

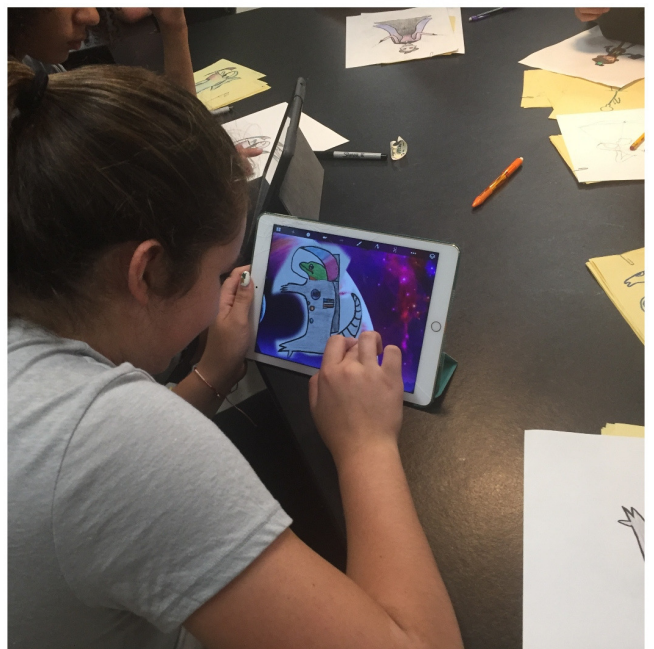
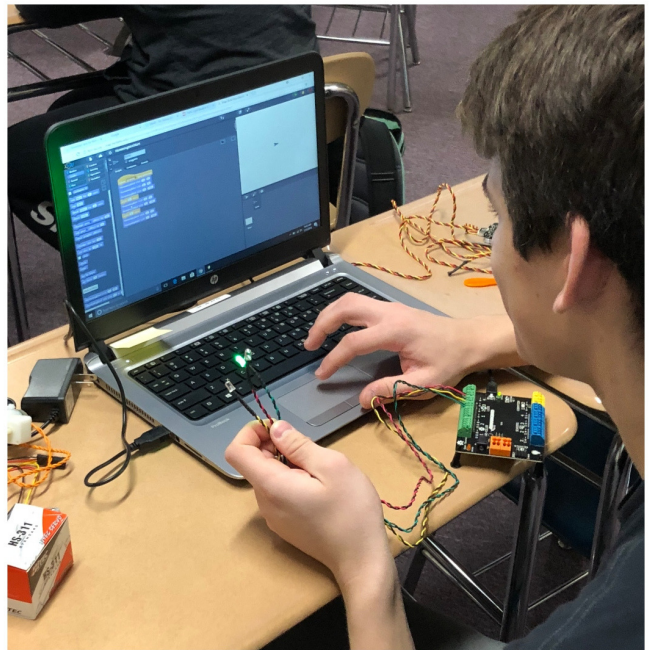
INSPIRE

THE MENDON-UPTON REGIONAL SCHOOLS
STRATEGIC PLAN

2018-2023

#MURSDInspires






"To make real progress in preparing all students to succeed in the 21st century, schools need to tap into the passions of students, help them develop critical skills and decisive life advantages, and *inspire* them."

-Tony Wagner & Ted Dintersmith,
Most Likely to Succeed

TABLE OF CONTENTS



MURSD Beliefs About Learning	2
Superintendent's Message	3
The Process	4
MURSD Mission Statement	5
MURSD Vision Statement	6
Theory of Action	7
MURSD Portrait of a Graduate	8-9
Strategic Objectives and Initiatives	10-11
MURSD Innovative Elements	13
Appendices	
Appendix A- Resources Used in Planning	14
Appendix B- Data Sources Used in Planning	15
Appendix C- Core Strategic Plan Team Members	16

WWW.MURSD.ORG

MURSD Beliefs About Learning

Schools that succeed in modern learning have clearly articulated and shared beliefs about learning. Without a collaboratively created belief system that is lived each day through classroom practices and a common language, schools cannot develop each child to his or her potential as a learner. Throughout the recent months, all stakeholders have been reflecting upon the conditions where learners may thrive. The following five beliefs represent our collective wisdom, and will serve as a compass for future directions.

*We believe **LEARNING** happens *most POWERFULLY* and *deeply...**

When we
**ESTABLISH
RELATIONSHIPS**
that create a *safe,*
inclusive, and
SUPPORTIVE
environment

When we are **ACTIVE,**
creative, purposeful,
and **REFLECTIVE**

When we nurture
CURIOSITY,
discover interests,
and pursue **PASSIONS**

When we engage in
**AUTHENTIC
EXPERIENCES** and
create products that
have **MEANING** and
RELEVANCE beyond
the classroom

Through
**MEANINGFUL
COLLABORATION**
among **STUDENTS,**
educators, families,
and the **larger
community**

Superintendent's Message



It is an *exciting time* for all of us to be **LEARNERS**. With the emergence of ubiquitous technologies never has so much information been at our fingertips. Technology has also created a world that is ever-connected and provides learning opportunities, both **locally** and **globally**, that were once not possible.

