

# VISION 2015: Engaging in New Ways

## Introduction

District 28 has a long history of success, and successful organizations must be mindful that past performance is not a guarantee of future results. In striving to be a world-class educational system, ranking among the very best of the best, we must guard against becoming complacent, over-confident, or settled in our thinking and actions.

Aspiring to world-class status as an organization begins with a vision, an eye toward the future and the possibilities it holds. A good vision tells us where we are going and why. Our District vision inspires us to be forward-thinking and intentional about success. It provides clarity regarding how to spend our time, efforts, and resources.

*“Vision and direction are essential for greatness. In world-class organizations, everyone has a clear sense of where the enterprise is going... Vision allows for a long-term, proactive stance – creating what we want.”*

– Ken Blanchard and Jesse Stoner, co-authors of  
*Leading on a Higher Level: Blanchard on Leadership and Creating High-Performing Organizations*

VISION 2015 cuts through the “white noise” associated with information overload and pinpoints those concepts and ideas that are essential to building and sustaining a world-class educational system. The purpose of our vision is not to identify specific programs or the latest silver-bullet solutions. Rather, it is to identify those opportunities that are most promising, build understanding and cohesion around them, and implement practices to help us successfully reach our vision. It is based on the very best practices and latest research in the field of education, as well as the work of the District’s Strategic Thinking and Planning Commission. VISION 2015 will provide unparalleled direction, clarity, and focus.

*The three core components of VISION 2015 intersect and overlap, with each one maintaining students at the center.*

- Component #1 addresses the primacy of **student engagement and motivation** in the learning process.
- Component #2 highlights the importance of the **professional practices** used by educators in the instructional process.
- Component #3 identifies **adult learning teams** as the most powerful and productive structure for District 28 to accelerate the growth and progress of our staff in addressing Components 1 and 2.

Bringing a vision to life takes time. The year 2015 is not a deadline, nor is it proposed as the point of accomplishment of the vision. Rather, 2015 is the point in the not-so-distant future when the vision must permeate and saturate our work. By investing our time and energies into fulfilling VISION 2015, District 28 will continue to spark the imagination of each child and expand the learning opportunities for everyone.

## Component #1: Student Engagement and Motivation

**When educators create opportunities for meaningful engagement, students are motivated to invest in their learning and take an active role in the process.**

*“Students are constantly asking themselves, ‘Can I get this, or is it just too hard for me? Is the learning worth the energy I must expend to attain it? Is the learning worth the risk of public failure?’ We must understand that, if students come down on the wrong side of these crucial decisions and thus stop trying, it doesn’t matter what the adults around them decide. The learning stops.”*

– Student Assessment Expert Rick Stiggins

Learning is not something that happens to a child; it is something that happens with a child. It is an intentional process marked by active engagement, deep understanding, and connected learning. Student learning is enhanced when motivation is high and engagement is authentic.

Phil Schlechty, a specialist in teacher professional development, argues, “It is difficult to dispute the proposition that students are likely to exert more energy and attend more carefully to tasks and assignments in which they are authentically engaged than in tasks where their engagement is less profound.”

The types of classroom challenges designed, the expectations held, and the instructional practices used must promote and lead to the personal involvement and investment of each child in his or her learning.



### **Essential Question:**

❖ **How do we increase student engagement and motivation?**

## Component #2: Professional Practices of Educators

**Of all the school level factors that affect children’s learning, the professional practices of educators are the most influential and impactful.**

*“The quality of an education system cannot exceed the quality of its teachers.”*

– McKinsey & Company 2007 Report: “How the World’s Best-Performing School Systems Come Out on Top”

In Robert Marzano’s meta-analysis of effective schools, he concluded, “The one factor that surfaced as the single most influential component of an effective school is the individual teacher within that school.”

The message from Marzano and other education reform researchers is clear: we must increase our depth of understanding

**Instruction has six to ten times as much impact on student achievement as all other factors combined.**

–Professors Peter Mortimore and Pamela Sammons

surrounding our work of teaching and learning, continually gaining new insights about our students by observing what they do, when they do it, why they do it, and how they do it.

Our work must become more scholarly, where we reflect on our practices and evaluate how children respond to their learning environment. Scholarly work not only includes looking at research and best practices and implementing the most promising practices into daily classroom life; it also means doing our own research to understand the instructional impact of our decisions and their effectiveness on each child.

**Essential Question:**

❖ **What professional practices are most effective in advancing students' learning?**

## **Component #3: Learning Teams**

***Small teams of educators working together to improve their craft is one of the most powerful approaches leading to improved student learning.***

In their ground-breaking “*Professional Learning Communities at Work*,” experienced educators Rebeca and Richard Dufour and education professor Robert Eaker state,

*“The most promising strategy for sustained, substantive school improvement is developing the ability of school personnel to function as a professional learning community.”*

More recently, in reviewing the research surrounding this concept, Mike Schmoker writes, “Professional Learning Communities have emerged as arguably the best, most agreed-upon means by which to continuously improve instruction and student performance...” Schmoker, who has studied effective methods of instruction and assessment, continues, “The concurrence of the research community on this approach is quite remarkable.”



Learning teams bring each educator and, consequently, the entire District to higher levels of professional competence. By coming together regularly to share ideas, review student performance data, discuss solutions, craft lessons, and study student work, the collaborative efforts of the group far surpass what could be accomplished in professional isolation. District 28 will encourage, promote, and require the ongoing improvement of every educator through collaborative learning.

