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**Strategic Plan Implementation  
Progress Report  
to the  
Ross Valley School District Community  
April 22, 2008**

This report is to provide the community an update on progress we have made this year on the goals of the Strategic Plan. The Strategic Plan was adopted in the Spring of 2007. It outlines the core values, mission, and vision for our District. The plan encompasses four major goal areas: create curriculum that is engaging, challenging and differentiated to meet the needs of all students; implement a balanced curriculum and assessment program based on District identified essential standards; create a caring community of adults who support student learning and well-being; attract and retain high quality staff. From this plan, the administrative team created an implementation plan to work on targeted actions in each of the goal areas.

The results in this update represent the work of a dedicated staff and community who have focused their efforts and pooled their talents to move toward a common vision and achieve common goals. I deeply appreciate the work of the teachers, classified staff and administrators on each of these reform efforts. I am also deeply thankful for the commitment on the part of parents who generously serve on committees so that we may realize our vision. The Strategic Plan would not have been possible without the vision and leadership of the Board of Trustees, both past and current. This collaborative effort in the Ross Valley brings our goals within reach.

Bryce Sumnick  
Superintendent

### **Curriculum, Standards and Engaged Learning**

In last week's school newsletters, we published an overview of the work we have accomplished in curriculum, identifying our essential standards. Essential standards are those standards that we consider to be critical for our students to know and be able to do. The newsletters are available on each school's website.

### **Social / Emotional Development; Character Education Curriculum**

The Ross Valley School District contracted with communications expert Ellen Dodge in order to implement a cohesive communication and character education program for all K-8 students, teachers, staff, and administrators. Ellen works in our district schools one day a week and rotates through each site every five weeks. The work provided has included direct instruction with students, staff development training, and one-on-one teacher meetings regarding specific situations in classrooms. The goals of our work for this year have been: utilizing common language at school sites regarding effective communication, implementing four similar pillars of character (responsibility, respect, honesty, kindness), clarifying yard supervision responsibilities, improving yard supervision effectiveness, and improving the overall communication amongst all stakeholders who work in or come in contact with our schools.

Counseling was another focus area to strengthen our Character Education curriculum. Four clinicians have served the elementary sites. They work the equivalent of two days per week at each campus. They provide individual counseling, group counseling, crisis support, outside referrals, conflict resolution support, and support to our character education programs. In addition, they share their expertise working with administrative, certificated, and classified support. They consult and collaborate with our school staff.

New to White Hill Middle School this year is an Academic Counselor who joins the full time counselor already on staff. Both counselors provide individual short term and long term counseling, conflict mediation, resource and support for parent/s or guardians, liaison contact with outside agencies, Lunch Bunch programs, Cross Age student support program, Student Diversity Council, and classroom presentations. In addition, specialized academic counseling support is provided to seventh and eighth grade students in anticipation of transition to high school. Academic counseling sessions focus on students identifying their own goals and learning additional strategies and skills to support class work, homework completion and overall success in school. Parent and staff communication is a vital part of our programs.

### **White Hill Implementation Plan**

White Hill identified four priority areas of reform. The four areas are: teaming, personalization and culture, student led conferences, and rigor and intervention. All of the White Hill teachers chose one of the four priority areas, based on their personal interest. The work groups have been working to improve White Hill.

#### ➤ **Teaming**

The Teaming Work Group at White Hill has accomplished all of our first year implementation goals. We have six functioning teams; two 6<sup>th</sup> grade teams, a 7th grade team, an 8th grade team, a 7/8 combination team, and a rotating team, (made up of all enrichment/PE teachers). The teams meet every Wednesday from 2:30-3:30 and talk about students. Every team has a team leader that is part of our new leadership structure.

Our first year implementation goals that were all accomplished include; coordination of homework and projects, parent communication (newsletters, phone calls, and e-mails), intervention meetings with appropriate documentation, student support, and adult support and collegiality. Next year our Teams will continue all that was accomplished this year and move on to creating team identities and interdisciplinary thematic instruction.

➤ Personalization/Culture

- Workgroup has been meeting since Summer 2007
- Student surveys, parent input, and California League of Middle Schools best practices used to set goals and objectives for work
- Consistent behavior expectations were set for entire school, common in all classrooms and areas of campus
- Communication and personalization work was done with counselor Ann Lauriks and consultants George Pigalow, and Ellen Dodge who provided staff development with teachers, administrators, classroom/assembly lessons, and Student Diversity Council
- Next steps include student recognition and community building activities based on four pillars of character; respect, responsibility, kindness, honesty.

