

# GREAT SCHOOLS, TOGETHER

## UNIT 4 LONG RANGE STRATEGIC PLAN

FINAL REPORT

2008



GREAT SCHOOLS, TOGETHER  
UNIT 4 LONG RANGE STRATEGIC PLAN

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

**A. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY .....4**

**B. SUMMARY OF PLANNING PROCESS .....5**

**C. VISION STATEMENT .....7**

**D. STRATEGIC GOALS, ACTIONS AND MEASURES .....8**

**I. STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT AND WELL-BEING ..... 8**

**II. STEWARDSHIP AND ACCOUNTABILITY ..... 10**

**III. FACULTY AND STAFF EXCELLENCE..... 11**

**IV. ENGAGEMENT OF PARENTS AND THE COMMUNITY ..... 12**

**V. DIVERSITY ..... 14**

**VI. FACILITIES .....15**

# *Acknowledgments*

Listed below are the members of the Vision Committee and the three Working Groups that incorporated the community's feedback into the long-range strategic plan.

## **Vision Committee**

Doug Abbott	Gina Jackson	Tracy Parsons
William Berry	Bruce Knight, Chair	Tom Ramage
Barb Daly	Happy Leman	Julia Rietz
Joan M. Dixon	Mary Logsdon	Gail Rost
Deborah Frank Feinen	Dan McCall	Linda Tortorelli
Deb Foertsch	Dannel McCollum	Phillip R. Van Ness
Peter Fox	Brian Minsker	Laura Weis
Mike Haile	Thom Moore	Joe Williams
Richard Helton	Charles Nash, Sr.	

## **Engaging Community Stakeholder Working Group**

Patricia Avery	Nancy Mullins
Jim Butler, Chair	Ann Ramirez
Marc Changnon	Peg Rawles
Troy Daniels	Pia Sengsavanh
Kelly Hill	Karen Simms
Chuck Jackson	Joe Stovall
Lyn Jones	Joan Walls
Jody Littleton	Nancy Yeagle

## **Infrastructure Working Group**

Jean Ascoli	Michael Harden
Steve Brewer	Mike Herbert
Stuart Broeren	Nancy Holm
John Currey	Lacy Rains
Joe Davis	Lynn Stuckey
Pat Dorsey	Roland White, Chair
Stephanie Eckels	John Woods
Don Fournier	Susan Zola
Mary Kay Gwinup	

## **Programs Working Group**

Al Anderson	Brenda Koenig
Tom Cech	Audrey LeGrande
Lizanne DeStefano	Pat Lewis
Ruth Ann Evans	Linda Morris
Stephanie Fadale	Maria Thompson
Paul Faraci	Patrick Thompson, Chair
Mildred Griggs	D'Andre Weaver
Terry Hazlewood	Lisa Wilson
Kathleen Hoppa-Grady	

## **Lead Facilitators**

Stig Lanesskog	Elizabeth Perrachione
----------------	-----------------------

# *Executive Summary*

The Unit 4 School District's initiative Great Schools, Together was conceived by the Unit 4 School Board and supported by the Administration. This initiative brought community members together to share their vision for our schools, now and in the future. The process began in November 2007 and concluded in September 2008.

*The goal of Great Schools, Together was to create a cohesive, long-range strategic plan for Unit 4 schools—using as much community input as possible—so that the Unit 4 School Board and Administration could move forward in ways that truly reflect the vision and goals of those they serve.*

The plan for Unit 4 includes a vision statement and six strategic goals in the following focus areas:

- I. Student Achievement and Well-being
- II. Stewardship and Accountability
- III. Faculty and Staff Excellence
- IV. Engagement of Parents and the Community
- V. Diversity
- VI. Facilities

Aligned with each goal are short, medium and long-term action steps. The time horizons for implementing and realizing the results of these actions are defined as follows:

*Short term:* accomplished within 3 years

*Medium term:* accomplished within 8 years

*Long term:* accomplished within 15 years

In addition, outcome measures, to track progress towards each of the goals, are defined.

Based on input from the community, **several priorities for Unit 4 emerged**, specifically:

- Establish and sustain effective *two-way communication with the community*
- Establish a *uniform, proactive approach regarding behavior/discipline* in the District that emphasizes positive models, desired behaviors, and family involvement
- Develop a *10-year Capital Improvement Plan (CIP)*, prioritizing well-defined known needs, while preparing for long-term changes
- Optimize *class size* to foster academic achievement
- Increase *time in the school day* and improve *flexibility of class scheduling*
- Hire, support and retain *qualified faculty and staff* by creating excellent teaching environments
- Utilize *evidence-based curriculum and assessment* that incorporates teaching methods appropriate to all students' learning styles
- Offer *choices for special education and gifted students* with regard to program placement, rather than a one-size-fits-all approach

- Prepare students to communicate in a global environment by offering *foreign language as a core component*, by introducing foreign language instruction in K-5, and by increasing the number of languages offered in middle and high school to more non-traditional offerings
- Develop an assessment tool for determining *equity between facilities* and bring each facility up to a consistent base line
- Create a *Location Team* of school staff, City of Champaign, Village of Savoy, Champaign Park District staff, and development community to begin identifying locations for new school facilities
- Create an *Educational Programming Team*, similar to the CIP team that is comprised of educators, staff, facilities managers and educational programming consultants and architects. Both teams will work together to determine what is best for facilities and infrastructure improvements over the long term.

The Unit 4 Board of Education will be responsible for overseeing the implementation of this plan and for engaging the community in an ongoing planning process. The Unit 4 Administration will use this long-range strategic plan to create more detailed action plans and responsibilities to achieve the aims of the Great Schools, Together initiative.

## ***B. Summary of Planning Process***

### **Overview**

To achieve the aims of the Great Schools, Together initiative, the community was engaged in a variety of ways. Community members served on a Vision Committee, in Working Groups, and as facilitators. All other community members were encouraged to attend one or more of ten community forums to brainstorm and share ideas. Held between March and May of 2008, these forums were scheduled at a variety of times and in various locations throughout the community. The hope was that everyone interested could attend at least one forum. Seven of the forums were theme-based, focusing on: Excellence & Equity, Programs, Infrastructure, and Engaging Community Stakeholders. Three—the first and last two forums—were open for participants to choose the topics they wanted to discuss.

Notes were generated after each of the forums. E-mailed to participants and posted on the Web site, these notes were also sent to members of the Vision Committee and Working Groups. *It was the community's comments, offered during these ten forums, that provided the core content for the long-range plans compiled by the three Working Groups—Programs, Infrastructure, and Engaging Community Stakeholders. The Vision Committee also referred back to these notes as they compiled the three separate plans into a cohesive whole.*

## **Structure and Roles**

### *Vision Committee*

The Unit 4 School Board invited community members to be part of the Vision Committee (VC). This committee was formed with the intention of ensuring—to the best of the Board’s ability—that all main community interests were represented. The VC’s role included: defining the vision of the District, launching and overseeing the planning process, and combining the three plans submitted by the Working Groups into a cohesive whole. The Vision Committee met ten times during the process.

The VC identified three main topic areas for the long-range plan—Programs, Infrastructure, and Engaging Community Stakeholders. Working Groups were created to focus on each of these areas.

### *Working Groups*

Members of the Working Groups (WG) were invited by Board and VC members. The members selected were deemed to have the expertise necessary for each group, and represent all of the community stakeholder groups. The WG’s pored over the community input, meeting either weekly or every other week for a few months to create three separate draft plans which they submitted to the VC.

### *Community Forums*

Ten community forums were scheduled from March to May of 2008. The first and last two forums were open-topic. This started the process with participants sharing those topics that were most important to them, and ended with the opportunity for participants to cover anything they felt had not been shared during the previous forums. The remaining seven forums mirrored the themes of the Working Groups, focusing on Programs, Infrastructure, and Engaging Community Stakeholders. Excellence & Equity was also added as a forum topic, given past challenges that resulted in the Consent Decree.

Over 265 individuals, from a broad cross-section of the community, participated in the forums. Forty community members with facilitation experience volunteered their time to facilitate the forums. Notes from each Forum were typed up and, where possible, compiled into themes. Throughout the process, these notes were posted on the Great Schools, Together Web site and e-mailed to those who attended the forums or requested a copy be sent to them.

## ***C. Vision Statement***

In partnership with the community, Unit 4 will be an exemplary school district that promotes each student's opportunity to succeed in a global environment.

To achieve this vision the District is committed to:

- Empowering strong leadership, demanding accountability, and inspiring performance at the highest level
- Operating through a culture of long-range planning implemented through short-term action plans
- Providing world-class, sustainable facilities and technology that support learning
- Providing comprehensive, research-based educational programming that supports student achievement
- Recognizing, embracing and celebrating diversity
- Fostering a safe environment where all students and employees are valued and respected
- Hiring, supporting and retaining faculty and staff known for their excellence in educating students
- Building partnerships with parents, the community, local businesses and higher education to strengthen each student's educational experience
- Acting as a responsible steward of the community's resources

# ***D. Strategic Goals, Actions and Measures***

## **I. Student Achievement and Well-Being**

*Goal: Foster high academic achievement, wellness and well-being among all learners in a safe, supportive environment*

### **Short-term actions**

- A. Establish a uniform, proactive approach regarding behavior/discipline in the District that emphasizes positive models, desired behaviors, and family involvement
- B. Provide more in-depth solutions to recurring and serious behavior problems
- C. Implement a bullying prevention program
- D. Make procedures and criteria for identifying and serving special education and gifted students transparent to professionals and families
- E. Offer choices for special education and gifted students with regard to program placement, rather than a one-size-fits-all approach
- F. Promote engagement and active learning for all students through the use of differentiated instruction, hands-on learning, project based instruction and field trips
- G. Implement programs that teach students practical work and life skills
- H. Expand programming focusing on career and technical exploration
- I. Improve nutrition in breakfast and lunch programs and vending machines
- J. Conduct, analyze, and utilize the data from the graduating senior survey developed at the U of I

### **Mid-term actions**

- A. Offer foreign language as a core component by introducing foreign language instruction in K-5 and increase the number of languages offered in the middle and high schools
- B. Expand after-school enrichment and tutoring programs in all schools
- C. Introduce computer technology and research at earlier grade levels and integrate it into daily activities and lessons K-12
- D. Strengthen programs for gifted and special education children
- E. Increase the number and variety of honors classes at middle and high school levels and establish bridge programs to enable more students to take them
- F. Keep students engaged over the summer with a variety of programs
- G. Increase the number of trained medical professionals
- H. Work with Public Health District to offer students their required immunizations on site
- I. Assist parents in obtaining foundational skills so they can assist their children
- J. Partner with early intervention programs to identify children most at-risk, establish transitions from the 3-5 program, and offer transition planning earlier for those graduating from high school
- K. Optimize class size to foster academic achievement
- L. Adopt an accelerated school community approach which will enhance learning for all children, by incorporating challenging activities into each class
- M. Establish flexible, wrap around services that promote readiness and academic success for all students
- N. Increase funding for and amount of time spent on enrichment activities at all levels
- O. Revise P.E. curriculum to focus on lifelong fitness

