



**Strategic Planning Report
for the
Elmwood School District**

June 2013

Elmwood School District

Mission Statement

The School District of Elmwood believes that we must make a concerted effort to help each student develop feelings of self-worth and confidence which will enable each to experience a sense of pride and accomplishment in our highly technological and rapidly changing society. Our multifaceted educational program involves development and utilization of skills, attitudes, and values which enables each student to develop potential as an individual and to make useful contributions as a member of society.

Philosophy Statement

The School District of Elmwood must also address the needs of our students as citizens and productive workers. Students should be guided in their interpretation of the modern world by an appreciation of their democratic heritage so they may be discerning in their choice of competent leadership and become intelligent participants in their communities and vocations. In order to ensure that their participation be satisfying, we must instill in our students an appreciation of positive work habits and the adaptability necessary to succeed in a society where occupations appear, change, and disappear.

We also believe that regardless of race, gender, religious beliefs, economic status, talents, or abilities, we must develop in all students the desire and techniques to learn, know, reason, solve, and evaluate. In order for students to become lifelong learners, we believe that they must be directed and encouraged to study independently, think logically and creatively, and to communicate ideas meaningfully. We must ensure that each student be equipped to appreciate the arts, culture, and interpersonal relationships. Such awareness, habits, and skills will assist them in accepting a realistic evaluation of themselves, their personal and vocational ambitions, and their environment.

We further believe that the atmosphere in the school should promote a realization within students that while much is expected of them the expectations are realistic and reasonable and should not cause them to be anxious or overly concerned. The atmosphere of the school should promote mutual trust between staff and students, as well as the values of fairness, generosity, and tolerance. Since the school reflects the needs, values, strengths, and aspirations of the community, it follows that the school, home, and appropriate agencies should work together to assure that each person involved is regarded as an individual worthy of our sincere interest, respect, and best efforts.

BACKGROUND

In September of 2012, the Elmwood School Board approved the hiring of Bruce Siebold, President of Rusk Prairie Consulting, to organize and facilitate a strategic planning process for the Elmwood School District.

Following are the key steps involved in that process as well as the findings and recommendations.

STEP ONE: Change Management Presentation to the Elmwood School Board (October 24, 2012)

A two-hour discussion regarding the strategic planning challenges and opportunities was facilitated by Bruce Siebold. The school board members discussed and debated the organization lifecycle components and how the Elmwood School District related to them.

- Introduction
- Growth
- Maturity
- Decline
- Reinventions

The discussion involved several areas including: enrollment history and projections; facility needs; stakeholder communications; recruiting, marketing and technology.

STEP TWO: Forming the Strategic Planning Steering Committee

The strategic planning steering committee was formed in December 2012. The role of the steering committee was to provide guidance throughout the entire planning process. Careful consideration was given to select individuals that represented a broad cross-section of the school district stakeholders, i.e., business community, parents, senior citizens, agriculture, civic, government, alumni and students/faculty/staff/administration.

Listed below are the strategic planning committee members:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Representing</u>
Jennifer Alwin	Middle School/High School Principal
Becky Baier	ESD Teacher
Paul Blanford	ESD Administrator
Josh Bleskacek	Parent/Business
Matt Broehm	Elmwood Village
Brian Buck	Parent/Village Board Member
Bernie Christman	School Board
John Crownhart	School Board
Brooke Glaus	School Board/Parent
Paula Hagle	Parent/K-12 Guidance Counselor
Steph Kern	Parent/Business
Vickie Lehmann	Village/Community Member
Katie Knegendorf	Teacher/Parent
Rod Webb	Parent/Pierce County
Bruce Siebold	Rusk Prairie Consulting Facilitator

STEP THREE: Putting the Steering Committee to Work (December 13, 2012)

The initial steering committee meeting had three primary objectives:

1. Develop a set of standard questions to be used in each focus group session.
2. Identify the various community stakeholders to be interviewed.
3. Review and provide suggestions in the overall format and mechanics of the strategic planning process.

After a lengthy discussion, the steering committee determined that the following questions were to be used in the focus group sessions:

1. What knowledge and skills will our graduates need to be successful in the next 10 years regarding career and citizen readiness?
2. What resources will we need in order to meet the needs of our students in 10 years (i.e., staffing, technology)
3. What will our buildings and facilities need to be like in the future in order to support our students, teachers, staff and community?
4. What are the greatest strengths of the Elmwood School District?
5. What are the biggest threats to the Elmwood School District?
6. What is the Elmwood School District doing now that may not be needed in the future?
7. What would make the Elmwood School District a “destination district?”
8. What specific recommendations/changes would you suggest the district make within five years?
9. If you had a magic wand and anything was possible, what would you wish for in regards to the Elmwood School District?
10. Other comments/suggestions.

STEP FOUR: Listening to the Elmwood Voices

A total of eleven focus group listening sessions were held between January 21, 2012 and March 4, 2013. Over 300 individuals participated in the process and all suggestions and comments were captured and recorded.