Simultaneously, we are living in a world of **constant change** and the simple reality is that we are preparing a generation of students for jobs that may not exist today. To be prepared for this **knowledge-based economy**, we still need to provide our students a basic foundation in literacy and numeracy. However, we must also provide them essential skills such as critical thinking, problem solving, effective communication, collaboration, and curiosity. These skills are essential not only for success in the workplace, but also for lifelong learning and *informed civic engagement* that our country so desperately needs from a new generation.

“ ... we also need to cultivate a strong sense of adaptability and independence in our students so they may take risks and not be afraid to fail. ”

Because of the rapid pace of change, we also need to cultivate a strong sense of **adaptability** and **INDEPENDENCE** in our students so they may **take risks** as learners and **not be afraid to fail**. We must provide them with a solid sense of agency, supporting them to pursue learning about topics of their passion, **making real-world connections** and **creating authentic products**. Every child must know that he/she has a teacher that is deeply invested in his/her success. These student-teacher relationships are the foundation of a **SAFE**, inclusive, and empowering school culture, one where all learners develop resiliency.

Our new district strategic plan, **Inspire**, details a forward-thinking blueprint of the type of school culture and learning opportunities that the children of Mendon and Upton deserve. Not all of the ideas are new, but all are critical for our students' success. Thus, there must be a **strong sense of URGENCY** to change some of the existing school structures and practices that do not align with our district's *Beliefs About Learning* (p. 2) or *Innovative Elements* (p. 13), which are the non-negotiables in our quest to fulfill the vision of this plan.

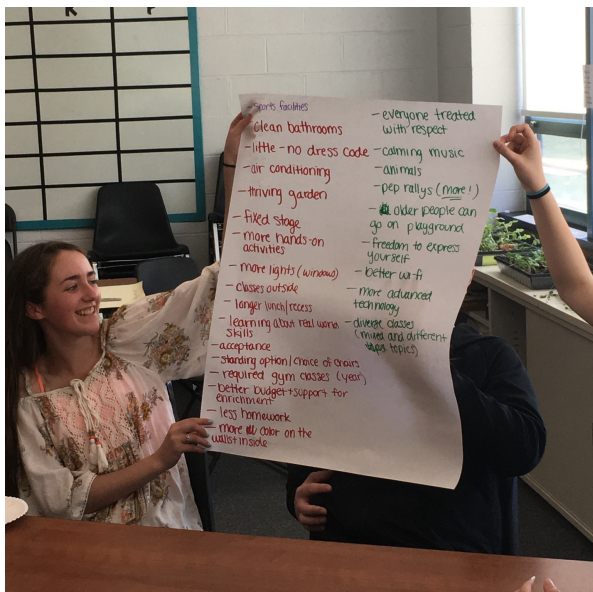
As always, the education of our kids is a shared responsibility. It is my hope that this plan is simply the beginning of an ongoing conversation and partnership with our families and the larger community to meet the many needs of our modern learners. I am truly inspired for what the future holds for our students... I hope you are too!

Cordially,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joe Maruszczak".

Joseph P. Maruszczak, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

The Process



"The focus should be on how to share a bold and audacious vision and make it both tied to the reality of the 21st century and filled with pictures of success and possibility."

-Rachel Curtis & Elizabeth City,
Strategy In Action

After the majority of the 2017-18 school year focused on a district-wide exploration of modern learning, the strategic planning process commenced in March 2018. A Core Strategic Plan Team of 30 teachers, students, administrators, parents, and community members was formed and met six times throughout the spring and summer. Each session was facilitated by Dr. Cathy Cummins, Executive Director of the Assabet Valley Collaborative.

