

ROSS VALLEY SCHOOL DISTRICT

Strategic Plan

Including:

Vision and Guiding Beliefs

Mission Statement

Goals and Strategies

Adopted April 19, 2007 by the Board of Trustees

Lori Lopin, President

Gina Feiner, Clerk

Conn Hickey

Sharon Sagar

Jeanne Thompson

Superintendent Cheryl Crawley

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INTRODUCTION

Ross Valley School District initiated a strategic planning process in the Spring of 2005 to “help us continue to build a strong and vital educational environment for our children” (Superintendent Cheryl Crawley). The purpose of this process was to develop an updated vision and to identify core beliefs to guide the District in the years ahead.

Over the next 18 months, more than 60 people participated on a Strategic Planning Task Force—teachers, administrators, staff; Board members; students, parents; community members. Guided by a Steering Committee, the Task Force gathered input through large and small group meetings, informed presenters, and focus groups with more than 100 participants. Breaking into subcommittees, the Task Force tackled critical topics: governance/communications; engaged learning/standards; technology in support of excellence in education; programs of choice. Each subcommittee developed recommendations which were reported to and discussed by the whole Task Force. Throughout the process, everyone stayed focused-keeping students at the center of their thinking and deliberations.

The Steering Committee, with support from an independent consultant, compiled and synthesized all the above work and drafted this report. The document

- sets highest-level thinking and direction with:
 - Vision
 - Guiding Beliefs
 - Mission
- identifies the highest priority areas for attention in the upcoming years with:
 - Major Goals and Strategies

The Steering Committee worked through a series of many drafts, with the Strategic Planning Task Force providing in-depth input at a day-long retreat in October 2006. In January-February 2007, the report was given a wide audience: it was mailed to all RVSD student households, including in Spanish, and it was the topic of discussion at a series of advertised meetings for staff and for parents at each school site. People were also encouraged to offer their comments through the District’s website. Input from this process was reviewed by the Steering Committee and incorporated into final edits to the document. In addition, White Hill Middle School established a working group to identify major strategic objectives specific and essential to middle grades. These White Hill Major Strategies are an addendum to the overall Plan.

The Plan was unanimously approved by the full Strategic Planning Task Force at their meeting on March 29, 2007, and will be presented to the Board on April 19, 2007 for adoption.

Once adopted by the governing Board, action plans will be finalized to address strategies identified as highest priority for attention at this time. Further, this plan should strongly guide the District’s annual planning, priority-setting, and allocation of critical resources—human, physical, facility, goodwill. It needs to be used and respected. It also needs to be evaluated and updated as needed. The Board should establish appropriate processes for monitoring ongoing implementation of the plan and for reviewing and updating the Major Goals and Strategies at least every 2-3 years and revisiting the Vision/Beliefs/Mission every 5-7 years.

Strategic Planning Task Force – Membership

Jan Bishop	Teacher, Brookside School Lower Campus
Peter Breen	Councilmember, Town of San Anselmo
Connie Breeze	Parent, Manor and White Hill
Maria Bruner	Teacher, Brookside School Lower Campus
Steve Butler	Assistant Superintendent, Tamalpais Union High School District
Mary Buttler	Assistant Superintendent, Marin County Office of Education
Lisa Canin	Parent, Wade Thomas and White Hill
Brit Carbone	Teacher, White Hill Middle School
Mary Caruso	Technology Department, Ross Valley School District
Kathleen Clow	Business Manager, Ross Valley School District
Marv Downey	Parent, Manor and White Hill
Gina Feiner	Trustee, Ross Valley School District
David Finnane	Principal, Brookside School Lower Campus
Betsy Fox	Education Consultant
Kendall Galli	Teacher, Drake High School (formerly White Hill)
Michele Gardner	Parent, Manor and White Hill
Phyllis Glassman	Teacher, Wade Thomas Elementary
Jane Hall	Parent, White Hill Middle School
Becky Hausamann	Teacher, Drake High School
Mathew Heersche	Head of School, San Domenico School
Tim Heth	Teacher, Manor Elementary School
Conn Hickey	Trustee, Ross Valley School District
Carol Hovis	Executive Director, Marin Interfaith Council
Pam Howard	Parent, Brookside and White Hill
Ian Johnson	Technology Department, Ross Valley School District
Bret Joyner	Director of Maintenance & Operations, Ross Valley School District
Jessica Jozwik	Teacher, Manor Elementary School
Amy Kaufman	Teacher, Wade Thomas Elementary
Michael Kellison	Principal, Brookside School Upper Campus
Jeff Krause	Teacher, White Hill Middle School
Ed Kujawa	Dean, School of Business & Education, Dominican University
Eliza Lape	Co-Chair, YES Foundation Board of Directors
Tim Lentini	Teacher, Brookside School Upper Campus
Lori Lopin	President, Board of Trustees, Ross Valley School District
Jay Luther	Attorney, Law Offices of Jay Luther
Megan Marietti	Teacher, Brookside School Upper Campus
Julia Marrero	Teacher, White Hill Middle School
Jeff McLane	Parent, Wade Thomas
Beth Morton	Director, Education Task Force
Ana Hilda Mosher	Administrative Assistant, White Hill Middle School
Linda Nackerud	Director, Fairfax San Anselmo Children's Center

