

# 2011-2016

**Francis Howell  
School District**



**LEARNING TOGETHER**

# STRATEGIC PLAN

Approved by Board of Education  
November 3, 2011

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# **FRANCIS HOWELL SCHOOL DISTRICT STRATEGIC PLAN**

## **PREFACE**

In August 2005, the Francis Howell School District Board of Education retained Lindenwood University to conduct an analysis of issues facing the District and to develop a strategic plan to guide the District during the next five year period. The plan was completed and approved by the Board of Education in April 2006. During the five year duration, the Board and the Administration used the plan to guide them through the various aspects of meeting the mission and vision of the District.

Since the 2006-2011 strategic plan garnered the District much success, the 2011-2016 strategic plan was modeled in the same manner as the previous plan. The initial areas of work on which the District should focus for the next five years - 2011-2016 - were arrived at through the input of the Board's strategic committees comprised of parents, Board members, faculty and staff, administrators, and other District citizens. Using technology and survey tools, the 2011-2016 strategic planning process received input from a wider range of District stakeholders than did the previous plan. Individuals who were not on the strategic committees or subcommittees were also given an opportunity to provide input on the areas of work on which District should focus for the next five years. Approximately 1,100 FHSD stakeholders took the opportunity to provide additional input on District focus areas for the period 2011-2016. Based on the feedback of the wider community, the initial focus areas were revised.

Each Board strategic committee formed a smaller subcommittee to develop the narrative of the strategic plan. Subcommittees of the strategic committees came together to form a District steering committee whose charge was to review the focus areas in totality to determine if the various plan components would work together in a complementary manner. Based on the steering committee input, additional revisions were made to the 2011-2016 strategic plan, and the plan was sent to the full community for a second round of feedback and input.

This plan looks at five essential strategic areas of the Francis Howell School District - academics, finance (including facilities, technology and enrollment), human resources, community involvement, and governance, and it utilizes past trends and current data to project a picture of the District five years into the future. While projecting the future is difficult, it is imperative that educational planners have an understanding of the past and a realistic vision of the future in order to help our students be prepared for college and careers.

This strategic plan outlines a number of challenges the District will address during the next five year period, and this plan will help guide the Board of Education in setting annual goals, monitoring goal progress, and making adjustments along the way.

Dr. Pam Sloan  
Superintendent of Schools

## **I. Introduction**

The history of the Francis Howell School District dates back to 1825. There were various mergers from 1825-1915, and in 1915, the District became the Consolidated School District No. 2 of St. Charles County. Through additional mergers, the District became the Francis Howell Reorganized #3 School District in 1951. The District serves portions of the municipalities of St. Charles, St. Peters, O’Fallon, Cottleville, and New Melle and includes unincorporated parts of St. Charles County. The District comprises 150 square miles and serves about 17,300 students in grades K- 12. The District has three preschools that serve 1,256 children and a PAT program (Parents as Teachers) that serves 2,722 children. Population growth in the District mushroomed in the 1970s and 1980s and continued into the 1990s. In the last ten years, student enrollment growth has shown a slight decline from year-to-year. While there will be no annual student growth fluctuation, the five-year projections indicate that student population will continue a slow and gradual decline of approximately 200 students over the course of the 2011-2016 period, primarily at the secondary level.

During the 2006-2011 strategic planning process, the District reorganized its curriculum and instruction department to meet the needs of buildings as each implemented professional learning communities. The District continues its use of the professional learning community’s school improvement model to provide teachers work time to collaborate on matters of teaching and learning. Since adopting the PLC model of school improvement, the performance of the FHSD students on all state measures has steadily increased.

The economy that has dealt a significant blow to the country has affected Francis Howell as well. The District’s three major revenue sources, accounting for over 85% of the District’s total operating revenue, are all under severe downward pressure. Property taxes, once the stabilizing force in the District’s revenue picture, have been negatively impacted by historic declines in the price of housing. Due to the state’s struggling economy, basic state aid and the state-wide sales tax are both declining as well.

The primary goal of the 2011-2016 Strategic Plan is to improve student achievement. The Plan is based on the following assumptions:

1. The District is committed to being a high performing school district, meeting or exceeding all Missouri School Improvement Plan Standards and No Child Left Behind Standards, and preparing students for careers and college.
2. The District supports the tenets of professional learning communities and specific and identified curriculum, instruction, and assessment best practices.
3. The District is committed to providing the resources necessary to attract and retain highly qualified staff.
4. The District’s revenue from all sources will show a gradual decrease of approximately 2% over the course of the next five years.

5. The District will experience a decline in overall student enrollment of approximately 1% over the next five year period, with greater decline seen at the secondary level.
6. The District's buildings are generally adequate to meet student needs, given building improvement projects currently underway and based on current enrollment projections. Minor renovation at some sites will be required to meet the emerging learning needs of students. Systematic maintenance of all sites and ongoing safety and security improvements will need to occur.
7. The District is committed to providing technology that will meet the teaching needs of the staff and the learning needs of the students.
8. The District is committed to providing effective two-way communication for its internal and external stakeholders.
9. The District is committed to providing opportunities for the FHSD community to be involved in the education of its children.
10. The District is committed to data-driven and research-based decision making.