- P. Expand cultural and fine arts programming
- Q. Provide curriculum/activities/community events for students during school holidays and in-service days
- R. Offer more counseling/social services for students and parents regarding post secondary educational or training options, including required testing and financial aid options

**Long-term actions**

- A. Expand middle school sports programs to include 6<sup>th</sup> graders and expand sports offerings for both boys and girls at middle schools
- B. Offer additional early childhood and Pre-K programs
- C. Institute evidence-based curriculum, which teaches to students' individualized abilities; assess in ways other than standardized testing
- D. Provide ISAT/PSAE accommodations routinely for qualified students

**Outcome measures**

- Attendance rate
- Class size enrollment
- Community satisfaction
- Discipline referrals and suspensions
- English language standards
- Enrichment program participation
- Extracurricular activity participation
- Graduation rate
- Instructional time by subject
- Outstanding student performance (e.g. how many National Merit Scholars)
- Parental involvement
- Senior class student performance
- Social/emotional learning standards
- Student achievement (measured through multiple programs)
- Student participation in learning activities
- Student progress
- Student retention rate
- Students required to repeat classes or grades
- Support program effectiveness

## **II. Stewardship and Accountability**

*Goal: Align the District's priorities and resources through a community-involved planning process implemented through focused action plans with regular progress reports*

### **Short-term actions**

- A. Continue to engage in a long-term strategic planning and visioning process
- B. Build an annual reporting process to the School Board that includes public input
- C. Hold bi-annual open forums for the community to participate in upcoming school year plans and assess the previous school year.
- D. Improve the District's efforts to identify and pursue grant proposals
- E. Continue to institute principles of fiscal responsibility
- F. Actively seek private donations to build/maintain facilities

### **Outcome measures**

- Administrator/teacher retention
- Amount of donations, grants, referendum success
- Community satisfaction
- Funding allocation
- Grant funding
- Number of candidate running for school board
- Parental involvement
- Public forum involvement

### **III. Faculty and Staff Excellence**

*Goal: Retain, hire, and support highly qualified faculty and staff that reflects our student population*

#### **Short-term actions**

- A. Develop a plan to hire and retain high quality principals, faculty, and staff, with an emphasis on strong building leadership, through incentives including, but not limited to, competitive pay, good working conditions, excellent professional development, mentoring, performance bonuses, and opportunities for advancement
- B. Create a professional development plan emphasizing effective teaching in culturally and economically diverse environments (e.g. Madison Professional Development School Partnerships)
- C. Develop mechanisms to continually evaluate faculty and staff and tailor training programs based on their development needs
- D. Create pathways for teachers to use evidence-based methodology, support the implementation of those proven methods, and then hold staff accountable for the outcomes by creating alternative assessment methods which measure success

#### **Mid-term actions**

- A. Partner with UIUC and Parkland to strengthen professional development and continuing education.
- B. Hire, support and retain qualified staff by creating excellent teaching environments.
- C. Improve communication between teachers and parents around individual student issues such as: transition to kindergarten or a new school, homework, test scores and grades, and behavior

#### **Long-term actions**

- A. Support the creation of Professional Learning Communities or other community-centered decision-making models
- B. Increase staff to allow for more offerings in fine arts, special education, physical education, social services, teaching support services and one medical professional in each school

#### **Outcome measures**

- Community satisfaction
- Number of highly qualified teachers
- Number of teachers with masters degrees
- Parental involvement
- Teacher and staff accreditation, certificates, awards, and recognitions
- Teacher and staff retention rates

## **IV. Engagement of Parents and the Community**

*Goal: Effectively and efficiently engage parents and other community stakeholders resulting in strong partnerships*

### **Short-term actions**

- A. Train Administrators District-wide on becoming effective listeners and communicators while displaying professionalism and common courtesy
- B. Create a central point of contact for disseminating information and for identifying, cataloging, recruiting, and maintaining community partnerships
- C. Recruit and coordinate volunteers to support District programs and train teachers on how to use volunteers most effectively
- D. Regularly coordinate meetings with the media to foster a better working relationship and understanding
- E. Build upon programs that are working currently in the schools (e.g., *CU One-to-One Mentoring*, *VEYA*, *AVID*, *TALKS* mentoring and social work programs, *Positive Behavior Facilitation (PBF) Attendance*, *Truancy Education Alternative Opportunity Program*, *Attendance Improvement Team*, *Attendance Outreach Workers*, *Project Graduation*, etc.)
- F. Coordinate with local realtors to provide new members of the community with timely and accurate information about the District
- G. Create community advisory groups in areas such as special education, equity, and discipline to report to School Board at designated times
- H. Take the official school board meeting “on the road” to different schools
- I. Maximize the power of the Internet by re-engineering the District Web site to improve communication between teachers and parents
- J. Establish more partnerships with UIUC and Parkland at academic, cultural and vocational/technical levels
- K. Create and participate in community advisory groups aimed at explaining terms and language revolving around Individualized Education Plans (IEP)
- L. Establish and maintain a consistent District presence in the community
- M. Increase access for disenfranchised community stakeholders by establishing an “Ombudsman” position
- N. Provide a way to get better information out to the parents and community (e.g. Family Information Center)
- O. Create a quick reference which includes District information for parents including key community resources

### **Mid-term actions**

- A. Reconstitute and foster ongoing **two-way** communication between community stakeholders, the administration, and the School Board making sure that the diversity of the community is represented
- B. Train teachers and staff District-wide in service quality which includes communication, customer service, management style, and employee relations
- C. Train District-wide on soliciting and valuing parental and community involvement
- D. Coordinate with the Human Resources departments of local businesses to address their recruiting concerns related to Unit 4
- E. With parents as partners, teach students about appropriate and inappropriate communication between students and teachers to promote awareness of sexual abuse or harassment
- F. Partner with local business and industry to offer non-traditional classes for credit in the workplace
- G. Work with Lincoln Trail Libraries to develop and publicize academic resources for students and families

### **Outcome Measures**

- Community acceptance
- Community involvement
- Community satisfaction
- District enrollment
- Employment rate directly out of high school
- Number of community partnerships
- Number of District volunteers
- Number of hits on the District Web site
- Number of positive media stories
- Parent involvement
- Post secondary placement directly out of high school
- Post-secondary enrollment

## **V. Diversity**

*Goal: Leverage the strength of our diverse population to create a rich academic and social environment in each of our schools*

### **Short-term actions**

- A. Conduct, analyze, and utilize the data from the District climate survey
- B. Conduct outreach to minority community to assist the District in the attendance and retention of students
- C. Provide mandatory, ongoing diversity training for teachers, administrators and staff that addresses classroom climate, expectations, engagement, learning and assessment, and discipline
- D. Create an official office that will oversee/implement equity programs and initiatives
- E. Address the over-representation of minorities in special education classes
- F. Address the under-representation of minorities in upper level classes
- G. Implement curriculum and programs to embrace and promote understanding and acceptance of diverse cultures, including through art, drama, dance, clubs, and extra curricular activities

### **Mid-term actions**

- A. Ensure that the faculty and staff reflect the racial and cultural composition of the District

### **Outcome Measures**

- Community satisfaction
- Diversity of students within the individual schools
- Graduation and drop out rates of minorities
- Retention rates of students within the District
- Staff diversity
- The results of the climate surveys that the District conducts

## **VI. Facilities**

*Goal: Revitalize, build, and maintain facilities that are safe, sustainable and allow equitable access to programming across the District*

### **Short-term actions**

- A. Develop a public input process to address capital programming needs and school sizes for all grade levels
- B. Hire a facilities planner and establish a capital improvement planning team to create a ten-year capital improvement plan
- C. Re-evaluate the existing facilities studies and reprioritize the suggested improvements based on the long-term facilities plan
- D. Establish an Educational Programming Team, comprised of educators, staff, facilities managers and educational programming consultants and architects, to work with the capital improvement planning team to ensure programming needs are met
- E. Provide a safe physical environment for learning at all schools
- F. Establish energy efficiency as a priority in all renovation and new construction projects
- G. Establish a criterion that all new construction and renovation projects be built to United States Green Building Council LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) standards
- H. Quantify and communicate benefits to community for establishing environmental, energy efficient, high performance buildings
- I. Actively apply for grant funding to offset the cost of facility upgrades
- J. Investigate the potential for renovation, reuse or disposition of existing buildings and work with the City to develop a procedure to ensure the best possible reuse of the property
- K. Explore “land banking” or purchasing land for new schools
- L. Develop a waste management plan

### **Mid-term actions**

- A. Develop a cost/benefit analysis tool to assess the usefulness and viability of each facility
- B. Work in partnership with private business, the city of Champaign, the Village of Savoy and residents to secure land for school locations that are determined based on projected community growth
- C. Ensure all facilities have equitable access to and incorporation of technology as appropriate to support student achievement
- D. Actively seek partnerships with other units of government and with private industry to share space, develop programs, fund programs and/or construct facilities

### **Long-term actions**

- A. Negotiate with surrounding school districts to define district boundaries that reflect efficient service areas

### **Outcome measures**

- Amount of waste disposal
- Community satisfaction
- Energy consumption
- Maintenance costs
- Measurable benchmarks from capital improvement plan
- Utility costs

## **ENGAGING COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDERS WORKGROUP WORKING PLAN POINTS OF EMPHASIS**

*To effectively engage the various community stakeholders, the Board and the Administration need to direct their efforts toward:*

### **Short Term Goals**

- creating a clear and concise District vision that can be articulated to all stakeholders
- fostering a trusting working relationship between community, district, administration, and School Board
- conduct, analyze, and utilize data received from the District climate survey. Such survey to be conducted on a regular interval (i.e. every three years)
- conduct, analyze, and utilize the data from the graduating senior survey developed at the University of Illinois. Such survey to be conducted on an annual basis

### **Mid Term Goal**

- reconstitute and foster ongoing **two way** communication between community stakeholders, the administration, and the School Board making sure that the diversity of the community is represented

### **Long Term Goal**

- establishing and maintaining a consistent District presence in the community
- increasing access for disenfranchised community stakeholders by establishing an “ombudsman” position

