

Stillwater Central School District Board of Education Goals Aligned with District Strategic Plan

Our Strategic Plan is policy guide that articulates our school's path for the future. The strategic plan captures our image of our school and identifies themes, goals and strategies to preserve those aspects worthy protection and promote change where change is desired. Our strategic plan is informed by workshops with the New York State School Board Association's Advisory Solutions Team, Federal "Race To The Top Funding" and New York State Board of Regents "Learning Standards." The later standards represent the core of what all citizens should know, understand and be able to do as a result of their schooling. Students rightfully expect a powerful education in which teaching, assessment, and the provision of support for learning are closely linked.

During the 2010-2011 school year, the Stillwater Board of Education embarked on a new strategy for assessing the current state of educational affairs in our district and shaping a strategic plan which was intentionally informed by a series of workshops designed and implemented by our administrative team and faculty in our school district. During this academic year, four workshops were planned on "Student Performance and Educational Programs." Additional workshop included "The Development of an Information Technology Plan," a "Long Range Capital Plan" and "Communications" within our school district and beyond to the greater Stillwater Community. Naturally, the annual budget development process informed our efforts in the area of "Financial Management."

The creation of a Strategic Plan for Stillwater Central School District is an important next step as we continue to build on our planning efforts to date. To this end we present the following themes, goals and strategic priorities for the Stillwater Central School District.

John M. Murphy
Chairman, SCSD Planning Committee

Stillwater Central School District Goals and Strategic Priorities

TOPIC 1

Board Position on Student Performance and Educational Programs

Much is being discussed and written about education reform in the United States. Parents, teachers and school board members join their administration in efforts to understand and contrast the contemporary language, expectations and achievement goals of today's learning environment with what has traditionally been offered. "Today's students have not just changed incrementally from those of the past, nor simply changed their slang, clothes, body adornment, or styles, as has happened between generations previously." The framework for 21st century skills is a way to re-envision learning and prepare students for a rapidly evolving global and technological world. The contemporary classroom must foster an environment where students emerge as substantive life-long learners. This dynamic new environment promotes innovation through critical thinking, problem solving, collaboration, and technology integration, while building on mastery of core content and background knowledge.

Today's core standards define the knowledge and skills students should have within their Pre K-12 educational curriculum so that they will graduate from high school able to succeed in entry-level, credit-bearing academic college courses and in workforce training programs. It stands to reason that most graduates of our school district will enter the world of work at some point in their lives. There must be a nexus between a rigorous academic curriculum and the skills sets necessary to be a highly effective employee and citizen. Successful citizens and employees need strong written and oral communication skills, a strong interest in working with people, the ability to manage multiple tasks, work within deadlines under pressure as effective team members. This generation must have the ability to take direction and listen effectively, while having a client-service orientation and the ability to think and interpret information. Therefore, we propose and endorse the following goal and strategic priorities for our school district:

Goal

SCSD will provide educational programs designed to offer each student a path to success in an evolving 21st century world. curriculum, instructional materials and staffing resources will be allocated to maximize student achievement, individually and

collectively. Appropriate measures of success will be used in judging the performance of ongoing programs and in allocating resources. SCSC will provide “a well-designed articulated curriculum which is measured by meaningful, performance-based assessments.”

Strategic Priorities

1. Students excel in a rigorous and relevant course curriculum that reflects what students need to know and demonstrate a global 21st century environment, including mastery of language and appreciation of the arts and competencies in the use of technology.
2. Students will be provided remedial support and creative educational interventions to maximize their potential for graduation from SCSD.
3. Students will have the opportunity to graduate from high school with an Associates Degree or some college credits.
4. SCSD professionals will have 21st century preparation and access to ongoing high quality professional development aligned with New York State Board of Education priorities and Regents reform.
5. SCSD professionals will use data to inform decisions and improve performance. They will use an assessment system to measure student knowledge, skills and performance and to inform instruction .
6. SCSD professionals will have received preparation in the interconnectedness of the world with knowledge and skills including the study of language(s).

Stillwater Central School District Goals and Strategic Priorities

Topic 2

Information Technology

Educational technology, including computers and software have grown tremendously and have permeated most areas of our lives. It would be difficult to argue that business and industry should use less technology. Consider the striking advances in medicine, banking, bill paying and nano-technology brought on through technological advancement. There is no question the Internet has become an increasingly vital tool in today's information society. As a society we are going online to conduct such day-to-day activities as education, business transactions, personal correspondence, research and job searches. Some argue that the information age rivals the dramatic modernization of our country during the industrial revolution of the 19th century.

For today's students, use of the Internet plays a major role in their learning, as well as in their relationships with their friends, their families and their schools. The Pew Internet and American Life Project (Levin & Arafeh, 2002) found that teenagers use the Internet extensively. Clearly, students believe technology and especially the Internet impacts their lives and their schoolwork. About 17 million students, ages 12-17, use the Internet to find information for school research; that number represents 94 percent of youth in that age bracket. According to that study, students are very positive about the use of the Internet to do their schoolwork.