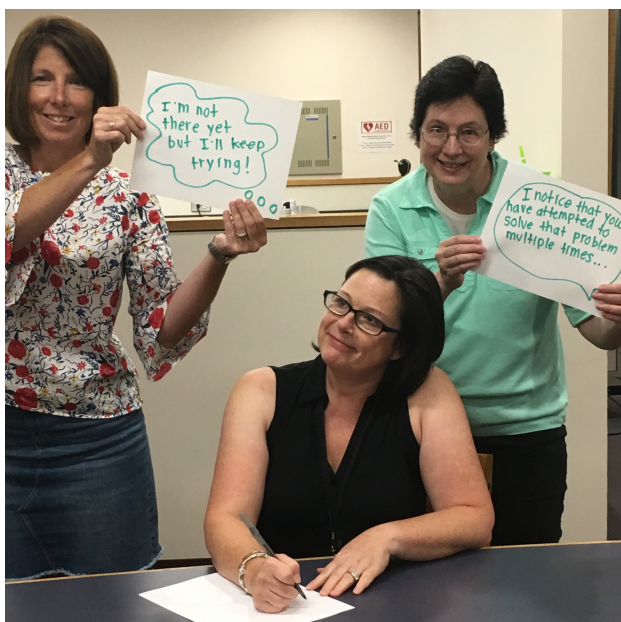
Dr. Cummins led the team in using the *Planning for Success* model as supported by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary & Secondary Education. The model requires that the participants envision the future using a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) Analysis and analyze district performance, using both quantitative and qualitative data (see p.15), for trends and patterns. Part of the qualitative feedback also included information derived from five separate focus groups that were conducted with middle and high school students and MURSD parents/community members. The model also promotes a backward design where all improvement strategies are derived from specific, desired student outcomes (see *Portrait of a MURSD Graduate*, pp. 8-9), which are based upon current research on what all students need to be successful.

The team used two different protocols to develop the *Portrait of a MURSD Graduate*, exploring general learning profiles of current students in the district, but also studying projections of market occupational outlook, answering this essential question:

What knowledge & skills will our graduates need to be successful in 2023 and beyond?

From these profile outcomes, the process of vision building followed where participants brainstormed the programs and practices needed to successfully address the vision. The team started with the aspirational "ideal," asking the questions, "What do we want to see in our schools?" and "What do all kids need to be successful?" Again, the team studied both qualitative and quantitative data about the quality of programs and services in our schools, asking the critical question, "What does that data say about our current practices or structures and the challenge/disconnect?"

From the answers to those questions, we have created a series of four overarching goals, or Strategic Objectives, to guide our programming, services, and staffing priorities through the next five years. (*More details follow on pp.10-12 .*)

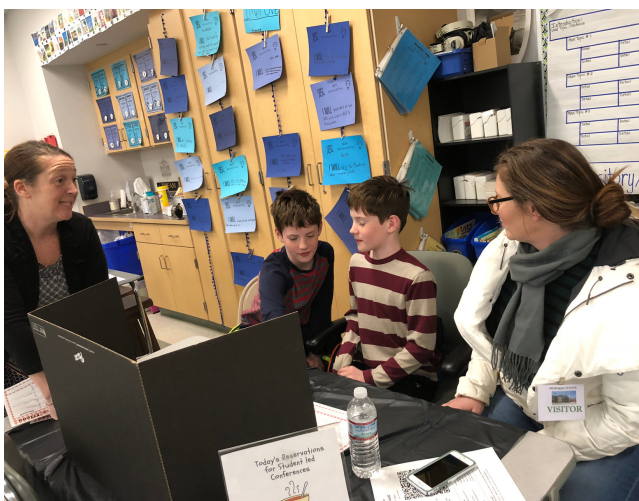


MURSD Mission Statement



The Mission Statement is the fundamental description of what the district does, whom it serves, and its core reason for being. It should be the foundation of all meaningful decision-making and goal-setting. If written properly, it communicates succinctly and quickly. It is clear and unambiguous and can be implemented by all who work for the district. The mission of the Mendon-Upton Regional School District is:

We empower all learners to thrive.



"We must lead children to grow in ways that are not captured by standardized measures... we must consider all aspects of children's growth, including safety, emotional well-being, and health."

-Thomas Hoerr,
*The Formative Five: Fostering Grit,
Empathy, & Other Success Skills Every
Student Needs*

MURSD Vision Statement



The vision of a district is a picture of what is attainable in the future. It is a statement that everyone will strive to reach and attain. As it is developed, the district needs to ensure that the vision is sustainable. The statement developed by the Core Planning Team represents beliefs and aspirations that encompass the passion that each member brought to this process. The vision of the Mendon-Upton Regional School District is:

In order to bring our mission to life, we will:

- Create programs, practices, and partnerships that value the whole child
- Lead innovation
- Inspire meaningful learning that ignites individual passions
- Reimagine education to align with our beliefs about learning
- Leverage technology to communicate, collaborate, and innovate
- Expand our definition of success beyond traditional metrics to celebrate the diverse talents, interests, accomplishments, and growth of the learner
- Engage students, parents, educators, and the community in an ongoing partnership focused on learning



