

# **VISUALIZE 2015**

## **Draft Strategic Plan**

*Planning our journey to become a world-class school district*



**Education Summit**

**March 20, 2010**

**Rockford Public Schools**

# Board of Education



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## DEAR COMMUNITY PARTICIPANTS:



Welcome to the first Rockford Public Schools Education Summit. The primary goal of this summit is to bring our community together to discuss the direction of the school District over the next five years. Your input is essential as we embark upon a journey to transform Rockford Public Schools into a world-class education system that prepares all of our students for success in the 21st century.

Visualize 2015 is a draft of our strategic plan that will guide our march toward victory in our classrooms. To move from visualizing victory to realizing victory, it is necessary for us to reform the way we do business. We are, in fact, already on this journey, but with the help of all our stakeholders—students, parents, employees, community members and leaders—we will arrive at our destination sooner.

What does victory in the classroom mean? It means setting adult issues aside and putting children's interests first. It means providing high-quality, strategic professional development for our teachers, support staff and leadership teams. It means building our capacity to support students by developing formative assessments aligned to the curriculum. It means ensuring every classroom has the resources and materials necessary to succeed. I invite you today to be an integral part of Visualize 2015 by providing us with feedback on our plan. Visualize 2015 is built around five major goals, which are enumerated throughout this document. We will realize these goals by having a laser-like focus on teaching and learning, improving instruction, developing leadership and building a robust accountability system.

Going forward, I encourage you to join us in realizing a future where all of our schools are high performing and all of our students are successful. Visualize 2015 is a pivotal point in the transformation of Rockford Public Schools. Thank you for participating in this historic event.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "LaVonne M. Sheffield".

LaVonne M. Sheffield, Ph.D.  
Superintendent



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Our strategic plan, Visualize 2015, is a wide-reaching document, yet it has one fundamental purpose—to provide direction to Rockford Public Schools so all children are provided the best possible education. This document is a plan for how we transform from a school system with some successes and numerous struggles into a school system that provides a world-class instructional system for all of its children so that they are able to compete in today’s global marketplace.

Visualize 2015 is shaped by our vision and mission statements, core beliefs and guiding principles that inform everything that we do. Our strategic plan is structured around five primary goals to achieving victory in our classrooms over the next five years. They are:

- 1. Enhance learning opportunities for all children**
- 2. Ensure parents and community members are partners in the education process**
- 3. Provide clean and safe schools**
- 4. Hold adults accountable**
- 5. Run an efficient business operation**

Visualize 2015 addresses challenges associated with each of the five primary goals and presents strategies for overcoming those challenges. The primary five goals are those that any school system must achieve to be successful, and the plan incorporates strategies that reflect the current best practices across the United States.

Many of these reforms have been or are being put in place in Rockford’s public schools: standards-based curriculum, personalized instruction driven by data and periodic assessment of student progress, and performance evaluations that are linked to student achievement, among other initiatives. Even without the benefit of these reforms, Rockford has schools that have demonstrated academic growth over several years and schools that are exceeding state standards despite having high poverty rates. The challenge for Rockford Public Schools is to provide quality learning environments consistently across the community, and Visualize 2015 presents strategies for overcoming that challenge.



Visualize 2015 also identifies the public schools as the heart of a preschool-to-bachelor's degree strategy that prepares children for kindergarten and prepares high school graduates for college. It is critical that we reform our thinking in this regard, that we move from a system of education silos where we concentrate only on what is happening within our one system to something that functions more like a relay race where we pass the torch from one leg of the course to another. If we accomplish this natural, seamless passing of the torch, we build a more literate Rockford, a more thoughtful Rockford and a more progressive Rockford.

Our plan is based on the belief that all children want to learn and can learn, that all they need is the proper guidance. Visualize 2015 recognizes that many children in Rockford Public Schools come from a range of diverse backgrounds. Our job is to ensure that we meet the needs of every child regardless of their ethnic origin or economic status.

It is important to keep in mind that while Visualize 2015 delves into many aspects of education including finance, transportation, security, communication and food service, they all support teaching and learning. Nothing in education is more critical than the relationship between students and the teacher in their classroom.

How will we know when we have realized our plan? We will know when Rockford Public Schools become the schools of first choice for families.

Rockford's children deserve a rigorous, high-quality education regardless of their race, abilities or language background. Not only is that their right, but Rockford's future depends on their successful education. For that reason, it is incumbent upon everyone—



**Baylee Kaehler  
Kindergarten-  
Walker Elementary School**

parents, teachers, students, administrators and concerned citizens—to join forces to help realize the plan outlined on these pages. In naming our plan, we thought it was important for everyone to visualize success. If we visualize success, we come to expect success. Once we expect success, we can accept that our goals are possible. And once we believe, we can achieve.



