

Pine-Richland School District
Key Initiatives Update (November 2020)

Topic	Progress/Next Steps
COVID-19: Educational Program	<p>Starting with communications and planning in February 2020, the district has continued to use three key drivers to design and improve the educational model: (1) health and safety; (2) effectiveness of learning academically, socially and emotionally; and (3) flexibility for students, families and staff. The PRSD Healthcare Leadership Council was formed in June to help inform this critical initiative. Comprising 43 members that include community-based healthcare experts, this council has helped the leadership team refine plans that align with public health guidelines. The concept of a continuum has been used to illustrate the hybrid model and virtual-for-all contingency.</p> <p>The start of the 2020 - 2021 school year was very positive given the circumstances. Different hybrid model options exist at the K - 3, 4 - 6 and 7 - 12 levels. The vast majority of K - 3 students are now engaged in full-time in-person instruction given the addition of 14 teachers to those grade levels. PRSD is monitoring county conditions (i.e., incidence rate per 100,000 people and PCR positivity test percentage) and cases (i.e., frequency) to determine timing for further potential changes to the educational program. Despite a small number of positive cases of students or staff, the PRSD hybrid has reduced the likelihood of transmission within the schools resulting in the very limited need to quarantine. The health services department is providing excellent levels of support and coordination as the pandemic response team works with the Allegheny County Health Department (ACHD).</p> <p>At the time of this update, the overall conditions are worsening slightly in the region, state and country. ACHD is working to provide more granular metrics to school districts to inform program options for school districts. Vaccine development and increased effectiveness of therapeutics will also help school districts understand options as the year continues to progress. Frequent updates on this topic will continue through the board meeting schedule, weekly eBlast updates and the PRSD COVID-19 website.</p>
Diversity, Equity and Inclusion	<p>Diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) is a key strategic initiative linked to safety and school culture. The goal of this work is to achieve our mission by helping staff and students establish environments of inclusion and appreciation of differences. Counselors, administrators and other support staff have been collaborating with the community-based PR anti-racism coalition to identify short- and long-term actions and goals. Counselors have begun to reach out to black and brown families to develop connections and identify if additional supports are needed. The district has participated in a number of professional development sessions with local and national universities. Students in the middle and high school have established black student unions and are working with parents and their sponsors to connect with students both inside and outside of the district.</p> <p>Beginning in October, the PRSD DEI Leadership Council was formed and met for the first time. The council, consisting of parents, staff, students, and university partners, will support the internal team and provide feedback on emerging recommendations. The district has identified a number of key DEI research topics that will guide our strategic, sustainable action items. Research topics include: (1) Curriculum, instruction, and assessment; (2) Staff development; (3) Student and school culture; (4) Policy and procedures; and (5) Parent and community outreach and partnerships. A policy review is also being conducted by the PRSD School Board and administration related to nondiscrimination. This policy review follows an anti-racism resolution passed by the board in July 2020.</p>

