

MIDLAND PARK PUBLIC SCHOOLS



FRAMEWORK FOR THE FUTURE

Dear Midland Park Community,

Welcome to the Framework for the Future, a strategic roadmap, created during the 2025-2026 school year, designed to guide the Midland Park Public Schools toward continued excellence. This document serves as a foundational point of reference for our School Administration, Faculty, Staff, and the Board of Education as we establish annual goals, align our district resources, and evolve our educational programs.

The Framework for the Future is a living document. It is designed to be dynamic, ensuring our district remains agile in an ever-changing educational landscape. We are committed to updating this framework annually to reflect new goals and, when necessary, refining our overall district strategy to meet the emerging needs of our students.

The creation of this framework was made possible through the dedicated participation of our entire school community and borough residents. We extend our deepest thanks to the parents, students, staff, and neighbors who attended our work sessions, responded to surveys, and shared their voices at meetings. This document is a direct reflection of your shared perspectives, acknowledging what makes Midland Park special while identifying opportunities for growth. Your honest feedback regarding hopes, concerns, and successes has been instrumental in shaping this vision for the future.

The Framework for the Future is deeply interconnected with the Midland Park Mindset which emphasizes hard work, acting with integrity, innovation, teamwork, and self-reflection. While our mindset establishes the overarching principles for success, this Framework provides the targeted plan and guiding principles to ensure these values are practiced every day in our schools. Together, we are building a future that empowers every student to discover who they want to be and helps them create the life they desire. As we look toward the horizon, we do so with an immense sense of pride and excitement. The publication of this Framework is not the conclusion of our work, but rather the beginning of a dynamic new chapter for the Midland Park Public Schools.

We recognize that the world our students are entering is evolving at an unprecedented pace. The professional landscape is being reshaped by innovation, and the skills required for success in society are constantly shifting. To meet this challenge, we pledge to move beyond the status quo. We commit ourselves to a culture of regular reflection consistently evaluating our practices, celebrating our successes, and identifying areas where we can grow. Embracing change is at the heart of this Framework. By staying agile and open to new ideas, we ensure that our schools remain a place where students are not just taught, but are empowered to thrive in a rapidly changing world.

With the Framework for the Future as our guide and the Midland Park Mindset as our foundation, we are ready to meet the future with confidence. Together, we will continue to work to provide our students with the tools, the resilience, and the vision they need to create the lives they desire and contribute meaningfully to our global society.

Sincerely,



Kevin Ulmer
Superintendent of Schools



DISTRICT GUIDING PRINCIPLES

1. THE "REAL-WORLD" INSTRUCTIONAL LENS

- **The Principle:** Every program must be weighed against its ability to provide an impact on our students' success in the "real world."
- **How to apply it:** Decision makers must ask: *"Does this lead to a 'Durable Skill' (resilience, ethics, empathy, teamwork) or a 'Transferable Skill' (analysis, communication, innovation) that is applicable outside the classroom?"*. Every academic program and elective should advance learning through a balance of deep conceptual understanding **and** authentic application.

2. FISCAL INNOVATION & RESPONSIBILITY

- **The Principle:** Financial decisions must prioritize fiscal responsibility through innovative efficiency before consideration of cutting student resources, programs or raising taxes.
- **How to apply it:** Before authorizing new administrative costs, the district must first explore shared-service models and complete an efficiency analysis. Fiscal decisions should ensure that capital is preserved for high-impact student needs, with careful analysis of how each cost affects both the school community and community at large.

3. FAMILY AND COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

- **The Principle:** Perception should move the district away from a service provider model toward a true partnership where parents, students, teachers, administrators, and community members are a team.
- **How to apply it:** Decision making by all stakeholders should remain grounded in long-term student growth and support practices that build independence and resilience, while broadening the student's network of support and incorporating active student participation in goal setting.

4. TRANSPARENCY & PROACTIVE ENGAGEMENT

- **The Principle:** Trust is the district's most valuable asset. It is built through timely, transparent communication, and explaining the "why" when existing practices change.
- **How to apply it:** Any major shift must be accompanied by proactive communication. This must include articulation of the specific benefit to the students, the school community, or township at large. If a decision cannot be clearly explained it needs to be re-evaluated to ensure it meets the intended goal.

5. A NEW PERSPECTIVE ON SAFETY

- **The Principle:** A student cannot learn if they do not feel safe, and they cannot feel safe in an environment that is physically, emotionally, or socially deteriorating.
- **How to apply it:** This principle creates a multi-faceted standard for safety. Decisions must address the psychological and emotional impact along with physical safety and foster a sense of small-town/small-school belonging.