## INTRODUCTION

*Visualize* a city with world-class public schools, where every child graduates prepared to compete with young adults from China, India and Japan. Visualize public schools where the business community organizes to ensure that every child has an opportunity to go to college or have a post-secondary experience, where teachers, administrators, support personnel, parents and volunteers work collaboratively to ensure that each school and each classroom is preparing our children for a dynamic and exciting future. Visualize meaningful partnerships with our institutions of higher education, city government, nonprofit and faith-based organizations. Visualize championship athletic teams and exemplary arts and extra-curricular activities for children. Visualize public schools that develop not only each child, but each employee, to his or her maximum potential.

Transforming vision to reality is the purpose of Visualize 2015. The transformation will require the cooperation, support and hard work of students, parents, community members, businesses, municipal government, teachers, administrators, support personnel, higher education and other stakeholders. A world-class school system is a prerequisite to development of a world-class city.

Rockford is on the precipice of something phenomenal. Many elements of greatness already exist:

- Outstanding post-secondary educational opportunities that range from two-year vocational programs to doctoral offerings that rival the higher-education options in many communities the world over.
- Industrial/technology infrastructure that can support operations as diverse as small precision machining, large automotive manufacturing and advanced aerospace engineering and research.



- Business community eager to develop partnerships with the public schools. In particular, the Rockford Area Economic Development Council offers progressive leadership that promises to improve our quality of life and appeal to businesses and families.
- Municipal government committed to providing “excellence everywhere” in its public services and a nationally renowned park system with superb recreational facilities.

You might say that the planets are beginning to align and that our job now is to connect the dots. Visualize 2015 is as a map to take us to the world-class schools our children deserve and from there to the world-class city of our dreams.



**Maddie Witt  
Auburn High School**

Draft



## **WHERE WE BEGIN ON OUR JOURNEY TO EXCELLENCE...**

Rockford Public Schools covers a 165-square-mile area and serves nearly 30,000 students from diverse economic and ethnic backgrounds. In order to visualize the future of our schools, it is important for us to examine the present data of our city and schools.

Enrollment in Rockford Public Schools has changed dramatically during the past generation. The percentage of students who qualify for free and reduced-priced lunches has increased from 18.0% in 1992 to 78.6% in 2010. In 1992, White students accounted for 68.1% of the enrollment, compared to 23.4% for Black and 5.6% for Hispanic students. In 2010, White students make up 38% percent of the enrollment, compared to 30% for Black and 22.3% for Hispanic students.

Standardized scores over the past five years show progress in elementary and middle schools, but significant gaps exist between racial and other subgroups. High school scores have declined and also show achievement gaps and low achievement overall.

The following pages contain data comparing demographics of the city's population to enrollment in the public schools and student performance as computed on the Illinois School Report Card.

