



**River Valley School District
2018-2023
Strategic Plan Summary Document**

The Mission of River Valley School District is to...

Provide a Quality Education for all students.





Letter from Board President and Superintendent

River Valley School District 2018-2023 Strategic Plan: Participants Help Shape the Vision and Goals for the Future of River Valley School District.

This document contains the 2018-2023 River Valley School District Strategic Plan. We're excited about this plan and the possibilities it provides for our students, parents/guardians and community to improve education at River Valley School District.

420 community, parent/guardian and staff forums and an electronic survey resulted in **21** people providing input for the planning process. A Strategic Planning Team of 28 community members, parents/guardians, staff and students participated in an all-day planning retreat on October 27, 2018.

Throughout the planning process the community expressed high expectations of River Valley School District becoming a world class school district and having all students graduate from high school. Even though some of the goals are extremely high, they reflect the strong desire that has been expressed to embrace significant change and dramatically improve the school system.

There were several clear and consistent themes that emerged from this process.

1. While much more work needs to be done; River Valley School District is headed in the right direction with positive momentum behind the academic growth, instruction reforms and innovative new school choices .
2. The future of growth and success of River Valley School District must be a top community priority that requires support from all stakeholders (students, parents/guardians, taxpayers, businesses, non-profits, foundations, government agencies, etc.).
3. As a district, we must do a better job of positively engaging and aligning internal (students, parents/guardians, staff and the school board) and external (taxpayers, community organizations, businesses, non-profits, government agencies, elected officials) stakeholders around common goals and strategies to significantly improve academic achievement and high school graduation rates.

Our Strategic Planning Team, comprised of a very broad and diverse group of 28 stakeholders, developed the goals. We look forward to continuing to work in partnership with all sectors of our community to implement these goals and suggested strategies.

Jack Pawlik, President of the Board

Will Kearney, Superintendent





Introduction

Strategic Planning is the process of determining what an organization wants to be at some point in the future, and how it will get there. In the current environment where schools are challenged to do more with scarce resources, planning for the future is more important than ever. An effective strategic planning process results in stakeholders focusing on critical priorities that will meet the mission of a quality educational program for all students.

In April 2018, the River Valley School District Superintendent and the Board of Education made a commitment to create a three to five-year strategic plan. The School Board created a partnership with the Michigan Association of School Boards to serve as facilitators for this project. The district, under the leadership of the School Board President and Superintendent, completed a process that was data-driven, inclusive of district stakeholders and focused on the priorities that will help the district succeed.

There were several criteria relative to the strategic planning process established by the School Board and the leadership team:

- The process must be inclusive where all stakeholders have an opportunity to provide structured input.
- The School Board must be an integral part of the process—providing input, support and commitment.
- There must be clarity in the respective roles of the School Board, administrators, staff, parents/guardians and community.
- There is alignment between the strategic planning process and current strategic initiatives, and critical issues facing the district.
- Timelines, responsibilities and reporting schedules must be built into the planning processes.
- There must be ongoing communication about the planning process with all internal and external stakeholders.

This strategic plan is a living document. It will serve as a ‘road map’ to future planning, resource allocation, staff development and decision-making over the next several years.

As part of the planning process, the vision, mission statement, and belief statements were developed. Based on qualitative and quantitative data and a new vision, mission and belief statements; strategic goals and objectives were developed. Regular monitoring of progress and renewal is critical to the plan’s success.





The Strategic Plan Process

This overview describes the planning process, including the survey, data analysis, planning team roles and responsibilities, and timelines.

Stakeholder Input

Input from students, parents/guardians, community and staff were gathered through a comprehensive electronic survey as well as a series of community, student and staff forums. The community engagement process was conducted to:

- Identify and assess strengths
- Gauge values and perceptions of the community
- Provide an opportunity for input
- Identify areas for improvement
- Gather data to use as a decision making tool
- Develop communication plans and tools

The response rate of 406 indicates that the school community cares about the future of the district and desires to engage in the process of creating the future (see Attachment 1 for summary).





Local Area and School Demographic Data

An analysis of district demographics and quantitative data was completed. The analysis included demographic, enrollment, educational, financial and personnel trends over the previous five years, 2008-2016, as applicable, in comparison with districts selected by the Board and Administration and state averages, where available (see Attachment 2 for the data analysis summary). The reference districts used for River Valley School District were Decatur, Gobles and Lawrence Public Schools, Marcellus Community Schools and New Buffalo Area School District.

Strategic Planning Team

A Strategic Planning Team was formed to take a primary role in developing the strategic plan. The team consisting of 28 parents/ guardians, community members, board members, students and staff members, were selected with input from the Board of Education and key stakeholder groups. The team participated in a retreat workshop as well as additional committee meetings to develop a mission statement, vision, beliefs, and strategic goals. During the retreat the team reviewed and discussed relevant quantitative and qualitative data as essential elements in the formation of goals and objectives contained in this document (see team members on page 5).

Collaborating with the River Valley School District Board of Education, administration, staff and the entire community really illustrated their level of care for the school, the community, and most of all, the students.

