” program

for all grades and subjects which would allow any student the opportunity to move forward in the curriculum upon showing mastery of content. This would fulfill the policy and the community's wish for a more flexible program of acceleration which would account for each child's individual progress and pace.

Alongside this recommendation, we would still need to define early entrance criteria, as well as, an appeal process for parents should they disagree with a recommended placement. Tools such as the Iowa Acceleration Scale are a good place to begin discussions surrounding accelerated grade placements, and would be a good support to a personalized system of competency-based learning.

Reinstatement of the Board Policy Subcommittee

The Board of Education Policy Subcommittee should be reinstated to review the policy recommendations. To ensure an appropriate level of Board governance, the Policy Subcommittee should review all policy recommendation in advance of being presented to the entire Board of Education. The subcommittee would convene twice a year, late fall (November) and early spring (March) to review District policy updates. For this school year, the subcommittee would only have one policy review in March. The Superintendent/CSBO will reach out to the Board of Education members for volunteers.

Develop and Modify Building Level Policies at the District Level

While we have made intentional efforts to promote autonomy at the building level, after collaboration between the building and district administrators, it was determined that the continuity and consistency of policies and procedures were best developed at the District level. However, while it will be the responsibility of the Superintendent/CSBO to ensure continuity and consistency in the *development* of building level policies and procedures, it is the Principal that is responsible for the ensuring continuity and consistency in the *practice* of policies and procedures at the building level. The Superintendent and Principal will work together on existing problematic building level policies and procedures.

Section 3: Master Facilities Plan

Developing the Master Facilities Plan has been an ongoing area of focus for the past five years. The District has received input on the District's facilities needs from administration, faculty, staff and students and will continue to reach out to all of the District's stakeholders. Based on the feedback, the District has identified the following facility priorities:

- Improved Lunchroom Solution
- Flexible Learning and Professional Development Spaces
- Additional Meeting and Storage Spaces
- School-Wide Climate Control Solution

The proposed partnership between the Sears School and the Village House project has the potential to provide an improved lunchroom solution, along with some of the needed additional learning, professional development and meeting spaces. However, the primary challenge with moving forward with the District's Master Facility Plan is the undetermined timing of the proposed Village House project. Without definitive plans and timing of the Village House, it is impossible to plan renovation within our school building with complete confidence. Additionally, the logistics of both the school building and the Village House will have a significant impact on daily operations of the lunch program. Careful coordination of both projects is an absolute must.

In conjunction with the elements of our Strategic Plan and the findings of the educational delivery audit, the Administrative Cabinet began the initial work of the developing the Master Facilities Plan. In November 2018, the entire Cabinet and three architects from DLA Architects attended a three-day workshop on Educational Visioning. This workshop was intended to lay the groundwork for the development of the District's Master Facilities Plan. The working group accomplished the following in Educational Visioning Workshop:

- We shared Priority Goals for the academic programming and architectural design of the Joseph Sears School renovation
- We discussed 21st century teaching and learning strategies and identified 21st Century Learning Goals as connected to current and future best-practices within the Joseph Sears School
- We assessed the Joseph Sears School's Strengths, Challenges, Opportunities, and Goals with regard to the development of its academic programs and school facility
- We shared Visions for the Future evolution and growth of the renovated Joseph Sears School
- We explored and prioritized a range of architectural Design Patterns that would best support 21st century teaching and learning within the renovated Joseph Sears School
- We discussed the role that Guiding Principles play in setting facility design priorities and intent
- We created a set of Guiding Principles and priorities for design of the renovated Joseph Sears School

Master Facilities Plan Recommendations

Fulfilling the goals of the Strategic Plan and timely maintenance of our facilities will continue to pose challenges to our educational programming until we establish and deliver the Board of Education approved Master Facilities Plan. Based on the positive momentum of Village House project, the District will continue the planning and research efforts behind the Master Facilities Plan with the assumption that the Village House will provide the improved lunchroom solution, along with some of the needed additional learning, professional development and meeting spaces. Through the work of the Educational Visioning process, we have established the groundwork for developing the Master Facilities Plan. However, in effort to be prudent with District resources, the plan will be phased in over a three-year period. The first phase will focus on renovations that are independent of the Village House including renovation work to create additional learning, professional development, meeting and storage spaces. Additionally, the

District made a commitment to problem solve the climate control issues throughout the building. In effort to show good faith in our commitment, while being fiscally responsible with District resources, we will research potential climate control options that will require minimal, if any, redundancy of cost and work related to future potential projects.