Following are the various stakeholder groups that were interviewed:

Stakeholder Group	Date Interviewed
Elmwood Teachers	January 21, 2013
Senior Citizens	January 30, 2013
Agriculture	January 30, 2013
Support Staff	January 30, 2013
Parents	January 30, 2013
Government	January 31, 2013
Students	February 5, 2013
Alumni/Open Forums	February 6, 2013
Civic Organizations	February 20, 2013
Business	February 20, 2013
Parents	March 4, 2013

STEP FIVE: The Steering Committee – Sort, Priorities, Recommendations

All comments and suggestions from the eleven focus group sessions were compiled and distributed to the steering committee for review. The steering committee then met three times in April to sort, prioritize and provide recommendations to the Elmwood School Board.

Meeting Dates

- April 10, 2013
- April 24, 2013
- April 25, 2013

The steering committee determined that there were major themes or “buckets of ideas” represented throughout the listening sessions. They were:

1. Facilities
2. Curriculum
3. Technology
4. Communication
5. Marketing
6. Financial Resources
7. Personnel

Under each theme or bucket the steering committee was then asked to develop the following detail:

- Overall objectives
- Measurable action steps
- Priorities
- Long-term vs. short-term
- Estimated time frame
- Person responsible
- Estimated costs
- Visible outcomes

The steering committees work and recommendations to the Elmwood School Board are found on the following seven pages.

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FACILITIES – Overall Objective:						
To provide a healthy, safe, accessible and engaging educational facility for the students, teachers, staff and residents of the Elmwood School District.						
Measurable Action Step	Priority (1,2,3) (1=highest)	Short-term ST Long-term LT	Time Frame	Person Responsible	Estimated Costs	Visible Outcomes
Improve inside and outside school signage	1	ST	3-6 months	Art classes Buildings & Grounds Consultant	TBD	Ease of navigating and more welcoming environment
Scrolling events signage on Hwy 72	1	ST	1-2 years	Fundraising committee	\$25,000	Increased awareness of school activities/events
Additional parking	1	ST & LT	3 months to 3 years	School Board	TBD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional parking • Less congestion • More handicap accessibility
Update and remodel bathrooms	1	ST	Summer 2014	School Board Paul Blanford Buildings & Grounds	TBD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Handicap accessible • Baby changing tables • Bathroom by new gym
Main school entrance and all other facility entrances	2	LT	5 years	School Board Paul Blanford Buildings & Grounds	TBD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Designated main entrance • Handicap accessible • More entrances should be key fob accessible

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CURRICULUM – Overall Objective:						
To improve and expand the academic and enrichment programs of the Elmwood School District.						
Measurable Action Step	Priority (1,2,3) (1=highest)	Short-term ST Long-term LT	Time Frame	Person Responsible	Estimated Costs	Visible Outcomes
Expand on-site course offerings for all student levels	1	ST/LT Ongoing	Begin first offerings by next school year	School Board Selected teachers Students/staff Paul Blanford Paula Hagle	TBD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More course offerings to meet needs of all students • More flexible schedules • Better preparation for entry level workforce and post-secondary students.
Explore and expand distance education course offerings	1	ST/LT Ongoing	ASAP	School Board Selected teachers Students Paul Blanford	TBD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AP college credits • Better prepared students • Flexible schedules • Independent learning • Offering a variety of student enrichment classes (i.e., arts, drama, foreign languages)
Formalize career preparation	1	ST	Next school year	School Board Teachers Students Paul Blanford Business Community	TBD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop life skills • Exploring academic, career and financial mgmt. skills • Job shadowing • Internship programs • Career fairs • Guest speakers

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COMMUNICATIONS – Overall Objective:						
To identify and expand communication opportunities within the Elmwood School District to students, parents, community members and staff.						
Measurable Action Step	Priority (1,2,3) (1=highest)	Short-term ST Long-term LT	Time Frame	Person Responsible	Estimated Costs	Visible Outcomes
Updated website	1	ST	Immediate and Ongoing	Must identify a webmaster	\$0 Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased awareness of district activities • Possible student/family recruitment tool • Branding • Merchandise sales
District newsletter (website and paper)	1	ST	Immediate and ongoing	Identify champion	\$0 Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased information flow to students, parents, staff and community • Celebrate all success stories
Explore social networking options (Skylert)	1	ST	Immediate and Ongoing	I.T. Department	\$0 Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved communication flow between school district and all stakeholders • Potential student recruitment
Staff communication policy	1	ST	3-6 months	School Board Paul Blanford Paula Hagle	\$0 Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Step-by-step policy to ensure consistent communication practices. Policy will cover protocols to interact w/parents, community, students, staff and emergency situations

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MARKETING – Overall Objective: To brand and promote the benefits of the Elmwood School District as a premier “destination district”.						
Measurable Action Step	Priority (1,2,3) (1=highest)	Short-term ST Long-term LT	Time Frame	Person Responsible	Estimated Costs	Visible Outcomes
Create a brand identify for the Elmwood School District (ESD)	1	ST/LT	6-12 months and Ongoing	Identify a stakeholder committee Student project opportunities	Minimal Significant time commitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased awareness about the benefits of ESD • Test scores • Success stories • Logo
Explore “100 Successful Alumni” promotion	2	LT	3-5 years	Identify stakeholder committee members	TBD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wall of recognition • Community awareness and pride in Elmwood graduates • Fundraising and donation potential • School projects and student learning opportunities
Explore potential advertising and public relations opportunities	1	ST	1 year and Ongoing	Identify stakeholder committee members	TBD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assist in branding the school district • Potential learning opportunities for students

