



ENTRY PLAN REPORT

Superintendent Brad Willson



Introduction . . .

In July of 2022, I began my career as Superintendent of Seaman Schools and could not wait to start the process of learning more about our school community. Over the past four months, I have been focused on listening and learning by opening conversations about our district’s strengths, challenges, student success, and where we want to go as a school community. The feedback I received has been very beneficial in helping me better understand our district, its people, and assist in building a process to begin developing our strategic plan with input from all stakeholders.

Before I begin my summary report, I would like to first acknowledge the great work that’s been done in the years prior to my arrival. When visiting with people in the district about Seaman Schools, you can’t help but feel an enormous amount of pride, knowing that you are a part of something that means so much to so many people. We are a community built around its schools and we are unified in our desire to provide the best educational experience possible for our kids.

Brad Willson, Superintendent

Listening & Learning . . .

The strengths of our district were strong and consistent: we have a tradition of success; and the people and relationships are what make us unique. I truly enjoyed hearing the many memories from our adults who went through the Seaman School District and are now raising their children in our community with hopes of the same positive and enriching educational experience.

We are a district of tradition and a district that wants to keep progressing and improving. One of our challenges will be to strike a balance between the pride and beliefs which exists within the school community in present terms, with all that could be possible with future school improvement efforts, which will mean change. Change is hard, and can be met with anxiety, and barriers that could slow or prevent us from accomplishing agreed upon outcomes for our students. I believe if we start with the end in mind (desired student outcomes) while strategically planning and communicating the work it will take to get us there, we can achieve even higher than we've ever imagined.



We have a tradition of success and the people and relationships are what makes us unique.

Keeping everyone moving in the same direction is key and I believe we have an opportunity to improve our already cohesive teams. In all the work we do, we need to ensure we're working as one unified team with the appropriate guiding documents and support. We currently have a comprehensive strategic plan that has been well-communicated, yet I rarely heard anyone speak about the current strategic plan specifically nor did I hear themes from the plan in conversations. The strategic plan should unify the work of the district. Without coherence the district cannot achieve the results it desires. There was a strong "all for one and one for all" sentiment in conversations, but it was in reference to the relationships, not the work to be done. We need to harness that same connectedness and energy in our collective efforts. This is a huge leverage component from which we can build upon.



STRENGTHS

Relationships

Reputation

Tight-Knit Community

Student Successes
(Athletics/Activities)

Staff Morale
is Improving

Budget/Technology/
Career and Tech Ed

CHALLENGES

Attracting and Retaining High Quality Staff
Community Division
Schools and District Department Connectivity
Student Behavior and Attendance
New People in New Roles on New Teams
Parent Trust/Parent Engagement
Declining Enrollment/Budget

When reviewing the current strategic plan I also reviewed our performance data. I noted the comprehensiveness of the current strategic plan has an exceptional set of goals and objectives for the district. However, there isn't an action plan associated with any of the 23 stated objectives. This seems to have left people with great expectations, without the unifying plan on how to achieve those expectations. Each person, team, and school/department is doing its best to meet the district expectations, but they are not necessarily pulling in the same direction. This can create frustration and a lack of tangible results.

In my conversations, I heard a desire for the district to lead by providing more support to schools and more ownership for schools in the planning process. We need to move in that direction, but first, we need to build some foundational elements in the district. This will include learning how to develop and implement a data-informed strategic plan with a team-oriented action plan. I firmly believe that people are not motivated by other people's goals and that a strategic plan is most effective when built from the ground up. Once we understand how to get results with the district component of the strategic plan, schools and departments need to begin the process of strategic planning at levels that are closer to the classroom.

The last thing that I noted was the desire to be visionary and innovative. Innovation tends to incubate from the ground up, based on an overall vision from the organization. The process of developing a unifying district plan with results-based plans from the schools and departments sets the groundwork for a truly

Next Steps . . .