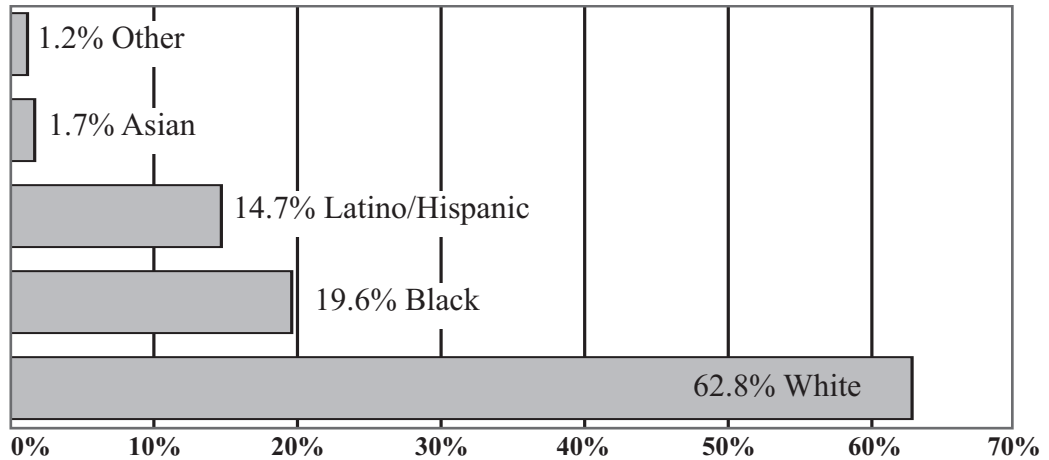


## SNAPSHOT OF ROCKFORD

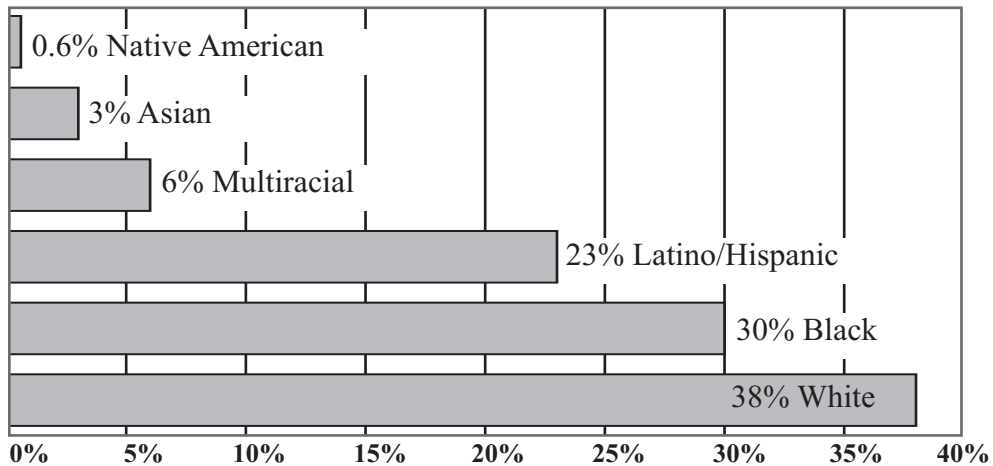
*The City of Rockford, IL, has a population of 150,115.*

*Rockford Public Schools has 29,587 students.*

### ROCKFORD POPULATION DEMOGRAPHICS 2006



### ROCKFORD PUBLIC SCHOOLS DEMOGRAPHICS 2010



### ROCKFORD PUBLIC SCHOOLS BASICS

Total # of students	29,587
Free and reduced lunches	79%
Mobility	14%
High school graduation rate	69%



## THE PRESENT

### ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PERFORMANCE 2004 - 2009

Meeting or exceeding state standards in Mathematics on ISAT			
	2004	2009	% of change
White	76%	85%	9%
Black	44%	62%	18%
Hispanic	65%	79%	14%
Asian	92%	84%	-8%
Multi-racial	78%	74%	-4%
Economically Disadvantaged	55%	72%	17%
All	58%	78%	20%

Meeting or exceeding state standards in Reading on ISAT			
	2004	2009	% of change
White	59%	72%	13%
Black	32%	45%	13%
Hispanic	45%	51%	6%
Asian	73%	76%	3%
Multi-racial	68%	62%	-6%
Economically Disadvantaged	39%	51%	12%
All	43%	60%	17%

### MIDDLE SCHOOL PERFORMANCE 2004 - 2009

Meeting or exceeding state standards in Mathematics on ISAT			
	2004	2009	% of change
White	49%	78%	29%
Black	16%	52%	36%
Hispanic	27%	70%	43%
Asian	67%	84%	17%
Multi-racial	46%	68%	22%
Economically Disadvantaged	23%	62%	39%
All	38%	63%	25%

Meeting or exceeding state standards in Reading on ISAT			
	2004	2009	% of change
White	65%	77%	12%
Black	30%	52%	22%
Hispanic	40%	63%	23%
Asian	65%	82%	17%
Multi-racial	67%	70%	3%
Economically Disadvantaged	38%	60%	22%
All	51%	63%	12%

### HIGH SCHOOL PERFORMANCE 2004 - 2009

Meeting or exceeding state standards in Mathematics on PSAE			
	2004	2009	% of change
White	59%	42%	-17%
Black	20%	12%	-8%
Hispanic	31%	27%	-4%
Asian	71%	51%	-20%
Multi-racial	45%	50%	-5%
Economically Disadvantaged	28%	22%	-6%
All	44%	36%	-8%

Meeting or exceeding state standards in Reading on PSAE			
	2004	2009	% of change
White	64%	58%	-6%
Black	30%	24%	-6%
Hispanic	36%	30%	-6%
Asian	60%	49%	-11%
Multi-racial	51%	50%	-1%
Economically Disadvantaged	35%	32%	-3%
All	58%	41%	-17%



## **CORE BELIEFS AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

### **CORE BELIEFS**

- WE BELIEVE THAT EVERY CHILD CAN AND WILL ACHIEVE AT HIGH LEVELS
- WE BELIEVE EVERY CHILD HAS THE RIGHT TO LIVE AND LEARN IN A SAFE, SECURE COMMUNITY
- WE BELIEVE PARENTS ARE ACTIVE PARTNERS FOR ACHIEVEMENT
- WE BELIEVE EDUCATING OUR CHILDREN IS A COMMUNITY-WIDE EFFORT
- WE BELIEVE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF OUR HUMAN RESOURCES AND THAT EVERY STAFF MEMBER WILL MODEL EXCELLENCE
- WE BELIEVE EVERYONE SHOULD BE HELD ACCOUNTABLE FOR THE EDUCATION OF OUR CHILDREN
- WE BELIEVE PUBLIC EDUCATION IS AN ESSENTIAL PART OF OUR DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY



### **GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

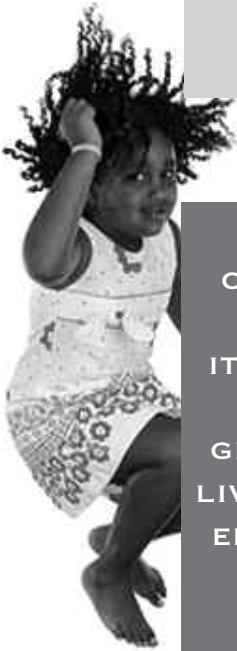
- WE EXPECT ALL STAFF MEMBERS TO COME TO WORK WITH HIGH EXPECTATIONS
- WE WILL EMBRACE CHANGE AS WE CHALLENGE THE STATUS QUO
- ONE OF OUR GREATEST ASSETS IS OUR TEACHERS
- INSTRUCTIONAL PLANNING WILL BE DATA-DRIVEN
- DIVERSITY STRENGTHENS AND ENRICHES OUR COMMUNITY



## VISION, MISSION AND GOALS

### OUR VISION

ROCKFORD PUBLIC SCHOOLS WILL OFFER A WORLD-CLASS EDUCATION THAT PREPARES ALL STUDENTS TO COMPETE IN A GLOBAL SOCIETY. WE WILL PROVIDE A NURTURING, CHILD-CENTERED AND PARENT-FRIENDLY LEARNING ENVIRONMENT THAT MAKES ROCKFORD SCHOOLS THE SCHOOLS OF FIRST CHOICE FOR FAMILIES.



### THE MISSION

OF THE ROCKFORD PUBLIC SCHOOLS IS TO SERVE THE COMMUNITY BY ENSURING ALL OF ITS DIVERSE STUDENTS DEVELOP THE CAPABILITIES TO CONTRIBUTE TO SOCIETY, SUCCEED IN THE GLOBAL ECONOMY AND LEARN THROUGHOUT THEIR LIVES BY CREATING DYNAMIC INTEGRATED LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS THAT RESPOND TO THE NEEDS AND ASPIRATIONS OF THE INDIVIDUAL STUDENT IN PARTNERSHIP WITH FAMILY AND COMMUNITY.



### FIVE GOALS TO BECOME THE SCHOOLS OF FIRST CHOICE IN ROCKFORD

- ENHANCE LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL CHILDREN
- ENSURE PARENTS ARE PARTNERS IN THE EDUCATION PROCESS
- PROVIDE CLEAN AND SAFE SCHOOLS
- HOLD ADULTS ACCOUNTABLE
- RUN AN EFFICIENT BUSINESS OPERATION



## **OUR COMMITMENT**

We will strive to realize the goals outlined in this plan expediently but also in logical phases. We will be transparent in implementation of the plan's strategies. We will measure our progress and communicate that progress to the public. We will listen to stakeholders to ensure the plan reflects the community's desires and earns the community's support.

Economic factors may affect the pursuit of our goals. As we draft our strategic plan in 2010, the nation remains in an economic downturn unseen since the Great Depression, and the State of Illinois struggles with a financial crisis that threatens to result in a substantial loss of revenue for Rockford Public Schools. At the same time, our partnership with the Rockford Education Association in the application for Race to the Top grant funding is promising and could provide millions of dollars to help attain the goals set forth in this document.

Much like the nation's constitution, Visualize 2015 is meant to be a living, breathing document. Therefore, the District will conduct an annual Education Summit to report and evaluate the process of the strategic plan. This will also provide an opportunity for the community to provide feedback in our process of continuous development.

What gets measured gets done. Toward that end, the establishment of the Office of Accountability is a key priority for 2010. The Accountability Office will develop performance measurements and communicate annual progress for each school and department. In the first quarter of each school year, Annual Performance Reports will illustrate performance versus targets and delineate targets for the coming year. Open, honest communication will foster trust and hope between Rockford Public Schools and its stakeholders. We will communicate progress and current targets according to this schedule:

<b>First Quarter of each school year:</b>	Publish <i>Annual Performance Reports</i>
<b>Monthly:</b>	Publish <i>Data Dashboards</i> to assist staff members in meeting annual targets
<b>Third Quarter of each school year:</b>	<i>Education Summit</i> to guide implementation of <i>Visualize 2015</i>



## **VISUALIZE...**

- Every child having a post-graduation plan
- Enhanced vocational offerings at each high school
- Expanded College Readiness programs
- Multiple alternative education pathways
- Proficiency in reading and math by 3rd grade
- Relevant, technologically-rich, standards-based instruction
- Every student having an individual learning plan
- Comprehensive professional development programs for all staff
- Seamless educational program from preschool to post-secondary
- A comprehensive communications plan focused on teaching and learning
- Research-based structures for specialized programs
- All students having rich experiences in the arts, athletics and activities
- Children with healthy bodies and healthy minds