### **2006-2011 Strategic Plan Accomplishments**

The 2006-2011 Strategic Plan provided the Board, Administration, and the other stakeholders specific areas of work on which to focus for five years. By using the plan to guide the work of the school community, many achievements and advancements were made in that time period. Some of those achievements include the following:

#### **Academics**

- The District improved ACT, MAP, subgroup achievement, graduation rate, attendance, and Advanced Courses at a rate greater than the state. Francis Howell Missouri Assessment Program scores are the highest of St. Charles County Districts, and the improvement rate is greater than comparative districts.
- The District restructured its curriculum development process. Between 2006 and 2011, 234 curricula were revised with input from stakeholders. Curricula have sample activities and assessments that are aligned to state standards and include pacing guides.
- The District annually reviewed instructional programs and included data as well as recommendations. When necessary, programs were identified for comprehensive evaluations as well.
- The District developed a comprehensive professional development plan that included mentoring to new teachers, curriculum professional development, and district-wide professional development on essential topics such as instructional strategies and quality assessments.
- The District reduced the number of days teachers were out of the classroom for professional development and curriculum writing.

## **Finance**

- The District was able to maintain a 25 cent voluntary rollback of its property tax rate from 2004 through 2010, resulting in savings of over \$30 million for District taxpayers.
- The District exercised fiscal discipline that allowed it to maintain end of year balances of slightly more than 20% of operating expenditures.

## **Facilities and Operations**

- The District completed construction of a new academic building at Francis Howell High School and is currently working on construction of a new performance gymnasium and associated facilities.
- The District improved the efficiency of its facilities and operations services by relocating from the Annex facility to a more central location in the District.

## **Human Resources**

- The District decreased overall staffing as student enrollment declined.
- The District provided additional professional development to staff through the Lindenwood partnership.
- The District reviewed and updated all non-certified job descriptions.

## **Communications**

- The District increased communication of positive District news stories through use of electronic media, such as Web page, eNews, Facebook, and Twitter.
- The District reorganized its committee structure to seven strategic committees and updated policies to reflect these changes.

## **Section II. Francis Howell School District’s Mission, Vision, Values**

The mission, vision, and values provide a brief and cohesive statement of the District’s purpose, its vision of the future, and its commitment to achieve the vision. The District’s mission, vision, and values statements were crafted from input of subcommittees of each strategic committee. The subcommittees included Board members, administrators, staff members, and the community. These statements will establish the general direction and commitment for the District planning for the next five year period.

### **Mission**

Preparing students today for success tomorrow.

### **Vision**

Every student will graduate with college and career readiness skills.

### **Values**

Francis Howell School District is committed to the following:

- Providing a consistent and comprehensive education that fosters high levels of academic achievement
- Operating safe and well-maintained facilities
- Providing a safe learning environment for all students
- Recruiting and retaining a high quality staff
- Promoting parent, community, student, and business involvement in support of the school district
- Ensuring fiscal responsibility
- Developing responsible citizens
- Operating as a professional learning community
- Making appropriate use of technology

### **Section III. District Academics**

Student achievement in the Francis Howell School District has been improving at a higher rate than the state and our identified comparative districts. Francis Howell is currently meeting or exceeding all state accountability standards and has earned accreditation with distinction in performance. Indicators such as Missouri Assessment Program scores, graduation rate, ACT scores, attendance, and advanced courses have all been steadily increasing.

A review of the data also indicates the percentage of students reading at or above grade level is relatively flat at the elementary level. There also continues to be a gap between overall school and District achievement and subgroup achievement.

Every school in Francis Howell annually develops a School Improvement Plan. Each site's plan includes a goal for achievement, attendance, behavior, and climate and aligns to the District Comprehensive School Improvement Plan. Each school uses data to develop and monitor their building improvement plan. The professional learning community model continues to be the vehicle for implementation of improvement efforts. The long-term District commitment to this process has proven beneficial.

### **Future Focus**

#### **1. Develop and Implement a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Curriculum**

The District should develop and implement a curriculum that prepares our students to be successful in college and careers in the 21st Century. As the nation continues to compete in a global economy, it is imperative that students are prepared to meet increasing expectations in areas such as creativity, collaboration, critical thinking, and communication.

To do so, the District should form a 21st Century Skills Task Force to create an action plan. The task force should do the following:

- Research 21<sup>st</sup> Century skills and model programs
- Define 21st Century concepts and common vocabulary for curriculum, assessment, and instruction
- Develop a Francis Howell current reality and identify current District practices that align with research
- Develop a 21<sup>st</sup> Century action plan that addresses changes needed in District curriculum, assessment, and instruction and can be intentionally, rigorously, and effectively implemented in District classrooms
- Identify data points to measure progress towards meeting 21st Century skills

## **2. Meet Needs of Struggling and High Achieving Students**

The District should determine how to better meet the needs of struggling and high achieving students. Student readiness levels need to be addressed in daily instruction. Teachers need support to be able to tailor their instruction and adjust the curriculum to meet individual students' needs. While this has been addressed in the past, additional systemic strategies need to be developed to continue to support students at both ends of the spectrum. This will be a leverage area as the District continues to increase student achievement.

Professional development should continue to be based on the three-tier pyramid of interventions and be provided to teachers on quality instruction that addresses differentiation (tier one). This professional development should include a rationale, sample lessons, and tools. The District should also provide a model at each level of educational interventions and data triggers (tiers two and three).