Membership, cont'd

Anne Newman	Chair, White Hill Site Council
Catalina Nocon	Principal, Manor Elementary School
Yvonne Nolan	Teacher, White Hill Middle School
Mark Otavka	District Liaison, MAP-RVSD Multi-Age Program
Michele Patterson	Principal, White Hill Middle School
Meredith Pike-Baky	Member, Educational Task Force
Anna Pilloton	Executive Director, Marin Teachers Network
Julie Quater	Representative, YES Foundation Board
Katie Rice	Executive Assistant, Marin County Supervisor Hal Brown
Dennis Riley	Director, Student Services, Ross Valley School District
Connie Rodgers	President/CEO, San Anselmo Chamber of Commerce
Mary Ann Rogers	Teacher, White Hill Middle School
Judy Ruby	Account Specialist, Ross Valley School District
Sharon Sagar	Clerk, Board of Trustees, Ross Valley School District
Marsha Shannon	CSEA Representative, Ross Valley School District
Sonya Stanley	Facilitator, Parent Advisory Board, RVSD Multi-Age Program
Jeff Sterley	Member, Marin Realtors Association
Debbie Stutsman	Town Manager, Town of San Anselmo
Rebecca Sullivan	Parent, Brookside Elementary School
Bryce Sumnick	Principal, Wade Thomas Elementary
Jeanne Thompson	Trustee, Ross Valley School District
Marci Trahan	Director of Human Resources, Ross Valley School District
Lew Tremaine	Mayor, Town of Fairfax
Nancy Wasserman	Assistant Principal, White Hill Middle School
David Weinsoff	Councilmember, Town of Fairfax
Rebecca Wicker	Teacher, Manor Elementary School
Julie Whyte	Co-Chair, YES Foundation Board of Directors
Meredith Williams	Teacher, Manor Elementary School
Linda Yamane	Parent, Brookside Elementary School

Ex Officio Members

Cheryl Crawley	Superintendent, Ross Valley School District
Libby Dietrich	Task Force Facilitator, Pacific Associates
Debbie Freed	White Hill Middle School Sub-committee Facilitator

VISION, GUIDING BELIEFS, MISSION

VISION

Ross Valley School District graduates will be prepared for increasingly complex life in the 21st century. They will have mastered core content areas to their highest ability and be flexible in their application of skills and knowledge. They will be intellectually curious, will understand the importance of inquiry, and will be confident in their ability to pursue and direct their own learning. They will access, manage, and evaluate information through the ever-growing means available. They will be capable and innovative problem-solvers, and will be able to work collaboratively and effectively with others. They will appreciate the rich possibilities of creative expression. Our graduates will be involved, caring, respectful, and positive members of the community and, ultimately, of our democratic society. They will reflect awareness of, demonstrate integrity and act responsibly for each other, their community and the world around them.

GUIDING BELIEFS

We believe:

- every child has an innate ability and desire to learn, and all children need challenge and support to grow to their full potential
- each child brings unique experiences, abilities, motivations, and learning needs to school
- children learn best in an environment that is emotionally and physically safe and supportive
- schools are learning communities where teachers, staff, families, and children all learn and all share in the learning process
- schools must have the participation of those they serve to be successful
- communication is an essential tool for building trust and credibility and for working and problem-solving collaboratively
- all people deserve to be treated with respect

MISSION

Ross Valley School District and its schools are dedicated to providing the quality educational experience all students deserve, which is grounded in best practices, reflects the highest academic standards, and is responsive to community expectations.

