



## **Darby Public Schools**

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# **Darby Public Schools**

## **Strategic Planning Process**

### **2012**

### **Overview**

**The Darby Public Schools** has created a new direction for the school district to strategically focus its resources on identified wants, preferences, and needs of its community. As part of this process, Darby Public Schools has begun a strategic planning and thinking process that will lead to a stronger and more vital school district. This process will be ongoing as Darby Public Schools move into the future. This Strategic Plan is intended to help Darby Public Schools in focusing its resources in a manner that will best benefit the students enrolled in Darby Public Schools.

The Darby Board of Trustees and Staff Leadership Team began the strategic planning and thinking process necessary to fit with its commitment to students, to community engagement, to moving the District forward and to utilizing a knowledge-based decision making process.

As part of its preparation for planning strategically, Darby Public Schools brought in staff from the Montana School Boards Association with expertise in strategic planning for public schools to help facilitate the group through the initial strategic planning process.

On September 10, 2012, the Darby Board of Trustees formally adopted its new strategic plan.

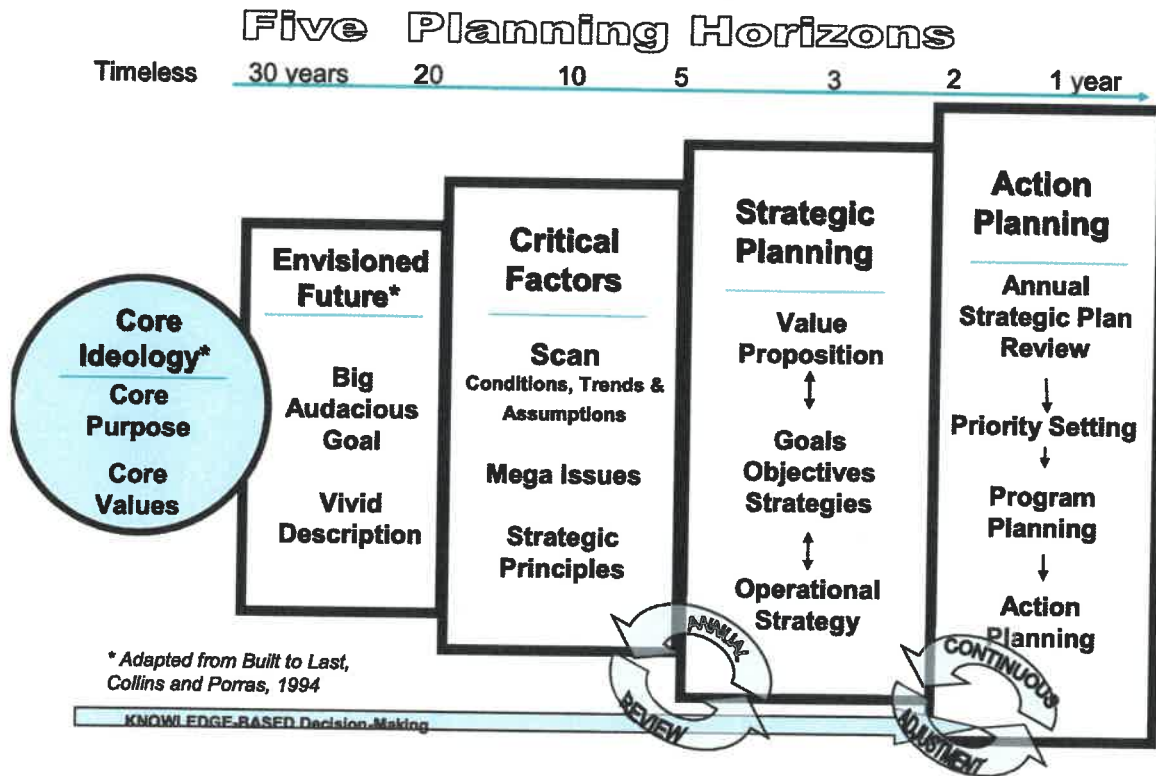
The Darby Board of Trustees and Staff Leadership Team view the process of strategic planning as an ongoing process within the school system. This is not a "strategic planning project" that is completed. Nor is it intended as the end of a conversation, but rather as the beginning of one – a conversation regarding how Darby Public Schools can best serve the community and maximize the focus and impact of its resources on its Core Purpose. Darby Public Schools intend that this plan become the means by which the Darby community's values, needs and priorities can be regularly discussed, clarified, documented, prioritized and pursued by our school system over time.