## **3. Increase Math, Reading, and Writing Performance**

The District should continue to increase math, reading, and writing performance. The District is currently exceeding state accountability standards. Current strategies that have been identified to improve schools are working and should continue. These strategies include using the professional learning community's model, developing targeted school improvement plans based on data and research, providing teachers with effective professional learning, and implementing a viable curriculum. Regular evaluation of instructional programs and implementation of recommendations should also continue. A comprehensive and long term plan to address reading, writing and math at all levels should be developed.

In addition, the District must be proactive in addressing the rigorous national standards (Common Core) that have been adopted by The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and prepare for the new Missouri state assessments (Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium assessments.) A transition plan should be developed to address changes needed in curriculum, assessments, and instruction as the state implements these changes.

## **4. Decrease In-school and Out-of-school Suspensions and Bullying**

The District should support and expand school programs and systems that decrease in-school and out-of-school suspensions and bullying. While progress has been made in these areas, providing an environment conducive to learning for all must be a priority.

Schools have successfully identified their methods for addressing inappropriate student behavior. Programs such as Positive Behavior Supports and Character Education should continue to be supported and expanded. Additional collaborative problem solving and anti-bullying programs should be implemented. School improvement

plans should continue to outline specific goals and action steps that directly address inappropriate behaviors, and these plans should continue to include data for regular evaluation. School improvement training should continue to present research in this area for inclusion in school improvement plans.

## **5. Increase Parental and Community Involvement**

The District has taken intentional research-based actions aimed at improving parental involvement, and these parental involvement practices have been nationally recognized. Current efforts should be expanded to include a standing committee aimed at developing a district-wide parental and community involvement plan that includes goals, strategies, and action steps.

## **Section IV. District Finance**

The Francis Howell School District is facing financial challenges, the likes of which have not been seen in generations. The national economy, which is only just beginning to emerge from the most significant economic downturn since the Great Depression, is again showing signs of a slowdown. This new economic reality is most visible in the District's assessed valuation. From 1998-2008, the District experienced double-digit assessed value increases. This growth allowed the District to fund moderate expansion of its programs and services, while keeping the overall debt burden low for its taxpayers. The 2009 and 2011 reassessment cycles both produced negative growth in assessed value, which placed a great strain on the District's ability to continue to provide the same level of programs and services.

Seventy-three percent of the District's assessed valuation is comprised of residential property. The recession was driven in a large part by declines in the housing market. While St. Charles County did not experience the speculation in housing prices seen in others parts of the country, the value of homes here was negatively impacted. It is likely that home prices will remain depressed for the foreseeable future, leading to continued negative or very low growth in assessed values in the District.

The District, through careful financial management, has maintained an appropriate level of fund balance. For Fiscal Year 2011, the District had an ending fund balance of over twenty-one percent. Board Policy 3114 sets a target of fifteen to twenty percent fund balances. This level is necessary to provide the operating capital needed to cash flow District operations. Looking to the future, the District's fund balances are projected to decline annually, dropping below fifteen percent in Fiscal Year 2015.

The District's current strong financial position comes as a result of significant changes made. Beginning in 2009, the District worked to reduce its expenditures. The reductions were strategically designed to have minimal impact on the classroom. The District has reduced its expenditures by a total of \$15.3 million. Annual budgets were reduced by \$3 million in Fiscal Year 2010, and an additional \$5 million in Fiscal Year 2011. Expenditures for Fiscal Year 2012 were reduced by \$7.3 million, with the majority of those reductions coming from salaries and benefits.

In addition to reductions, the District continues to seek ways to operate more efficiently. Beginning with the 2011-2012 school year, the District will operate on a unified calendar. This change will save the District approximately \$1 million annually in transportation costs. There are ongoing efforts to reduce our utility usage. The District installed more energy-efficient light fixture, using grant money from Ameren to offset the installation costs. Energy audits, funded through Laclede Gas, have also helped the District reduce its operating expenditures.

The District recently completed several major construction projects - a rebuilding of Francis Howell High School, additions and renovations to Daniel Boone Elementary School, and the addition of science labs at Francis Howell North High School. These

projects were financed through a \$78.5 million bond issue approved by the voters in November 2008. The District benefited from favorable construction costs; each of the three major projects came in well under budget. This allowed the District to address other capital needs including additions and renovations to Castlio Elementary School.

The District has made every effort to keep the costs of borrowing as low as possible. These efforts included utilizing \$39 million of low interest Qualified School Construction Bonds and Build America Bonds, and refunding outstanding bonds to take advantage of historic low interest rates.

The District faces significant financial challenges in the next five years. Revenue from property taxes, which comprises almost fifty-eight percent of the District operating revenue, is not expected to grow, removing one of the major mechanisms the District had to cover the costs of maintaining its level of programs and services. Further complicating this revenue stream is the expiration of a twenty cent special purpose levy which generates approximately \$4 million in revenue each year. This levy was initially approved by voters in 2004 and extended for an additional five years in 2008. Without approval by voters, this levy will expire in Fiscal Year 2015.