We keep the focus on our students, and we are committed to providing a program of academic excellence, cultural richness, social, emotional, and physical development that educates, supports, challenges and inspires the whole child.

The Ross Valley School District:

- provides diverse opportunities and experiences so all children experience success
- nurtures curiosity and supports the development of critical thinking which together provide the foundation for life-long learning
- engages students in a range of creative outlets including performing and visual arts
- engages students in caring for the social and natural worlds around them
- models life-long learning through continuous program improvement and professional development
- draws on educational research, available data, and current best practices to inform all aspects of our work—academics, social-emotional support, district governance, school operations
- ensures successful student and family transitions into the district, and from grade to grade and school to school, including attention to articulated curricula
- attracts, supports, and retains an excellent teaching, administrative, and support staff
- provides school grounds and facilities that are safe, well-equipped, maintained, and realize the best use of the community's investment in them
- engages the full school community in an authentic and respectful manner
- communicates proactively and effectively throughout the District so that students, families, teachers, staff, and the entire community are informed and empowered to participate

GOALS AND MAJOR STRATEGIES

GOAL A

Use best practices of instruction to engage, challenge, support and educate all students in ways that reflect diverse learning styles, individual strengths, and differentiated needs

MAJOR STRATEGIES:

- A1) Invest adequate time and resources to train and support our teachers and administrators to develop and effectively implement engaging, challenging curricula and differentiated instruction
- A2) Educate all District stakeholders about the full range of instructional programs available to students, including but not limited to Special Education, Gifted and Talented Education, Programs of Choice, English Language Learners, Title I
- A3) Provide adequate resources to assure that all students are performing to their potential
- A4) Use a range of differentiated assessment tools to evaluate and communicate student success
- A5) Provide resources and professional development to enable teachers to adopt relevant technology and fully integrate its use in supporting, differentiating, and extending instruction
- A6) Commit to continual program improvement by providing teacher time and resources for program planning, reflection, and evaluation
- A7) Provide opportunities to assess levels of interest in choice; where there is sufficient interest and sufficient evidence of best practice, expand choice while maintaining equity and investment in strengthening all programs
- A8) Develop and implement regular, on-going evaluative processes to obtain authentic, useful student, family, teacher and staff feedback

GOAL B

Make learning meaningful and deep by implementing a balanced curriculum and assessment program based on District-identified essential standards that integrate and resolve the demands of:

- **deep engagement in learning**
- **accountability for State standards**
- **development of life-long learning skills and capacities, including but not limited to critical thinking, questioning, and information literacy**

MAJOR STRATEGIES:

- B1) Initiate and sustain a process to identify District essential standards that define and integrate:
 - core content mastery
 - engaged learning
 - accountability for State standards
 - development of life-long learning skills and capacities
- B2) Use District essential standards to stimulate and guide curriculum development and articulation across grades
- B3) Strengthen curricular focus to address critical thinking, questioning, information literacy, and other life-long learning skills
- B4) Empower, encourage, and recognize teaching and learning that meet District essential standards
- B5) Use a variety of assessment tools to assess and report student mastery of District essential standards

GOAL C

Surround our students with a caring community of adults who support their learning and social/emotional well being

MAJOR STRATEGIES:

- C1) Adopt a philosophy and create and nurture a culture that engages and celebrates authentic, full partnership among family, district, schools, and the wider community
- C2) Build relationships of trust among all stakeholders; enable access to information, and expand opportunities for input and dialogue by implementing best communication practices and communication technology
- C3) Clarify roles and responsibilities and increase the level of openness in decision-making processes; use collaborative/shared decision-making models wherever possible and effective
- C4) Explore, implement, and sustain structures and opportunities for all students to have regular and personalized relationships with one or more adults and to experience connectedness to the school environment
- C5) Identify and implement teaching practices, classroom/school arrangements, and enrichment/extra-curricular activities that intentionally infuse the district with a culture that supports each student's social/emotional well-being, addresses needs of the whole child, and provides meaningful opportunities for participation
- C6) Inform our multiple stakeholders about who we are, what we are about, and what is important using an expanded range of communication methods (print, technology-based, in person) to increase the effectiveness of two-way communication