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<p>In-Depth Program Review Study Phase: Special Education, World Language, Art</p>	<p>Given the context of the global pandemic and the impact on the educational program, modifications have been made to both the timeline and the process for the in-depth program reviews planned this year in the Special Education (delayed), World Language (modified), and Art (modified).</p> <p>The structure of the work we conduct typically involves departmental and program representation across each of our grade spans and schools. Teacher representatives would typically secure substitutes for these full-day work sessions. Given the overall decrease (nationally and regionally) in substitutes interested in entering classrooms during the pandemic and the number of classrooms that need coverage for teachers working virtually, we would be unable to support this model without impacting our programming.</p> <p>In addition, the Special Education program review would involve a number of different representatives from across departments, as well as grade spans, buildings, and roles (e.g. special and regular education teachers; psychologists; intervention specialists; reading specialists; administrators; etc.). This program review has a scope that is too large to accommodate within the current context. As a result, we have deferred this review to the 2021-2022 school year, at which time we hope conditions have improved and staffing will be available to support our needs.</p> <p>Within the World Language and Art departments, we have such a small number of individual teachers that we did not want to exclude anyone from the process as each lens by building, grade span, and course type (e.g. language or art focus) need to be represented. An intentional “pause” until the month of October was put into place, in order to allow us to settle into the new year and hybrid models given the impact of the pandemic on our educational system. After meeting with the Academic Leadership Council members, a plan has been outlined to utilize a “flipped” model of work up until the January 2021 time period.</p> <p>A podcast introducing the departments to the work ahead and asking them to complete critical framing activities was sent out at the end of October. The scheduled in-service sessions for the rest of the 2020 - 2021 school year will focus solely on the work of the in-depth program review for each of these departments. This will allow all members to participate in the review, without the need for classroom coverage. The process itself is an incredible professional development experience as the committees analyze data; conduct research in their fields; and speak with both community and other K-12 partners recognized for their excellence within a content area.</p> <p>The committees will accomplish as much as possible in this unique circumstance to move the process forward toward eventual recommendations. The possibility of extending beyond the school year exists; yet we will stay focused on the outcomes and complete the report effectively and efficiently in a modified manner.</p>
<p>In-Depth Program Review Implementation Phase: Science; Health & PE; Math; Business & Computer Science; Social Studies; Gifted and/or Highly Achieving; English Language Arts; Library; Music</p>	<p>Building administrators, senior leadership team members, department chairpersons and teachers are implementing the recommendations from the in-depth program reviews in Science (2016-17), Health/PE (2016-17), Mathematics (2017-18), Business/Computer Science (2017-18), Social Studies (2018-19), Gifted and/or Highly Achieving (2018-19), Music (2019-20), Library (2019-20), and English Language Arts (2019-20). Each department is monitoring the implementation process through shared action plans.</p> <p>Significant progress is being made in each of these departments, with those in the initial years reflecting the most change and progress towards full implementation, with the exception this year of the Music, Library, and English Language Arts, as they have been impacted by the pandemic and necessity to focus on health/safety and the current educational delivery models within the hybrid. We are seeing an increased need to coordinate the work between departments where recommendations are aligned and to be integrated. Examples exist between social studies, library, and English Language Arts, related to social justice, diversity, and current events being brought into the classroom through text, discussion, and resources of varying perspectives.</p>

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	<p>Engaging the ALC members, principals, and teachers across each department has amplified the impact of the work and allows for the integration of work to be best coordinated for each recommendation with transcending impact. We previously established quarterly action plan meetings with the leadership teams for each department engaged in the implementation phase to prioritize and take action on each of the next steps. These meetings will continue as is possible, balancing the demand for focus on learning within the hybrid and the ability to move forward with new recommendations.</p>
<p>Budget Awareness and Future-Focused Financial Planning</p>	<p>The development and implementation of long-range financial strategies have been an area of ongoing study and action for the school board and administration for many years through the Pine-Richland School District strategic plan. However, COVID-19 has economic implications for both the short- and long-term planning horizon. Consistent with our annual approach, we are focused on an analysis of the key drivers for revenue and expenditure (e.g., staffing levels, debt service, transportation, capital funding, technology and curricular supplies). Our operational efficiency measures continue to reflect a strong return-on-investment for the educational program at Pine-Richland. We need to continue to refine our systematic and integrated approach to short- and long-term expenditures grounded in the mission/vision/values and strategic plan. A continued focus exists on strategic decision-making to ensure a strong financial position currently and in future years.</p>
<p>Primary Schools Redistricting for 2021 - 2022 (Hance, Richland and Wexford)</p>	<p>During the development of the 2019-2023 strategic plan, the district identified a need to conduct an updated demographic study given the increasing trend in enrollment within the Wexford Elementary School zone. A new study was conducted in the 2019-2020 school year to provide updated information about the 10-year enrollment projections for our school. The study involved geocoding students to homes, understanding the new and planned constructions, township birth statistics, etc. to have the best possible statistical projections for our community. The prior demographic study's 10-year projections from 2016 were accurate and provided a solid foundation from which the demographers could work to build the new set of data.</p> <p>While the overall enrollment of the district has remained stable for the last 10 years and is projected to remain stable for the next 10 years, our district has seen significant increases in enrollment in the West (Township of Pine), while the enrollment in the East (Richland Township) has been declining over time. The net result is stable enrollment, with a shift of population from "East to West" within our district, given the number of constructed and planned real estate developments yielding in-migration. Beyond the 2020-21 school year, Wexford Elementary School would have been unable to absorb additional increases in sections and still deliver educational programming as intended (e.g. special areas classes and related services).</p> <p>Given the new projections and a list of established decision-making criteria about which the administration and board achieved consensus in the spring of 2020, third party demographers (Thomas & Williamson and Davis Demographics) developed two viable redistricting scenarios for consideration of the administration and school board. On October 5, 2020, these scenarios were shared for review at a future committee meeting held on October 19, 2020, where Scenario B was recommended by administration. Scenario B considers all decision-making criteria and allows for the most confidence in the educational programming and accommodations of projected sections within each school. On November 4th, a virtual town hall session was held to engage the community in a question/answer session. Some questions were submitted in advance through a survey and others were asked "live" through the same monitored form. Board approval of the recommendation is pending on November 16th. Community updates have been shared via district eBlasts and will continue throughout the planning and implementation phases of this key strategic initiative, with the focus shifting to logistical work and the supportive transition of impacted students, families, and staff to their new building.</p>