Adoption of a plan is an affirmation of the initial general intent and direction articulated by the Core Ideology, Envisioned Future and Goals and Strategic Objectives. It is understood that the strategies identified in this document will change over time as we implement the plan and gain a deeper understanding of what does and does not work and incorporate the feedback of our constituents to ensure that the plan remains relevant and contemporary over time.

Progress toward achieving identified strategic objectives will be assessed at least annually, and the plan will be updated based on achievement and changes in the needs of the students served by the Darby Public Schools.

## Strategic Planning Framework

The framework used by the Darby Public Schools for its strategic planning process was adapted from a model developed by Jim Collins, author of “Built to Last” and “Good to Great.” The Board and Staff Leadership Team focused on five different planning horizons, starting with the long term issues first to provide focus on shorter term efforts.



## Core Ideology of the Darby Public Schools:

**Core ideology** describes a school district's consistent identity that transcends all changes related to its relevant environment. It consists of two elements - **core purpose** - the school district's reason for being - and **core values** - essential and enduring principles that guide a school district. **Envisioned future** conveys a concrete yet unrealized vision for the school district. It consists of a **big audacious goal** - a clear and compelling catalyst that serves as a focal point for effort - and a **vivid description** - vibrant and engaging descriptions of what it will be like to achieve the big audacious goal.

### Core Purpose:

*The Core Purpose of Darby Public Schools is to provide a safe, happy, healthy, caring environment where each child flourishes academically, socially, emotionally and physically and is well prepared for the future.*

### Core Values:

*The Core Values of Darby Public Schools are:*

**Fierce Independence** – We value our local community and our schools. We believe that maintaining our independence is what unites our community and our school system and sets us apart from others. We believe that collaborating with other communities and schools is important, but we value our local autonomy.

**Resilience** - The community of Darby and our public school have withstood many obstacles and has overcome many barriers over the years. Through our resolve we will continue to do so.

**Respect** – We believe that showing and having respect for others is vital to our success. Irrespective of our differences in beliefs, opinions, heritage and cultures, we are respectful of others.

**Loyalty** – Through thick and thin, the community, parents, staff and students remain loyal to Darby community and to our public schools. We believe that devotion and allegiance to our community and our public schools are necessary keys to our success and the success of the students we serve.

**Resourceful/Innovative** -- We understand that traditional methods of acquiring what we need to provide a quality education are not enough for our students. We are very resourceful and innovative when it comes to finding funding, human resources and other resources to enrich the lives of our community, parents, staff and students.

## 10-15 Year Planning Horizon

### Envisioned Future of the Darby Public Schools:

#### Big Audacious Goal:

*Darby Public Schools is the school of choice in the Bitterroot Valley!*

## **Vivid Descriptors of the Desired Future**

- We have created and lived up to an image and preference that is desired by students and parents.
- Academically, we have high expectations of our students.
- We have created an environment where students have the opportunity and flexibility to be challenged in their respective areas of interest.
- We have parents that are highly involved in their children's education.
- We have a community that is highly engaged in our schools.
- Our business sector has flourished thereby attracting new families to Darby.
- We have a 100% graduation rate.
- All resident students are enrolled in Darby Public Schools.
- We are the preferred employer in the South Bitterroot Valley.
- Federal and state law has been revised to provide us with the flexibility needed to allow our students and staff to excel.
- We have a progressive administrative and board leadership team.
- The staff is aware of the unique attributes and needs of each student through enhanced communication with the parents of students.
- Our facilities and equipment are state-of-the art providing students and staff with the tools necessary to keep up with an ever changing world.
- We have an exceptional STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts and math) program that supports and encourages students in pursuing relevant fields.
- We offer a personalized educational platform that is adaptable to each student and prepares each student to reach his/her full potential.
- Our students have multiple and varied career and job opportunities to remain in our local community after leaving our school system.
- Our students have and show a strong sense of pride in our community and our school.
- Through research, job trends, anticipation of the jobs of tomorrow, and enhanced opportunities, our students are well prepared for their futures.
- We have adapted our school calendar to support personalized learning for students.
- We have an engaged alumni association who gives back to our local community and our school. Our students (past and current) understand and appreciate the value of their public education in Darby Public Schools.
- We have a school-based farming operation that supports the nutritional needs of our school and our community.
- Our local economy is thriving. As a result of our economic stability and growth, families who used to reside in Darby temporarily are gainfully employed, remaining in and supporting our community and our school.