*Today's social environment requires communication that can foster cooperation and mutual respect. To achieve such, the District must engage in district-wide training on the essentials of communication and collaboration which would include, but not be limited to:*

### **Short Term Goals**

- training, District-wide, on becoming better listeners and communicators while displaying professionalism and practicing common courtesy
- soliciting and valuing parental and community involvement with a focus on communicating and collaborating more effectively

### **Mid Term Goals**

- training, District-wide, in customer service
- training, District-wide, on soliciting and valuing parental and community involvement

*Engaging community stakeholders and fostering better community partnerships can not be effectively and efficiently accomplished without a focused effort. As such, the Board and the Administration should create a District Office For Community Information and Outreach which would include the following functions:*

### **Short Term Goals**

- creating a District central point of contact for identifying, cataloging, recruiting, and maintaining community partnerships
- recruiting and coordinating volunteers to support District programs
- coordinating, on a regular basis, meetings with the media to foster a better working relationship and understanding
- coordinating with local realtors to provide new members of the community, timely and accurate information about the District
- maximize the power of the Internet by re-engineering the District web site and employing or contracting a professional Web Master

### **Mid Term Goals**

- coordinating with the Human Resources departments of local businesses to address their recruiting concerns related to Unit #4
- creating a District central point of contact for disseminating District information through the use of community information officers at the building level

***The outcomes of the District focusing on the previous points of emphasis can be measured by:***

- the change in enrollment through the attraction of new students and retention of existing students
- the results of the climate surveys that the District conducts
- the change in volunteers
- the change in positive media stories
- the change in community partnerships
- the change in the number of hits on the District web site

**Unit 4 Schools**  
**~Great Schools Together~**

**Report and Recommendations of the  
Infrastructure and Facilities Working Group**

**September 2008**

## Table of Contents

A Letter to Readers .....	3
I. Executive Summary .....	4
II. Summary of the Planning Process .....	7
III. Context: Key Trends .....	8
IV. A Vision for the Future of Unit 4 Infrastructure and Facilities .....	9
V. Key Issues and Recommendations .....	9
1. Responsible Stewardship of our Heritage .....	9
2. Responsible Stewardship of our Future .....	10
o Baseline Standards .....	11
3. Responsible Stewardship for Community Resources .....	12
4. Responsible Stewardship of Capital Programming Needs .....	13
5. Responsible Stewardship of Educational Programming Needs .....	14
VI. Evaluating Progress .....	16
VII. Action Steps: Short Term, Mid Term, Long Term .....	17

## **A Letter to Readers**

The successful education of all children within the Unit 4 School District is the utmost priority. The school board, as an elected body within the district, is charged with the responsibility of ensuring success in this endeavor. To that end the board has to work within the financial limits placed on them by the community and the state. Physical facilities within the district are vitally important to achieving the goal of providing a high quality, equitable education for all children. The district is fortunate to have many wonderful schools that provide an excellent base for learning. These schools are valuable because of their heritage to our community. As a result, the board has the duty to the community to act as a responsible steward for the facilities under its control.

First and foremost is the responsibility to develop a long-term plan for making necessary changes to district facilities as the community changes and grows. Equally as important is to ensure those facilities provide an equitable education to all students. Some of the district's facilities are approaching a century of utilization and do not provide equivalent opportunities for all users. It is accepted that at some point all facilities may be obsolete for the intended purpose as school buildings, but have the opportunity to contribute to the community in another capacity through adaptive reuse. First, the facilities that should be upgraded should be determined and second, those facilities that can no longer be renovated to meet reasonable standards or are no longer needed by our population should find another life. A plan must be developed to renovate and/or upgrade existing facilities that can continue to function as a viable piece of the district's infrastructure and to replace obsolete buildings. Following the completion of the plan, it should be reviewed and updated at regular intervals.

It is of utmost importance that the board communicate this straight forward plan to the citizens of this community. The board, as a responsible steward, must understand that not all citizens in the school district will agree with priorities set by the board, however, most will recognize that a diligent plan was created and therefore a responsible direction has been set for the future. Support from the community will have been earned. The district has much work to do to move forward with the construction and renovation of schools. The "Great Schools, Together" process and input should be viewed as the beginning with several important next steps needed to proceed in a responsible manner.

## **I. Executive Summary**

The successful education of all children within the Unit 4 School District is the utmost priority. Adequate physical facilities within the district are vitally important to achieving the goal of providing a high quality, equitable education for all children. The district is fortunate to have many wonderful schools that provide an excellent base for learning. The board has the duty to the community to act as a responsible steward for the facilities under its control. This stewardship should encompass five components in order to achieve the vision set forth by the Infrastructure and Facilities Working Group. These components include:

### **Responsible Stewardship of our Heritage**

- Our schools are valuable because of their heritage to our community.
- Such community landmarks should be maintained with appreciation and care.
- While existing facilities are safe and in generally good condition, many of these facilities do not meet the varied needs of today's educational standards and programs.
- At some point facilities may become obsolete for the intended purpose as school buildings, but have the opportunity to contribute to the community in another capacity through adaptive reuse.
- Opportunities for these buildings to be reborn should be pursued if and when new facilities are required.

### **Responsible Stewardship of our Future**

- It is our responsibility to provide an environment that fosters the highest quality education possible for all students today and in the future.
- High performance facilities produce a productive, safe and comfortable work and learning environment that results in better attendance, improved learning, higher test scores, and reduced teacher turnover.
- Students should be assured they are safe at school.
- Students should be assured equitable opportunities for learning through the establishment of baseline standards for all facilities. *All* facilities should be upgraded to meet these standards.

### **Responsible Stewardship of Community Resources**

- Planning for the long-term use of facilities is essential to the responsible management of community resources.

- Demographic changes should be anticipated through studies that are included in long-term planning for facilities.
- Making informed choices about energy use, facility upgrades, and maintenance results in financial stability.
- The usefulness and future viability of all facilities should be periodically assessed.
- A significant portion of the facilities operating budget is dedicated to energy costs. Minimizing this cost is imperative to maximize the resources available for education.
- Any expansion or construction efforts should incorporate design features that enhance energy efficiency and do not increase overall energy consumption.
- Any new construction projects should be built to USGBC LEED for Schools standards, in accordance with Illinois funding policies, maximizing energy efficiency and environmentally friendly features, such as:
  - Geothermal energy systems
  - Daylighting
  - Non-toxic and durable building materials
  - Building envelope and systems that perform beyond code
  - Recycling
  - Energy efficient appliances

### **Responsible Stewardship of Capital Programming Needs**

- A 10-year Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) should be developed for the long-term management of limited resources dedicated to the physical improvement of facilities. This plan is a tool to managing a realistic schedule of improvements and providing accountability to the public.
- To effectively develop and manage a CIP, a consultant should be hired to develop the initial plan and a specific staff position should be responsible for the management and update of the completed plan. This should not be a secondary responsibility for this staff person. It should be the primary function of this position. The majority of available time for this staff person should be devoted to developing and updating the capital improvement plan (especially for the first few years of plan development).
- An element of the CIP should be the consideration of land acquisition for expansion or construction of new schools.

## **Responsible Stewardship for Educational Programming Needs**

- The recommendations of the Programming Working Group and a plan for implementing changes to educational programming should be developed and be consulted before changes are made to facilities.
- District wide questions regarding program changes should be answered before proceeding to facilities improvements. These questions include:
  - Should we have Kindergarten through Eighth Grade school programs versus Kindergarten through Fifth Grade elementary school?
  - Should we have multiple smaller high schools versus fewer larger high schools?
  - Should we have multiple smaller elementary schools versus larger elementary schools?

***[Note: These are the type of fundamental questions that the school district must answer before finalizing a capital improvement plan. There are many resources that can be used to provide input into these decisions, but in the end, these are the type of questions that the school board and administration must resolve prior to moving forward. Inputs could be gathered for the “The Great Schools Together” study effort, from further public input, from intergovernmental partners and from consultants.]***

**The efforts of the “Great Schools Together” study effort and in particular the work of the Infrastructure and Facilities Working Group will provide general guidance and provide certain specific recommendations, but it is the responsibility of the district administration and board to carry these forward. The five components of responsible stewardship are a framework and the next step in the process is the implementation of the recommendations.**

**First and foremost, the district and board must develop a long-term plan based on these recommendations for making necessary changes to its facilities as the community changes and grows. Equally as important is to ensure those facilities provide an equitable education to all students. A plan must be developed to renovate and/or upgrade existing facilities that can continue to function as a viable piece of the district’s infrastructure and to replace obsolete buildings. Following the completion of the plan, it should be reviewed and updated at regular intervals.**

## **II. Summary of the Planning Process**

The Infrastructure and Facilities Working Group was selected by the “Great Schools, Together” Vision Committee. Members include local engineers, architects, environmental design specialists, electricians, city planners, district employees, teachers, parents, school volunteers and other professionals who have an interest in improving the school district and community. The group met from November 2007 to July 2008 to learn about Unit 4 facilities, facilities studies that have been completed to date, and to discuss input from the Community Forums. Members also attended, and in some cases facilitated, stations at the Community Forums held throughout the community.

In addition to the Community forums, all group meetings were open to the public. A special public presentation was held April 9, 2008 at the Faith United Methodist Church that highlighted sustainable construction practices and the potential for use in public buildings. Group members Jean Ascoli and Don Fournier were integral in developing the presentation that highlighted one of our community’s LEED Silver certified buildings.

Discussions during group meetings were lively yet productive. Many team members contributed special reports on their area of expertise or interest as it applies to school facilities. The recommendations presented here build on input from the Community Forums and represent the general consensus of the working group.

### III. Context: Key Trends

#### **A. More Space**

Today's best practices for school facilities require more square footage than in the past. A modern education includes spaces for enrichment courses, like music and art, technology labs, private rooms for specialists to work with students, space for record keeping and many more elements, too numerous to mention. Keeping up with every trend would be impossible, but it is accepted that more space is needed to accommodate the needs of a modern education system.