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<p>Student Information and Financial Software System Evaluation</p>	<p>The Student Information System (SIS) and Financial Software System (FIS) form a backbone for day-to-day operations within the district. Following a detailed project migration plan by the technology department and the human resources/business office, both new systems - SapphireK12 (SIS) and Tyler InfiniteVisions (FIS) - went live on July 1, 2020.</p> <p>SapphireK12 Initial support from the SapphireK12 team has been positive. The selected system has enabled different uses for our district. In the last few weeks, the Pine-Richland Sapphire Community Web Portal (CWP) opened and over 7,600 users (students and/or guardians) have logged in to view student bus assignments, class schedules, homerooms, and complete forms. Year-to-date, over 5,000 forms have been completed and submitted electronically at the high school level. In years past, these forms were completed on paper. We will continue to evaluate data processes and the integration of the Sapphire system to our workflows.</p> <p>Tyler InfiniteVisions Throughout the summer, the business office ran two parallel systems. The former system, eFinance, will be used through December 31, 2020, in order to close out audit entries and accruals and other reports from the previous fiscal year. Future configuration sessions have been scheduled in January 2021 for year-end processing and in June 2021 for fiscal year-end processing.</p>
<p>School Safety and Security</p>	<p>The district continues to take a strategic approach to the topic of school safety and security. We know that incidents of school safety and security raise many questions and feelings with students, staff, families and the community. This is true whether the incident is specific to our community or connected to other parts of the region or country. Fostering a safe and positive school environment sets the foundation for learning. As a district, we focus on a wide range of actions to strengthen that culture.</p> <p>Experts agree that many aspects of safety and security, such as preventative measures and response protocols, should not be publicly discussed. However, when a specific incident occurs, a threat assessment is conducted with law enforcement and other relevant agencies to determine next steps. A series of heightened security procedures are implemented based on the details. The investigation is then conducted by relevant administrators and/or law enforcement officials. Within the confines of state and federal laws, the district also communicates with stakeholders in a timely manner with updates as appropriate (e.g., FERPA).</p> <p>In addition to the steps identified above, the District has reviewed, amended, and approved a revised Memorandum of Understanding ("MOU") with the Northern Regional Police Department that provides for the creation of a School Resource Officer position within the District. Starting in the 2020-2021 school year, the SRO is working in conjunction with the District's Safety and Security Coordinators to provide additional safety and security measures as well as greater police presence at the secondary campus. It is our goal to create a positive, welcoming environment for our students and families. The NRPD shares our vision. Through training, dialogue, and the setting of expectations we will work to ensure that the presence of and collaboration with the SRO is a positive addition to our schools.</p>