State funding is the second largest revenue source, accounting for twenty-four percent of the District's operating revenue. The state's basic aid formula, which had provided annual revenue increases to the District, is underfunded by the state. This means the District can expect to receive less state aid in the future than it has in the past. Particularly troublesome is a provision of statute that may impact how the basic state aid formula is calculated. The District may lose as much as \$5 million in basic state aid beginning in Fiscal Year 2013. Transportation aid is also significantly underfunded, leading to smaller annual payments each year, even as the costs of providing transportation services are increasing.

The final major revenue source is sales tax revenue. Funds generated by a one percent state-wide sales tax are distributed to school districts based on its weighted average daily attendance. This revenue source accounts for over seven percent of the District's operating revenue. Sales tax collections remain well below levels seen in 2008, and this portion of state aid has not shown signs of significant recovery.

The District's current tax levy is \$5.0008 (FY 12 rate to be set September 15, 2011). The levy includes \$0.67 committed to make principal and interest payments on the District's outstanding general obligation bonds.

## **Future Focus**

### **1. Maintain Appropriate Level of Fund Balances**

The District should strive to maintain fund balances equal to fifteen to twenty percent of operating expenditures. This level of reserves provides operating capital to meet cash flow needs from the beginning of the fiscal year in July until the receipt of property tax revenue in early December. The District may not be able to avoid short-term borrowing in the next five years although efforts will be made to do so.

### **2. Analyze Expenditures and Resources to Support 21st Century Learning**

The District is currently engaged in a study of how best to incorporate 21st Century learning strategies into its instructional program. Effort should be made to determine how existing resources can be reallocated. This may involve replacing hard cover textbooks with electronic books, utilizing more on-line resources and allowing students to bring their own technology to school for instructional purposes.

The District should ensure that all instructional initiatives, the budget, and all other District and campus improvement plans align with each other and support the Mission, Vision, and Values, Strategic Plan, and District policies.

### **3. Assure Adequate Resources are Available for Programs**

Projections show that the District will need to continue to carefully manage its financial resources over the next five years. New initiatives should be analyzed from a cost-benefit perspective prior to implementation. All new programs need to be funded assuming no increase in available resources.

### **4. Explore Alternative Funding Sources**

The District's traditional revenue sources – property taxes, basic state aid, state-wide sales tax – are all negatively impacted by current economic conditions. The District should explore whether additional revenue sources can supplement these traditional sources. The analysis should include examination of both the positive and negative aspects of non-traditional revenue sources. Ads in school buildings or on school buses may generate revenue, but these ads also allow our children to become a captive audience to corporate advertising. Similarly, sponsorship opportunities should be investigated, but such sponsorships must be limited to products and corporations appropriate for school-age children. There may be opportunity for outside entities, such as the Howell Foundation, to engage in corporate fundraising initiatives, thereby, avoiding or minimizing the impact of advertising on students. The District should take advantage of grant opportunities, including those through entities such as the St. Charles County Alliance for

Business, Learning and Education. The District's relatively high socio-economic status may place it at a disadvantage for qualifying for certain grants.

#### **5. Incorporate Benchmarking into Program Planning**

The District is a member of the Mid-States Benchmarking Consortium which is comprised of school districts with demographics and student populations similar to those in Francis Howell. Ongoing efforts should be made to use district operations information from this group, and from other benchmark sources, to incorporate best practices and better inform decision making.

## Section V. District Enrollment

Strategic planning in a school district is heavily influenced by enrollment trends and projections. Proper planning allows resources to be committed efficiently and effectively to serve the needs of the District students and community. While numerous economic and political decisions can impact District growth, District enrollment is projected to remain essentially flat - experiencing only a slight decrease over the next five year period. This loss of approximately 200 students over the five-year period will result in a District enrollment of slightly more than 17,000 students by 2015. This stability in student population will allow District planners to appropriately address facility improvements and instructional program enhancements during the next few years.

### Future Focus

#### 1. Monitor Decline in Student Population

The District is expected to experience a slight decline in overall student population in the foreseeable future - most notably at the secondary level. The District is expected to see an enrollment decline of approximately 200 students during the next five-year period. Annual enrollment projections are as follows:

2010-11 Actual .....	17,290
2011-12 Estimate.....	17,210
2012-13 Estimate .....	17,179
2013-14 Estimate .....	17,179
2015-16 Estimate .....	17,137
2016-17 Estimate .....	17,087

#### 2. Monitor Enrollment in all Attendance Areas

Student enrollment will not be consistent in all attendance areas and will not be consistent from year to year.

Six schools in the District were projected to experience little change in student enrollment. Schools with generally stable enrollments include the following attendance areas.

- Castlio Elementary School
- Central Elementary School
- Daniel Boone Elementary School
- Fairmount Elementary School
- Warren Elementary School
- Bryan Middle School

Seven schools in the District will see enrollment decline by approximately 50 students. Schools that are projected to experience some decline include the following attendance areas.

- Becky-David Elementary School
- Independence Elementary School
- Hollenbeck Middle School
- Francis Howell Middle School
- Saeger Middle School
- Francis Howell North High School
- Francis Howell Central High School

Five school sites are projected to see moderate growth in student enrollment.

- Henderson Elementary School
- Harvest Ridge Elementary School
- John Weldon Elementary School
- Barnwell Middle School
- Francis Howell High School

### **3. Fine Tune Attendance Center Boundaries**

While major shifts in attendance center boundaries may not be necessary, some fine-tuning of boundaries to achieve greater operational efficiency will be necessary.