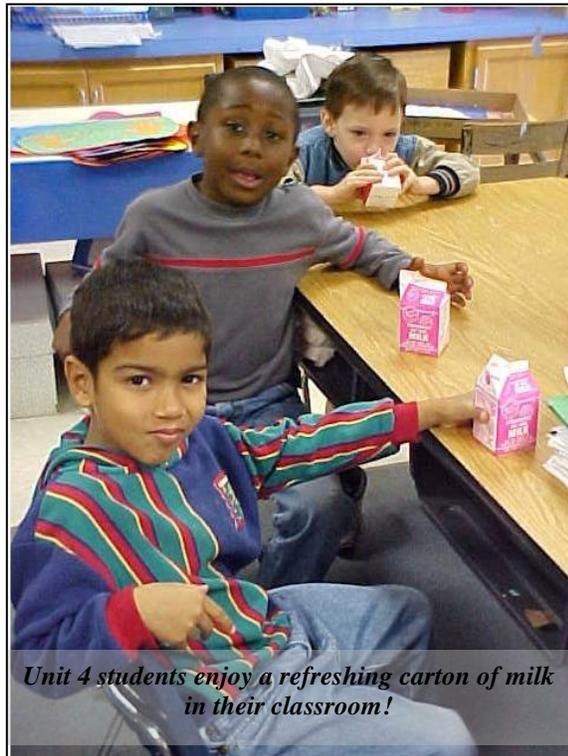
#### **B. Equitable Facilities**

Looking at the public input, the perception that educational opportunities were not equitable between facilities was a recurring theme. This is problematic, because the limitations of the facility in turn limit the programs that can be offered at that facility. Equitable opportunities should not be limited by facilities.

#### **C. Energy Efficiency**

Another trend is the increasing cost of energy needed to power schools and the desire to control that cost over time. This is a major expense for the school district. Sustainable practices are also getting attention at the state level.

In order to receive State funding for new construction projects, the building must meet the criteria established by the United States Green Building Council (USGBC) LEED for schools. Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) for schools incorporates energy efficiency, use of daylight, low-emissions materials and uses recycling to minimize the construction material that goes into landfills. It is similar to LEED-NC, but has been specifically tailored for the needs of school facilities.



*Unit 4 students enjoy a refreshing carton of milk in their classroom!*

## **IV. A Vision for the Future of Unit 4 Infrastructure and Facilities**

### **Responsible Stewardship**

**“We envision a school district that acts as a responsible steward of our resources, provides for equitable education of all students, sustainable management of facilities and ultimately the future prosperity of our community.”**

## **V. Key Issues and Recommendations**

### **1. Responsible Stewardship of our Heritage**

As public buildings, schools are valuable community landmarks. Many school buildings are also considered historic (over 50 years of age). Because of the importance to our heritage, they should be respected and maintained. Existing facilities are safe for use and generally in good condition. Despite this, many of these facilities are not meeting the needs of today’s educational standards, which include expanded use of technology, break-out spaces and accommodation of special needs students.

It is accepted that at some point all facilities may become obsolete for the intended purpose as school buildings. Because many members of the community have attended these institutions, the prospect of renovating or no longer using them as schools elicits an emotional response. This response is understandable, but the majority of the decision must be made in the context of what is best for the long term educational needs and financial limitations of Unit 4 in terms of cost/benefit analyses. There are opportunities for these facilities to contribute to the community in other ways, possibly through adaptive reuse.

Opportunities for these buildings to be reborn should be pursued if and when new facilities are required. As public buildings built and maintained with public funds, the school district has a responsibility to the community to ensure the reuse of existing facilities has a positive effect on the surrounding neighborhoods. Unit 4 should collaborate with the City of Champaign to accept and review proposals for the reuse of properties when they are to be relinquished.

### **Recommendations:**

1.1: The District needs to balance the value of facilities in terms of heritage with the educational programming needs of the community now and in the future.

1.2: Investigate the potential for renovation, reuse or disposition at the following facilities first: Booker T. Washington, the Family Information Center, the Mellon Building, Dr. Howard School, Edison Middle School, and Central High School. Determine the feasibility and cost benefit analysis of improving these facilities in their existing locations vs. building new schools.

1.3: Work with the City to develop a procedure for managing 'Request for Proposals' if property disposition is needed to ensure the best possible reuse of the property, based on neighborhood compatibility and community needs (see page 31 for more).

## **2. Responsible Stewardship of our Future**

It is the responsibility of the school district, in conjunction with the community, to provide a learning environment that fosters the highest quality education possible for all students both today and in the future. Numerous studies have been conducted showing the importance of sunlight, temperature and audio control and other factors on the success of building occupants – not only in schools, but in office buildings and other work environments. This was also cited as a concern in Community Forum discussions. In short, high performance facilities result in a productive, safe and comfortable work environment that results in better attendance, improved learning, higher test scores and reduced teacher turnover (See pages 21 and 22 for more).

In addition to comfortable work spaces, students should be assured equitable opportunities for learning through the establishment of baseline standards for all facilities. In the input sessions, participants shared their concern that students in the same grade level at different facilities did not have access to the same experiences because of inequities often resulting from facility limitations. The lack of amenities like adequate gym and cafeteria space, quality or proximity of playing fields, break-out rooms for activities and modern technology labs in all facilities are hindering the goal of an equitable education among all students. A list of baseline standards for all schools has been compiled based on school type, and is listed in the following pages. All educational facilities should be upgraded to include the baseline standards appropriate for the population. The spaces should be sized and designed to accommodate the current 'best practice' program needs. It is estimated that the current best practices in education require more square footage per student than in the past, and may continue to grow in the future. The current and future level of use of the building should be taken into account when sizing facilities upgrades or new construction.

Resources must be budgeted to ensure that these spaces are properly outfitted and maintained over time. For example, a computer lab is only useful with computers - computers are only useful with software licenses - software is only useful with proper training. Each step requires resources.

Additionally, the district needs to develop a policy that covers how private donations are used to ensure that donations are distributed in an equitable manner.

### **Recommendations:**

2.1: The district needs to engage in a long-term strategic planning and visioning process is updated every 10 years through a public input process. This plan will provide guiding principles for the growth of the district over a 30-50 year horizon.

2.2: Energy efficiency should be a priority in all renovations and new construction projects to reduce long-term energy use and associated costs. When building upgrades are being conducted, the use of geothermal heating and air conditioning systems should be used wherever possible.

2.3: All facilities should have equitable access/incorporation of technology by grade level

2.4: All schools should provide an environment for learning in which students feel safe.

2.5: All schools should be upgraded to include the following baseline standards in order to achieve equitable educational opportunities for all students as soon as possible, preferably within 10 years.

### **Baseline Standards needed in all school facilities:**

- Modern mechanical and electrical service that accommodates current/future technology needs
- Air Conditioning - Even temperature to ensure comfort and protection of equipment
- Operable windows with outdoor views and screens to prevent pests from entering
- Adequate safety features
- Separate gym/cafeteria spaces
- LEED – Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design - for Schools (The State of Illinois requires this for school construction projects that receive state funds)
- Dedicated Enrichment Spaces that adequately serve programs, like:
  - Arts
  - Music
  - Enrichment classes
  - Band Room with proper storage and practice rooms *{Middle and High Schools}*
- Stage and Performance Area *{Elementary and Middle Schools}*
- Special Education rooms for break-out or targeted services
- Auditorium with adequate storage, staging areas and acoustics – not a Cafetorium *{High Schools}*
- Private specialist spaces
- Staff work space
- Administrative space
  - Adequate record keeping area
- Library
- Computer Labs
  - Multiple purposes
  - Some dedicated labs, ex. Writing Lab
- Proper outdoor spaces to accommodate the quantity, age and skill level of users
  - Physical Education

- Playgrounds and/or outdoor recreation spaces at all schools
- Track/Sports Facilities {High School}
- Marching Band practice area {High School}
- Well-designed transportation spaces for safe and efficient pick-up/drop-off
- Natatorium (Indoor swimming pool) {High School}
- Industrial Technology space {Middle and High Schools}
- Science Labs
- Eliminate portable classrooms

***[Note: This list is intended to provide equity of education to all students assuming similar function and curriculum at all schools. This list is not static, it should be tailored to the programming needs of individual schools. If a given school has specific programming needs and function, then the facilities at that school may need to be tailored to suit those needs.]***

### **3. Responsible Stewardship of Community Resources**

Planning for the long-term use of facilities is essential to the responsible management of community resources. Community resources include tax-payer monies, natural resources and environmental quality. The ability to make informed choices about energy use, facility upgrades and maintenance results in financial stability. Periodically, the usefulness and future viability of all facilities should be assessed. This could be incorporated into a regular Capital Improvement Plan process, discussed below in # 4.

To adequately prepare for long term needs, demographic changes should be anticipated. A recently completed district-wide demographic analysis provides excellent information that can be used in preparing for the needs of students and facilities. Regular updates of studies like this provide valuable information for decision makers.

A significant portion of the facilities operating budget is dedicated to energy costs. Minimizing this cost is imperative in order to maximize the resources available for education. Any expansion or construction efforts should incorporate design features that enhance energy efficiency and should not increase overall energy consumption. New construction projects, including additions, should be built to United States Green Building Council LEED for Schools standards. Illinois funding policies for schools require this. The following features should be maximized wherever possible:

- Geothermal energy systems
- Daylighting
- Non-toxic and durable building materials
- Building envelope and systems that perform beyond code
- Recycling

- Energy efficient appliances

### **Recommendations:**

- 3.1: This document and the recommendation of the “Great Schools Together” study effort should be looked at as a first step—a beginning. The District must look at questions raised here and recommendations that need more in-depth study and policy guidance to proceed effectively.
- 3.2: The district must develop a long-range strategic plan that will provide guiding principles for the growth of the district over a 30-50 year horizon. This plan will be updated every 10 years through a public input process.
- 3.3: Reevaluate the existing facilities studies and reprioritize the suggested improvements based on the recommendations of this plan. Providing for equitable opportunities through facilities should be the key goal in this effort.
- 3.4: Develop a cost/benefit analysis tool for assessing the usefulness and viability of each facility. The analysis should include a cost versus energy efficiency assessment with strategies to improve energy performance at all facilities. These assessments should be conducted periodically.
- 3.5: Energy costs should be minimized wherever possible through the use of high performance buildings and incorporation of sustainable practices like geothermal technology.
- 3.6: Any new construction projects, including expansion, should be built to United States Green Building Council LEED for Schools standards. This is also an Illinois State requirement for school facilities.
- 3.7: Actively apply for grant funding to offset the cost of facilities upgrades. Construction projects that follow sustainable practices may have more grant opportunities available in the near term.
- 3.8: Actively apply for private donations, prepare a list of needs that a private donor could contribute towards, develop a policy for managing private gifts, and if not done so already, consider developing a separate not-for-profit foundation for the purposes of fundraising and gift distribution.
- 3.9: Actively seek partnerships with other units of government and with private industry to share space, develop programs, fund programs and or facility construction.

## **4. Responsible Stewardship of Capital Programming Needs**

To effectively manage the number of facilities in the Unit 4 school district, a Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) is essential. A CIP typically projects physical improvements projects over a ten year period. The plan allows staff to best allocate limited resources and track the progress of facilities improvements over time. This plan is a tool to managing a realistic schedule of improvements and providing accountability to the public. An element of the CIP should be the

consideration of land acquisition for expansion or construction of new schools. Public input indicates a preference for schools in neighborhoods.

