Mount Pulaski CUSD 23
District Improvement Plan

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Introduction

Strategic Planning

A cross-section of more than 30 stakeholders from the Mt. Pulaski community was invited to participate in two days of goal-setting and district planning. These days of planning have designed strategic goals that will drive Mt. Pulaski's five-year strategic plan.

District Leadership Participants

Jason Spang, Blane Olson, Aaron Wilham, Dezaray Brookshire, Doug Martin, Breann Titus, Ashley Combs, Ryan Mott, Danielle Lora, Heather Fricke, Linda Smith, Josh Pharis, Jonathan Jordan, Ginger Payne, and Deanne Mott

Grade School Building Leadership

Ashley Burgard, Jenna Kloba, Katie Gisinger, Carly Powell, Jeanie Beccue, Mackenzy Payne, and Jessica Awe

High School Leadership

Wyatt Waterkotte, Michael Copley, Julie Wubben, Cindy Stoll, Brian Erlenbush, and Jamie Selinger

Student Leaders

Eva Leonard, Juan Andrade, Audrey Cooper, and Chase Roberts

Community Members

Dee Howard, Michelle Hagenbuch, Sarah Young, Lindsay Volle, and Amy Roberts

Planning Process

A strategic planning (SP) process was facilitated by educational consultant and retired Illinois superintendent Ralph Grimm in the winter and spring of 2025 with over 30 community stakeholders invited to participate. The days were a collaborative process that questioned, discussed and prioritized what Mt. Pulaski community values and expects from its school district. The facilitator gathered the data from the strategic planning session and developed a Goal Setting and Planning Report.

The MPCUSD 23 Goal Setting and Planning Report identified five goal areas, which included highly qualified staff, student-centered, communication, growing special education population, and safety & security.

Collaboration from this event has led to the creation of a District Improvement Plan. The District Improvement Plan (DIP) builds upon the foundational principles of the Strategic Plan and expresses goals, objectives, and strategies that, if accomplished, lead to the achievement of the vision. The DIP, in turn, inspires initiatives in individual School Improvement Plans (SIP.) The SIPs define the efforts made at the school level to achieve district-wide goals, though

independent school-based goals are also included.

Goals and District Improvement Plan Purpose

The overall goal of the Strategic Plan, District Improvement Plan, and the individual School Improvement Plans is to build systemic and sustainable capacity to carry out data-supported planning going forward. Planning helps prioritize major initiatives and may impact far reaching areas including curriculum development, teaching and learning, assessment, organization, facilities improvement, district finances and data management.

The Mt. Pulaski CUSD 23 can improve student learning and system effectiveness by engaging in a cycle of continuous improvement to manage its performance. To support this purpose, we have developed a multi-year District Improvement Plan that includes processes to support schools, students, and staff in their performance management efforts. The DIP has been designed to meet local, state, federal, and program accountability requirements.
Our District Improvement Plan must be evaluated and revised annually based on a number of components, including but not limited to:

- Core Beliefs
- District Vision and Mission Statements
- Goals
- Action Planning
- Resources
- Staffing
- SIP Assessment
- Timelines

Core Beliefs, Vision Statement, Mission Statement and Slogan

<u>Core Beliefs</u>

- Student-centered decision-making is our top priority
- All people feel safe, welcome and valued
- Integrity, diversity and respect for all is imperative
- Students will be challenged with rigorous curriculum and instruction
- A strong, communicative partnership among parents, community and school is essential.
- Parent involvement is critical to student success
- Opportunities and encouragement for continuous improvement are integral for success.

<u>Vision Statement</u>

We are an innovative, high-performing community that produces globally-minded, influential citizens.

Mission Statement

We engage and inspire students to become mindful and productive citizens promoting growth and success for all.

Slogan

Inspire-Engage-Empower

FIVE primary goals rose to the top as our areas of focus in this plan moving forward.

- Highly Qualified Staff
- Communication
- Student Centered
- Safety & Security
- Resources for a Growing Special Education Population

Action Planning

A District and School Improvement process never really ends. It is a cyclical process that regenerates each year based on the previous year's success, challenges, and overall district development. District and School Improvement Plans are fluid in nature as they are assessed each year and adjusted to meet the new set of circumstances that drive improvement. Some goals may be reached while others will inspire stakeholders to continue striving for them. This cyclical process continues each year until the strategic plan has run its course of 5 years, when another strategic planning activity will inform future goals.

Finally, all district and school staff should remember the purpose of the district improvement planning process: to develop a plan of action that consistently reinforces student learning and achievement.