[Students complete their schoolwork more quickly; they are less likely to get stymied by material they don't understand; their papers and projects are more likely to draw upon up-to-date sources and state-of-the-art knowledge; and, they are better at juggling their school assignments and extracurricular activities when they use the Internet. (Levin & Arafeh, 2002. pii)]

Those who lack access to the Internet are at an increased disadvantage. Consequently, increasing the number of students using technology tools of the digital age is a vitally important goal.

Educators must prepare for a technology-rich future and keep up with change by adopting effective strategies that infuse lessons with appropriate technologies. Seventy-seven percent of public schools had a majority of teachers who used the Internet for instruction during the 2003-04 school year, up from 54 percent in 1998-99 (Fox, 2005, p. 42). Technology being infused into the schools is ongoing, unstoppable, and necessary. Thus, school use and access to new and current technologies, is on the rise and more and more states have established technology standards for students, teachers and administrators.

So technology applied in the educational environment include skills such as finding and managing resources, publishing on the web, and connecting with other students, parents and global communities. Teachers must be proficient in these skills in order to model good practices for their students and to help students include these skills in their learning. Thus, it is necessary that the learning environment include web-based tools that are commonly used in the contemporary classroom environment. Therefore, we propose and endorse the following goal and strategic priorities for our school district:

Goal

SCSD will employ appropriate information technology resources as an integral part of its educational and management functions. In addition, students will master suitable IT skills as part of an integrated 21st century curriculum.

Strategic Priorities

1. SCSD will ensure students use technology to access and demonstrate new knowledge and skills that will be needed as life-long learners to be competitive in a constantly changing international environment.

2. SCSD will ensure 21st century technology and learning tools are available and are supported by school facilities that have the capacity for 21st century learning.
3. SCSD will use 21st century assessment systems to inform instruction and measure student knowledge, skills and performance.

TOPIC 3

Board Position on Future Growth

The flexibility to adapt to changing circumstances is essential for any organization, but especially for a school district. Many factors outside of the district's control dictate the demand for services that must be provided: state and federal regulations, demographic trends, local and regional real estate development patterns, and so on. And, unlike private businesses, a school district cannot choose to limit its customer base to suit its current or optimum operating size or capabilities.

The impact of the Luther Forest Technology Campus (LFTC) requires analysis in order to forecast future growth in Stillwater and the corresponding potential impact on our school district. We do know from the Town's 2006 Comprehensive Plan that the LFTC is proposed to contain a mixture of industrial, commercial and residential uses, including up to four silicon computer chip manufacturing facilities, 2-million square feet of support uses such as a hotel/conference center, support businesses/offices, and up to 50 residential homes. Development of LFTC is planned to occur in five phases over a fifteen to twenty-five year build-out period.

Flexibility has no value in situations where there is no uncertainty or variability. If we could say with confidence that no growth or change in the district will ever require added facilities, we could ignore this entire topic. If straight-line projections for population growth and demographic trends could be relied upon as predictors, it would be simple to calculate future need. However, the local and regional economic impact of the LFTC is a significant unknown. Its' potential impact on the district must at least be considered when deciding how much flexibility for future growth is enough.

SCSD will ensure that it has adequate flexibility to accommodate future facility needs, including those which might result from development associated with Global Foundries and the Luther Forest Technology Campus.

SCSD is aware that population projections are used to estimate the number of people, households and families that are likely to live in Stillwater in the future. The Capital District Regional Planning Commission (CDRPC) is charged with preparing such projections on a regular basis. As the Economic Development District for our four-county region, CDRPC requires population and household projections to fulfill its demographic and economic planning functions. According

to available estimates the population of Stillwater is expected to grow between nine and six percent a year. It is anticipated that there will be approximately 1500 additional people in 2040 than there were in 2000. Household size is expected to shrink over time according to the CDRPC. *Persons per Household*, identifies the number of people per household expected over the next four decades. The numbers indicate that as the population grows, household size will decline. This will create additional pressure for the development of new housing in Stillwater.

It seems important that our school district be sensitive to our municipal government vision for the future of our community. That said, Stillwater aspires to retain and strengthen its rural character, open space resources and agricultural traditions. We seek to manage growth and change in a manner that protects and enhances the communities historic and aesthetic attributes, improves community quality of life, stimulates economic activity, and supports social and civic institutions for this and future generations of Stillwater residents.

SCSD understands that flexibility usually comes at a cost. For example, this could be the capital cost of owning extra real estate, or the added cost of construction that might be incurred to preserve future expansion options. Fiscal prudence requires a balance between the cost of flexibility and the potential future cost of being forced to act within limited options.

Currently, SCSD is midway through an extensive facility expansion which will, when completed, provide adequate facility capacity for the foreseeable future. This project has expanded the footprint of both the elementary school and the middle/high school buildings. Along with the new track and multi-purpose field, these building additions consume much of the buildable land area owned by the district.