## **GOAL 1**

### **ENHANCE LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL CHILDREN**

A public education is guaranteed to all children. We believe that all children can learn. We live in a diverse community that has children with diverse needs. We serve children of poverty, children who are academically gifted and children who have a range of disabilities. Our enrollment includes students who come from 72 different countries. We serve them all and believe that all will be successful. Given our diversity, we have set the following objectives:

#### **Academics**

- All curricula and assessments will be aligned to national and state standards
- Formative assessments will be used to target instruction and ensure all students demonstrate academic growth
- Student needs will be met through the creation of personalized academic learning plans
- Our graduation rate will increase with more students attending post-secondary schools
- Dual-credit and advanced placement (AP) courses will be expanded and the curriculum aligned to college and career readiness standards to ensure students enter post-secondary schools ready to earn college credit
- Elimination of the achievement gap
- Every child entering kindergarten will have had a comprehensive preschool experience
- Instructional practices will be reviewed and refined to meet the needs of our diverse learners and reflect best practice



- Technology will be utilized by every staff member in every classroom
- All students will be proficient in reading and math by 3rd grade
- All students will benefit from the Healthy Bodies = Healthy Minds program which will be integrated throughout the curriculum
- Continuous improvement of PSAE and ISAT scores

If we believe that all children can learn, we must answer these questions:

- What is it we expect children to learn?
- How will we know what they have learned?
- How will we respond when they don't learn?
- How will we respond when they do learn?

Our curriculum must focus on the interests and strengths of students, stimulating natural curiosity and thoughts. Programs and policies will support this focus.

### **Alternative Education**

Alternative education is a perspective, not a procedure or a program. There are many ways to become educated, and we must provide a variety of structures and environments so that each student can find the one that is sufficiently comfortable to facilitate success.

- Expand Alternative Education options for all students in Rockford
- Establish a K-12 school focused on Creative and Performing Arts
- Examine how to expand the Gifted program

### **Athletics**

We will realize our goal of enhancing learning opportunities for all children by strengthening our athletic programs to develop character, leadership and strategic thinking skills in students. Strong athletic programs build positive relationships between students, school morale and community pride.

- Inspire students to pursue higher education and prepare them for success in college
- Provide a model for community outreach and social growth
- Build students' self-esteem and school/community pride by raising program standards and producing winning teams
- Engage at-risk students and increase academic achievement among student athletes
- Expose student athletes to adult role models and create opportunities for student athletes to serve as role models for students



**Alondra Sanchez-Galvan**  
4th-grade -  
West View Elementary School



## **Guidance Counseling**

We will work in concert with the community to ensure that all students receive the support of a comprehensive counseling program that inspires and empowers them to make decisions, set future goals and then take the steps to reach their goals. We will continue to create and build partnerships such as our College Readiness joint venture with Rock Valley College.

- Provide personal and social counseling that will allow students to acquire the knowledge, attitudes and interpersonal skills to understand and respect self and others
- Provide students with career development counseling that will help them understand the relationship between personal qualities, education, training and the world of work
- Provide academic counseling that enables students and parents to identify and make coherent curricular choices, enabling them to complete high school with the skills and abilities necessary for post-secondary opportunities
- Provide the tools necessary to access post-secondary options including college, military or trade school

## **Attendance and Truancy**

We will incorporate best practices to improve attendance and school engagement, lessening the effects of truancy.

- Align resources to implement best practices on student engagement and student promotion
- Ensure that daily school attendance and truancy reduction are shared priorities in the community by educating all stakeholders on the link between school attendance and student success
- Work in concert with the community to provide programs that reduce barriers to school attendance and re-engage truant students

## **Special Education**

We will provide curriculum aligned to the national standards, make decisions based on performance data and focus on the unique needs of students with disabilities to ensure they leave school well prepared for continued learning and successful employment.

- Provide Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) that include state and national standards in the general education curriculum, along with high expectations, focused instruction and increased exposure to curricular content
- Utilize instructional practices that support the learning of students with disabilities
- Educate students with disabilities to the greatest extent possible in the least restrictive environment in the school they would attend if they did not have a disability



- Provide students with disabilities access to participate in all school activities
- Provide professional development for all staff to enable them to meet the needs of students with disabilities
- Establish linkages for post-secondary supports and options for students with disabilities
- Decrease number of minority students unnecessarily referred to special education

### **Response to Intervention Program**

We believe that increased student learning requires the consistent practice of providing high quality instruction matched to student needs. Response to Intervention (RtI) is a general education initiative which requires a collaborative effort among all staff including general educators, special educators and bilingual/ELL staff. In a quality educational environment, student academic and behavioral needs must be identified and monitored continuously with documented student performance data used to make instructional decisions. The process of identification and continuous monitoring is the foundational component.