Theory of Action



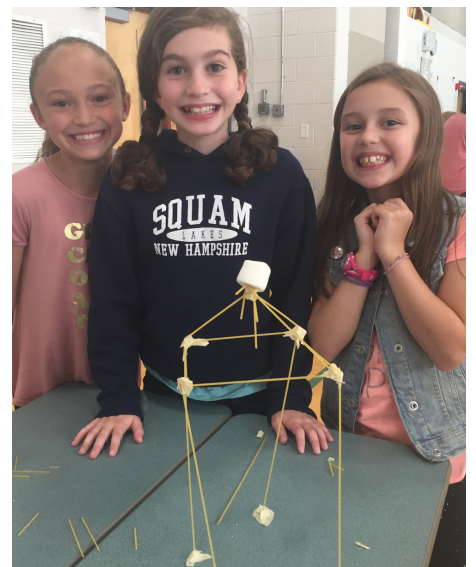
A Theory of Action describes the beliefs that encompass an organization's strategy and links the strategy to the organization's vision. It can be thought of as the storyline that makes the vision and resulting strategy concrete. It is a hypothesis using an if-then statement to articulate what will be achieved and how, in the broadest sense, it will be achieved. The following Theory of Action is embraced by the MURSD Core Strategic Planning Team to effectuate positive changes in the district:

If we engage the community as true partners in learning, support social-emotional learning as an essential competency, and redefine and reimagine school structures and practices so they are closely aligned with our Beliefs About Learning, then we will produce graduates who are mindful learners, global citizens, solution seekers, effective communicators, inspired innovators, and skillful collaborators.



"Design school focused on student passions. Give students real work to do. Get them out of classrooms and out into the community."

-Suzie Boss,
*All Together Now: How to Engage
Your Stakeholders in Reimagining
School*