Several small boundary changes were made within the past few years to alleviate pockets of enrollment that were outside the contiguous school boundaries. One significant boundary change was made to alleviate potential overcrowding at Becky-David. Ongoing study of District-wide capacity should be used to aid future boundary change decisions. New subdivisions are currently developing at a slow rate but will increase the need for boundary changes if housing rebounds.

### **4. Review Ancillary Education Programs**

The District should review its utilization of necessary ancillary education programs (e.g., hearing impaired program, exceptionally gifted, autism, English language learners) in order to determine appropriate locations and services to be provided.

Assignment to ancillary education programs cross normal attendance boundaries. The District should determine if current programs should be maintained or modified, and if present delivery sites are appropriate for the services provided. The District-wide capacity study will also assist in this decision.

## **Section VI. District Facilities**

The Francis Howell School District's facilities include three early childhood centers, ten elementary schools, five middle schools, three traditional high schools, two alternative high schools, one administration building, one support service building, one facilities and operations services building, and one warehouse and transportation complex. These facilities encompassing more than 2.7 million square feet and are located on approximately 740 acres of ground. The replacement value of the facilities is estimated to be in excess of \$300 million. Facilities range in age from fairly old to recently built. The majority of the facilities were constructed in the 1980s and 1990s during a rapid growth period in the District.

The District has recently undertaken renovations to several of its facilities including construction and renovation of a new Francis Howell High School, additions and renovations to Daniel Boone Elementary School, and construction of new science labs at Francis Howell North High School. Work is just beginning on additions and renovations to Castlio Elementary School. While additional renovation work will be required at some of the District's older facilities, projected enrollment trends indicate the District will have no need to build any new school locations in the next five-year period.

The facility maintenance needs are increasing due to the age of the buildings. In the past, the District relied heavily upon utilizing bond issue revenue to accomplish routine maintenance tasks that would normally be included in the annual operations budget. During the past five years, the District has allocated \$1.5 to \$2 million annually to address routine maintenance items such as asphalt repairs and sealing, sidewalk replacement, window updates, ADA modifications, roof repair and replacement, and electrical upgrades. The District needs to continue its commitment of operating funds for facility maintenance through the annual budget process.

The District Facilities Committee meets throughout the year and develops a prioritized list of renovation projects and major system repair needs throughout the District. In addition, the Facilities Committee reviews the recommendations of the Technology Committee to determine the potential impact and cost of implementing the recommended technology upgrades. It is important that future facility renovations include the basic technology infrastructure that can address expected technological enhancements.

### **Future Focus**

#### **1. Assess New Construction/Renovation Needs**

The District should continue to address legitimate new construction/renovation needs during the next five year period.

The Facilities Committee has identified in excess of \$10 million worth of major capital projects to be completed in the short term. Additional funding sources should be considered for these major capital projects over the next five years. For example,

Francis Howell High School currently does not have an athletic complex for baseball, softball, and sufficient practice areas. Students have to leave the campus and travel several miles for these programs. The District should allocate funds for the design and construction of a new athletic complex to serve these needs.

Since no additional school sites/buildings would be required to serve the District's enrollment, any funds remaining from the 2008 bond issue should be allocated to address these identified needs.

## **2. Evaluate Utilization of District Facilities**

All school buildings have, at some point in the past, served more students than are currently enrolled. Several facilities have fewer students currently in attendance than were enrolled at its high point. In this same time period, the educational programs and building utilization patterns have changed significantly. Utilization of existing space should be critically reviewed on an annual basis. Where feasible, programs should be combined to provide greater efficiencies, and support services should be distributed to existing space to enhance efficiency of service delivery. Ongoing evaluations of District capacity should be used to determine desirable usage of each facility.

## **3. Plan for Facilities Renovations**

The District should plan for renovations at several of the older school buildings, as well as improvements to some classrooms as necessary. The District should also continue to improve the overall safety and security of all facilities.

The District needs to continue with its comprehensive plan for facility improvement in its older school buildings. While some costs can be addressed through the annual District operations budget, it is possible that some commitment of existing bond issue resources may be required to bring these facilities up to District standards. Several significant plumbing, electrical, and HVAC renovation projects have been identified by the District's Facilities Committee that need to be addressed. Ongoing capital safety needs should be considered in Capital budget planning. Additionally, the Facilities Committee should annually review and prioritize additional facility concerns that arise over the next five years.

## **4. Maximize Energy Efficiency**

The District should review and initiate solutions and programs to reduce energy use.

The District should aggressively implement energy guidelines and concentrate on changing behaviors in regards to reducing energy use. Additionally, the District should review building automation and control systems on aging facilities to ensure maximum energy efficiency.

## **5. Develop a Life Cycle Replacement Program**

The District should develop a detailed, comprehensive life cycle replacement program for major facility components. This program would allow the District to better plan for large capital expenses, help eliminate large emergency replacements and assist in planning for long term facility needs.

## **6. Maintain Buildings to High Standards**

The District should continue its commitment to facilities maintenance through the annual budget process.

The District should review and be committed to allocating the appropriate staff and budget that foster effective utilization of the District's physical plant assets. An annual review of staffing, supplies, and repair budgets should be carefully considered based on the need to provide a safe and comfortable learning environment.