- Develop a three-tiered model of school supports for both academics and behavior in all schools
- Develop and implement a problem-solving method of decision-making in each school: across the tiers, the problem-solving method is used to



**Evan Jarzynski**  
**Jefferson High School**

match instructional resources to educational need

- Develop intervention plans for each student receiving supports through the RtI initiative
- Utilize progress-monitoring data to evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention plan at each school

### **Arts Program**

We will provide a world-class, sequential and comprehensive, rigorous, standards-based fine and performing arts program. Our arts program will be enhanced and supported by co- and extracurricular activities and extended learning opportunities before and after school and during summer.

- Provide art education in Pre-K schools
- Strengthen community partnerships between the fine and performing arts
- Ongoing professional development for staff
- Summer enhancement and enrichment activities for students
- Broaden interdisciplinary units to ensure students learn how the arts interplay in everyday life



- Develop system-wide opportunities for students to explore and showcase talent

### **ELL Program**

We will narrow the achievement gap between native English speakers and English language learners by aligning existing curriculum to ensure that what is written, what is taught and what is tested moves students toward a status of competency and success.

- Develop student exit criteria for all bilingual programs
- Create an articulated curriculum (Pre-K through 12th grade) complete with standards, incremental assessment and specific exit criteria
- Select and implement a research-based structure for transitional bilingual and dual-language programs
- Expand the bilingual Parent Advisory Council (PAC)
- Improve access for ELL students to participate in school activities and offer summer programs that focus on academic and enrichment opportunities
- Provide professional development for all teachers so that they can become proficient in teaching ELL students and provide opportunities for regular education teachers to become certified to teach ELL students
- Provide professional development on cultural sensitivity for all staff

- Develop grade-by-grade academic expectations for all ELL students and communication of the expectations to parents
- Ensure that all students exit bilingual programs in three years
- Offer parent training sessions so that parents can support the English language learners

### **Pre-School**

We will provide access to and support for families with children ages birth to five years through social and academic experiences that will enable them to start school prepared for success.

- Expand access to all three- and four-year old children whose parents choose to have a public preschool education
- Provide community-wide Child Find screening and collaborative placement for birth to three and three to five preschool programs
- Develop strategic planning of Pre-K classroom locations to support best practices for early learning and long-term student achievement
- Provide focus on parent education efforts, birth to five, on social emotional development, health and early literacy
- Develop collaborative Pre-K and Kindergarten professional development based on alignment of Pre-K and Kindergarten standards



- Provide system-wide technological support for data collection, assessment and longitudinal information to evaluate impact of Pre-K programming from preschool to grade 12
- Provide support for the implementation of the state-wide “Kindergarten Readiness Assessment”

### **Communications and Community**

To support public schools, the public must be informed about the work of its schools and involved in that work. Communication is, therefore, vital to achieving the goals of Rockford Public Schools. The ready availability of the non-traditional news media in Rockford offers a significant opportunity to convey information to the public, but the District must also utilize a variety of communication formats to directly reach a diverse audience that increasingly relies on sources other than the commercial news media to obtain information.

- Develop a campaign that focuses on teaching and learning
- Tell the story of Rockford Public Schools in compelling ways that explain the “big picture”; showcase good work that happens in schools and offices every day and lift the spirit of students, staff and community members.
- Create a “brand” that gives Rockford Public Schools an inviting and professional visual identity with key

messages and concise applications that easily convey a common vision and direction

- Redevelop existing communication tools and launch new methods of communication to increase the flow of information to the public, employees and the news media; employ a full range of communication options that include traditional news releases, direct mailings, cable television programming, e-mail blasts and web-based products



**Brock Bidwell**  
2nd-grade - West View Elementary School

- Celebrate successes through regular public recognition of student and staff accomplishments and through visible special events that honor achievement or reinforce the District’s vision and educate the community about its public schools

### **Professional Development**

The development of a world-class school system necessitates the development of world-class employees. Our goal is to create a system of continuous professional development for administrators, teachers, support staff and parents and establish a



culture of learning and professionalism. We believe in modeling learning and professionalism at every level for students to emulate.

Everyone in the Rockford Public Schools community must view student achievement and professional development as interconnected with the goal of creating an environment where learning for students, staff and the community is the norm.

Following are some of the professional development programs and initiatives that will be implemented over the next five years.

#### Leadership Development Institute

Development of school and administrative leadership is essential to increasing and sustaining student achievement. “It turns out that leadership not only matters, it is second only to teaching among school-related factors in its impact on student learning.” (Devita, How Leadership Influences Student Learning).