GOAL D

Attract, support, and retain a high quality team of teachers, administrators, and staff

MAJOR STRATEGIES:

- D1) Define, fund, and implement a competitive compensation and benefits plan, and provide additional monetary and non-monetary incentives including but not limited to classroom stipends, mentorships, leadership opportunities
- D2) Provide an environment that honors teaching and leadership that are forward-thinking, innovative, and engage creativity and passion
- D3) Empower teachers with time and opportunities for self-reflection and planning in order to examine and perfect existing teaching practice, and explore and test promising new practice
- D4) Create professional development plans with staff that incorporate the District's priorities for enhancing curricula and teaching practices and that address individual teachers' strengths and needs
- D5) Expand opportunities for development, growth, and leadership for teachers, administrators, staff, and board members
- D6) Re-examine the District's operating structure to improve effectiveness and efficiency and increase clarity about which decisions get made where and by whom

Vision, Guiding Beliefs, Mission and Major Strategies

specific to:

WHITE HILL MIDDLE SCHOOL

NOTE: As directed by the RVSD Strategic Planning Task Force, the White Hill Work Group will next “take up the conversation of the definitions of choice at the middle school level, seeking to understand the different perspectives in the district. This conversation will take place in the context of the work that has already been done and the priorities established from that work.

WHITE HILL VISION

augmenting those held District-wide with these that are specific and essential to middle grades

Each young adolescent brings to school his or her own experiences, abilities, motivations, and learning needs. White Hill embraces the challenge of providing learning environments that will allow all students to flourish.

We maintain high expectations for all our students and hold a vision that they will leave middle school able to:

- succeed academically
- think creatively
- identify and solve complex and meaningful problems
- know their passions, strengths, and challenges
- communicate and work well with others
- lead healthy lives
- be ethical and caring citizens of a diverse world

WHITE HILL GUIDING BELIEFS

augmenting those held District-wide with these that are specific and essential to middle grades

- an understanding of the intellectual, social, physical, ethical and emotional characteristics of the early adolescent is critical to effective learning and teaching in the middle grades
- young adolescents need strong caring and supportive relationships with adults and peers as they increasingly make decisions and choices that affect their lives now and in the future
- students' need for social interaction and their physical energy are qualities to be engaged and used for learning
- young adolescents are ready to be challenged to contribute in significant ways to society
- involvement of families as partners is critical to the success of our school and our students

WHITE HILL MISSION

augmenting those held District-wide with these that are specific and essential to middle grades

White Hill Middle School is committed to academic excellence, developmental responsiveness, and social equity. In pursuit of this, we focus on:

- improving learning, teaching, and assessment, and
- creating school culture, structures, and supports that enable all students to learn to their potential, all faculty to engage in continuous professional development and purposeful collaboration, all families to remain involved with their children's education

RVSD

Goal A: Use best practices of instruction to engage, challenge, support and educate all students in ways that reflect diverse learning styles, individual strengths, and differentiated needs

WHITE HILL MAJOR STRATEGIES

augmenting those held District-wide with these that are specific and essential to middle grades

WH A1: (Differentiate)

- Invest adequate time and resources to fully develop and effectively implement differentiated instruction to deliver standards-based, grade-level instruction that reflects individual student needs and engages and challenges each student at the appropriate level
- Use individual student progress data to:
 - intervene when students are not achieving and target the resources needed to support them to perform to their potential
 - deliver appropriate, accelerated classroom and school-wide academic enrichments for high-achieving students

WH A2: (Assessment)

- Develop and ensure shared use of multiple formative assessments that reflect diverse learning styles and provide varied opportunities to demonstrate knowledge and mastery
- Utilize ongoing common assessments to assess and refine engaging, challenging, and effective differentiated instruction

WH A3: (Time)

- Schedule regular common planning time for professional learning communities to analyze student data, coordinate instruction, and communicate with families
- Establish a schedule (before, during and/or after school) that has the capacity and flexibility to provide recommended and required instructional minutes for core academic classes, accelerated opportunities, and targeted interventions, and ensures that each student has access to additional academic and interest-based classes and opportunities to meet social and personal needs

