

A unified district vision guides our new strategic planning process

Written by Dr. Aldo Sicoli, Superintendent of Robbinsdale Area Schools
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Robbinsdale Area Schools is currently updating our strategic plan for achieving our mission to inspire and educate all learners to discover their potential and positively contribute to their community. Over the past few months, we have assembled an outstanding team of community members, parents, students and staff to participate in a community planning initiative to build a plan that delivers our vision of every student graduating career and college ready.

After working diligently with our current plan and seeing great progress and growth, it was important for our staff to maintain continuity and develop a unified vision to describe our long term, unchanging commitments as a district. We call this framework the “Unified District Vision.”

The Unified District Vision is focused on High Intellectual Performance through Equity for all, in which every student graduates career and college ready. We do this by demanding high expectations for all students and staff and looking at everything through an equity lens.

According to Glenn Singleton, co-author of *“Courageous Conversations About Race,”* creating true equity is “raising the achievement level of ALL students while narrowing the gap between the highest and lowest achieving student populations, and eliminating the racial predictability and disproportion of which student populations occupy the highest and lowest achievement categories.”

Robbinsdale Area Schools is more diverse than ever with 54 percent students of color, 50 percent of students receiving free or reduced priced meals, and more than 68 languages spoken at home. An equity lens ensures we are increasing educational opportunities for all students and are laser-focused on reducing achievement gaps with traditionally underserved communities.

Our Unified District Vision contains four key focus areas to guide our planning process: Culturally Relevant Teaching and Educational Practices, Open Pathways to Success for All

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Students, Empower Family and Community Members as Partners, and Empower Students Through Engaging Learning that Encourages Student Voice.

Through our community planning process, the core team will refine, debate and enhance these goals and focus areas. We know schools play a major role in the success of students and the transformation of communities but we also know we can't do this work alone. Collaboration with families, faith communities, service organizations, businesses, foundations, and policy makers strengthens our work. Over the next two months, each of our core team participants will be meeting with 10-12 community members to gather a broad range of feedback to guide this process. We have important work to do and I am convinced we are on the right track by getting valuable input from our community stakeholders.

Education is in the midst of great change. Technology has changed the way our teachers engage students in the curriculum and share knowledge and information. We are excited about the future of education. We know we are preparing our students for a future that isn't predictable, for jobs that haven't been invented, and for a society that grows more diverse and more connected each year.

Building a strategic plan based on a Unified District Vision ensures that high intellectual performance through an equity lens is central in preparing our students to self-actualize. When we are able to eradicate racial and income achievement gaps and ensure that every student graduates career and college ready, there will be immeasurable benefits for our community, our state and our country.