**River Valley School District Strategic Plan**

**TEACHERS WORKSHOP**

**River Valley High School**

**February 16, 2018**

****Approximately 80 teachers participated in this workshop. The purpose was to gain input on strategic issues that participants believed the River Valley School District (RVSD) is and will be confronting over the next two to five years, and potential strategies to address those issues. Participants were divided into small groups, who were asked to respond to four questions, which was followed by large group discussion.

The following participant-identified strategic issues are listed below in the form of questions after the solid bullets (•). Participant-identified strategies for addressing each issue are listed after the open bullets (o). Following the meeting the District’s consultant divided issue and strategy identification into the six categories expected to be covered in the strategic plan: student achievement, student engagement, curriculum and instruction, facilities, community communications and engagement, and finance and operations.

**Student Achievement**

* What can we do to maintain and improve achievement?
* Continue developing our arts and music programs alongside STEM development. It’s our “branding” what RV is known for.
* Make sure that curriculum is aligned to maximize student achievement
* Consider year round school?
* If we believe that “students are our number one priority,” how can administration justify larger class sizes at the elementary level?
  + Have elementary class sizes of 20 or less
  + Use assistants / assistance for high needs kids
  + Offer parent support

**Student Engagement**

* How can we get kids more involved in co-curriculars?
  + Transportation and fees are barriers
  + Need a late bus
  + Set up an Uber / Van system to get kids to outlying towns. Get a retired person to volunteer
  + Late bus to increase co-curricular participation
  + Late bus with drop off points in communities to encourage participation in extra-curriculars and sports
  + Explore fee possibility for bus to help with funding
  + Fleet of smaller vehicles to pick up / drop off kids. Vehicle size 20-24.
  + Coaches and co-curricular leaders should be compensated. Many staff and community members volunteer a great deal of time and effort into helping our kids grow and learn – and we should compensate them accordingly.
  + Encourage engagement of students with teachers who have co-curriculars. Keep them interested to make them well-rounded students.
* How can we ensure students’ basic needs are met?
  + Healthy, fresh food where a chef comes in to provide healthy options
  + Lunch denials - kids need food! (Maslow’s hierarchy of needs!)
  + Use food waste from lunch program to feed kids after school
  + Before and after school childcare
  + Open the school doors from 7 – 5, offering enrichment opportunities for all after school
  + Offering care before and after school (snack, homework)
  + More mental health support services
* How can/do we embrace the differences among students and communities in the RVSD area?
  + Embrace diversity of integration for best practices – leadership teams to work on this with representation from all areas, including special, kitchens, maintenance
  + Create living communities which respect each other’s differences; know one another personally (i.e., outside of school)
  + Provide an open house for Arena students before the end of the school year – late afternoon / evening – done after class assignments are made to meet the teacher, explore the school.
  + Disagree that the quality of education will decrease due to attendance in a “larger” school. Students handle the transitions better than adults.

**Curriculum and Instruction**

* How can we best integrate technology in education?
  + Not enough 4K – 2 to incorporate all the individualized learning (ipads, chromebooks, labs)
  + Need for 1:1 devices in 1st and 2nd grades
  + Address spotty internet coverage and its impact on everyone (multiple comments)
  + Add Wi-Fi on buses

**Facilities**

* + How can we upgrade our schools?
  + More success with building new than adding on
  + Consider K-5, 6-12 model
  + A new hub or facility needs to be built to combine the 6-12 classes. We have many shared staff already, and as enrollment declines we may find that increasing vertical and horizontal communication and standards – and philosophy – district wide should be attainable and explicit.
  + Knock down the MS and build a K-8 building with an auditorium and a fieldhouse. Use the elementary school and remodel it for the field house and auditorium.
  + Look at a 1-8 building option
  + Do not spend more money on deteriorating schools
  + Consolidate to two buildings district wide in one campus. Maybe PK-6 and 7-12. Benefits include increased collaboration and resource consolidation; MS and HS especially.
  + Talk to the Village about building a new indoor pool with shared funding between the Village and district
  + ELC building and issues that need to be resolved there: space configurations, bathrooms, playground, size of rooms, size of furniture, lunch tables, maintenance issues, storage door
  + Improve safety of playground equipment
  + Fund balance for playground improvements? Grants, endowment fund?
  + Use already existing equipment storage space of buildings that are closing
  + Conduct survey to get staff input on room space, building needs, energy efficiency