## **5-10 Year Planning Horizon**

### **Assumptions Regarding the Relevant Future for the Darby Public Schools**

In order to make progress against the 15 year Envisioned Future, Darby Public Schools must constantly anticipate the strategic factors likely to affect its ability to succeed, and to assess the implications of those factors. This process of building foresight about the future will help Darby Public Schools to constantly recalibrate its view of the relevant future, a basis upon which to update the strategic plan on an annual basis. As the outcome-oriented goals that will form the basis of the long-range strategic plan will be based on this foresight, annual review of these statements will be an appropriate method of determining and ensuring the ongoing relevance of the strategic plan.

Creating the Assumptions - during the Strategic Planning Process, the Darby Board of Trustees, Staff Leadership Team, and community members made many assumptions about the future. While many different assumptions were made, what follows are those assumptions that are likely to have the greatest influence on the development of Darby Public School's Strategic Plan.

## **Assumptions about the future**

### **Demographics**

- We anticipate that a percentage of our population will continue to be people who are here to "get away."
- We anticipate that we will continue to see an aging population in terms of people who have resided here and those who are moving into our community. We anticipate this segment of our population to continue supporting our school and our community, but for those on fixed incomes it may be difficult to support the school financially.
- We anticipate that we will continue to have staff members who do not live in the District. This impacts the buy-in of the staff in our community as people tend to be much more connected to the communities in which they live.
- We anticipate that we will continue to be challenged by the lack of suitable housing. In large part, our housing will continue to either be low-end housing or high-end housing, with very little in between. However, this may change with high speed internet and as the socio-economic status of our community improves. This may also bring younger families with children into our community.
- We anticipate that we will continue to see a transient population. Of course, the economic status of our community impacts whether people remain in our community on a long-term basis.
- We anticipate that our enrollment will remain stable or increase. We continue to have a significant number of students are at or below poverty level.
- We anticipate that parents will continue to have many educational choices for schooling their children in the Bitterroot Valley.

### **Business/Economic Climate**

- We anticipate that with technology, people will not need to live where they work. As internet access in Darby improves, we anticipate that we will have some people living in Darby and working remotely from their place of employment.
- We anticipate that we will need to collaborate, to a greater extent, with our local business community so that businesses will continue to support our schools and to provide enhanced

learning opportunities for our students. This may result in more students having local job and career opportunities.

- We anticipate that we will experience some positive economic growth. We do not yet know if this will have a significant impact on our school.

### **Legislation/Regulation**

- We anticipate that Montana's accreditation standards will continue to be reworked and provide greater flexibility to enhance student learning.
- We anticipate that the ESSA will be reauthorized and include changes in the way we measure student achievement.
- We anticipate that government attitudes toward K-12 public education will remain negative.
- We anticipate that we will continue to struggle with school funding not keeping pace with inflation.
- We anticipate continued advocacy for privatization, charter schools, vouchers, etc. which will result in less funding for schools.