**Ker components of a Unit 4 Capital Improvement Plan (CIP):**

1. Plan encompasses all buildings, grounds (including property needed for future development), and equipment valued over \$50,000.
2. Long-range planning period (e.g., ten years).
3. Updated regularly to reflect changes in asset conditions and needs. (May vary by asset type and cost; e.g., equipment schedules might be updated annually whereas buildings might be updated bi-annually.)
4. The following should be considered in the updates:
  - Current educational needs
  - Potential changes in educational needs and/or standards
  - Demographic trends
  - Long-term advantages of renovation versus new construction
  - Meet or exceed all legal requirements (e.g., accessibility)
5. Plan should indicate financing methods for all projects/purposes. Financing methods should be feasible and sustainable (e.g., do not rely on temporary revenue sources to fund ongoing expenses).
6. Routine maintenance addressed in the CIP or in a companion document.
7. Plan should be consistent with other Unit 4 plans and policies.

Developing a CIP for the first time can be a daunting task. A consultant with experience in developing CIPs for schools may be needed to provide assistance for the initial plan. A CIP has more specific recommendations for projects that are scheduled in the near future. Some large policy issues will need additional study, but this should not preclude the creation of the initial CIP. As these details are worked out, they will be incorporated into future annual updates.

This is normal in the development and update of a capital improvement plan. Projects that are in the early planning stages and that are not so well defined are normally included in the out years of the plan. As the projects come close to implementation more scrutiny is placed on prioritization and developing more defined scope and more reliable cost estimates.

Following the creation of the initial plan, annual updates should be conducted by a staff team with representatives from facilities, financial management and programs, as well as public input from teachers, staff and the public.

## **Recommendations:**

**4.1: The most important next step is the development a ten year Capital Improvement Plan for Unit 4 within 12 months of the adoption of this report.**

4.2: A staff person who has expertise in this area should be hired to manage the plan and all updates to the plan. A consultant will be needed to complete the initial CIP because a significant level of analysis will be needed.

4.3: Develop a team with the right knowledge base to be ongoing participants in the annual CIP reports and updates. This team should include individuals with knowledge of program needs.

4.4: Build in an annual reporting process to the School Board that includes public input.

4.5: Celebrate and promote accomplishments through media attention and public open houses. These accomplishments should be shared with the entire community, not just district parents.

4.6: Negotiate with Mahomet to amend the school district boundary.

4.7: The District should investigate the potential for a land dedication or 'fee-in-lieu-of' system for new residential developments to generate contributions for schools.

4.8: "Land banking" or purchasing land for new schools should be considered, but this is a next-step item (See #5).

## **5. Responsible Stewardship for Educational Programming Needs**

The buildings that house the students, staff and faculty of Unit 4 are only one piece of the education puzzle. Bricks and mortar projects have the fortune of being tangible. They have the ability to inspire community pride in a way that other improvements cannot. The condition of facilities influences how students perceive the value of education and schools in the community. However, facilities and programs must work hand in hand. The recommendations of the Programming Working Group, the public and the team should be consulted before changes are made to facilities.

The input gathered through the Community Forum process has been a useful starting point. This input raised additional questions that must be answered before proceeding. The outcome of these questions will shape the long-term policies affecting facilities improvements and potential land acquisition. A targeted public input process that includes multiple opportunities for public involvement should be used to answer these questions. These questions include:

- Should we have Kindergarten through Eighth Grade school programs versus Kindergarten through Fifth Grade elementary school?

- Should we have multiple smaller high schools versus fewer larger high schools?
- Should we have multiple smaller elementary schools versus larger elementary schools?

**Recommendations:**

5.1: Develop a public input process that will answer the questions regarding K-8 schools, elementary school size and high school size policies. This process should include multiple outreach methods, including web-based or e-mail responses, surveys, notes home to parents, discussions during teacher in-service days and parent-teacher association meetings, as well as information sessions.

5.2: Consult district-wide programming needs before proceeding with major facilities upgrades or changes.

5.3: The District must create an Educational Programming Team, similar to the CIP team that is comprised of educators, staff, facilities managers and educational programming consultants and architects. This team will work with the CIP team to ensure programs needs are being met. The following questions should be answered through collaboration of both teams:

- What existing schools can be expanded in a reasonable way – is land available adjacent to the site? Is the land priced so that it is feasible to expand there?
- What is the cost-benefit analysis of this expansion and can this facility be made equitable to other facilities?
- Should the number of strands at certain facilities be changed?
- Should the grade level at certain facilities be changed?

## **VI. Evaluating Progress**

### **Recommendations**

- Develop a Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) within 12 months of the completion of this process. The best measure of construction progress is referring back to the CIP. It is easy to look at the document to see if what was planned the previous year was accomplished. It ensures the district is ready to undertake major improvements over the long term.
- For energy consumption, the benchmark is a comparison of the BTU per square foot the building used in previous years compared to the BTU per square foot for subsequent years, following improvements.
- Annually report the progress/activity made in the physical improvements process – post on the school website. Once the CIP is set up, this will be the annual CIP report.

## **VII. Action Steps/Responsibilities: Short Term, Mid Term, Long Term**

### **Short Term – 0-3 years**

- Develop a 10-year Capital Improvement Plan within 12 months, prioritizing well-defined known needs, while preparing for long-term changes. Hire appropriate consultant to develop the initial plan and hire a staff person to specifically manage this plan.
- The District must resolve the question of north side seats, based on recent discussions of the great campus and other alternatives.
- Develop and implement an extensive public input process using mail surveys, web-based input, discussions during teacher in-service days and regular staff meetings, etc. to answer the following policy questions:
  - Should the District develop a policy for one very large high school, two large high schools or three or more smaller high schools?
  - What is the level of interest in K-8 schools and what facilities should be modified?
  - Should the District develop a policy for fewer larger elementary schools or multiple smaller elementary schools?
- Develop an assessment tool for determining equity between facilities
  - After answering the question regarding changes in policy for high schools and K-8 schools, begin using the assessment tool to determine what facilities need renovations, expansion or redevelopment to achieve equity through the baseline standards listed on page 10.
- Create a Location Team of school staff, City of Champaign, City of Savoy and Champaign and Savoy Park District staff to begin identifying locations for new school facilities.
- Create an Educational Programming Team, similar to the CIP team that is comprised of educators, staff, facilities managers and educational programming consultants and architects. Both teams will work with the CIP team to determine what is best for facilities and infrastructure improvements over the long term.
- Reprioritize the needs established in existing studies, primarily the 2005 BLDD study to accomplish the goals of equity as stated on pages 9 and 10 of this document.

**Mid Term –**

- Work with the Location Team to identify and investigate locations. Consider policies like ‘fee-in-lieu-of’ systems for new residential developments and cultivate relationships with development community.
- Reevaluate the plan on a regular basis to ensure goals are being met and to adjust for change.
- Accomplish the goal of achieving equity between facilities within 10-15 years.

**Long Term –**

- Update the long range strategic plan that sets the vision for the district using a public input process every 10 years.
- Continue to monitor the facilities to ensure they are maintaining their effectiveness.

**Final Report**  
**Great Schools Together Programs Working Group**  
**July 1, 2008**

This report includes:

- I. **Summary** of how we engaged in the planning process,
- II. **Guiding Principles** that we feel can and should be applied to all existing and future programs,
- III. **Outcome Measures** to determine if the Guiding Principles are being met,
- IV. Specific Programs **Recommendations** based on community forum input, and,
- V. Those we feel are the highest **Priority Recommendations** for the District and Board to consider first.

## **I. Summary of Process**

The Programs Working Group, a sub-committee of the Visions Committee, has been meeting regularly since the inception of the strategic planning process to gather the information from the public, learn what is currently offered in our schools, and create a document which represents the will and desires of the constituents of the Champaign Unit 4 Schools. We have, without fail, kept equity issues at the forefront of our discussions; a lens of sort with which we have been consistently looking through. We have examined the most recent developments in strategic planning from other districts nationwide, saw what was and was not working, and strived to base our recommendations and priorities upon evidence-based research.

To that end, we collectively feel that there is much work to be done to explore the opportunities that are currently available for the Champaign Unit 4 Schools. Of the questions outlined by the visions committee, many have been addressed in this document. However, many still remain unanswered such as (and these are questions directly from the Vision Committee Document): “Should each school have its own distinct educational profile? How do we help the public understand that schools cannot be excellent without equity and schools cannot be equitable without excellence? How are we going to address the equitable treatment of kids? How can we re-establish neighborhood schools without ending up with a social/racial imbalance?”

From the community forums, it was evident that these and many other issues continue to polarize the public and create disharmony, making it nearly impossible to come to a true consensus of opinion. This, we feel, is good; as we live in a democratic state, where we are free to disagree on matters that will affect us all. Debating important topics should continue, led by the school district, as this will begin to bridge the gap between perception and reality for those people it serves. The public wants to know what is being done with their tax dollars, and why they should, as an example, vote to approve the sales tax that will be on the November ballot. We believe that the district has been given a gift through this process of compiling information gathered from the school community; in an otherwise consultant-client relationship, the information and recommendations gathered is worth many thousands of dollars, which have been supplied by countless hours of volunteer efforts from all involved in the process, both large and small. It is up to you now to make those recommendations a reality and work to communicate your plan to the public. The trust in the process and the system will come, if the district remains committed to effectively communicating its message, and anticipating the demands of accountability from the public.

## II. Guiding Principles

### Preface

As community members we believe that schools are a community asset and should help advance the common good and enrich the lives of students, their families, and all members of a community during and outside of official school hours. When schools open their doors to the wider community, everyone benefits, and the social and economic climate of the entire community is enhanced. With this in mind, we, as community representatives, offer the following suggested statement of principles and beliefs.

### Programs

The mission of Champaign Unit 4 school programs is to ensure that each student in our diverse population achieves his/her fullest potential in a safe and affirming learning environment characterized by:

- Individualized learning that is active, curiosity-driven, and student-directed
- An emphasis on preparing students to live and excel in a global environment
- A challenging, well-rounded curriculum that engages the mind and opens doors to possibility
- High expectations
- An inclusive and equitable educational environment
- High-quality facilities and staff
- A positive, collaborative spirit that strengthens the community and relationships within it
- Instruction that incorporates current technological advances into the curriculum
- A sensitivity to, and celebration of, differences
- A welcoming atmosphere and dynamic, authentic communication between home and school

### Beliefs

We believe that...