## **Section VII. District Technology**

The District has made substantial investments in technology for instructional purposes. The Board of Education recently approved a \$1 million four-year replacement cycle for educator laptops to promote anytime and anywhere access. In the past five years, the District has invested over \$2.2 million to provide SMART boards for over 65% of the classrooms. During the summer of 2010, all K-4 classrooms were outfitted with sound amplification systems. The District has consistently allocated an average of \$250,000 per year for computers. The District has developed a 5-year technology life cycle plan to address aging and obsolete technology in the District. Infrastructure and hardware components life expectancy and year of replacement has been identified and is used annually to aid in the budgeting of technology.

While the financial investment in the technology hardware is evident, the integration of the technology to create engaging learning environments has not kept pace. Approximately 23% of all certified teachers completed training on the integration of technology into the classroom during the prior six-year period. The District participated in a state-sponsored technology and professional development initiative (eMints) for the 2004-2005 and 2005-2006 school years and then began a District-operated, instructional professional development program – Transforming Teaching through Technology. The District program, while affecting more than three times as many teachers and students as the eMints program, still does not meet the demand from teachers for professional development in integrating technology into the instructional program.

Integration of technology into the classroom setting to enhance and engage students begins with the curriculum. Over the next three years, the District is scheduled to review and revise 144 curricula and has plans to begin incorporating technology-based activities.

Preparing students for a global, competitive, and ever-changing workplace requires a new set of skills not intentionally incorporated into the curriculum or taught in schools today. Digital literacy is becoming an increasingly important skill for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century learner and this must be addressed for Francis Howell School District students. Other 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills include communication, collaboration, creativity and innovation, and critical thinking. During the 2010-2011 school year, the District began to learn about and increase the awareness regarding the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills framework. A three-year 21<sup>st</sup> Century plan has been developed.

As the District continues to use technology as a strategic asset in the operation of the District and the business of education, there are some key trends in the K-12 technology world that should be considered. For example, the Internet provides an overwhelming array of resources for K-12 education. This includes the current trend of decentralizing the data center and moving traditionally locally hosted services to the Internet or “cloud.” Also driving technology developments and change is the expectation of being able to work and learn anytime, anywhere, on any device. The District should continue to put into practice these emerging technologies to maximize the District’s resources.

## **Future Focus**

### **1. Provide Support for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning**

The move to 21<sup>st</sup> Century learning will require transformational changes in the way curriculum is delivered. Process- and project-based types of learning across all content areas will need to be increased and integrated into everyday learning, including communication, creativity, collaboration and critical thinking. The District should prepare the internal and external communities (staff and parents) for the change from a traditional type of school environment, where the teacher is the expert, to an environment where the teacher is more of a facilitator and student learning is self-directed.

In addition to the action steps outlined in the Academic Future Focus area of this Plan, long-term planning should also include the following:

- Develop communication plans to enlist support from staff, parents, and patrons
- Provide professional development for teachers and administrators
- Re-align curriculum and assessments to address the new skills
- Implement technologies to support mobile, anytime, anywhere learning

A task force of business and community leaders, higher-education faculty, District teachers, administration, Board of Education members, parents, and students should be assembled to develop the long-range plan for creating 21<sup>st</sup> Century schools in Francis Howell.

### **2. Deliver Professional Development for Technology**

To ensure technology is used effectively and efficiently in the instructional environment, the District should provide the necessary time and tools to promote and encourage learning from basic technology skills to the integration of technology in classroom learning. The District should implement the necessary systems to deliver technology professionally, systemically, and in a variety of media. Employees should have the ability to self-direct their learning in an anywhere, anytime environment. The District should also develop a progressive professional development program that helps teachers determine and increase their level of proficiency.

### **3. Ensure All Students Have Access to Technology**

Efforts should be made to provide access to technology appropriate for the curriculum. Priority should be given to identify those students without access to technology at home and find the means to provide the technology components and connectivity while

away from school. The District should reach out to technology vendors and Internet service providers to build partnerships to help provide the necessary resources.

A complete physical inventory should be conducted to assess the equity of technology across the schools. The District should work to exceed the state averages for technology resources.

#### **4. Provide for a Technology Enriched Curriculum**

During the timeframe of this strategic plan, all District curricula reviewed and revised or created should include technology integration activities across all content areas. This integration should be centered on process and/or project-based learning that provide the opportunity for students to apply interdisciplinary skills, and should move beyond suggested websites or current technology tools.

The curriculum development process should incorporate open content resources, when appropriate. For learning to be engaging, a variety of digital resources should be used as opposed to sole reliance on the printed textbook. Open content allows for diverse media (e.g., video, audio, interactive links) that help reinforce the content or concept being taught. These resources are often more current and free for consumption.

Professional development for the content leaders and curriculum writers should be provided in the area of integrating the four Cs of 21<sup>st</sup> Century learning (communication, collaboration, creativity and critical thinking) using web-based tools and other technologies to enhance and engage the student anytime, anywhere.

#### **5. Enhance Online Learning Opportunities**

The District currently uses the A+ online learning system at the alternative high school (Francis Howell Union) and for credit recovery. There has been much success with this style of learning for students. Online learning tools allow for the delivery of diverse course offerings, even during tight budgetary times. Online learning is a way to offer courses not available in the District. The District should make annual goals to offer online courses for credit at the high schools with the possibility of dual or college credit in mind.