### **Technology /Science**

- We anticipate that technology will continue to move at a pace where it will be difficult to keep up with and make plans for the future.
- We anticipate that it will take increased dollars to keep up with technology.
- We anticipate that we will need to make advancements in the area of STEAM at both the elementary and high school levels if we want our students to keep pace with society.
- We anticipate that information will continue to be readily available with technology advancements.
- We anticipate that even if the school keeps pace with societal/global expectations, we will continue to be challenged by the community not keeping up with the same pace.
- We anticipate that we will need to adapt to the technologies that students utilize and not the technologies utilized by adults.
- We anticipate that technology will be a primary tool for the delivery of education.

### **Politics and Social Values**

- We anticipate that we will continue to see a lack of government support for our public schools and a push towards privatization.
- We anticipate the ongoing trend of children being on their own at a very early age because of the challenges facing many parents/families.
- We anticipate that we will continue to see greater parental participation at the elementary level and less involvement at the high school levels.
- At the high school level, we anticipate the trend of parents struggling with how to deal with factors that negatively impact their child(ren).
- We anticipate the trend of parents expecting the school to do more for them to continue.
- We anticipate that technology is and will continue to impact the communication between parent and child.

- We anticipate that we will need to keep our emphasis on and provide the necessary time for students to engage in the arts, critical and creative thinking for our students to be successful.
- We anticipate continued polarization of political/ideological values that will have an impact on the community. We need to instill in students and parents that disagreements on political/ideological values are fine so long as respect for differing values is honored.

## **5-10 Year Planning Horizon**

### **Mega Issues facing the Darby Public Schools:**

**Mega issues** are issues of strategic importance, which represent choices the school district will need to make in defining the ultimate direction of its long-range plan. These issues represent potential impediments to achievement of the Envisioned Future, and form a basis for dialogue about the choices facing the school district. These questions can serve as an ongoing "menu" of strategic issues that, using a knowledge-based approach in gathering insights relative to Darby Public Schools' strategic position and directional choices for each of the issues, can be used by the Board to create regular opportunities for strategic dialogue about the future issues facing the school district.

Note: The mega-issue questions are not necessarily arranged in priority order.

### **Mega-Issue Questions for consideration by the District:**

- How do we ensure that we have the necessary technological resources, equipment, etc. to keep pace with a global society?
- Given our diverse population, what can we do to maximize the engagement of the community parents in our school programs and services?
- How do we effectively educate parents about the importance of having strong support systems at home and about the importance of being actively involved in their child's education?
- In light of the school choices that are available to parents and students, what can we do to set our District apart from the others?
- What can we do to effectively advocate for increased funding and additional resources for our school to ensure that our students are provided with the best possible programs and services?

## **Knowledge-Based Decision Making Questions**

The Board should prioritize the above-referenced mega issues and decide which of these issues require immediate attention on the part of the Board. Once the identified mega-issues are prioritized, the Board will set aside time at scheduled meetings to analyze a particular mega issue. At such meetings, the Board's primary focus will be on the mega-issue at hand. All other business (routine or otherwise) will be conducted at the end of the meeting once the dialogue and deliberation on the mega-issue has been concluded for that meeting. When analyzing mega issues, the Board will utilize a knowledge-based decision making process. This will keep the focus of the Board on relevant factors to consider as it develops strategies to overcome particular impediments/barriers that may impact the Board's strategic direction. The Board will analyze mega-issues by answering the following questions:

1. What do we know about the wants, needs and preferences of our constituents that are relevant to this decision?

2. What do we know about the current realities and evolving dynamics facing our constituents/community that is relevant to this decision?
3. What do we know about the capacity/strategic position of our school district that is relevant to this decision?
4. What are the ethical implications of our choices?

## **Five Year Planning Horizon**

### **Outcome-Oriented Goals and Strategic Objectives**

The following thinking represents goals for the next five years. They are areas in which Darby Public Schools will explicitly state the conditions or attributes it wants to achieve. These outcome statements will define, "what will constitute future success." The achievement of each goal will move the school district toward realization of its Envisioned Future.

Strategic Objectives provide direction and actions on how the school district will accomplish its articulated goals. All strategies included in the strategic plan should be considered accomplishable at some point in the future. Strategic Objectives are reviewed annually by the Darby Board of Trustees, Staff Leadership Team and faculty.