- Critical thinking is essential for successful citizenship.
- Learning can only take place in a physically and emotionally safe environment.
  - We should act on the understanding that each child may see the world differently than the adults in the school.
  - Cultural awareness is important to school environments.
  - Every student has intrinsic value and should feel valued.
  - Prejudices and racism can be embedded in our institutions, and it takes an active effort to ensure equity for all.
  - Schools should be structured in such a way as to maximize opportunities to support high-quality relationships.
- Character development is an important part of education.
- Schools work most effectively when they partner with local government, organizations, businesses, and universities.
- Education is a process which encourages life-long learning.
  - The educational process should reinforce the joy of learning.
  - Education should prepare students for a wide variety of adult roles including career and technical education.
- All students, particularly those with special needs, should be given the opportunity to learn in an environment that is most appropriately aligned with their learning style, ability, and measured educational level. Whenever possible, student learning should happen within an integrated classroom setting.

- Children are enriched by school communities that reflect socio-economic, racial, and other types of diversity.
- Creative, emotional, and physical expression is vital to the human spirit.
  - Education is not complete without fine arts, such as visual art, music, drama, and dance, as well as physical education.
- Adult role models should reflect the diversity of the community, enriching education with examples of good citizenship and pathways for success in careers, relationships, and community involvement.
- Administrators, teachers, and staff should demonstrate understanding of current educational research and best practices.
- Early intervention is essential to school success for many students.
- Students learn best when teachers differentiate instruction by offering a variety of learning strategies tailored to their needs, including active, hands-on approaches and cooperative learning experiences.
- The benefits of small schools and class sizes outweigh the associated costs.
- Teachers, students, administrators, parents, and community members should have every opportunity to interact in a collaborative, democratic spirit.

### **Suggested Addition to District Mission Statement**

The mission of the Champaign Unit #4 School District, *in partnership with the community*, is to guide all students in gaining knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to direct their lives, improve a diverse society, and excel in a changing world by providing dynamic, resource-rich learning environments and experiences in which people and lifelong learning are valued.

## **III. Outcome Measures**

With the understanding that measurements are imperfect and that outcomes are affected by a variety of personal and contextual factors, it is also understood that some measurements and outcomes are necessary to assist in determining whether programs and schools are making sufficient progress toward implementing the guiding principles and attaining goals in this long-range plan. To that end, we offer the following:

Each should be broken up and applied different ways when looking at numbers disaggregated by grade, school, and various other demographics.

1. **Retention rates.** Student retention rates shall be measured on a yearly basis to determine the degree to which students are progressing through the school system grade by grade.
2. **Graduation rates.** Student graduation rates shall be measured on a yearly basis, with the goal of 100% graduation for all demographic groups.
3. **Students required to repeat classes or grades.** The number of students required to repeat a grade/class shall be measured with the ultimate goal of 0% for all demographic groups.
4. **Enrichment program participation.** Student participation in enrichment programs shall be measured on a yearly basis with the goal of yearly increases for each demographic group.
5. **Extracurricular activity participation.** Student participation in extra-curricular activities shall be measured both in athletic and non-athletic activities and across demographic groups. To do so, we must measure to make sure that:
  - All schools offer the same activity, i.e., every school has a student council.
  - All grades offer the same activity, i.e., 7<sup>th</sup> grade basketball is available for both boys and girls.

The goal is to see yearly increases in participation for all demographic groups.

6. **Attendance rate.** The student attendance rate shall be measured as an indication that schools provide a healthy learning environment that encourages students to attend class.
7. **Student Achievement.** Achievement of students shall be measured through multiple programs:
  - Standardized testing programs, such as ISAT and PSAE.
  - Grade analysis, e.g. report cards used as a measurement of progress.
  - Teacher-generated assessments which track the progression of students, e.g., reading levels of students.
  - Individualized student progress monitoring which focuses not only on benchmarks but monitoring students' improvement from quarter to quarter or year to year.
8. **Parent involvement.** The involvement of parents is a key to student success, thus their school involvement shall be measured. This involvement can take many forms, such as classroom activity, active PTA membership, participation in mentorship programs, gifts in kind, and monetary contributions. It is our goal that every parent shall have an avenue to become involved in our schools.
9. **Community involvement.** We see strong community involvement as a key to a strong school system. The support of our community shall be measured by activities such as scholarship assistance, involvement in mentoring programs, partnership with community businesses, and monetary assistance.
10. **Grant funding.** The amount of grant money awarded to our district shall be measured; we will also monitor the use of this grant money awarded and its positive effects on our students.
11. **Public forum involvement.** Involvement in public forums is an important aspect of our outreach effort to seek community input for our programs and, as such, we will measure this involvement.
12. **Staff retention rates.** A healthy school district cannot succeed without its staff. We will measure the retention rates of not only our teachers, but also our administrators, secretaries, and all other support staff.
13. **Class size enrollment.** Class size enrollment shall be measured to provide the best possible learning environment equally throughout the district.
14. **Post-secondary school enrollment.** Successful school districts prepare students for success after high school. We will measure the number of students enrolled in 4-year degree programs, 2-year degree programs, certificate degree programs, and trade and training school programs. Our yearly goal shall be growth in such programs by all demographic groups of our district.
15. **Instructional time by subject.** The amount of class time devoted for each subject shall be measured. We shall not only monitor core subjects such as math, reading, and English, but others such as P.E., language arts, and fine arts.
16. **Community acceptance.** Community acceptance of the school district shall be measured using surveys developed to provide students, parents, and members of the community the opportunity to assess the quality of teachers, staff, and administrators, as well as the programs offered. We shall also employ exit interviews/surveys of teachers, staff, and parents as they leave our school district. The goal is to provide the highest possible quality employees and programs for our community.
17. **Staff diversity.** The diversity of our teachers and staff shall be measured, with the goal of, at a minimum, reflecting the diversity of our community.
18. **Funding allocation.** Both the amount of money spent within each school and how it is spent shall be measured. This shall be done to ensure that money is spent not only on infrastructure improvements, but also on professional staff development.
19. **Student participation in learning activities.** We want our students to be actively involved in the learning process, thus we shall measure the amount of time our students have available to take an active part in activities such as field trips, classroom projects, and mentoring projects within the community. Participation in these activities needs to reflect the diversity of our student population in order to be effective.

20. **Support program effectiveness.** The effectiveness of our support programs, such as early intervention and AVID, shall be measured. Both pre and post assessments shall be administered to all students in order to provide the information needed to measure a program's success.
21. **Classroom minimum space requirements.** All classrooms shall be measured to make sure they meet the minimum space requirements for our students.
22. **Discipline referrals and suspensions.** The number of discipline referrals and suspensions shall be measured and disaggregated by demographic group. The ultimate goal is 0 for all groups.
23. **Student progress.** It is our goal that students progress through the school system in a progressive, orderly fashion. Therefore, all courses shall be evaluated on a yearly basis to determine where students are failing and would thus be unable to advance to the next grade level.
24. **Senior class student performance.** The performance of students in our high school senior class shall be measured in order to determine the exact reason why a student is not eligible to graduate with his/her class.
25. **Scorecard.** A scorecard shall be developed for each school, class, and course in order to measure the grade performance of students. This scorecard will be made available to the public with the intent that the public, as well as the administration, can use this information to determine which programs are working well and with which programs students are struggling. This will be an impersonal report with no student names attached to grades.
26. **English language standards.** Standards will be established for every grade level that will measure each student's ability to master the English language in not only verbal, but also reading and writing skills.

With these measurements, when analyzed both individually and as a whole across all schools, classes, and demographics, we will be able to gain a rich understanding of the success and shortcomings of our schools.

#### **IV. Specific Program Recommendations Based on Community Input**

Members of the Program Working Groups attended all Community Forums. We also received written summaries of community input from the forums. These recommendations were derived by carefully reviewing data from the Forums and identifying common themes and specific suggestions. The intent of this section was to be as inclusive as possible and to represent the wide range of input provided by the Forums. In Section V, we identify a smaller set of high priority recommendations for immediate consideration and action.

##### **Academic Programs**

1. **Establish foreign language instruction for K–5 as a core component of the curriculum and increase the variety of foreign language courses offered in middle and high school.** Specific suggestions included offering Chinese throughout the district and hiring University of Illinois graduate students as instructors.
2. **Promote engagement and active learning for all students through the use of differentiated instruction, hands-on learning, project based instruction, and field trips.** Respondents acknowledged that this would require sustained, intense professional development for teachers, administrators and other staff focusing on recognition of multiple intelligences, critical thinking, active learning and differentiation.
3. **Introduce computer technology and research at earlier grade levels and integrate it into daily activities and lessons K-12.**
4. **Implement programs that teach students practical work and life skills,** such as Indiana's Work Ethic Certificate, a collaboration between businesses and schools that promotes attendance, academic achievement, social skills and work readiness.

5. **Implement programs to promote understanding and acceptance of diverse cultures.** These could be conducted both in and out of school and could focus on history, language, music, art, literature and all aspects of culture. *Odyssey Club*, based out of Colorado, is an effective example.
6. **Increase the number and variety of honors classes at middle and high school levels and establish bridge programs to enable more students to take them.** The United States Military Preparatory School, is one such program that increases students' skill base so they can succeed in regular and/or honors classes.
7. **Keep students engaged over the summer with a variety of programs** that address academics, life skills, job skills, and college readiness activities like resume building. Grant funding may be available from the state to develop these programs and give stipends to participating students.
8. **Expand programming focusing on career and technical exploration**, including HVAC, trades, technology, work co-ops, health profession, and LPN programs; establish partnerships with Parkland College and local businesses and industries.
9. **Establish more partnerships with UIUC and Parkland at academic, cultural, and vocational/technical levels.** It was widely recognized that these partnerships could help the district achieve many of its goals. Examples include professional artist interaction with students; increased interaction with the UIUC College of Education around professional development; Math, Science, and Technology Education (MSTE) collaboration; technical and vocational assistance from professionals at both UIUC and Parkland; and providing facilities for additional high school career and technical programs at Parkland like trade and shop classes. See [www.madison.k12.wi.us/tnl/sci/program\\_desc.html](http://www.madison.k12.wi.us/tnl/sci/program_desc.html) for an example.

### **Special and Gifted Education**

1. **Strengthen programs for children with special educational needs.** Programs should address social and interpersonal skills training; life and employment skills, and academics and should focus on serving special needs students throughout their eligibility period and integrating them into classroom and community settings as much as possible. Programming should be consistent across schools.
2. **Improve the IEP (Individualized Educational Plan) process.** Provide sufficient training and resources for teachers and aides and families. Develop a program and materials for parent education on IEP advocacy and rights. Provide case managers/instructional specialists to oversee implementation of IEP.
3. **Make procedures and criteria for identifying and serving special education and gifted students transparent to professionals and families.** Definitions should be clearly established and communicated to parents and teachers. It might be useful to create a glossary of common terms used in education (IEP, special needs, enrichment) so parents can find out at a glance what these terms mean. Procedures for students who are both gifted and special needs should be specified.
4. **Increase the amount of time spent on enrichment.** The standard 45 minutes per week was widely thought to be inadequate.
5. **Provide ISAT/PSAE accommodations routinely for qualified students.** The perception exists that practices vary across schools and grade levels.