The District should investigate partnerships with local universities, other institutions and the state's online learning program to provide online course offerings for high school students.

## **Section VIII. District Human Resources**

Employment levels in the Francis Howell School District have decreased significantly during the past five year period. Total employment has decreased from 2016 in the 2006-2007 school year to 1897 in the 2011-012 school year. Detail over a six year period is included in the Personnel section of the Appendix.

When compared to other school districts in Missouri, District pupil-teacher ratios are higher than average. In the 2010-11 school term, District teachers served students on the basis of one teacher to 19 students, compared to a statewide average of 17 students (source: Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.)

FHSD teachers are likely to pursue higher education. In 2010-2011, 81% of FHSD teachers possessed a Master's degree or higher, compared with 59% statewide (source: Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.)

The District has a high percentage of "highly qualified" teaching staff. In 2005 Francis Howell had 19 teachers who were National Board Certified. In 2011 that number had increased to 69. Also, in 2011, 98% of core courses in Francis Howell were taught by "highly qualified" teachers (according to the No Child Left Behind definition of "highly qualified" teacher).

### **Future Focus**

#### **1. Identify Staffing Needs**

The District should focus on determining the appropriate number of staff necessary to support programs and adjust staff as appropriate in alignment with student population and programmatic needs. The District should strive to not exceed DESE maximum class size standards and to meet the DESE desirable class size standards within the financial constraints at any given time over the course of this plan. The District should carefully examine data when making staffing decisions (e.g., student-to-staff ratios, academic achievement data, and research-based best practice) so that staff is deployed in a way that has the greatest potential for increasing student achievement.

#### **2. Hire and Retain Highly Qualified Teachers**

The District should attract, hire, and retain highly qualified staff, which more closely reflects the Francis Howell student demographic. The District should regularly review salaries so that the District remains competitive among St. Louis metropolitan area school districts, particularly St. Charles County districts. This will need to be weighed against financial constraints at any given time over the course of this plan.

The District should survey every employee who leaves the District to determine if conditions exist that should be addressed in order to retain employees. Using that data, the District should work to correct areas of concern, where possible.

The District should further develop hiring and recruiting practices that will result in the hiring of highly qualified staff such as the use of appropriate screening instruments, research-based interview processes, application review processes, and other appropriate candidate assessment processes.

Development of a new teacher evaluation tool that more accurately reflects 21<sup>st</sup> Century teaching skills and newly-released teacher standards should be actively pursued.

### **3. Improve and Maintain Positive Employee Group Relations**

The District should strive to further improve and maintain positive relationships with all employee groups. The Interest Based Bargaining process was used with several employee groups during negotiations for the 2011-2012 school year. The effectiveness of this process should be assessed from year to year, for each employee group, and should continue to be utilized as long as it is successful.

Communication between leadership of each employee group and administration/Board should continue to be open, honest, professional, and collaborative. Issues should continue to be addressed first at the level closest to where the concern was raised. When addressing an issue, the focus should be on collaboratively arriving at a solution.

## **Section IX. District Community Relations**

The importance of timely, accurate, and effective communication is an important function in any organization. The volume of information in people's lives can be overwhelming and contradictory. It is imperative the District continue to keep its community of staff, students, parents, and patrons well informed about District progress and initiatives. The District has strived to improve its communication. In an effort to better inform the community, the District improved the website to ensure up-to-date and dynamic content, targeted internal communications, and introduced a more reliable and timely eNews system. To improve two-way communication, the District leveraged social media such as Facebook and Twitter to reach a certain demographic population that is connected in this manner. Further efforts include community engagement meetings, key stakeholder meetings, surveys, and electronic forums. These efforts have helped the District achieve an 85% approval rating from the community based on 2010 survey data.

### **Future Focus**

#### **1. Ensure Community Involvement on District Committees**

The District uses strategic and standing committees in an advisory capacity to help support the work of the Comprehensive School Improvement Plan. The District should make every effort to seek the input and feedback from a broad constituency on all District committees. Policies and procedures that include purpose, formation, membership (composition, application process and term limits), and reporting should be developed and implemented. Attention should be paid not only to membership but also to attendance to ensure all stakeholders are represented. Committees should evaluate the manner in which they meet and conduct business so as to make use of various means and modes for committee members to provide input and feedback.

#### **2. Identify and Investigate Emerging Communication Technologies**

A priority for the District is to keep abreast of, investigate, and evaluate the rapid advancement of communication technologies to ensure effective and efficient communication efforts. Varying demographics justify the District using a plethora of tools to provide information and seek input. The District should continue to explore, develop, and promote the use of social media at the individual school sites. Building administrators and faculty should embrace these technologies as a means for two-way communication internally and externally within the District's defined policies and guidelines. While the District uses websites, some social media, and eNews as tools for internal and external communication, it is limited in methods to efficiently notify all stakeholders in the event of emergencies or school closures. The District should make every effort during the time covered by this strategic plan to procure and implement such a system to ensure accurate and timely notifications.

Achievement data can be complex and voluminous. Dashboard and portal technologies compile, simplify, and visually represent data from various information sources that are relevant, pertinent, and important to parents, patrons, and students. Information from food service (lunch balances, items purchased, menus), transportation (routes, bus info), student achievement (assessments, behavior, attendance) and finances should be made available to all stakeholders via easily located, straightforward, and visually appealing forms.