- Principal Academy—to assist principals in developing their instructional leadership and managerial skills
- Pathway to the Principalship—for assistant principals to prepare them for principalships
- Administrative Leadership—to develop the leadership capacity across all levels of administration

#### Instructional Development Academy

Research has shown that classroom instruction has the greatest impact on student achievement. Instructional strategies to raise student engagement levels, interactive lessons, learning strategies to effectively differentiate instruction—all of these and more must be part of a system of continuous improvement for the instructional staff. Following are some of the components of such an academy:

- Instructional Strategies Series
- National Board Certification
- Master Teacher Series
- Instructional Coaches Series
- New Teacher Mentoring and Induction
- Paraprofessional Developmental Series
- Master Degree Cohort Programs
- Social Workers Series
- Counselor Series

#### Support Services

Bus drivers, secretaries, food service workers, and skilled trades people are all vital in our journey to become a world-class school district. Therefore, we are developing comprehensive training programs for all of these groups.

#### Parent Academy

Parents are essential to the success of our students and should be partners in the educational process; therefore, their development is crucial to the development of our



students. Through a Parent Academy, parents will receive training and development in a multitude of areas, such as computer technology, parenting skills, and techniques for assisting their children with their homework.



**Lilly Drinkwine  
2nd-grade  
Washington Elementary School**

Draft



## **VISUALIZE...**

- Expanded partnerships with higher education, businesses and community organizations
- Parents engaged in professional development and school organizations
- A world-class customer service system for our schools and offices

## **GOAL 2**

### **ENSURE PARENTS AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS ARE PARTNERS IN THE EDUCATION PROCESS**

Research has shown parent involvement increases student achievement. We will promote and facilitate involvement by parents and community members by empowering and teaching them how to become active participants in the learning process.

#### **Parents**

Promote and create professional development opportunities to empower parents in the education of their children by developing and implementing system-wide parent academies and providing various learning opportunities throughout the year.

- Create Parent Academies at all schools and a system-wide parent conference
- Increase school-based parent organizations
- Increase parental involvement through participation in system-wide events, committees.
- Develop programs and partnerships that bring parents into schools

#### **Partnerships**

Expand partnerships with businesses, higher education, community organizations and city government, and develop new partnerships to provide students and staff with rich and rewarding experiences. Following are some of our partnership targets:

- **Higher Education**  
Create a seamless transition from high school to post-secondary education. Numerous partnerships and alliances are being developed currently with Rockford College, Rock Valley College, Northern Illinois University, Rockford Career College, Benedictine University and others.
- **Business Community**  
Expand and further develop existing relationships within the business community to enhance the experiences of our students and simultaneously provide businesses with world-class talent. Presently, we are designing internship programs for high school students and partnering with Rockforward and Alignment Rockford.
- **Community Organizations**  
Expand our relationships with faith-based and other community-based organizations.



### **Customer Service**

We will audit procedures and practices to provide the highest levels of customer service to our stakeholders. We will improve the tenor, tone and professionalism of our personal interactions for stakeholders. We will also develop innovative, customer-friendly approaches to how we conduct business. Our student enrollment process implemented during the 2009-2010 school year provides a model for improved customer service in other areas.

- Parents of middle and high school students will enroll at the local school, eliminating congestion at the central enrollment office
- Parents of younger students will enroll students at the new Student Assignment Center, a one-stop shop that consolidates the process at a single location



**Kayla Griffin**  
**5th-grade**  
**Spring Creek Elementary School**

Draft



## **VISUALIZE...**

- **Schools that are clean, safe, attractive, and environmentally friendly**
- **Modernized buildings supported through a Master Facilities Plan**
- **All students and staff having access to state-of-the-art technology**
- **A comprehensive positive behavior support system**
- **An early warning indicator system to support students' success**

## **GOAL 3**

### **PROVIDE CLEAN AND SAFE SCHOOLS**

Developing a world-class education is inclusive of creating positive and safe learning environments that are conducive to learning and are welcoming to all our stakeholders.

#### **Facilities**

School buildings are the face we present to the public and their condition is often the way the public measures our commitment to excellence. We will modernize our facilities through the development of a five-year Master Facilities Plan that is aligned to the Visualize 2015 Strategic Plan.

- Provide schools that are clean, safe, attractive and energy-efficient
- Incorporate environmental design into all remodeling projects and new construction to purposefully support efficiency and safety
- Incorporate environmentally friendly and energy-efficient concepts into all facilities as funding is secured
- Implement a School Beautification Program to improve all facilities

#### **Security**

Students and staff can better focus on academic success when they feel comfortable and safe in their environment. All students have the right to live, learn and play in a safe and secure location.

- Implement student uniforms in all schools

- Create a culture of respect by staff modeling professional behavior

#### **Technology**

Life in the 21st century requires a sound, broad-based knowledge of a variety of technology tools. Students and staff will learn and teach in engaging classrooms that are infused with the internet, modern software and computers that will help personalize instruction and develop highly marketable career skills.