Sears school is committed to increasing green efforts within the Sears School learning community. As a part of the research behind the development of the Master Facilities Plan, it is our recommendation to conduct a Sustainability Audit.

The process of the sustainability audit is fairly simple. We are recommending contracting with an architectural company that specializes in conducting sustainability audits. Wold Architects and Engineers has extensive experience with school districts. Many of our neighboring Districts have used their services.

The sustainability audit will begin by listening to our educators and staff. The architects will walk and examine closely how our building and outdoor spaces function and how they support learning. Our faculty and staff will be interviewed to establish how we use our building today and how we will want to use in future for sustainability education. The audit will address critical questions such as:

- How can the building itself act as a teacher for students to learn about building systems and natural cycles?
- How can the district be a leader and go-to example for the community on how to be energy efficient, reduce waste and be a global citizen?
- How can we develop a sustainable school vision that dovetails into our long term strategic goals?

The audit will take 2-3 months to complete. The estimated cost is approximately \$1,000 plus reimbursements, which is quite reasonable. Included with this Audit is a copy of the *Sustainability Audit Proposal*. It is our recommendation to start the audit in February 2019 in conjunction with developing our Master Facilities Plan.

Section 4: School Operations and Scheduling

Current Reality: There are some challenges associated with the current schedule:

- There is limited time for common planning between core and related arts teachers.
- Professional development time was limited because of the reduction of the lunch period and increase in instructional time at the junior high level.
- The intervention/enrichment block at the junior high has been adjusted in many ways in recent years and is currently non-existent.
- The purpose of the workshop period at the junior high is not clarified and the placement of the workshop period has been inconsistent.

- Applied music is inconsistent with 6th grade receiving less time than 4th, 5th, 7th and 8th grades.
- Latin students do not receive the same preparation for high school as Spanish and French students.
- There is not a formal time in the junior high schedule for social emotional programming.
- Movement needs to be incorporated throughout the school day in a more consistent manner.

The schedule has changed every year for over 10 years. This has curricular implications as teachers have continually had to redesign their content to “fit” into the amount of time and the schedule configuration. The goal for the scheduling process for the 19-20 school year is to collaborate with staff on the specifics, complete it as early as possible, and keep the impact minimal to students and teachers. At this time, we have the following recommendations for the Board to consider:

- Latin should be spiraled back into a 4-year program. This spring the option would be given to current 4th, 6th and 7th graders. The following year, the program would be available to all students at the 5th-8th grade levels.
- Applied music time for curriculum should be consistent in 4th-8th grades.

The rest of the bullet points above will be addressed through collaborative planning with the Team Coordinator committee. We will keep the Board posted as the schedule develops.

Current Reality of Lunch/Recess: There are some parents and community members who feel that time is limited for students to eat, and that there is not enough play time in the schedule for students. Teachers have felt that they have not had permission in the past to allow students additional time for play or choice time if it has not been formally outlined in their schedule.

In researching township districts, we have found that one district has a 60 minute lunch/recess period, one district has a 50 minute lunch/recess period and the rest have 40 minutes like we do.

In terms of time for movement, the current schedule allows for 30 minutes of physical education per day and 20 minutes of recess for all grades 1st-8th. At junior kindergarten, students have 40 minutes per day of play time (instructional as well as free choice). At kindergarten, students have an additional 30 minutes of play time each day.

School Operations and Scheduling Recommendations

Advantages of Keeping the Current Schedule:

- No disruption to the current schedule
- We can explore options to add additional recess time in the 2-5 schedule at alternate times.
- Alignment with most of the township
- In support of research around the advantages of increased instructional time

An Alternate Schedule Proposal:

If we were to increase the lunch/recess time, the recommendation would be to take 5 minutes from each core academic area in the junior high. This would result in 20 minutes less academic time for K-5, as well. The 20 minutes would be added to the current lunch/recess block. There would be no disruption to the related arts areas.

Advantages of the Alternate Schedule:

- Minimal disruption to core academics to increase lunch and play time
- Support a growing sense in the community that our children need more of a break during the day
- In support of research surrounding more frequent breaks in the school day

Conclusion

While the initial legwork of the Educational Audit Delivery is completed, there is much work to be done. After the Administrative Cabinet discusses the audit and corresponding recommendations with the Board of Education, we will start developing our action plan. It is our hope to provide an update to the Board by late spring.