**Essential Question:**

❖ **What conditions are necessary for high-performing learning teams to thrive and have the greatest impact on student growth and development?**

## Appendix A

### Strategic Thinking and Planning Commission Membership

#### **Facilitator:**

Bob Davidovich

#### **Members:**

Bruce Alhborn – Board of Education Member

Elisa Glass - Board of Education Member

Larry Hewitt - Superintendent

Kathy Horvath – Assistant Superintendent

Scott Warren – Director of Technology/Personnel

Heather Meihl – Student Services Director

Rosanne Scanlan – Meadowbrook Principal

Chris Finch – Westmoor Principal

Scott Meek – Northbrook Jr. High Principal

Paul Zavagno– Greenbriar Interim Principal

Karen Hanley – PTO Council President

Maria Fox – Meadowbrook Parent

Stacy Simpson – Northbrook Jr. High Parent

Susan Zera – Greenbriar Parent

Kristine Schwadner - Westmoor Parent

Fern Tribbey - Community Member

Hillary Nasso – Meadowbrook Teacher

Mindi Rench – Northbrook Jr. High Teacher

Traci Ratner – Greenbriar Teacher

Sarah Wippman – EXCEL Coordinator (Westmoor)

Judi Epke – Technology Coach

Sarah Stanley – Orchestra Teacher

David Downing – Northbrook Jr. High Teacher

Carol Hyde – Westmoor Teacher

## Appendix B

### Sources Consulted – Biographical Information

#### **Ken Blanchard, Ph.D.**

Dr. Blanchard is cofounder of The Ken Blanchard Companies, an international management training and consulting firm. He is the author of *The One Minute Manager* and *Leading at a Higher Level* and has received many honors and awards for his contributions in the fields of management, leadership, and speaking.

#### **Rebecca DuFour, M.Ed.**

Ms. DuFour has served as a teacher and school administrator, helping her school earn state and national recognition as a model professional learning community. She is the lead consultant and featured principal in the *Video Journal of Education* program, “Elementary Principals as Leaders of Learning.”

#### **Richard DuFour, Ed.D.**

Dr. DuFour was a public school educator for 34 years, serving as a teacher, principal, and superintendent. He was principal of Adlai E. Stevenson High School in Lincolnshire, Illinois, from 1983 to 1991, and he also served as superintendent of the district from 1991 to 2001. During his tenure, Stevenson earned praise from the United States Department of Education (USDE) for being one of “the most recognized and celebrated schools in America,” and has been referenced as an example of best-practices in education. Dr. DuFour is the author of 75 professional articles, and he wrote a column for *The Journal of Staff Development* for nearly a decade.

#### **Robert Eaker, Ed.D.**

Dr. Eaker is a professor in the Department of Educational Leadership at Middle Tennessee State University, where he also served as dean of the College of Education and interim vice president and provost. He has written widely on the issues of effective teaching, effective schools, helping teachers use research findings, and high expectations for student achievement. He was cited by *Phi Delta Kappan* as one of the nation’s leaders in helping public school educators translate research into practice.

**Robert Marzano, Ph.D.**

Dr. Marzano is the cofounder and CEO of Marzano Research Laboratory in Englewood, Colorado. He is a leading education researcher and author of more than 30 books and 150 articles on topics such as instruction, assessment, writing and implementing standards, cognition, effective leadership and school intervention. His books include *Designing & Teaching Learning Goals & Objectives*, *District Leadership That Works*, and *Formative Assessment & Standards-Based Grading*.

**Peter Mortimore, OBE**

Dr. Mortimore is a professor at the University of Southern Denmark and a teacher, researcher and the former director of the Institute of Education at the University of London. He has served as the president of the British Educational Research Association and has co-authored a number of books, including *Fifteen Thousand Hours*, *School Matters*, and *The Culture of Change*.

**Pamela Sammons, Ph.D., HEA**

Dr. Sammons is a professor in the Department of Education at the University of Oxford. From 2004-2009 she was a Professor of Education at the University of Nottingham and a member of the Teacher and Leadership Research Centre (TLRC) there. Dr. Sammons has been involved in educational research for the last 30 years with a special focus on the topics of school effectiveness and improvement, leadership and equity in education. She has a particular interest in the evaluation of education policy initiatives, including both formative and summative approaches to assessment.

**Mike Schmoker, Ed.D.**

Dr. Schmoker has worked on school and district improvement, assessment, curriculum and staff development as a central office administrator in two school districts in Arizona and as a senior consultant at McREL (Mid-Continent Regional Educational Laboratory) in Denver, Colorado. He is now an independent consultant who has written four books, including *Results Now: How We Can Achieve Unprecedented Improvements in Teaching and Learning*.

**Phillip Schlechty, Ph.D.**

Dr. Schlechty is founder and CEO of the not-for-profit Schlechty Center for Leadership in School Reform. Dr. Schlechty advises school districts throughout the United States, with a focus on helping them build capacity to support building-level changes. He has been the recipient of the American Federal of Teachers Quest Citation and the American Educational Research Association's Professional Service Award, in recognition of the innovative professional development programs he has developed for educators.

**Rick Stiggins, Ph.D.**

Dr. Rick Stiggins is the founder and CEO of the Assessment Training Institute (ATI), which specializes in maximizing student learning, confidence, and motivation by helping teachers and administrators meet the challenges of both classroom and standard assessment. Dr. Stiggins has authored dozens of articles and books that provide frameworks for teacher assessment expertise and assessment quality. Dr. Stiggins earned his doctorate in Educational Measurement from Michigan State University.

**Jesse Stoner, Ph.D.**

Dr. Stoner is an expert on vision and leadership. For over 20 years, Dr. Stoner has worked closely with leaders in a wide range of organizations to help them create a shared vision and ensure it is lived. Her most recent book, *Leading at a Higher Level: Blanchard on Leadership and Creating High-Performing Organizations*, was written with Ken Blanchard, co-founder of the The Ken Blanchard Companies. Dr. Stoner earned her advanced degrees in psychology and a doctorate in organization development from the University of Massachusetts.