➤ Student-Led Conferences

- Conferences added a parent communication piece regarding student academic progress in addition to the three progress reports and three report cards already in place.
- 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> grade students set academic and social/emotional goals in the fall.
- Students compiled a portfolio of two work samples from each class.
- Students wrote a reflection for each work sample.
- Conferences were scheduled for every student at White Hill during the week of October 29.
- Students led parents through their goal setting, work samples and reflections during the conference.
- Parents reflected on their child's progress and completed homework that was returned to school (made available in Spanish).
- Parents completed a survey reflecting on the conference process.
- Students were surveyed about the conference process in the school survey.
- Students will reflect upon their goal setting in the third trimester.
- Students will keep part of their portfolios for next year (6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grades).

➤ Rigor and Intervention

The Rigor and Intervention Work Group is basing its work on the questions that drive Professional Learning Communities. What do we want our students to learn? (essential standards), how will we know when they have learned it? (formative assessments), what do we do when they do learn it? (rigor), and what will we do when they do not learn it? (intervention). This work group's first charge is focusing on our math program at White Hill. Julia Marrero has done an incredible job as the Department Chair of White Hill's Math Department. They have started the textbook adoption process this year, have been working on the essential standards process, have started the study of the White Hill math program, and have successfully implemented 6<sup>th</sup> grade math labs (interventions) during

our sustained silent reading period twice a week. We also have established our reading intervention program and currently have 25 seats available for students who are below proficient in Reading/Language Arts. White Hill has a new Academic Counseling Program that is focused on 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students who are identified as having difficulty passing the high school exit exam. Leslie Dempsey, our Academic Counselor, sees 60 students a week, communicates with parents, monitors grades, teaches organization skills, collaborates with teams and individual teachers and holds groups of students with similar challenges in school.

### **Decision Making / Governance Structure**

The District formed a new governance team this year, the District Leadership Council. (DLC) The DLC is a committee of parents, teachers, classified staff, trustees and administrators of the Ross Valley School District that acts in an advisory capacity to the board of trustees.

The committee met 3 times this year to consider issues of importance to the district. They were charged by the board of trustees to discuss, deliberate, and consider relevant information and design solutions to the complex problems of enrollment, communication and governance. The rationale for the Council is that a broad based, knowledgeable constituent representing all district stakeholders is the best assembly for discussing complex issues and developing solutions that are consistent with the community wishes.

At meetings in December and January, the DLC developed and recommended a facilities plan for incoming kindergarten students. In March they prioritized goal areas to improve district communications and appointed a sub committee to further develop the communication guidelines. (Please see section on Communications in this progress report.) In May, they will address the issue of governance in the District.

### **Professional Development I – Essential Standards, Social emotional development, Professional Learning Communities**

We have identified the highest priorities for teacher and administrator professional development, for the next 1-2 years consistent with the implementation of identifying essential standards, engaged, learning and differentiated instruction. Briefly, the areas we have provided professional development are:

- Essential Standards – (Please refer to newsletter article the week of April 14, 2008.)
- Professional Learning Communities – method of collaboratively working together in which teacher teams analyze student progress and determine best instructional strategies and interventions.
- Social Emotional Development (communications) – please see the section in this Progress Report.
- Data Director – Administrators and teacher leaders have attended training for this on-line management tool of all standardized and local assessments and/or data.
- Math Textbook adoption – We are in the first year of a 2-year adoption process.
- Special Education – opportunities for teachers and staff to discuss and receive training (e.g. Autism, changes in IEP forms, best practices, etc).

### **Professional Development II - Leadership**

We have provided choices for staff development for board members, including participation in California School Boards Association's Masters in Governance Training (3 members have completed) and Board Orientation workshops. Individual trustees represent the board by holding positions on advisory and legislative bodies.