**Community Communications and Engagement**

* + We are increasingly a retirement community and need to draw family types to come and stay. How can we provide incentives for younger families to move to the District? To stem declining enrollment?
  + 5 year residency before pay full property tax
  + A way to generate more affordable housing
  + More major employers
  + Need more careers here (in community)
  + Provide opportunities for all, age-wise and community-wise
  + Change zoning to build houses
  + Offer outstanding programs that attract from tri-county area (i.e., auto program to fulfill lack of tech)
  + Promote ELC building to attract younger families
  + Build the stuff that community needs (i.e., ics/mca)
  + Continue promoting what we do, communication with community
  + Lease billboard in Middleton saying “Move to Spring Green”: great schools, top academic programs, etc.
  + How can District rebuild trust in the RVSD community?
  + Incredibly complicated and deep issue. Will take a lot of time, effort and outreach to rebuild.
  + Our school nurses do an excellent job with outreach to parents—maybe we could follow their lead with regard to outreach
  + Building strong interpersonal relationships with students as a way of building trust—online education does NOT provide this
  + Share honest staff stories – humanize the staff to help the community fully understand our lives (professional and appropriate personal info)
  + Promote without biases would be great
  + Ensure that correct and complete information is disseminated throughout the district
  + Ensure communications reaches all parties in an unbiased manner
  + Promote the good of RVSD unbiasedly – rotate the promoter throughout the district
  + OPEN communication within every building and across the district between buildings and community
  + Rebuild trust in community and staff. Staff confidence reflects directly to the students.
  + More open houses
  + Have more events that bring all communities together / more private school inclusion
  + Community events held at the school
  + Promoting district falls on teachers, what is our priority?
  + How can we best communicate what is going on in the schools?
  + The professional staff know / don’t feel uncomfortable telling public that we know what we’re doing
  + Write in 3rd person “why we chose teaching?”
  + Have teachers fill out a form and choose people once a week
  + Get quotes from other staff / students about the person and their impact Highlight what each class / department is doing throughout the year (Examples: Week 1 – Elem grade 1, Week 2 – Grade 2, Week 3 – Agriculture, Week 4 – Fundamentals of English)
  + Promote on Facebook, YouTube, put on RV website

**Finance and Operations**

* + How can we ensure safety of students and staff?
  + Facilities security
  + Safety protocol
  + “At times students have concerns that teacher should be aware of for safety concerns” is an example of a building concern
  + Safety concerns of staff – promote assistance
  + How do we recognize and address the broader transportation issues for students and parents, including but also beyond co-curriculars?
  + Look at what other districts are doing.
  + Late bus would also enable homework help / internet access time for homework
  + Busing – late bus to transport students to after school enrichment, homework support.
  + Is there a way to structure days so that kids do not have to be on the bus so early? Later start.
  + Explore changes in district boundaries – cost effectiveness of outlying students and busing
  + How can we best retain teachers?
  + Smaller classes allow more one-on-one and connections, quality
  + Make staffing decisions that enhance student experience rather than bottom line decisions (i.e., hire a permanent sub rather than staff subbing for one another)
  + Teams need time to communicate and collaborate (both grade level and departments). Please build in time within the school year / day.
  + Early release, after school training
  + Need for stability in staffing positions / rooms – especially at elementary building
  + Ensure stability and continuity in the structure of staffing (i.e. grade levels, custodial, programs, classes) within buildings
  + Maintain grade level teams year to year
  + Maintain competitive teacher salaries
  + Lead us to specific goals, projects
  + Engage more teachers earlier in all decisions, processes, etc. Provide time for teachers to meet and brainstorm solutions for the challenges facing our district.
  + Support encouragement of teachers by administration and school board. Teacher input regarding in service, classroom issues, overall planning.
  + Equal opportunities for staff to participate in committees, workshops, conferences, curriculum piloting, etc.
  + No teaching overloads
  + Improve morale
  + Concern with feeling that we need to self-promote (teacher to teacher, teacher to administrator) as part of our job in terms of job security
  + Consider job sharing idea – salary provided for two, but no benefits – other districts doing this successfully
  + How should district deal with staff reductions because of decreasing student enrollment?
  + Creative / flexible ways to design teacher schedules: job sharing, co-teachers, etc. How can we pair teachers?
  + If more grade level sharing in content areas, how will school schedule change?
  + Qualified teachers still required to replace retiring teachers
  + Are we going to have to have another referendum?
  + Can we do what is best for the kids in all decision making?

Each small group was then asked to arrive at just one thing within their group they hoped would come out of this process, either from among the above responses, or otherwise. While some groups did not have time for this question, here were the responses:

* Continued strong test, academic, and co-curricular success leads to job security
* Promote grade levels / departments equally on social media as some favoritism is out there
* Build trust amongst staff to increase output potential
* Have teachers volunteer for committees vs. a selected panel from administration
* Better, healthier, safer environment for students and staff – sustainable
* We firmly believe that support staff are a fundamental and integral part of our daily lives. We need more of them and we need to provide them with a wage that is livable and commensurate with the work that they’re doing.
* Efficiency in communication
* Respect for teachers, education, and understanding the needs of the school district

Finally, the consultant asked a representative from each group to share one thing from their discussion that each group wanted him and others in attendance to hear. Results are as follows:

* Embrace diversity by having a transparent plan
* Kids are resilient – do what is best for them
* Establish continuity within staff
* Focus on retaining quality teachers
* Build trust in community, especially considering economic diversity
* After school transportation – maybe larger van instead of late bus. Could Lamers invest in smaller vehicles?
* Kids first
* Open house after school for incoming Arena kids
* Job sharing for teachers
* Address lack of specialized space
* Open school doors from 7 – 5
* Increase enrichment opportunities
* Enhance tech for 4k – 2nd
* How can we justify increasing class sizes?
* Have students / teachers share stories to build trust
* Offer outstanding programs to draw students
* Make sure ELC building is not forgotten
* Ensure greater team stability