ACADEMIC PRIORITIES

**REAL-WORLD
INSTRUCTIONAL LENS**



**TECHNOLOGICAL
AGILITY**



THE "MENTOR" PIVOT



**COMPETENCY-BASED
MASTERY**



**PERSONALIZED
PATHWAYS**



**"BACK-TO-BASICS"
MASTERY**



CURRICULUM & INSTRUCTION

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

REAL-WORLD INSTRUCTIONAL LENS

Every academic program and elective should lead to the advancement of durable human capacities such as reasoning, collaboration, resilience, and ethical judgement through a balance of deep understanding and authentic application. Project-based learning and internships should be central to connecting the classroom to the real world.

TECHNOLOGICAL AGILITY

Technology and AI should be integrated as "co-pilots or partners" to amplify human impact and personalize learning, ensuring that "human-to-human" mentorship and coaching becomes the centerpiece of the educational experience.

THE "MENTOR" PIVOT

Teachers should shift their role from rote content delivery toward "mentors" focusing on high-level critical thinking, social-emotional growth, and project-based learning that machines cannot replicate.

COMPETENCY-BASED MASTERY

Instruction should move toward a model where "seat time" is replaced by "mastery," allowing students to demonstrate proficiency through hands-on application, project based assessment, capstone projects, academic discourse, and participation in internships.

"BACK-TO-BASICS" MASTERY

At the elementary level, ensure there is targeted direct instruction in reading, writing, and math to ensure a student's academic foundation is secure before middle school.

PERSONALIZED PATHWAYS

Instruction must prioritize consistent Small Group Instruction (SGI) and a flexible curriculum that empowers educators to move beyond "one-size-fits-all" pacing. By utilizing data-driven grouping and adaptable unit structures, the district ensures that every student, whether requiring immediate remediation or advanced enrichment, receives instruction tailored to their specific learning profile, social-emotional needs, and future goals.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

SCHOOL CLIMATE & CULTURE



PURPOSE-DRIVEN LEARNING

The Principle: Students deserve to know the "why" behind their education. Culture is built when students see their schoolwork not as "rote tasks," but as an investment in the development of durable skills (resilience, ethics, empathy, teamwork) and transferable skills (analysis, innovation) that have immediate and future value.

SAFETY THROUGH "SMALL-TOWN" BELONGING

The Principle: Physical and psychological safety is rooted in being known. The culture should prioritize high frequency, human centered mentorship where every student feels a sense of belonging, ensuring they are seen as individuals rather than data points on a spreadsheet.



RESILIENCE THROUGH "PRODUCTIVE FRICTION"

The Principle: School culture should normalize setbacks as essential for growth. By implementing a supportive, consultative approach to academic and behavioral challenges, students should learn from their mistakes, build resilience, and understand the consequences of their actions. The culture should promote continued growth, with students having a clear plan to recover from setbacks.

BEST PRACTICES FOR MAINTAINING SUCCESSFUL HOME- SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS

Prioritize Proactive Communication and Transparency

- **Keep Families "In the Loop":** We commit to frequent, specific, and proactive updates regarding a child's academic progress, behavior, and social-emotional growth to ensure parents never feel out of the loop.
- **Transparency:** We will maintain clear transparency regarding our school practices, curriculum, academic expectations, and the "why" behind assignments so parents can act as fully informed partners in their child's learning.
- **Timely Response:** We aim for a "no surprises" approach, ensuring timely communication when concerns arise, prioritizing issues that require an immediate response to ensure student well being. A general twenty-four hour rule for responses to parent questions or concerns will be applied in all buildings.

Engage in Collaborative Goal Setting and Academic Support

- **Shared Academic Strategy:** We will bridge the gap between school and home by providing regular updates, newsletters, or e-blasts that detail school and classroom happenings, celebrate accomplishments, and inform parents of academic goals for each unit of study.
- **Tailored Support:** We recognize that every child learns differently; through collaborative goal setting, teachers, parents, and students will work together to identify the most effective methods to meet each individual student's needs.
- **Active Parent Involvement :** By providing insight into current units of study, assessments, and projects, we will empower parents to take an active, supportive role in helping their children meet their goals. This includes active involvement in academic support in a child's early experience and building independence as students progress through high school.

Building Success Through Personal Connections and Community

- **Meaningful Interaction:** We will prioritize face-to-face or direct interaction through more frequent discussions about each child's progress, including well-being, social interactions, and behavior, in addition to grades.
- **Community Building:** We will create more opportunities for parents and staff to meet, build trust, and develop community through collaborative workshops and school-wide activities.
- **Strengthening the Human Bond:** By moving beyond digital tools and fostering genuine personal connections, we ensure that both parents and educators feel heard, respected, and united in their mission to support the student.