### **3. Community Relationship Building**

The District should focus efforts and resources to establish strong community relationships with targeted groups of stakeholders throughout the community. Outreach activities and opportunities for personal connections to the business community, post-secondary education, and others not directly connected to the District should be explored. Efforts to actively utilize a group of stakeholders as communication ambassadors to help disseminate accurate information and provide opportunities for two-way communication should be conducted. The District should continually assess the purpose, current membership, methods of contact and prioritization of involvement in order to ensure value is obtained by the efforts expended. In order to assemble and implement an effective communication group, the District should identify best practices of electronic networks and districts with active and effective Key Communicator Networks. Outside expertise or additional resources should be considered to assist these efforts.

### **4. Improve Systems for Collaboration between District Committees**

The District streamlined the use of committees through the use of strategic and standing committees. Each committee has a focus for meeting the goals of the District (e.g. technology, wellness). An effort to promote the work of each committee to internal and external stakeholders through the use of technologies (e.g. website) should be standard operating procedure. Currently, many committees operate in isolation and without input or interaction from other District committees. The District should form a group with representation from each strategic and standing committee that meets quarterly to promote communication and collaboration. The annual report of all of the committees' work will be made available to all stakeholders. This has a two-fold benefit. First, it provides a holistic picture to those involved in setting direction and reviewing progress. Secondly, it instills accountability for achieving something of value for the individual committee members. Collaboration between committees of associative interests and goals should be encouraged through the use of cooperative projects or tasks.

## **Section X. District Governance**

The District maintains a Policy Committee to review and update policies and regulations used to govern the operations of the District. The committee is one of the District's seven strategic committees and has representation consisting of Board of Education members, District and school administrators and employee group leaders. There are occasions when subject matter experts or other parties may be invited to attend a meeting to provide input and feedback on a specific policy change affecting that stakeholder group. The District receives notice of recommended changes to policies and regulations via a policy service provided by Missouri Consultants for Education on a quarterly basis. This service is a benefit of the District's membership in the Missouri United Schools Insurance Council. During the 2010-2011 school year, the policy committee reviewed and updated over 120 policies and regulations.

### **Future Focus**

#### **1. Govern the District Efficiently and Effectively through Board Policy**

The District should keep a watchful eye in the next few years regarding legislative changes at the federal and state levels that affect public education. Public education has been in the political spotlight and will likely be subject to a variety of legislative changes. These will require a dedicated focus to interpret and review/revise existing policies and regulations.

#### **2. Review and Update Policies to Reflect Current and Best Practices**

A comprehensive review of all policies and regulations should be conducted during this strategic plan period. A process for reviewing and updating the policies was discussed and agreed upon as part of the 2010-2011 committee work. A calendar/timeline should be created to include all policies and regulations which can be communicated to internal and external stakeholders. A proactive and systematic approach in reviewing, revising, and creating policies and regulations which keeps up with current trends in education and student learning should be developed and followed.

## **Section XI. Executive Summary**

The Francis Howell School District is among the largest school districts in Missouri.

Significant progress in all seven strategic areas was made during the last five years. The 2011-2016 time period will be fraught with financial challenges, public pressure to improve learning, and 21<sup>st</sup> Century learning challenges. Adherence to the adopted 2011-2016 Strategic Plan will be important in order that continued progress be made. However, adjustments to this plan should be made as data and current reality dictate adjustments to some of the assumptions. Francis Howell School District is well-positioned to be one of the premiere districts in Missouri.

The following is a summary of the 2011-2016 plan.

### **Academics**

1. Develop and implement 21<sup>st</sup> Century curriculum.
2. Meet needs of struggling and high achieving students.
3. Increase math, reading, and writing performance.
4. Decrease in-school and out-of-school suspensions and bullying.
5. Increase parental and community involvement.

### **Finance**

1. Maintain appropriate level of fund balances.
2. Analyze expenditures and resources to support 21<sup>st</sup> Century learning.
3. Assure adequate resources available for programs.
4. Explore alternative funding sources.
5. Incorporate benchmarking into program planning.

### **Enrollment**

1. Monitor decline in student population.
2. Monitor enrollment in all attendance areas.
3. Fine tune attendance center boundaries.
4. Review ancillary education programs.

### **Facilities**

1. Assess new construction/renovation needs.
2. Evaluate utilization of District facilities.
3. Plan for facility renovations.
4. Maximize energy efficiency.
5. Develop a life cycle replacement program
6. Maintain buildings to high standards.

## **Technology**

1. Provide support for 21<sup>st</sup> Century learning.
2. Deliver professional development for technology.
3. Ensure all students have access to technology.
4. Provide for a technology-rich curriculum.
5. Enhance online learning opportunities.

## **Human Resources**

1. Identify staffing needs.
2. Hire and retain highly qualified teachers.
3. Improve and maintain positive employee group relations.

## **Community Relations**

1. Ensure community involvement on District committees.
2. Identify and investigate emerging communication technologies.
3. Build community relationships.
4. Improve systems for collaboration between District committees.

## **District Governance**

1. Govern the District efficiently and effectively through Board policy.
2. Review and update policies to reflect current and best practices.