



End of Year Goal Summary 2016-17

Domain 1: Direct activities to improve students' academic achievement and overall growth in student learning.

This year the District Leadership Team (administrators and department chairs) met regularly to discuss the characteristics of successful students and strategies we can use to ensure all students are prepared for life after high school. We then turned our conversations to things we can do to create a system better able to produce our desired results. Three major areas of focus emerged out of this work: more frequent time to understand and address student needs; updating the teacher evaluation process to limit the time we spend determining what we already know about the skills of each our veteran teachers; and creating structures that support personalized professional development for all staff, with a focus on continual growth.

We concentrated on the first of these three areas by restructuring our Professional Learning Community (PLC) meeting time to be weekly. We ended up with a Late Start schedule for 2017-2018 that begins nearly every week of the school year with our teachers talking about the needs of students and designing strategies that will make a difference in teaching and learning. Throughout this year we refocused our expectations around PLCs and emerged with a refined philosophy and expectation for this work next year, and into the future: We believe we need consistent time to better understand our instruction and the impact it has on student learning and determine how to appropriately respond when we identify gaps in learning. We believe this new structure will allow teachers to have more dialogue about student data, interventions, and differentiated learning opportunities, thereby empowering teachers to design and implement strategies that will improve all students' learning experiences and achievement.

We also made some focused programmatic changes. We added the Freshman/ Sophomore Seminar course to intervene with students that demonstrate they need some targeted skills to better succeed in high school. The course allows us to identify and support students that need help with academics more quickly. There has been a great deal of work around expanding dual-credit, especially with the College of DuPage, and creating better pathways to colleges. We are eliminating Project 99, which is the in-house program for students facing expulsion, and shifting to the DuPage Regional Office of Education "Partners for Success" program. Their program provides a higher level of structured supports for students that have demonstrated challenges within the traditional school environment.

A common theme throughout this year was working towards a better understanding of the perspectives our students bring into our classrooms. This was our opening message, both from the Superintendent's presentation to the faculty and from Dr. Robert Brooks, the keynote speaker. The message was reinforced and supported through professional development sessions on mental health and diversity that provided training on ways to better understand the student experience and how to respond to developing student needs. We closed out the year by bringing in Gary Howard, an expert on culturally responsive teaching, to continue our efforts to improve learning through the lenses of our students, our curriculum, and ourselves.

It is important to recognize the District continued to move forward significantly, even in light of extreme turnover in administrative positions. Last year we replaced a Superintendent, a Principal, three Associate Principals, an Assistant Principal, and an Activities Director. This type of change has the potential to stall the progress of a school district, but we grew, despite all the changes in leadership.

Domain 2: Work with the Board of Education to revise the Master Site Plan/ Master Facility Plan.

The Master Facility Plan (MFP) was an area of major focus this year. At the beginning of the year we put a team in place that developed a plan for the year. The major initial tasks were to find a consultant to help us message the Plan to the community, define possible scenarios and timelines for the MFP, and try to determine costs for the different options being proposed. Each of these tasks was completed by December. We returned in January to begin outlining the steps to communicate the MFP to the community. This involved the use of the Superintendent's Advisory Council to help shape the structure of future meetings. After spring break we began holding several community meetings to share the MFP and gather feedback. We also held meetings with our staff.

The work in the spring led to a [report](#) outlining our findings from the initial community meetings, and laid out steps for next fall. Over the summer we will continue to build on the FAQ document; prepare videos and presentations for additional community meetings in the fall; and invite community members to the Citizen Task Force to help create clear, unbiased, and transparent communications. The Master Facility Plan will continue to be a major focus heading into next year.

Domain 3: Work with the Board of Education to review and revise (as needed) the Strategic Plan.

We started the 2016-17 school year reflecting on the progress of the 2015-16 school year. In July, a new goal setting process began that built District Goals, with input from the administration, that reflected the Board's Goals for the Superintendent. The Goals for this

year were approved by the Board, and the administration periodically reported out on their progress. Each quarter the Superintendent shared an updated "[District Goal Progress](#)" document with the Board. These Goals were also integrated into other administrative goals, messaging to the staff, and videos for the community. Ultimately, this summary was created for the Board, with the intention of providing a readable account of the year's progress on the Goals.

Domain 4: Review and revise how technology practices will affect classroom instruction over the next decade.

We continue to be viewed as a leader in the area of instructional technology. This year we began to use the "[Future Ready](#)" framework to drive the use of technology toward personalized instruction. This closely aligns with the work we are doing within Domain 1 of the District Goals. We continue to develop programming to impact instruction through the appropriate use of technology - which is clearly seen by an increase in the use of devices, and tools like Google Classroom - to provide better communication and structure within learning activities. This year, teachers were expected to have a "digital presence" online for students and parents. The administrative team worked to redefine how the use of technology intersects with instructional practice, as seen through the teacher evaluation rubric. Next year is the third year of 1:1 student devices. This is typically when the most rapid growth in instructional practice, especially in the area of personalized learning supported by technology, is seen.