RVSD

- Goal B: Make learning meaningful and deep by implementing a balanced curriculum and assessment program based on District-identified essential standards that integrate and resolve the demands of:**
- **deep engagement in learning**
 - **accountability for State standards**
 - **development of life-long learning skills and capacities, including but not limited to critical thinking, questioning, and information literacy**

WHITE HILL MAJOR STRATEGIES

augmenting those held District-wide with these that are specific and essential to middle grades

WH B1: (Curriculum)

- Invest adequate time and resources to fully develop and effectively link curriculum to state standards and assessments in ways that provide for deep engagement and development of life-long learning skills
- Focus efforts to engage students in learning activities that are articulated across the curriculum and that require the development of increasingly complex thinking and questioning processes

WH B2: (Assessment)

- Develop meaningful and reliable assessments with clear performance criteria to ensure that both students and teachers know how well they are doing and what they need to work on
- Create processes to regularly review appropriate data to identify needed changes in curriculum and to develop and refine specific, measurable curricular goals and objectives

WH B3: (Relevance)

- Expand opportunities (integrated in the curriculum, and at lunchtime and before or after school) that infuse learning with technology, visual and performing arts, real world connections, sports and other physical activity
- Develop integrated and meaningful community learning opportunities and relevant community service projects

RVSD

Goal C: Surround our students with a caring community of adults who support their learning and social/emotional well being

WHITE HILL MAJOR STRATEGIES

augmenting those held District-wide with these that are specific and essential to middle grades

WH C1: (Relationships)

- Foster close relationships for accountability and engagement among students and with adults who share extended time through grade, content-area, or interdisciplinary small learning communities
- Institute practices that promote positive student behavior, including common language, constructive approaches to discipline, a focus on youth assets rather than deficits, and interventions and supports that emphasize empathy and respect
- Rigorously explore for opportunities in the day to make every child's voice heard, to enable students to feel that they are known and that they belong, and to provide experiences for meaningful involvement
- Intentionally engage families in the education of young adolescents by giving families meaningful roles in school governance and school/campus activities, and by offering family opportunities to support students' learning and social/emotional development at home and at school

WH C2: (Transitions)

- Work with elementary and high schools to inform students and families about academic and behavioral expectations and to promote seamless, articulated transitions

WH C3: (Safety, Resilience, and Health)

- Foster a school culture that is safe, engaging, and respectful for and among young adolescents and adults
- Provide functional facilities for school-wide and large group gatherings and activities
- Ensure access to adult mentors and counseling

Goal C, continued

WH C4: (Accountability/Assessment)

- Strengthen and develop data-driven processes in which teachers, administrators, students, families, and other community members examine and analyze a range of data (aggregated and disaggregated as appropriate), relating to school environment and curriculum, and develop action plans to address identified problems and challenges

WH C5: (Partnerships)

- Engage student voices in assessing and refreshing student activities
- Enhance appropriate and meaningful opportunities for family input and involvement
- Expand school-community collaborations and partnerships to increase opportunities for adult mentors, learning projects in the community, and for service learning opportunities

WH C6: (Communications)

- Strengthen communication among teachers, students, and families about the school program, curriculum plans, social issues, and students' progress—ensuring respectful sharing of information (positive and problematic), and commitment to collaboratively address areas needing improvement

WH C7: (Access)

- Provide all students equal access to all opportunities and supports included above
- Formalize and consistently provide family/parent conferences at all grade levels

MAJOR STRATEGIES – WHITE HILL

RVSD

Goal D: Attract, support, and retain a high quality team of teachers, administrators, and staff

WHITE HILL MAJOR STRATEGIES

augmenting those held District-wide with these that are specific and essential to middle grades

WH D1: (Professional Development)

- Provide teachers, administrators, and staff with time and resources needed to address middle school issues and recommendations for White Hill
- Build capacity to be a community of professional learners who are supported in their professional development, committed to a continuous improvement process, and able to manage and benefit from change

WH D2: (Leadership)

- Develop effective, clear, and stable leadership structures and decision-making processes to support and sustain White Hill's strategic directions and communicate these structures and processes to all stakeholders