### **Safety/Discipline**

1. **Establish a uniform, proactive approach regarding behavior/discipline in the district that emphasizes positive models, desired behavior, and family involvement.** Several effective programs exist including: Nurtured Heart, PBIS (Positive Behavior Intervention System), PBF (Positive Behavior Facilitation), and Chill/Reset.

2. **Provide more in-depth solutions to recurring and serious behavior problems.** Solutions could include individual and group counseling, mediation, and conflict resolution. Consider community service as part of the discipline system.
3. **Implement a bullying prevention program (including internet bullying) involving students and families.** PTA could be a good vehicle for this.
4. **With parents as partners, teach students about appropriate and inappropriate communication between students and teachers to promote awareness of sexual abuse or harassment..**
5. **Enhance the safe route to school program.** Work with the community to improve the condition of sidewalks. Provide more crossing guards.
6. **Improve and communicate pick-up and drop-off procedures.** Distribute clear car and bus procedures to all parents and students (perhaps in different languages).
7. **Develop training and enforcement programs for buses.** Train bus drivers and monitors on safety and behavior management. Drivers should conduct orientation for students who ride their buses. Provide district bus monitor on the MTD busses to ensure the safety of students. Provide an alternative for students who are kicked off the bus, as their parents may not have other transportation options.
8. **Provide more parking at the high schools or restrict student use of cars.** Too many students are driving; parking on the side streets is an issue that concerns neighbors.
9. **Continue to enforce building security at all schools.** Only authorized personnel, students, and those registered at the office should have access.

#### **Health/Wellness, Including Physical Education**

1. **Revise P.E. curriculum to focus on lifelong fitness.**
2. **Provide elementary students with more P.E., recess and classroom activities that promotes physical activity.** Ideally, *physical education should be offered every day as mandated by state law.* All schools should have a separate cafeteria and gym, not one room used for both.
3. **Increase the number of school nurses.** Explore partnerships with Parkland, UIUC Nursing Education programs, and the Champaign County Public Health Department.
4. **Provide adequate supplies for first aid needs at every school.** Also provide a storage area or containers to hold all supplies.
5. **Increase availability of sinks, soap, and dryers in restrooms.**
6. **Work with Public Health District to offer students their required immunizations on site.**
7. **Improve nutrition in breakfast and lunch programs and vending machines.** Increase use of fresh fruit/vegetables and incorporate cultural aspects into food options where possible.
8. **Refrain from using unhealthy food/treats as a reward for participation or good behavior.**

#### **Non-Academic and Extra-Curricular**

1. **Expand cultural and fine arts programming.** Include enrichment for all at the elementary level; increase band, orchestra, music, choir, art, and drama; and offer dance at all levels.
2. **Expand middle school sports programs to include 6<sup>th</sup> graders and expand sports offerings for both boys and girls at all middle schools.**
3. **Expand after-school enrichment and tutoring programs in all schools.** Provide stipends to encourage teachers to become involved in these programs. Partner with University and Parkland and community organizations to supply and train tutors (successful examples at Garden Hills and BTW).

4. **Provide funding to low income students for extra-curricular activities or after-school enrichment programs.** If assistance programs already exist, the district needs to get the message to parents.

### **Support Services**

1. **Increase programming for referral and early identification of at-risk children.**
2. **Offer additional early childhood and Pre-K programs.** Expand the transitional Kindergarten program to include the “at-risk” population.
3. **Offer more counseling/social services for students and parents regarding post secondary educational or training options, including required testing and financial aid options.** Suggestions include a mock job fair; communication with and visits from company human resource officers or recruiters; and presentations on how to write a resume, how to dress for an interview, and interview skills.
4. **Conduct outreach to minority community to assist the district in the retention of minority students in schools.** Schools could create a quick reference tool for parents including key resources within the district, school, and/or community to. Involve churches and community agencies in retention efforts. Establish a community outreach center to support families and students with retention and school success.
5. **Build upon programs that are working currently in the schools.** These include *CU One-to-One Mentoring*, *VEYA*, *AVID*, *TALKS* mentoring and social work programs, *Positive Behavior Facilitation (PBF) Attendance*, *Truancy Education Alternative Opportunity Program*, *Attendance Improvement Team*, *Attendance Outreach Workers*, *Project Graduation*, *Operation Reclaim*, *Reconnect and Restore*, *Social and Emotional Learning*, *Gentlemen’s Club*, *Society of Gentlemen*, *Ladies Club*, *GLAM*, *AAM Ladies*, *Student Leadership Clubs*, *National Honor Society*, and *Student Council*.
6. **Establish flexible, wrap around services that promote readiness and academic success for all students.** This system would include routine monitoring of student progress to identify students who are failing, early parental involvement, and a broad system of academic, behavioral and health supports.
7. **Assist parents in obtaining foundational skills so they can assist their children.** This can be done via linking parents with resources like Parkland’s Adult Literacy and Education program, the Champaign Library and the Urban League. Teachers and family liaisons should be trained to work with parents to bridge the gap between the schools and home.
8. **Work with Champaign Libraries to develop and publicize academic resources for student and families.**

### **Professional Development and Assessment**

1. **Concentrate on hiring, retaining, and training high-quality faculty and staff especially principals.** Identify and promote skills that are crucial for success in the role of principal, including: communication, teamwork, and creating a positive atmosphere within the school. Offer professional development opportunities for current district staff to assume greater leadership roles that could eventually lead to the principalship. Conduct exit surveys of teachers and staff leaving district.
2. **Create a strategic professional development plan for the district.** The plan should address strategic goals, resource allocation, targets for participation and outcomes in terms of equity and student achievement.
3. **Provide mandatory, on-going diversity training for teachers, administrators and staff that addresses classroom climate, expectations, engagement, learning and assessment, and discipline.** This should be a goal in the professional development plan mentioned above.
4. **Partner with UIUC and Parkland to strengthen professional development and continuing education.** For example, the University of Wisconsin has a partnership with the Madison-Metro area schools. (See the website at <[labweb.education.wisc.edu/pds/index.html](http://labweb.education.wisc.edu/pds/index.html)>).

5. **Build positive relationships with teachers and all district staff through incentives such as competitive pay, good working conditions, excellent professional development and mentoring, bonuses for high performance, and opportunities for advancement.**
6. **Create opportunities to develop positive teacher/family relationships** such as parent-teacher organizations and school councils, outreach activities, and strong communication mechanisms. Create a mechanism for student/parent feedback.
7. **Provide parents with more information about faculty/staff qualifications and certifications.** These could be listed on school web pages or distributed at the start of each school year.

### Communication

1. **Improve school communication with parents to make all parents feel that they are a welcome partner in their child’s education.** Suggestions included: invite parents to have regular “coffee and donuts with the principal”; initiate “Town Hall Meetings” in diverse neighborhoods several times a year to bring together the district, board, community members, critics/activists, PTA; create parent/community advisory boards to provide authentic feedback to the district and board; hold 8<sup>th</sup> grade orientation for students and families; waive charges associated with graduation and other events.
2. **Provide clear, easily accessible information for parents regarding parental rights, safety/crisis procedures, the controlled choice system, school policies, in-school supports, extra-curricular programming and other important issues.** Use multiple methods of reaching parents including: e-mail, web pages, telephone, U.S. mail and backpack mail. Produce this information in multiple languages.
3. **Improve communication between teachers and parents around individual student issues such as: transition to kindergarten or a new school, homework, test scores and grades, and behavior.** Increase opportunities for parent teacher conferences. Find the best way/time to communicate with individual families . See the Madison, Wisconsin School District website <madison.k12.wi.us> for an example of their “Infinite Campus” grading and communication system.
4. **Improve the district’s efforts to create grant proposals.** Increase district staff to assist with grantwriting.
5. **Increase cooperation between school districts.** This will better ensure seamless integration of students moving from one district to the next, increase efficiency and create the opportunity for new programs.

### Equity

1. **Promote equitable distribution of resources and programming across all buildings, teachers and students.** Differences in facilities, programs, and the allocation of resources contributes to the impression that all students do not have the same educational opportunities in Unit 4. The district plan should identify potential inequities and detail a strategy for equitable resource allocation and programming.
2. **Ensure that the faculty and staff reflect the racial and cultural composition of the district.** Develop a targeted recruiting plan that includes minority serving institutions.
3. **Offer the same programming at both /middle high schools or give students/parents a choice between the two schools.** This includes honors and AP course offerings, music and arts, sports and extra-curriculars, and after school programming.
4. **Ensure that there is equity and consistency in discipline and behavioral approaches across all buildings.** This supports the adoption of a district wide behavior/discipline approach.
5. **Address the overrepresentation of minorities in special education classes.** Examine pre-referral, referral, identification and monitoring policies and practices.
6. **Address the under-representation of minorities in upper level classes.** Provide support to minorities that are in upper level classes to assist with their integration and success in the classes.

7. **Create an official office that will oversee/implement equity programs and initiatives.** Incorporate it within the district structure and make it accountable to the school board and the community; create a community liaison committee.