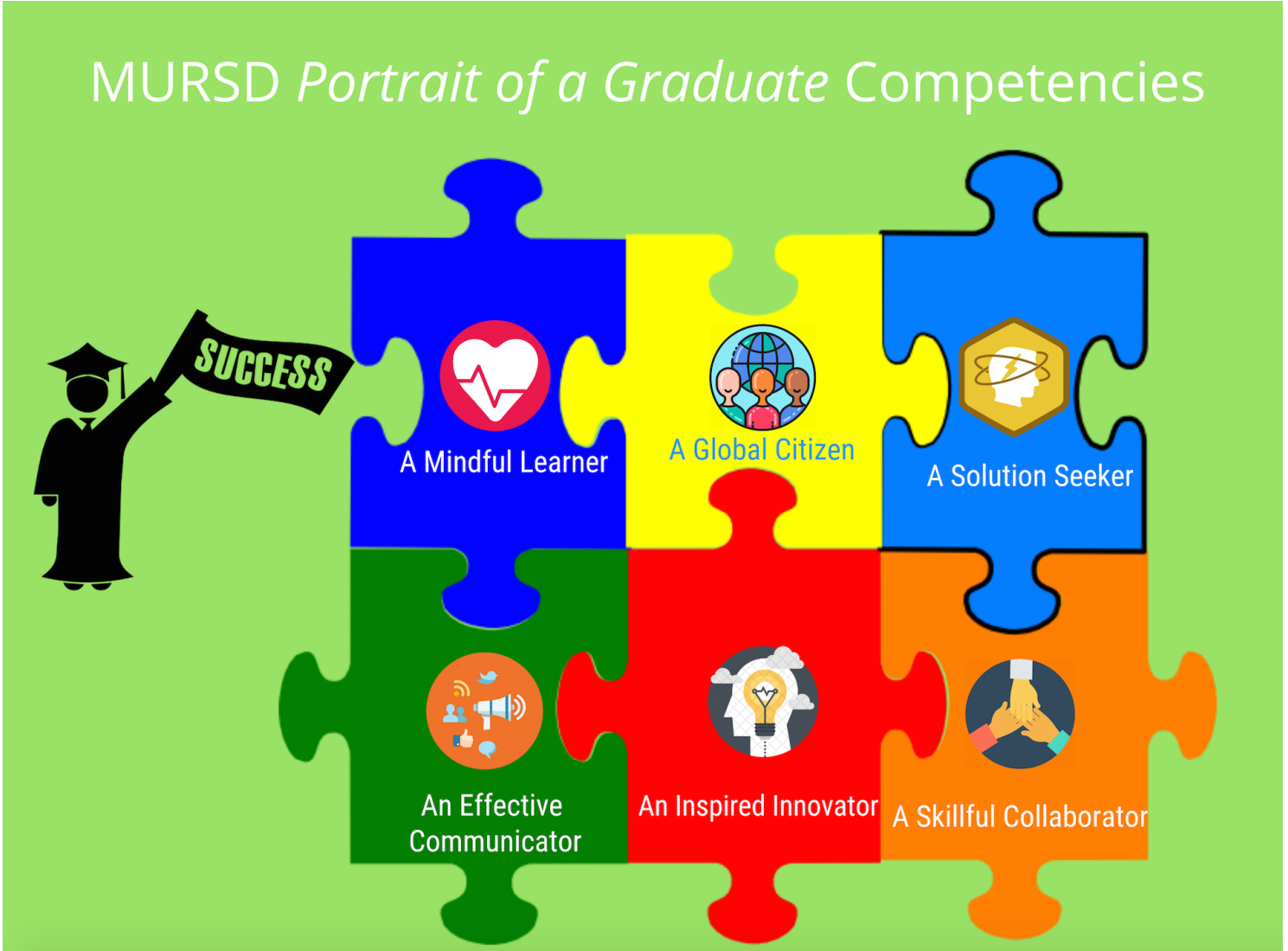




MURSD Portrait of a Graduate

Like other forward-thinking public school districts across the United States, the MURSD has created a **Portrait of a Graduate** profile to answer this question: *What are the skills necessary for success for all students in this rapidly changing, increasingly diverse, and interconnected world?* The *Portrait of a Graduate* competencies move MURSD students and staff members to look beyond the high-stakes testing environment and help our students develop skills, so they can be successful in the world and in the workforce of the future.

The next two pages detail the vision of the *Portrait of a Graduate* for our district. The intent is to create a tangible set of outcomes that all stakeholders can expect to see in our graduates. Alignment of this vision to resources, time, and professional practices will be necessary so all students may have opportunities to develop each aspect of the portrait to their fullest potential.



MURSD PoG Competencies in Detail

A Global Citizen



The MURSD Graduate:

- Demonstrates understanding of others' perspectives and needs
- Demonstrates value for diversity of experiences, culture and perspectives
- Respects cultural differences and works effectively with people from a range of social and cultural backgrounds
- Leverages social and cultural differences to create new ideas and increase both innovation and quality of work

A Solution Seeker



The MURSD Graduate:

- Identifies, defines, and solves authentic problems and essential questions
- Reflects critically on learning experiences, processes, and solutions
- Monitors comprehension - recognizes when obstacles are encountered, diagnoses obstacles and selects appropriate strategies to work through them
- Values, seeks, and evaluates sources of help

A Skillful Collaborator



The MURSD Graduate:

- Demonstrates ability to work effectively and respectfully with diverse teams in a variety of formats
- Exercises flexibility and willingness to try on or build on the ideas of others when they differ from one's own
- Assumes shared responsibility for collaborative work, and values individual contributions made by other team members
- Elicits input from others in a variety of ways

An Inspired Innovator



The MURSD Graduate:

- Views failure as an opportunity to learn, understanding that creativity and innovation is a long-term cyclical process
- Adapts to varied roles, jobs, responsibilities, schedules and contexts
- Uses a wide range of idea creation techniques
- Elaborates, refines, analyzes, evaluates, and iterates ideas in order to maximize creative efforts
- Seeks and incorporates feedback and reflection

A Mindful Learner



The MURSD Graduate:

- Has a growth mindset
- Recognizes one's own emotions, thoughts, and values and how they influence behavior
- Successfully regulates one's emotions, thoughts, and behaviors in different situations
- Has the ability to set and persist toward personal and academic goals
- Makes constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions based on ethical standards, safety concerns, and social norms

An Effective Communicator



The MURSD Graduate:

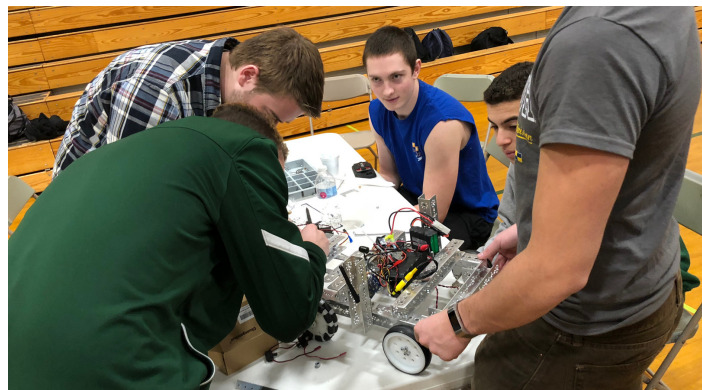
- Articulates thoughts and ideas effectively using oral, written, and nonverbal communication skills in a variety of forms and contexts
- Uses communication for a range of purposes
- Listens effectively to decipher meaning, including knowledge, values, attitudes and intentions
- Utilizes multiple media and technologies, and knows how to judge their effectiveness and their impact

Strategic Objectives

Based upon the compilation of both quantitative and qualitative data sources, the plan's priorities may be broken down into two categories: **strategic objectives** and **strategic initiatives**. The strategic objectives are the “big rocks” or the overarching goals that must guide the district in its work over the next several years. The strategic initiatives are specific programs, structures, practices, and staffing that promote the district's successful achievement of the strategic objectives.