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FINANCIAL RESOURCES – Overall Objective:						
To explore, evaluate and implement various strategies to increase the financial resource base of the Elmwood School District.						
Measurable Action Step	Priority (1,2,3) (1=highest)	Short-term ST Long-term LT	Time Frame	Person Responsible	Estimated Costs	Visible Outcomes
Explore grant opportunities	1	ST	1-2 years	Paul Blanford CESA Cooperation w/local districts	TBD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional district resources • Increased learning opportunities for students and staff
Explore sharing staff with local districts	2-3	LT	5 years	School Board Paul Blanford Other school districts	TBD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leveraged resources • Increased # of class offerings and student learning opportunities
Explore a community library	2	LT	3-5 years	School Board Village Board	TBD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a “learning center” for the school and community
Explore and organize the selling of advertising in/on school facilities	1	ST	1-2 years	School Board Paul Blanford	\$0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased revenue stream for the school district • Increased community support and involvement w/the school district

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PERSONNEL – Overall Objective: To attract, recruit, develop and retain high quality teachers, staff and administrators.						
Measurable Action Step	Priority (1,2,3) (1=highest)	Short-term ST Long-term LT	Time Frame	Person Responsible	Estimated Costs	Visible Outcomes
Continue to promote professional development opportunities for teachers, support staff, and administrators	1	ST/LT	Ongoing	School Board	TBD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Up-to-date teachers, staff, and administrators
Develop a “new staff mentoring program”	1	ST/LT	Ongoing	Paul Blanford Teaching staff	Time commitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New staff will be welcomed and more quickly productive
Recruitment strategies	1	ST	Ongoing	Paul Blanford Paula Hagle Linda Garfield	\$0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Professional, consistent, and dynamic job postings
Additional nurse hours	3	LT	3-5 years	School Board Paul Blanford	TBD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Additional nursing hours to support students, staff and administrators
Benchmark salaries with similar Wisconsin school districts	1	ST/LT	Ongoing	School Board Paul Blanford	TBD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Competitive wages A strong recruitment tool

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TECHNOLOGY – Overall Objective:						
To enhance educational opportunities within the Elmwood School District for students, teachers, staff, and community members by systematically exploring, evaluating and implementing state-of-the-art learning technologies.						
Measurable Action Step	Priority (1,2,3) (1=highest)	Short-term ST Long-term LT	Time Frame	Person Responsible	Estimated Costs	Visible Outcomes
Update the buildings infrastructure (classrooms, wiring & outlets) (wireless networking) (1:1 student devices)	1	ST	Immediate and Ongoing	School Board Paul Blanford Jon Wood	TBD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faster services • More access to new technologies • Increased teaching and learning opportunities
Explore BYOD programs for middle and high school students	1	ST	1-2 years	Jon Wood Teachers Students	TBD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flexible teaching and student learning opportunities • Faster and expanded services
Staff development	1	ST	Immediate and Ongoing	Paul Blanford Teachers/staff	TBD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Up to date staff and access to new learning technologies
Explore a community/school resource center (i.e., computer, library, learning center)	2-3	LT	3-5 years	School Board Community official	TBD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased student and community learning opportunities • Leveraged resources

STEP SIX: Presentation to the Elmwood School Board

A presentation to the Elmwood School Board was made on June 17, 2013. The strategic planning process was reviewed and discussed. Specific implementation steps and priorities were to be determined by the school board members at future meetings.

Final Thoughts

The Elmwood School District should feel proud of the strategic planning process it has completed. The community stakeholders were eager to share their ideas and it was very evident that they take great pride in the Elmwood School District and want it to move forward in a positive and sustainable manner.

However, there is still work to be done. Four areas the Elmwood School Board may want to consider as it moves forward are:

1. **Communication to District Stakeholders.** Keeping the district stakeholders informed is of vital importance. Developing numerous methods of sharing and communicating with the community will assist in securing support for all the new initiatives the district will embark upon. You simply can't over communicate.
2. **Identify Champions.** The numerous objectives outlined in the strategic plan will not be achieved without identifying "champions." A champion will be the person responsible to see that the tasks are completed and progress is being made. Without a champion, the board should seriously consider not moving forward on a particular goal or objective.
3. **Establish Priorities.** Numerous recommendations were identified during the strategic planning process, but due to district time and money constraints, everything cannot be immediately accomplished. It is recommended that the board identify what it wants to accomplish in a systematic process that includes both short and long-term goals.
4. **Yearly Review.** Finally, it is recommended that the district establish and schedule a yearly strategic planning review process. This event should highlight the accomplishments and celebrate the successes. If needed, this is also the time to modify the plan and make mid-course corrections.



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