### **Time and Structure**

1. **Implement smaller class size and a lower teacher-to-student ratio across the district and especially at high school.** See appendix A.
2. **Shorten the amount of time students spend on buses.**
3. **Provide balanced calendar option at middle and high schools.** This was of particular interest to families with students in balanced calendar elementary schools.
4. **Provide more flexibility in scheduling to allow students to take additional courses to fulfill graduation requirements.** Suggestions included: longer school day, online courses, zero hour, expanded summer school.
5. **Implement a closed campus lunch at the high schools.** Students return to campus late and disrupt programming. This is also a safety and traffic issue.
6. **Provide curriculum/activities/community events for students during school holidays and in-service days.**

In addition to the consensus viewpoints expressed above, there are several important issues where there was not a clear consensus from the community. These include:

1. **Whether all schools should offer identical programs.** There are two schools of thought: one is that every school should offer the same programs, facilities, and resources in order to achieve equity; the opposing point of view says providing equal opportunity does not necessarily mean offering the exact same courses, resources, and facilities at every school, but similar opportunities and resources should be available to every student in each school building.
2. **Whether to change the structure of our current K–5, 6–8, 9–12 system.** Options suggested include: K–8 pilot, magnet schools, charter schools, combination of systems where K–3 is neighborhood, 4–8 school of choice, high school is magnet system or one large campus (like the Great Campus initiative currently under consideration at Stratton).
3. **Whether to continue modified controlled choice after the expiration of the Consent Decree or reorganize as magnet schools.** The Board should be aware that many parents want a return to neighborhood schools. Others want controlled choice based on SES; some want the Consent Decree extended and to have controlled choice based on race; some want magnet or charter schools; and some want to eliminate “controlled” choice and permit free choice. .
4. **Whether to increase the school day or adopt another type of scheduling system that allows more room in the curriculum for additional programs.** (See the School and Class Structure section.)
5. **Whether the self-contained gifted program should be modified.** Many parents like the gifted program, while others want to see students of all levels taught in the same classroom. Also, some feel that the location of gifted programs and the lack of gifted programs in all schools subverts true school choice.
6. **Whether School Resource Officers (SRO) have a positive or a negative impact on students.** Some parents and students feel that the increased security is needed because their children feel safer and the learning environment is less disrupted. Other parents feel that SROs are too aggressive, leading to more criminal charges filed disproportionately against African-American students.

7. **Whether bilingual staff and resources should be available at all schools.** Some feel that “choice” implies that that English language learners should be able to be served in every school. The opposing view is that this is difficult to accomplish, because it divides the teachers, staff, and resources.
8. **Whether to initiate “Looping” at the elementary level (younger students having the same teacher two years in a row.)** Parents felt strongly on both sides of this issue. Some feel it is developmentally appropriate ; others fear a situation where the child and teacher are not working well together and must remain together for two years.
9. **Whether to have uniforms for all the schools.** Some parents are opposed, but others argue that uniforms take the focus away from status and put it back on academics.

We suggest that the district do more work with the community to resolve these issues and achieve consensus. This could happen through additional community forums and/or by asking the PTA groups to bring these questions to their constituency and have parents weigh in on what their priorities are regarding these issues.

## V. Priority Recommendations

This final section outlines priorities taken directly from the community recommendations which were themes continually repeated throughout the forums. We chose these recommendations carefully because they were most important to the community, they contained elements that would create community-wide support for implementation, and finally, were founding principles that might solve issues raised by the community in other areas.

1. Utilize evidence-based curriculum that incorporates methods that teach to all students’ learning styles and individualized abilities, and assessing those students in ways other than standardized testing. Specifically:

- Connect with Coalition of Essential School systems in Illinois that are beginning to explore ways to focus on individualized learning, challenging curriculum, and de-emphasizing standardized testing scores. Examples of those schools are: Mt. Carmel H.S., Broadmoor M.S. in Pekin, and North M.S. in Godfrey.
- Adopt an accelerated school community approach which will enhance learning for all children, by incorporating challenging activities into each class, which are typically reserved for students identified as gifted or talented. Please refer to <http://soeap.udayton.edu/support/accel/>
- Create pathways for teachers to use evidence-based methodology, support the implementation of those proven methods, and then hold staff accountable for the outcomes by creating alternative assessment methods which measure success.
- Establish flexible, wrap around services that promote readiness and academic success for all students. This system would include routine monitoring of student progress to identify students who are failing, early parental involvement, and a broad system of academic, behavioral and health supports.
- Increase funding for enrichment activities at all levels, including field trip funding, artists-in-residence, special after-school/lunchtime enrichment programs such as student councils at all levels, expansion of enrichment programs already in place to include leadership, artistic, sciences (etc.) categories.

- Establish bridge programs, perhaps based on the model of United States Military Preparatory School, which increases students' skill base so that they can succeed in regular and/or honors classes.
- Partner with local business and industry to offer non-traditional classes for credit hour in the workplace.

2. Reduce class size so that no school exceeds the state average for class size. At present, 50% of the classrooms in CUSD #4 are over the state average for class size.

**(See attached appendix A.)**

3. Offer foreign language as a core component by introducing foreign language instruction in K-5 and increase the number of languages offered in middle and high school to more non-traditional offerings that will prepare students to communicate in a global environment. To that end and to allow for more instructional time, we recommend:

- Increasing time in the school day.
- Become flexible in scheduling classes. Examples include: Zero hour or blocking (different longer classes on different days) as a way to increase number of classes taken; alternative options to fulfill graduation requirements in order to take more courses, on-line courses.

4. Hire, support and retain qualified staff by creating excellent teaching environments.

- Allow for and encourage diversity in staff by integrating diversity, culture recognition and sensitivity, respect, citizenry, and tolerance training into staff professional development.
- Support the creation of Professional Learning Communities or other community-centered decision-making models.
- Increase staff to allow for more offerings in fine arts, special education, physical education, social services, teaching support services (teacher's assistants, PT, OT etc.), and 1 medical professional in each school.

5. Offer choices for children with special needs with regard to program placement, not a one-size-fits-all placement approach.

- Partner with early intervention to identify children most at-risk for requiring services before age three and work with the agency to establish transitions from the 3-5 program to collaborate on IEP's, and offer transition planning earlier for those graduating from high school.
- Create and participate in community advisory groups aimed at explaining terms and language revolving around IEP's.

6. Establish and sustain effective two-way communication with the community. Specifically:

- Create community advisory groups in areas such as special education, equity, discipline to report to school board at designated times.
- Hold bi-annual open forums for the community to participate in upcoming school year plans and assess the previous school year.

- Take the official school board meeting “on the road” to different schools.
- Improve communication between teachers and parents regarding assessment and feedback about test scores, daily issues, curriculum and grading by e-mail, direct communication or via the website.
- Conduct outreach to minority community to assist the district in the attendance and retention of students in schools by creating a quick reference tool for parents including key community resources. Establish a community outreach center to support families and students with retention and school success.
- Establish a uniform, fair, proactive approach regarding behavior/discipline in the district that emphasizes positive models, desired behavior, and family involvement, train teachers and school administrators to implement it effectively, and include families in the process.

Resources:

- The Nebraska State Parental Information and Resource Center (PIRC).
- Weiss, A.R., & Westmoreland, H. (2006). Family & Community Engagement in Boston Public Schools: 1995-2006.)
- The Connecticut State PIRC – PIRC, 25 Industrial Park Road, Middletown, CT 06457-1520. Tel: 860-632-1485. [Email-kirner@ctserc.org](mailto:Email-kirner@ctserc.org)

Thank you for allowing us to summarize and effectively represent the public who spoke at the community forums, on the website, via proxy and through other forms of communication with regard to the broad subject of programs. We are pleased to have been a part of this process, and are looking forward to a longstanding partnership dedicated to creating Great Schools, Together.

Respectfully Submitted,

Cech, Tom, Training Coordinator, Plastipak Packaging

DeStefano, Lizanne, Executive Associate Dean for Research and Administration, Office of the Dean, University of Illinois

Evans, Ruth Ann, Retired Dean of Adult Education, Parkland Community College

Fadale, Stephanie, Regional Outreach Representative, Carle Foundation Hospital

Griggs, Mildred Barnes, Professor Emeritus, College of Education, University of Illinois

Koenig, Brenda, Unit 4 PTA Council Vice President

LeGrande, Audrey, Community Council Director, Junior League of Champaign Urbana

Lewis, Patricia M., Retired School Administrator & Educational Consultant

Thompson, Maria, VEYA Director

Thompson, Patrick, VEYA President

Weaver, D’Andre, AVID Coordinator, Champaign Unit 4 Schools

Wilson, Lisa C., Attorney

Listing of Unit 4 Schools, their average class size, versus the State and District average...

School	Grade	Class Avg	State Avg	District Avg
Barkstall	K	23.0	20.9	22.4
	1	23.0	21.0	22.4
	2	23.7	21.3	20.5
	3	23.0	21.8	20.0
	4	21.0	22.5	20.2
	5	24.0	22.8	20.1
Bottenfield	K	23.0	20.9	22.4
	1	23.3	21.0	22.4
	2	24.0	21.3	20.5
	3	23.7	21.8	20.0
	4	23.7	22.5	20.2
	5	23.7	22.8	20.1
B.T.Washington	K	21.5	20.9	22.4
	1	19.0	21.0	22.4
	2	19.5	21.3	20.5
	3	13.0	21.8	20.0
	4	24.5	22.5	20.2
	5	13.7	22.8	20.1
Carrie Busey	K	23.3	20.9	22.4
	1	23.3	21.0	22.4
	2	22.7	21.3	20.5
	3	23.7	21.8	20.0
	4	17.3	22.5	20.2
	5	21.0	22.8	20.1
Dr. Howard	K	22.7	20.9	22.4
	1	22.7	21.0	22.4
	2	16.0	21.3	20.5
	3	16.8	21.8	20.0
	4	16.8	22.5	20.2
	5	17.3	22.8	20.1
Garden Hills	K	21.7	20.9	22.4
	1	23.0	21.0	22.4
	2	20.0	21.3	20.5
	3	16.0	21.8	20.0
	4	18.0	22.5	20.2
	5	20.3	22.8	20.1
Kenwood	K	23.0	20.9	22.4
	1	23.0	21.0	22.4
	2	20.7	21.3	20.5
	3	24.0	21.8	20.0

	4	19.7	22.5	20.2
	5	20.7	22.8	20.1
Robeson	K	22.8	20.9	22.4
	1	23.3	21.0	22.4
	2	22.8	21.3	20.5
	3	24.7	21.8	20.0
	4	22.5	22.5	20.2
	5	24.3	22.8	20.1
South Side	K	23.5	20.9	22.4
	1	23.0	21.0	22.4
	2	24.0	21.3	20.5
	3	23.0	21.8	20.0
	4	23.0	22.5	20.2
	5	20.5	22.8	20.1
Stratton	K	19.8	20.9	22.4
	1	20.0	21.0	22.4
	2	14.5	21.3	20.5
	3	14.0	21.8	20.0
	4	16.0	22.5	20.2
	5	16.0	22.8	20.1
Westview	K	23.3	20.9	22.4
	1	23.0	21.0	22.4
	2	21.0	21.3	20.5
	3	23.0	21.8	20.0
	4	22.3	22.5	20.2
	5	21.0	22.8	20.1
Edison	6	23.2	22.6	22.3
	7	18.9	21.8	21.1
	8	20.5	21.9	23.4
Franklin	6	21.0	22.6	22.3
	7	24.0	21.8	21.1
	8	24.5	21.9	23.4
Jefferson	6	22.6	22.6	22.3
	7	24.3	21.8	21.1
	8	24.1	21.9	23.4
Central	9-12	20.0	18.9	20.5
Centennial	9-12	20.7	18.9	20.5