MURSD Strategic Objectives:

We will **ENGAGE**
the community
as *partners*
in **LEARNING**.



We will support
social-emotional learning
so our schools are **SAFE**,
healthy, and **BALANCED**
learning environments.

We will **REDEFINE**
and *reimagine*
school to **EMPOWER**
learning for a
modern context.



We will **ALIGN**
our
professional practices
with the
MURSD
Beliefs About Learning.

Strategic Initiatives



The four strategic objectives are supported by a total of 23 strategic initiatives. Each of these strategic initiatives will be further defined by specific action plans that will detail key goals, actions, and benchmarks for successful completion. As it is not realistic to complete all initiatives in any given single year, action plans for prioritized strategic initiatives will be completed on an annual basis. Below are the 23 strategic initiatives categorized by each strategic objective.



Engaging the Community as Partners in Learning

- *Improving School & Classroom Communication with Our Families*
- *Developing Internships, Job-Shadowing, and Service Learning Opportunities*
- *Creating Cross-Grade and Cross-School Connections for Learning*
- *Engaging Authentic Audiences to Support Real Work that Matters*
- *Defining, Communicating, and Celebrating Authentic Learning*
- *Sustaining and Ensuring Efficiency of District Operations*
- *Developing Partnerships That Draw Upon the Expertise of the Community*

Supporting Social-Emotional Learning

- *Providing Tiered SEL Supports and Interventions*
- *Teaching and Modeling the SEL (CASEL) Core Competencies*
- *Planning for Safety, Crisis, & Resiliency*
- *Revising and Implementing District-Wide Health & Wellness Programming*



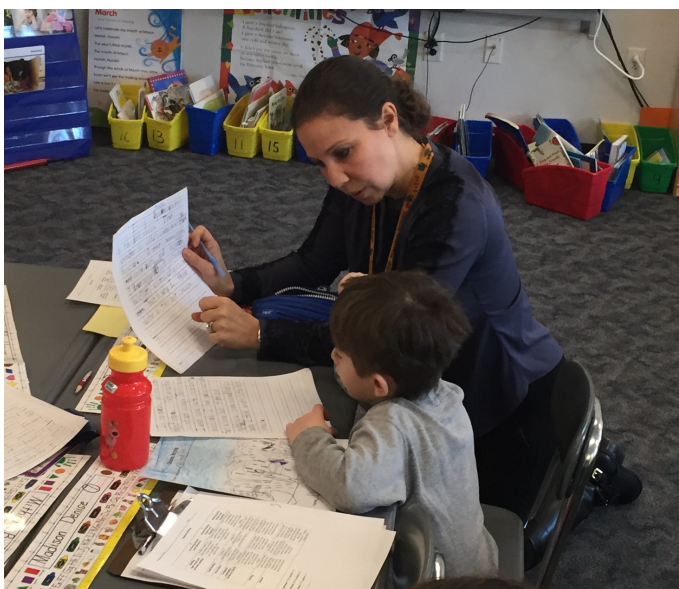
Redefining & Reimagining School

- *Redesigning Use of Space & Time in Learning Environments*
- *Developing Interdisciplinary & Project-Based Experiences*
- *Providing Coherency & Consistency to Homework Practices*
- *Building Global Connections*
- *Revising or Designing Lessons & Units with Real-World Connections and Deep Inquiry*
- *Implementing Maker Education, Robotics, & Emergent Technologies*



Aligning Practices to the MURSD Beliefs About Learning

- *Integrating Project-Based Learning*
- *Supporting District Beliefs About Learning by Ensuring Staffing and Resources*
- *Developing Structures & Practices that Support Student Agency*
- *Developing New Tools to Define & Measure Success*
- *Engaging All Learners in Continuous Feedback & Reflection*
- *Implementing the Four Shifts Framework*



"Trust the teachers to inspire and engage our students. Given trust, community support, and well-conceived standards, our teaching force can be unstoppable."

-Ted Dintersmith
What School Could Be

MURSD Innovative Elements

Embedded within each of the strategic objectives and initiatives are the following six **innovative elements**, which are essential in fulfilling our vision. Each of these elements is critical for our students to be successful in a modern context. While each is complex and merits deep investigation, all intersect to create empowered student learning. Thus, each innovative element will drive our work moving forward.



Learning Culture

Our schools are safe and supportive learning environments where positive relationships come first. We value our students and their families and partner with the community wherever we can. The growth mindset is embedded in all of our practices and learning.



Student Agency

Our students are active, self-directed learners with a voice in what they learn and how they learn. We encourage them to pursue what they are passionate about learning.



Technology That Amplifies Learning

Our students leverage technology in a safe and purposeful way so they may be effective communicators, collaborators, and innovators.



Authentic Work That Matters

Our students engage in learning experiences and create products that have clear connections to the real world.