It is prudent for the district to examine the degree of flexibility it will have for any future facility expansion; and assess whether steps should be taken to enhance this flexibility. Given the long timeframe for facility design and construction, plus the unique challenges related to real estate transactions, this review should be undertaken in the near term. Therefore we propose and endorse the following strategic goal and priorities for our school district:

GOAL

The SCSD will ensure that it has adequate flexibility to accommodate future facility needs, including those which might result from development associated

with development with Global Foundries and the Luther Forest Technology Campus.

Strategic Priorities

1. Analyze and assess the degree of flexibility currently possessed by the district to manage future growth needs within the district. Said analysis will include a review of the capacity of current facilities, upon completion of current projects, changes to current facilities, or use thereof, which could allow increased capacity without expansion and, capacity of existing school property to accommodate future expansion.
2. Assemble and analyze data regarding population growth and demographic trends within the district. Said analysis will include historical data, projections, potential impact of the LFTC and student population and related facility impact for various growth scenarios.
3. Determine availability of options to enhance flexibility, if called for by examining available real estate opportunities, including cost and suitability and identifying other scenarios for enhancing flexibility

Topic 4

Financial Management

“Public schools are public because they are paid for primarily by public funds, which come from taxes. It is taxation that gives meaning to the phrase the public schools belong to all the people. And, because the schools belong to all the people, no single segment of the community can dictate their programs or control their direction.”

School board members are stewards of public funds and are accountable for seeing that those funds are aligned with the Stillwater School District’s goals and strategic priorities. Said goals define a future-oriented vision for the school district and standards for student academic progress and success. The SCSD board of education is responsible for ensuring that “public funds are expended wisely, efficiently and equitably” to deliver a quality education for our students. All school board members are required to participate in and complete training on school district financial management principles and practices.

In order to carry out financial management responsibilities, board members must have a working knowledge of school finance including sources of all revenue, the budget process, tax levies, bond issues as well as the investment of school funds. Finally board members must understand district accounting procedures and cost-cutting strategies when appropriate.

Therefore, we propose and endorse the following goal and strategic priorities for our school district.

Goal

SCSD will continue to follow prudent and professional financial management practices in order to promote long-term fiscal strength and stability. Financial planning and budgeting will focus on resource attainment and alignment with priorities to maximize student achievement.

Strategic Priorities

1. SCSD will seek Federal, State and County grants and aid to support local taxpayer contribution to our educational enterprise.
2. SCSD will monitor monthly detailed warrants on all district financial accounts
3. SCSD will monitor appropriation status reports to include the annual budget, adjustments, expenses, encumbrances and funds available.
4. SCSD will establish an annual budget timeline to include workshops, public input, a public hearing and formal presentation of the board approved proposed budget to district residents through the SCSD newsletter prior to the vote on the budget.
5. SCSD will monitor the Treasure's report including the cafeteria fund, extra curricular fund, federal fund, debt service fund, capital fund money market account, debt service money market account, capital fund money market account, debt service money market account, capital fund checking account, federal and state electronic deposits, payroll fund, general fund cash, trust & agency fund and the general fund money market.

Topic 5

Communication

John Powell once said “to effectively communicate, we must realize that we are all different in the way we perceive the world and use this understanding as a guide to our communication with others.” One of the great challenges of a school district is to establish effective lines of communication among all campus stakeholders and the citizens who make up the district. With increasing interest in student achievement and measures of accountability for effectiveness in our schools, there is a heightened need to establish both formal and informal channels of communication among all interested parties. Traditional means of communication must exist and be complimented well with communication brought about by advances in media, marketing and technology.

“Community relations isn’t just press releases, publicity, public affairs, propaganda, or institutional advertising. Primary elements of an effective communication program include news media relations; school publications, (including newsletters, brochures, pamphlets, website, and topical magazine); and personal contacts.”

Certainly school districts establish their missions and formulate goals and strategic priorities to guide the effective functioning of the district. So too, they establish operating policies to guide the day to day activities both in the school buildings and on school grounds. Critical to the success of the mission of a school district is that said policies are reviewed periodically and made available to the public and all campus stakeholders. Therefore, we propose and endorse the following strategic goal and priorities for our school district

GOAL

SCSD will strive to promote effective communication and meaningful interaction among the Board of Education, the administrative team,

faculty, staff, students and the entire community. Vehicles to promote open, transparent communication within the district will be identified to promote leadership and guide innovation.

Strategic Priorities

1. SCSD will develop appropriate vehicles for community engagement and communication including a district newsletter, website and health and safety alerts.
2. SCSD will establish a policy manual and periodically review and update said manual.
3. SCSD will collaborate with community colleges and public and private universities and colleges to provide enhanced educational opportunities for students.
4. SCSD will make decisions in collaboration with parents, students, business, educational institutions and faith-based and other community and civic organizations to impact student success.
5. SCSD will create a culture that embraces change and promotes dynamic continuous improvement.
6. SCSD will collaborate with partners in Federal, State and County governmental entities to discover innovative transformational strategies that will facilitate change, remove barriers for 21st century learning and understand global connections.