### **Goals of the Darby Public Schools:**

#### **Goal Area 1: Enhanced Programs and Opportunities for Students**

**Statement of Intended Outcome, Five Years:** Darby Public Schools has substantially enhanced the programs, services and opportunities for students.

#### **Strategic Objectives – Two Year Plan:**

- We will enhance our rigorous and ongoing assessments of our programs, services and opportunities to provide enhanced courses, opportunities and choices for the students being served by the District.
- We will enhance the dual-credit and other opportunities for our high school students.
- We will develop educational and support services models where each student has a customized education plan in place that supports the student and inspires the student to reach his/her potential.
- We will collect and analyze student data, e.g., drop-out rates, age, gender, other demographics, etc. to improve our programming/services/opportunities available to each student.
- We will develop a system for tracking graduates and students that exit our system prior to graduation.
- We will develop a comprehensive system that encourages and provides support to staff for using best practice educational techniques. The staff are very innovative and hold themselves to a very high standard and we want to ensure that this culture remains and that we continue to enhance and improve this culture.
- We will develop a system that seeks input from students, parents, community and staff on our programs, services and opportunities to assess the opinions of others on the quality of our District.



- We will enhance our Parent/Teacher Conferences incorporating a parent learning component as part of the conferences.
- We will promote the need and importance of parental involvement in their child's education and will take measures to reach out to those parents who are not actively involved in their child's education.
- We will enhance our mentorship program to ensure that each student has positive peer support.
- We will enhance the professional development opportunities for staff that support the growth and enrichment of staff in their positions and in supporting a personalized learning environment for each student.
- We will increase our focus and opportunities for students in the area of science, technology, engineering, arts and math (STEAM).
- We will enhance the opportunities for our students to connect with and support our community and likewise develop enhanced opportunities for the community to support our students.

## **Goal Area 2: Community Relations**

**Statement of Intended Outcome, Five years:** Darby Public Schools has developed a comprehensive community relations engagement plan and as a result our community is highly engaged in our District and the District effectively interacts with the community. The public's perceived image and reputation of Darby Public Schools has substantially improved as a result of our efforts.

### **Strategic Objectives – Two Year Plan:**

- We will enhance our collaboration/partnership with local businesses and our community resources for the purposes of ensuring that they understand the needs of the District, that our students can benefit from the partnerships formed and likewise the District can fulfill the needs of businesses by giving students the hands-on skills they need to be successful when they leave the District.
- We will enhance the opportunities for the school to host community-based events and otherwise effectively connect with the community and parents of children.
- We will enhance our school environment to ensure that our school environment is inviting and inclusive to parents and the community at large.
- We will provide enhanced opportunities to showcase the positive aspects of our school and how we are positively making a difference in the lives of our students, staff, parents and community. We will develop/enhance our volunteer processes/programs.
- We will enhance our outreach and communication strategies with the Darby community and surrounding areas in our promotion of the positive attributes of Darby Public Schools.
- We will enhance our outreach to real estate firms/agents and develop strategies on promoting the District and the community in a positive light in their marketing efforts.

## **Goal Area 3: Safe School Environment**

**Statement of Intended Outcome, Five Years:** Through our efforts, our school environment is safe both in reference to the physical school grounds and in ensuring an inclusive and supportive culture for students and staff.

### **Strategic Objectives – Two Year Plan:**

- We will implement strategies to foster greater pride of our students, staff and community in our facilities.
- We will continue enhancing the safety and security of our school facilities and grounds.
- We will enhance our school environment to ensure that it is inviting and inclusive to parents and the community at large.

Here is a list of items implemented since the inception of the Darby School District Strategic Plan in 2012:

- We will include contact information in the front of the student handbook so that parents know who they need to contact if they have any questions or concerns about their child's education.
- We will take proactive measures to ensure that we are telling our own story about the positive attributes and happenings in our District and our community.
- We will make improvements to and update our Science lab.
- We will make improvements to the gym.
- We will make improvements to our Music facilities.
- We will take the necessary steps to ensure that we have the infrastructure to support technology.

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