District Improvement Plan

Highly Qualified Staff

Rationale	Highly qualified staff are the cornerstone of student achievement and overall school success. By recruiting, developing, and retaining exceptional educators and support staff, the district ensures that students benefit from high-quality instruction, meaningful relationships, and a culture of continuous growth.
Objectives	● Recruit and hire highly qualified candidates who align with district values. ● Provide, participate, seek and encourage ongoing professional development that promotes instructional excellence and innovation. ● Provide mentorship, recognition, and wellness initiatives to support all staff.
Person(s) Responsible Party	● Superintendent ● Principals ● Directors ● Certified Staff ● Support Staff
Outcomes	● Increased staff retention rates through staff satisfaction and engagement ● Improved instructional practices ● Increased student performance

Communication

Rationale	Effective communication fosters trust, collaboration, and transparency between the district, staff, families, and the community. By prioritizing open and timely communication, we ensure the opportunity for stakeholders to be well-informed, engaged, and confident in the district's vision and decisions.
Objectives	● Strengthen two-way communication between schools and families. ● Provide clear, consistent, and accessible information across multiple platforms. ● Increase opportunities for stakeholder feedback and engagement in district initiatives and activities.
Person(s) Responsible Party	● Superintendent ● Principals ● District Office Staff ● Directors ● Certified Staff

Outcomes	● Improved stakeholder satisfaction with district communication. ● Higher levels of family and community engagement in school activities. ● Increased trust and transparency reflected in stakeholder feedback.

Student Centered

Rationale	Centering decisions on students ensures that learning, growth, and well-being remain the district's top priorities. By valuing student voice, addressing diverse needs, and creating personalized pathways, we prepare all learners for lifelong success.
Objectives	● Incorporate student voice in decision-making processes. ● Differentiate instruction to meet the needs of diverse learners. ● Provide academic, social, and emotional supports that enhance student well-being.
Person (s) Responsible Party	● Superintendent ● Principals ● Certified Staff ● Support Staff
Outcomes	● Increased student engagement and ownership of learning ● Growth in academic performance across all student groups ● Increased opportunity for higher student satisfaction and sense of belonging

Safety & Security

Rationale	Ensuring a safe and secure learning environment is the foundation for academic and personal growth. When students, staff, and families feel confident in their safety, they are free to focus on teaching and learning without distraction. By prioritizing safety, our district reinforces trust, promotes well-being, and creates schools where every individual feels protected, supported, and ready to succeed.
Objectives	● Maintain and update emergency preparedness plans. ● Provide trauma-informed and social emotional training for staff. ● Provide regular training for staff and students on safety procedures. ● Promote a culture of respect, inclusion, and emotional safety.
Person (s) Responsible Party	● Superintendent ● Principals ● Directors ● Certified Staff ● Support Staff

Outcomes	● Maintained stakeholder awareness in school safety and security. ● Reduced incidents related to safety concerns. ● Positive climate survey results regarding physical and emotional safety.

Resources for a Growing Special Education Population

Rationale	Meeting the needs of a growing special education population requires intentional resources, staffing, and supports that ensure equitable opportunities for all learners. By investing in specialized programs, training, and services, our district can provide individualized instruction that fosters academic, social, and emotional growth. Prioritizing these resources reflects our commitment to inclusivity and prepares every student to reach their fullest potential.
Objectives	● Expand staffing and specialized supports to meet student needs. ● Provide targeted professional development in special education practices. ● Enhance resources and services that promote appropriate inclusion in all school settings that meet individual student needs.
Person (s) Responsible Party	● Superintendent ● Principals ● Special Education Director ● Special Education Teachers ● Certified Staff ● Paraprofessionals
Outcomes	● Increased student growth and achievement in special education programs. ● Provided opportunities for family engagement with special education services. ● Encouraged appropriate dynamic inclusion and access to the general education setting.

Primary Goal Area: Highly Qualified Staff

- Obviously Important
  - Good Staff = Good Education
- Always Relevant
  - Have improved at attracting staff
  - Buildings full of veteran teachers
    - Make sure we can still afford to pay them
  - Continue to make this a great place to work
- Key Elements
  - Current Contract
  - BLT's/mentorship/voice/leadership/representation
  - Facility upgrades
  - Environment
  - Class size
- Action Steps
  - Recognize staff at the end-of-year breakfast (yearly)
  - Differentiate SIP trainings so that they're more relevant and productive (yearly)
  - Consider making PD optional (yearly)
  - Encourage staff to include PD that is content-specific and even outside of the district
  - Continue to encourage the staff to conduct peer observations outside the district
  - Continue the staff appreciation we are being shown
  - Coordinate an all-district Christmas Party
  - Consider making applicants teach a lesson during interviews
  - Conduct exit interviews with staff who are leaving
  - Look into an alternative education program here in the district that we can charge other districts to send kids to
  - Send teachers to college career fairs to recruit. Maybe even invest in billboards to advertise our district
- What makes a staff member "highly qualified"?
  - Caring for kids and their needs
  - Having expertise in your subject area
  - Able to manage a classroom independently
  - Have a background that includes student teaching experience at minimum
  - Be willing to speak up for yourself and your kids
  - Pursuing/have pursued continuing education
  - Able to make connections