- Provide students and staff with access to state-of-the-art technology
- Develop effective technology systems that support and promote efficient operations
- Complete transition from current student system to SunGard student system

#### **Climate and Behavior**

Changing the culture of our schools will require a multifaceted approach that will include concurrent changes phased in over the next five years. Policies and practices that result in excessive suspensions, expulsions and arrests will be examined



regularly to help create a more positive school environment. Additionally, a variety of effective prevention and intervention strategies will be employed to support academic achievement, promote school safety, reduce truancy and support the rights of parents and students. The following components will help us realize this goal:

- Building-wide positive behavior support and discipline plans in each school
- Prevention and intervention programs that keep students engaged in school
- Professional development for teachers and administrators on classroom management, conflict resolution, peer mediation, character education and non-punitive approaches to discipline

- Guidance counselors and social workers available to meet students' academic and behavioral needs
- Early warning indicator system for students in elementary, middle and high schools with the following indicators: attendance, academic achievement and student behavior
- Policy that acknowledges disparities and stresses the need for staff to build cultural competence
- Parent trainings that are aligned with building Positive Behavior Intervention Support (PBIS) and discipline plans



**Arnold Syphommarath**  
Jefferson High School



**Josiah Scholten**  
Auburn High School



## **VISUALIZE...**

- Clear expectations for all District personnel
- Every staff member understanding how their work supports teaching and learning
- Rewarding outstanding performance and eliminating mediocrity in all areas
- A system that measures performance in all areas

## **GOAL 4**

### **HOLD ADULTS ACCOUNTABLE**

Enhanced student learning will be possible when all personnel are held to the highest expectations, when they work to support teaching and learning and when we reward outstanding performance and eliminate mediocrity in all areas.

#### **Office of Accountability**

Rockford Public Schools is moving to create a robust Office of Accountability in 2010. The following performance criteria will be measured system-wide through Data Dashboards and Annual Performance Reports:

- Student achievement and growth
- Graduation rates, attendance and behavior
- Stakeholder feedback through climate surveys

#### **Performance Measurement**

We will measure and assess the performance of all schools, departments and individuals with consistent, reliable periodic reports. We will communicate with stakeholders on a regular basis as an essential element of our strategic planning and achievement process.

- Annual performance reports to provide detailed performance information on each school and each department
- Regular review of Rockford Public Schools performance through an annual Education Summit, production

of annual performance reports and publication of targets for the coming year

- Public access to performance reports via our website, publications and Channel 20
- Monthly Data Dashboards to inform stakeholders on progress towards annual goals and targets
- System-wide evaluations tied to performance
- Standards of service for all

#### **Race to the Top**

Rockford Public Schools and the Rockford Education Association have entered into a historic partnership for the *Race to the Top (RT3)* grant. RT3 will provide resources necessary to accelerate our reform agenda. Four key reforms of RT3 include aligning learning standards, developing a robust data system to support instruction, having great teachers and principals in every school and turning around the lowest performing schools.



## VISUALIZE...

- **Transparent financial operations and a balanced budget**
- **A human resource system that strives for excellence in every employee**

## GOAL 5

### RUN AN EFFICIENT BUSINESS OPERATION

Running an efficient business operation through the recruitment and retention of a world-class work force, the equitable distribution of resources, regular reporting of a balanced budget, ongoing analysis of future budgetary needs and budget management training will equip us to positively impact student learning.

#### Finance

A world-class education is dependent upon financial resources. We will develop and implement a balanced budget in support of the District's strategies and goals while providing schools and departments with the flexibility to allocate the funding to enhance student learning.

- Decentralize responsibilities where appropriate to schools and departments
- Provide assessment of personnel during implementation of new system
- Increase financial transparency, demonstrating to parents and the community that the District is a responsible steward of public funds

- Provide nutritional meals in an efficient manner in order to support student academic success
- Implement effective business operations in the food service department to increase potential reimbursement and maintain a balanced budget



**Sarah Sutton**  
4th-grade - Welsh Elementary School

#### Food Service

Students will focus on learning when they are well nourished. We will improve food service operations to provide well-balanced and nutritious meals in a friendly manner. We will assist students to develop healthy and lifelong eating habits through education and modeling proper diet in all food service operations.

#### Human Resources

Providing our students with a world-class education requires quality human capital and the highest customer service standards.

- Recruit and maintain staff who embrace the principles of HQET (Highly Qualified and Effective Teachers)



- Overhaul the employee application process
- Create an all-inclusive pay table and update job descriptions accordingly
- Utilize new Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) software to provide information to employees regarding personnel and benefit-related issues
- Design and implement a professional teacher-induction program
- Improve employee orientation system
- Provide professional development for HR staff

### **Transportation**

The vast majority of our students are transported to school every day. We will

transport students safely in ways that maximize instructional time and minimize costs to taxpayers.

- Improve efficiencies and eliminate barriers through the effective use of technology
- Implement an effective student assignment plan through efficient routing
- Provide staff development in support of students
- Adopt the “dress for success” protocol for all transportation workers