Growth through Feedback and Reflection

Our assessment practices are grounded in regular, meaningful feedback and continuous reflection to promote individual growth. Through this growth, all students will find success in achieving our *Portrait of a Graduate* competencies.

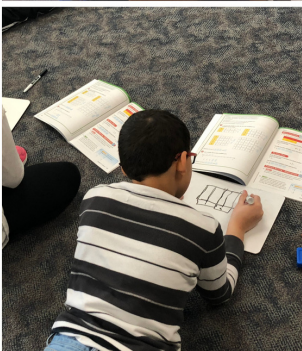


Flexible Learning Environments

We use time, physical space and virtual space flexibly to meet the academic, social-emotional, and vocational needs of our students.

Appendix A

Resources Used in the Strategic Planning Process



Books

- *All Together Now: How to Engage Your Stakeholders in Reimagining School*, by Suzie Boss
- *Most Likely to Succeed*, Tony Wagner and Ted Dintersmith
- *Bold Moves: How We Create Remarkable Learning Environments*, Heidi Hayes Jacobs and Marie Hubley Alcock
- *Learning Transformed*, Eric Sheninger and Thomas Murray
- *Uncommon Learning*, Eric Sheninger
- *Becoming Brilliant*, Roberta Michnick Golinkoff and Kathy Hirsh-Pasek
- *Building School 2.0: How to Create the Schools We Need*, Chris Lehmann and Zac Chase

Articles/Resources

- [10 Principles for Schools of Modern Learning](#) (Change.School)
- [Most Likely to Succeed](#) film Learning Sparks
- [Remake Learning Playbook](#) (The Sprout Fund)
- [The Iowa BIG Model](#)
- [Profile of a Graduate Samples](#) (Battelle for Kids)
- [Redesigning High Schools for the 21st Century](#) (Standard Social Innovation Review)
- [Pathways to Prosperity Network](#)

Schools

- [The Apollo School](#)- Central York HS (York, PA)
- [High Tech High](#) (San Diego, CA)
- [Mount Vernon Institute for Innovation](#) (Atlanta, GA)
- [Partnership for 21st Century Learning Exemplar Schools](#)
- [Deeper Learning Network Schools](#)

Strategic Planning Resources

- [Planning for Success Model](#) (DESE)
- [Empowering Modern Learners](#) (Peel School Board, Peel, Ontario)

Appendix B

Data Sources Used in the Strategic Planning Process

School Climate/Social-Emotional Learning

- [K12 Insight School Climate Survey Results- Spring 2018](#)
- [MetroWest Adolescent Health Survey Results, 2012-2016](#) (Presentation to the MURSD School Committee)

Technology

- [MURSD Technology Plan, 2016-2021](#)
- [MURSD 1:1 Learning Program Evaluation Report](#)
- [Presentation on 1:1 Learning Evaluation Report](#)

Visioning/Beliefs

- [Summary of Visioning/Emergent Themes from Focus Groups w/Students & Parents- Spring 2018](#)
- [Miscoe Faculty Beliefs About Learning](#)
- [Nipmuc Faculty Beliefs About Learning](#) (Including student *Food for Thought* data)

Homework

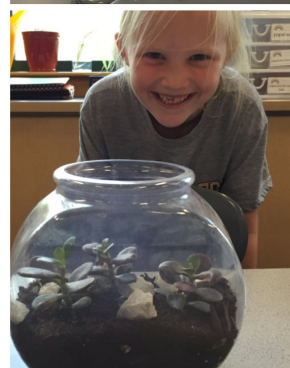
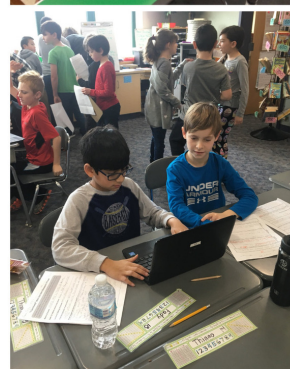
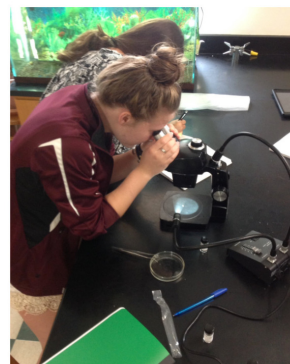
- [Nipmuc Student Responses during Food for Thought Lunches](#)
- [Teacher Responses to MURSD Homework Survey](#)
- [Parent Responses to MURSD Homework Survey](#)

Student Assessment

- [MURSD District Profile \(DESE\)](#)
- [HP Clough Elementary School Profile \(DESE\)](#)
- [Memorial Elementary School Profile \(DESE\)](#)
- [Miscoe Hill Middle School Profile \(DESE\)](#)
- [Nipmuc Regional High School Profile \(DESE\)](#)