- Create an engaging and welcoming climate
- Consistently looking to improve
- Continue to look for experienced teachers to hire
- Keep class sizes small
- Continue teacher mentorship
- Create mentorship for Paraprofessionals

Primary Goal Area: Communication

- Updates after board meeting are not available
  - Families, community, and staff don't know what is going on
- Consistency
  - Need a model for everyone to follow
  - Need a designated communication manager or technology coordinator
- New user-friendly website and app
  - Develop multiple social media platforms
  - Develop QR Code and post around town
  - Develop the model for consistency
- Get more students involved
  - School Newspaper/Content Creator/Club
- New Family Packets
- New Teacher Mentors
  - Have a preview or Orientation Process that is required
- Bootcamp
  - PreK
  - Kindergarden
  - 6th Grade
  - Freshman
- Communication Form
  - District
  - Building
  - Classroom
- Communication To
  - Staff
    - Send out BLT minutes to staff after each meeting
  - Parents
  - Students
  - Community

- Forms of Communication
  - App
  - Website
  - Social Media
  - Emails
  - Handouts to Students
- Parent Involvement Opportunities
  - FAFSA Nights
  - NAMI programming
  - Handbook Committees (student and athletic)
  - PASE Family Nights

Primary Goal Area: Student Centered

Schools exist to develop students for adulthood
Policy makers beyond our control are making decisions that have negative impacts that we must prepare for
You don't want to wait to focus on students until they are graduates that feel the system failed them

- General Goal
  - MP CUSD 23 develops students who are well-educated and well-rounded presented with skills to serve them in school and beyond
- Key Elements to be addressed
  - Learning activities and experiences need to be clearly relevant and applicable to students lives now and beyond school (soft skills, attitudes, behaviors)
  - Students have a voice in decisions to the greatest practicable extent
  - Teach students to be comfortable advocating for themselves
  - All decisions, curricular and extra-curricular, are made with a focus on furthering the learning, growth, and development of the students involved
- Potential Action Steps
  - Teachers, coaches , and sponsors emphasize skills outside the content of the lesson
  - Help students select classes, sports, and organizations that will serve them best as individuals (eliminate barriers, interest inventories, encouraged involvement)
  - Celebrate growth with the "whole student"
- Foster a culture of openness in the classroom
  - Instructors integrate student choice into all areas of the curriculum
- Help students to feel that their voice will actually make a difference and to understand the process/mechanism to make their voice heard
  - Office hours with student council
  - Google Form Feedback Form
  - Social Contracting
- Everything done in the district should be done in answer to the question, "Is this what is best for the students at large"?
  - Students are involved in setting individual and overall educational & organizational goals

- Encourage adults to develop meaningful relationships with students

Primary Goal Area: Safety & Security

- I Love You Guys Standard Response Protocol
  - Increase student knowledge of current and future safety practices within the district: Present to students and staff our "I Love You Guys" protocols and Zero Eyes software that might help students understand potential situations to feel safer in all situations.
- Invest in resources to improve the level of safety awareness: Invest in school visitor software that scans IDs and prints a badge for all visitors to our buildings.
- Implement these updated resources with fidelity: Initiate a check-in opportunity for our students at the beginning of the day to log a daily diagnostic of their social and emotional well-being.
- Commit to peer investment in all current and potentially new resources: Invest in peer training groups or mentor training for interested students to collaborate and discuss personal challenges in a confidential setting.
- Offer items (personal hygiene/clothing) in an accessible space for students.
- Develop a transition plan for students to ease the change of SROs.

Primary Goal Area: Resources for a Growing Special Education Population

- Elementary and High School has had an increase in high-needs students in the areas of behavior, trauma, autism, non-verbal, and aggression
  - We need to plan ahead as they progress through grades
- Space for self-contained classrooms in both buildings and safe sensory spaces
  - Training for special education teachers and paraprofessionals
  - Collaboration between general education and special education teachers
    - Are we efficiently staffed with paraprofessionals?
      - This has improved the past few years since their salaries have been increased
- Elementary Building Project
  - Space
    - Include the special education department in the planning for this
    - Utilize/renovate the space we have more efficiently
  - Training
    - More training opportunities throughout the year specific to special education department
      - SIP Days
      - Conferences
      - New partnerships with organizations like Menta

- Paraprofessionals need training prior to being thrown into classrooms
    - Shadow veteran paraprofessionals
    - Send paraprofessionals to other schools
    - Paraprofessional mentoring program
- Collaboration time with General Education and Special Education Teachers
    - Time built into first days of school before students arrive to go over expectations and transition at the end of the year
    - Ongoing to include special education teachers with grade-level planning days and SIP days