Domain 5: Encourage the continuous improvement of the educational program through educational leadership.

A District expectation is our professionals will continue to grow and share. We saw a great deal of this through social media this year, where staff shared what they were learning and doing. Many virtual professional communities emerged this year, as well. We also saw many administrators, department chairs, and teachers actively involved, and serving in leadership roles, within professional organizations.

A major area where administration provided direct leadership this year was the planning and successful execution of the SAT exam, which replaced the ACT as our statewide assessment. We discussed this change with leadership in August, with parents at Open House, and with students all year. We adopted the suite of assessments related to the SAT to ensure we could continue to analyze the longitudinal growth of our students.

Our educational leadership was also seen through our staff development opportunities outlined above in Domain 1. We are preparing for a shift in the way we coach our staff, with a focus on personalized learning for them as well. This will be an area where we dedicate a great deal of effort next year.

Domain 6: Continue effective relations with the Board of Education.

The administration has worked diligently to communicate with the Board frequently and clearly. We ensured the Board was first introduced to any new ideas through Preliminary Notes, then through a Board workshop, before any item was brought forward for Action. We continue the use of the “Superintendent’s Cover Letter” before Board Meetings, and added correlating descriptions within each item in BoardDocs. Items of urgency have been brought to the Board’s attention in a timely fashion. We have followed the practice of “no surprises” that was agreed to at the Board Self-Evaluation with Barb Toney, Field Services Director, Illinois Association of School Boards.

Small changes were made in the seating arrangement at Board meetings and with digital communications. We had excellent discussions around what is Board work and what is Administrative work. The Board attended the Joint Annual Conference, DuPage IASB Division events, and collaborated with local community organizations and other school boards.

Domain 7: Continue effective relations with the staff.

We switched to a mixed medium format for staff communications this year that utilized video, photos, and text. These messages came out weekly and featured positive messages to staff from students. In any decision we made, such as the change in Late Starts, the revised Summer Schedule, or other calendar changes, the administration was transparent and open to feedback from staff. We also defined practices for sharing information with staff that facilitates open communication.

We maintained an open dialogue with our collective bargaining units, the Downers Grove Education Association and Support Staff Association. Administration had regular meetings with their leadership. Union leadership was often involved in drafting communications before circulating them to the larger school community. This collaboration was clearly seen in the work around the calendar, Parent Teacher conferences, and Late Starts. One of the major accomplishments this year was successfully negotiating and ratification of a Support Staff Agreement.

The creation of the “[Opening Doors](#)” series began a long-term strategy to share with the public the excellent work our staff does. We paired this series with a lot of sharing of successes on social media, which we curated on our websites for easy access for our community. This type of sharing will continue to be a major focus next year and into the future.

Domain 8: Continue responsible business and financial practices.

In another year of fiscal uncertainty in Illinois, we continue to be excellent stewards of the community's financial investment in their schools. This trust will be essential as we move forward with the Master Facility Plan. We have continued our practices of transparency, creativity, and responsibility with District resources. Refinancing of debt and use of life/safety bonds have poised the District to take care of short-term and long-term needs.

Domain 9: Continue effective relations with the community.

We continue to leverage multiple forms of communication with our community throughout the year, culminating with a ["Year in Review"](#) that was mailed to all residents. One of the ongoing forms of communication is a monthly video message from the Superintendent to the community. Principals also created videos each month tailored around their school.

There were several meetings held throughout the year to address specific issues in the school community, including four meetings of the Superintendent's Community Advisory Committee; a meeting for area realtors led by District 99, with participation from the other partner elementary districts; and parent meetings on student societal pressures, mental health, and drug abuse, at each school. We also supported the Education Foundation as they added an Executive Director and began a new chapter in their partnership with District 99.

We were active throughout the year in advocacy at the Federal, State, and Local level. At the National level, we were recognized as a spotlight school district for our work in closing the digital divide and the homework gap (ensuring that all students have access to the internet and devices at school and at home). The Superintendent presented to members of the United States Congress at the Capitol in recognition of the District's work. Our local and State advocacy was supported through partnerships with the Legislative Education Network of DuPage County (LEND) and the Illinois High School District Organization (IHSDO). We also worked closely with sending school districts, municipal officials, the university community, and non-profit organizations on a variety of shared concerns.

Our relationship with our community will be a major focus next year as we move forward with the Master Facility Plan.