Previous Strategic Plan

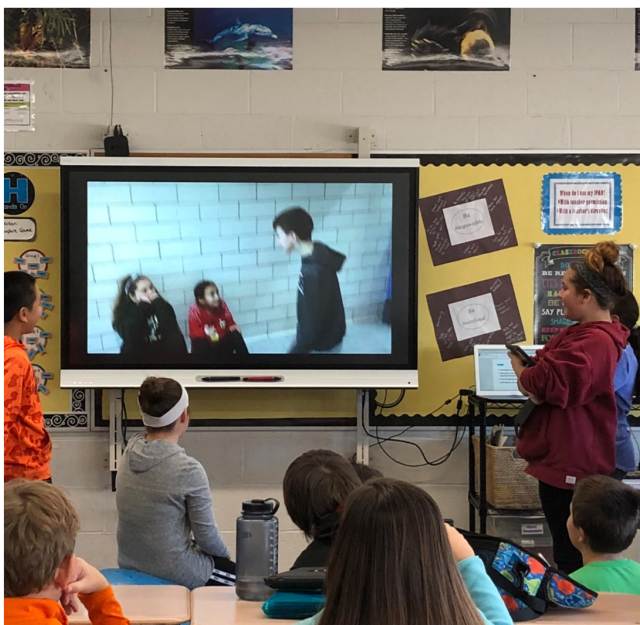
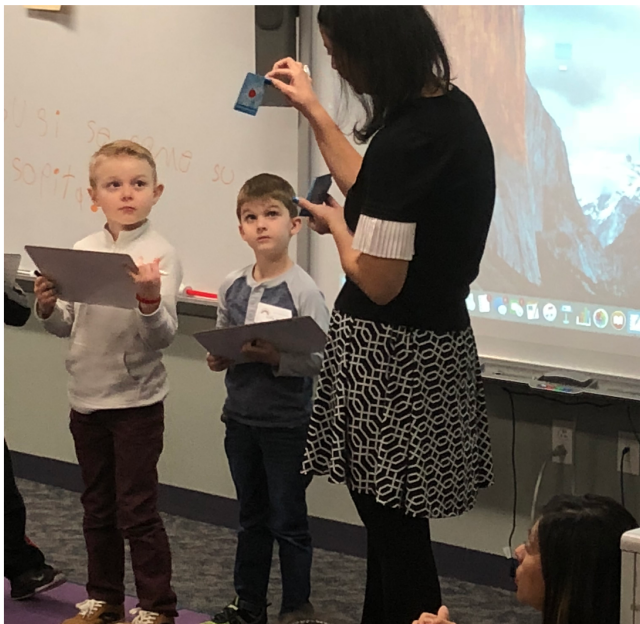
- [Status Report of Forward, the MURSD Strategic Plan, 2013-18](#)



Appendix C

Core Strategic Plan Team Members

Name	Role
Heather Allcock	Parent
Bruce Bisbee	Teacher, Nipmuc Regional HS
James Broe	Parent
Marie Brigham	Teacher, H.P. Clough ES
Jay Byer	MURSD Director of Finance & Operations
Katie Cardamone	MURSD SI Program Coordinator, Teacher, Memorial ES
James Charest	Teacher, Miscoe Hill MS
John Clements	Principal, Nipmuc Regional HS
Alison Clish	Teacher, Nipmuc Regional HS
Maureen Cohen	MURSD Assistant Superintendent of Schools
Chris Condon	Parent
John Dacey	Student, Nipmuc Regional HS
Diane Duncan	MURSD School Committee, Parent
Janice Gallagher	Principal, H.P. Clough ES
Michelle Goddard	Student, Nipmuc Regional HS
Vicki Grisanti	Parent
Stefani Hicks	Guidance Counselor, H.P. Clough ES
Cooper Johnson	Student, Miscoe Hill MS
Joseph Leacu	MURSD Director of Technology Operations
Jennifer Mannion	Principal, Miscoe Hill MS
Caterina Manser	Teacher, Miscoe Hill MS
Paul Marshall	Assistant Principal, Miscoe Hill MS
Joseph Maruszczak	MURSD Superintendent of Schools
Mary Anne Moran	Associate Principal, Nipmuc Regional HS
Kathleen Moeckel	President, MUEF, Parent
Sean Nicholson	MURSD School Committee, Parent
David Quinn	MURSD Director of Technology Integration
Mike Rubin	Parent
Debra Swain	Principal, Memorial ES
Dennis Todd	MURSD Director of Student Support Services



"Our job as teachers, parents, and leaders is not to prepare our kids for 'something.' Our job is to help kids prepare themselves for *anything*."

-John Spencer & A.J. Juliani,
Empower: What Happens When Students Own Their Learning