We have provided opportunities for teacher leadership:

- Two math lead teachers, one at the elementary and another at the middle school level, have been selected to lead in the adoption of new math program(s), train teachers in the implementation of newly adopted math program(s), oversee the development and implementation of local assessments as well as the analysis and use of the data to assist in differentiation and support programs for students
- Teachers are selected to be Support Providers in the Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment Program (BTSA), a State supported program to support beginning teachers and to clear their credentials. The partnerships meet weekly for two years and cover such areas as content, pedagogy, classroom management, serving special education students, EL learners, and technology. The program also provides a chance for beginning teachers to network with other new teachers.
- Teachers are selected to be Buddy Teachers to provide support to teachers who are in their first year to the District but who don't qualify for BTSA. Areas of assistance include curriculum and instruction, site culture, administrative tasks, etc.
- Tech mentors are selected staff who assists teachers at each school site to implement technology into classroom instruction.
- Each principal determines an administrative designee(s) who presides over the daily activities and student and staff supervision in the absence of the site administrator.
- One of our teachers is the Environmental Education Initiative leader who coordinates the field testing for units of instruction for environmental education.
- A Peer Assistance and Review (PAR) Panel chairperson has been selected to oversee the BTSA and teacher support programs in coordination with the assistant superintendent.
- We have identified a Math Adoption Team, consisting of teachers, parents, and administrators who work under the guidance of the math lead teachers and the assistant superintendent to work for 2 years to review state approved programs and to recommend programs to pilot and to adopt. Because there are over 42 programs on the State adopted list, the Assistant Superintendent and the two math lead teachers participate in the Marin County Ad Hoc Math Committee whose primary goal is to assist and provide a forum for districts to collaborate on program evaluation.

### **Attract and Retain Quality Team**

We have utilized effective advertizing and recruiting methods, such as EdJoin, an on-line system for teachers and specialized positions, Craig's List, university employment boards, professional journals, etc.

We trained and supported our new employees by providing:

- Employment orientation
- District as well as site orientations
- Special Education staff training and support in the execution of their responsibilities
- See Professional Development Opportunities I and II

We provided training and support to administrators and other management of district on evaluation procedures as well as provided individualized support to employees.

We have designed and implemented staff exit and annual surveys to find out what we do right/could improve to make Ross Valley continue to be a desirable place to work.

We are in the process of developing a plan to provide a compensation package for all staff that is competitive in Marin County, considering the constraints of a “revenue limit district.” In 2007-2008, RVSD has been able to reach the county wide salary average for 2006-2007.

We have also developed leadership opportunities for teacher leaders (See Professional Development II)

### **Assessment**

STAR tests and Writing Assessments developed by the Marin Teachers Network are used district wide to assess student learning. Our goal is to develop local assessments that will be given regularly that tell us what children know, identify where further instruction is needed or where children need additional challenge. Teachers will develop assessments based on our Essential Standards beginning in 2008-2009 school year. We have purchased Data Director, a software program, to report assessment information. This will make local assessments easy to analyze and allow teachers to make adjustments to meet the needs of each student.

### **Communications**

The District Leadership Council (DLC) appointed a Communications Subcommittee to develop our initial Communications Plan. The three areas they have targeted for spring 2008 are the District Web site, Communications 101 and Email/Voicemail protocols. The website system (SOCS) has been activated and a webmaster for each site has been trained to upload site information. The goal of the new system is to be user friendly and provide timely and current information. The SOCS system includes features which allow community interaction such as survey capabilities. We anticipate going “live” with our new web page by mid-May.

The Sub Committee has also developed meeting guidelines that outline norms for meetings district wide. They will continue to meet and develop common protocols for email/voicemail and how we interact. Additionally, the committee will identify the information parents, staff and community need to be well informed.

### **Facilities & Finance**

The DLC designed a facilities plan anticipating a kindergarten enrollment of 220 students. However, our kindergarten enrollment has grown to the point that we need three additional classrooms for the 2008-2009 school year. The Facilities Executive Committee recommends opening an additional class at each elementary campus to accommodate enrollment. In order to create enough space, they further recommend placing two second grades at Brookside Upper Campus and utilizing music rooms at Manor and Wade Thomas (if needed). The board will consider conducting a facilities study to determine long term solutions to the classroom shortage, which may include lease or purchase of portables or opening a school site.

The District has responded to the Governor's proposed budget by making \$1.2 million in cuts over the next two years. The Budget Advisory Committee will prioritize return of services should money be restored to the budget. Community and school members have discussed revenue generating ideas including possible sale of property, further cost cutting measures in the budget or an additional parcel tax. The District wants to keep reductions away from the classrooms while moving forward on our goals developed in the Strategic Plan.

The Strategic Plan has provided focus and direction for the District throughout the budget crisis as well as during the school year. It has been a pleasure to work in a District with such clear vision and purpose. I look forward to continuing our work together in 2008-2009.