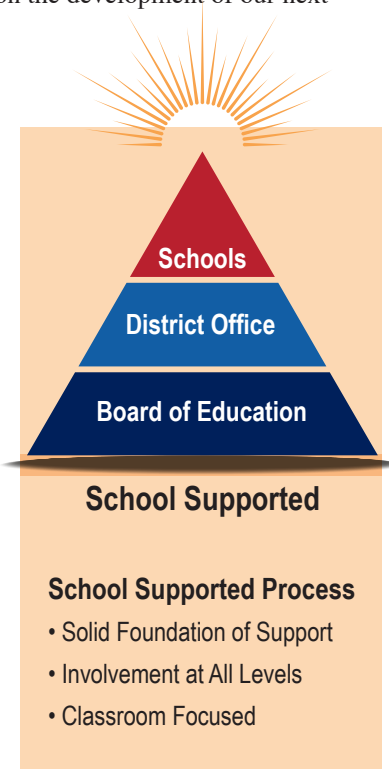
As I mentioned in the "Listening & Learning" section of my Entry Plan Report, a solid and achievable strategic plan that is clear and consistent is paramount to the success of an organization. The strategic plan sets the stage for the priorities of all 700+ employees so we can all be working and moving in the same direction. The process in which we develop the strategic plan is just as important as the plan itself. The process is where staff, students, and community are engaged to determine the scope and direction of the plan within the board of education's guideposts. Before we can begin formulating the ideas and contents of the plan, we must first understand the process of development.

From the feedback I have received, I am proposing a school-centered approach supported by district departments. In order to reach the level of innovation, academic achievement, and student learning that is desired, we will need a strong foundation so we can truly support and encourage our schools to take the student experience to the next level. This approach will allow our educational staff to get back to their "why" so they can fully focus on ensuring the success of each student.



visionary plan that fosters innovation at the classroom level and is scaled at the district level. I, personally, am drawn to visionary plans that foster innovation and I'd love to start this process as soon as possible. However, in order to have a successful innovative plan that transforms the educational experience, we must first develop the essential foundational and locally owned pieces of strategic planning and that takes time. The vision for innovation should be a gradual process that bubbles up during the first two phases of the plan. This will keep the vision fresh and grounded in the work of schools and departments.

The thoughtful and comprehensive feedback I received throughout this process was essential in the development of a strategic planning process as we embark on the development of our next strategic plan.



The “Why” . . .

Why do we work in education? We didn’t go into education for the money or the notoriety. We went into education because we want to make a difference in the world by helping students and families. We want to help prepare kids for their future. We want to make a difference in the lives of others. We know it’s hard work but the important work of positively impacting lives is not easy and those working directly with our students need to be supported. This strategic planning process is all about creating a foundation of support from the bottom up. Every piece of this process will focus on what we need to do so that our teachers, principals, paras, counselors, and all of the individuals working directly with our students have what they need to deliver their best to our kids.



The foundation of our team is strong. It is what I heard time and time again in conversations: “we have each other’s back,” “we support each other,” “our community is strong,” “we are a family,” “anything we need, we can count on each other.” The foundation for support is there, now we just need to leverage that into other areas of our work.

The Process . . .

As we have learned through the last few years, it’s important for a district to stay flexible with the ability to adapt to a changing environment. By focusing on our foundation in the beginning phases, we can make extraordinary strides for our students, even with changes in leadership, boards, teachers, etc., because the solid support system will be baked into the culture of our district.

Preliminary Planning

Stakeholders will assist in defining our graduate profile, which will specify key elements we expect our students to possess upon graduation. With the graduate profile in place, our board of education will set the stage to guide the strategic plan.

Phase 1

Fundamental Strategic Planning: Supporting the Learning Environment

This phase looks like a traditional process for developing a unified vision, mission and goals for the district. It puts the district on the same page and pulling in the same direction. It achieves results through the development of district processes and guidelines and provides an example for schools and departments to follow in creating a data-driven plan for improvement. This phase of the strategic planning process builds the team capacity and district structures necessary to support schools and departments in the next phase of the plan.

Phase 2

School Based Strategic Planning: Enhancing Student Learning

This phase builds on the fundamental strategic planning in Phase 1 and guides buildings and departments in the process of root-cause analysis, measurable goal-setting, building a collective commitment, and developing a team-oriented action plan in which everyone knows their part and is committed in the improvement process. The district structures provide the support and guideposts which buildings can leverage their strengths to meet their students’ specific needs.

Phase 3

Visionary/Innovative Strategic Planning: Transforming the Student Learning Experience

This phase is where schools have the capacity to re-imagine the student learning experience on the solid foundation. Schools will best meet the changing needs of our students. Input is gathered on how to best meet the needs of our graduates to ensure that they are as successful as possible in their future. It provides a systemic push to the improvement efforts that are already in motion and works to scale the most successful efforts of Phase 2. Schools develop innovation plans to achieve the district vision. Departments support school innovation plans through continued Phase 2 planning.