GODWIN SCHOOL

2026-2027 FRAMEWORK GOALS

ACADEMIC FOCUSED ACTIONABLE ITEMS

- **Incorporate Structured Play:** Balance academic targets by integrating sessions for "kids to be kids," using centers for puzzles, logic games, and collaborative play, to build interpersonal and social skills and teach social regulation.
- **Minimize Technology Use for Developmental Growth:** Prioritize "tactile" learning over digital apps, ensuring Pre-K to Grade 2 students build foundational skills through hands-on engagement and human mentorship rather than screens. This should lead to minimal (if any) tech driven tasks and assignments.
- **Parent Support Toolkits:** Provide physical resources to help parents support literacy and math mastery at home. This may include one page newsletters/flyers that preview each academic unit, along with easy to facilitate activities to support learning at home.

SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE ACTIONABLE ITEMS

- **Skill-Based Play:** Integrate structured play into the classroom. During structured play instead of just rewarding "good behavior," teachers recognize specific moments of teamwork or empathy, helping students name the character traits they are building.
- **The "Welcome Circle":** To foster "small school belonging," start every day with a ritual that ensures that student's voices are heard by their peers, establishing the classroom as a safe, high-trust social ecosystem. This may simply be a refined/focused approach to our current morning meetings.
- **Foundational Resilience:** Use missteps and mistakes as collective learning opportunities, where students are taught early on that mistakes are simply "data points" for getting better at a skill.

HIGHLAND SCHOOL

2026-2027 FRAMEWORK GOALS

ACADEMIC FOCUSED ACTIONABLE ITEMS

- **Core Concept Focus:** Utilize flexible small groups across grade levels to ensure students who need extra time on a concept get it, while those who have mastered it can move into enrichment.
- **Executive Functioning Instruction:** Explicitly teach students how to organize, focus, and manage time with and without the aid of digital prompts.
- **Introduce "Productive Failure":** Assess and grade students on their ability to iterate and improve their understanding after an initial failure.
- **Adopt a Cohesive Math Program:** Move away from "piecemeal" instruction by providing a unified, research-based Math curriculum which appropriately paces students to succeed in higher level math coursework in high school.

SCHOOL SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE ACTIONABLE ITEMS

- **The Executive Functioning Habit Development Lab:** Instead of discussing "how we feel" about a task or overusing behavior consequences as a remedy for executive functioning failure, teachers act as executive functioning coaches who teach students specific strategies for organization, preparation, planning, focus, and memory.
- **Student-Authored "Progress Portfolios":** Students create Personal Growth Portfolios where students track their own "habits" alongside their academic growth. Students will see that their success is a result of the systems they built, lowering stress and anxiety and developing a tool kit for self improvement.
- **Community Wellness & Accountability Stewards:** Create peer mediation and support groups that empower students to collaboratively problem solve and navigate academic and social challenges.

JR/SR HIGH SCHOOL 2026-2027 FRAMEWORK GOALS

ACADEMIC FOCUSED ACTIONABLE ITEMS

- **Increase "Real-World" Professional Exposure:** Expand internship and externship programs and regularly bring in professionals from the community as speakers or have students visit professionals in the community to connect classroom standards to professional demands.
- **Transitioning from Traditional Testing to Intellectual Mastery:** Shift the assessment model at MPHS from a high-stakes, rote-memory testing environment to a multi-dimensional system that prioritizes logical scaffolding, reasoning, and "real world" application of knowledge through project based learning, debate, socratic circles, "TED Talks", capstone projects, and community service projects.
- **Relationship-Driven Mentorship:** Pair students with mentorship teams to support both academic goals and social-emotional resilience.
- **"How to" AI Instruction:** Begin to explicitly teach students how to ethically and effectively use AI to support their learning. This includes the formal development of a unit of study with a focus on artificial intelligence to support learning and executive functioning.

SCHOOL SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE ACTIONABLE ITEMS

- **Self-Directed Post-Mortems:** Using a "Post-Mortem" protocol, the student leads the analysis of the setback. They identify the "Why" behind the failure and draft their own recovery plan, treating the process as professional development for their future adult lives. This process is supported by teachers, counselors, and administrators after a student's failure to accomplish their goals or repeated failure to meet school expectations.
- **Utilize AI for Cognitive Offloading:** Students are taught to use AI to handle rote tasks (complex scheduling, creating study tools) to reduce burnout. The goal is to free up "human time" for critical thinking and high interest projects, which directly supports long-term mental health and sense of purpose.
- **Wellness & Growth Labs:** Redesign professional activity periods and office hours into sessions where students can receive academic support, discuss academic pressure, and receive personal guidance. This ensures students feel the school is invested in their mental well-being, not just their GPA.