—Jack Temsey, MASB Facilitator





Strategic Planning Team Members

Administration

Heidi Clark*, Jim Wiseley, Pat Breen*, Patrick Zuccala*, Will Kearney*

Board Members

Dave Whitlow, Mike Ehlert, Phil Bender

Community Members

Cheryl Kersey, Darlene Heemstra, Larry Shawver, Marian Prince, Rich Zeiger

Parents

Erin Pryzbylinski, Jen Rudolph, Rodney Carnahan

Staff

Rebecca Shriber, Jeanne Carter, Joy Ackerman, Mary Casteel, Matt Cook, Rose Montie, Stacey Vetter, Terry Bronson

Students

Hailey Hauch

*denotes attendance at Implementation Workshop





Retreat Workshop

A retreat workshop was held on October 27, 2018. The workshop covered included:

- An overview of the strategic planning process and timelines
- Superintendent report of current and planned initiatives
- An analysis of demographic, quantitative and qualitative data
- A review and renewal of the vision, mission and belief statements
- The establishment of strategic goal areas and key objectives
- Assignment of planning team leaders to develop action plans for each goal and objective, including responsibilities, timelines and measurements

River Valley School District 2018-2023 Strategic Plan Vision Statement:

Describes what you want to happen in the long term. It's a statement about your hopes and expectations for the future. The vision statement below was validated during the Strategic Planning Team Retreat Workshop:

The Vision of River Valley School District is....

All River Valley Students will demonstrate P.R.I.D.E.





Mission Statement:

Establishes, in the broadest terms, the purpose of a school district. It should answer the question “What ultimate end will the district pursue and in the broadest sense, how?” The following mission statement was renewed during the Strategic Planning Team Retreat Workshop: Provide a Quality Education for all students.

The vision of River Valley School District is ... All River Valley Students will demonstrate P.R.I.D.E.

Beliefs: The basic beliefs/core values of the district—those things that we believe of utmost importance, providing guidance for how we behave and relate to others. The following beliefs were developed during the Strategic Planning Team Retreat Workshop:

We Believe:

- Do Our Best
- Care For Others
- Love Our School

Preparation
Respect
Integrity
Dependability
Effort





2018-2023 Strategic Goals

Strategic Goals: Areas of priority importance in which the district will focus their work (1-5 years). Strategic goals achieve the organization's vision, mission and beliefs. Objectives are SMART—**S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**chievable, **R**elevant and **T**imely

The Strategic Planning Team, at the October 27, 2018 retreat, developed goal statements and specific objectives. The goal areas are categorized below:

2018-2023 Goals

- Learning Environment/Culture
- Academics/Programs
- Operations
- Personnel/Leadership
- Communications/Community Involvement





Following the retreat, administrators were charged with developing specific objectives based on strategic goal areas identified by the team.

Goal Area 1: Academics

Strategic Goal Statement:

We will engage all learners by expanding programs for every student.

Priority Objectives:

- ✓ Expand CTE
- ✓ Interventions for Math & low achievers
- ✓ Expand STEM/STEAM
- ✓ Mentor Programs
- ✓ Advanced Math Offerings
- ✓ Stronger ESL
- ✓ Continue ELA Programs
- ✓ Improve Standardized Test Scores





Goal Area 2: Communications & Engagement

Strategic Goal Statement:

Focus on communication to improve the visibility of extra-curricular programs as a means to increase community pride.

Priority Objectives:

- ✓ Athletics
- ✓ Overtime
- ✓ Career Week
- ✓ Social Media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Remind)
- ✓ PTO
- ✓ SIT
- ✓ Weekly Teacher newsletters





Goal Area 3: Learning Environment & Culture

Strategic Goal Statement:

Foster a diverse learning environment that supports healthy living, family involvement and social/emotional needs.

Priority Objectives:

- ✓ Whole Child- Physical & Emotional Wellness, Support, Arts
- ✓ Parent Involvement
- ✓ Celebrate Diversity- both in academics & culture
- ✓ Provide global connections between/for students, broaden horizons
- ✓ Continued technology growth
- ✓ Love
- ✓ Student responsibility in learning- jobs, input





Goal Area 4: Operations

Strategic Goal Statement:

Ensure that district facilities are properly maintained and upgraded as funding permits.

Priority Objectives:

- ✓ Upgrade Facilities
- ✓ Improve maintenance of Facilities and Grounds
- ✓ Climate control
- ✓ Improve bus route times
- ✓ Increase bus route supervision
- ✓ Facilities for CTE programs
- ✓ Maintain fiscal responsibility
- ✓ Increase technology support
- ✓ Increase access and transportation to Trade programs





Goal Area 5: Personnel & Leadership

Strategic Goal Statement:

Develop a climate and culture that fosters (pay for continuing education, increase trainings led) staff retention, where the Administration listens to and supports continuous education for all staff.

Priority Objectives:

- ✓ Focus on Teacher retention
- ✓ Encourage staff continued ed
- ✓ Administration continue to listen to support staff
- ✓ Succession plan for personnel replacement
- ✓ Plan for more staff involvement
- ✓ Continue staff leadership opportunities





Strategic Plan Implementation

The implementation plan will be developed collaboratively by the superintendent and key staff members. Alignment with current school improvement plans will be an integral part of the implementation plan. The district priority goals/objectives identified during the strategic planning retreat will be translated into action plans with measurements, timelines, responsibilities and a board monitoring calendar.

Recommendations for keeping the momentum of the process are the following:

1. Finalize Goals/Objectives/Action plan
 - Measurements
 - Timeline
 - Responsibility
 - Resources
2. Develop reporting/board monitoring calendar
3. Develop communication plan
 - Community
 - Staff
4. Schedule Mid-year progress report
5. Schedule Annual Plan update





STRENGTHS

ACADEMICS/PROGRAMS

- Students willing to learn
- AP Classes & College Credit
- Curriculum

CULTURE/LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

- Small
- 1 to 1 student to devices
- Student Pride

**COMMUNICATIONS/
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

- Sports
- Community outreach
- Communication strategies

LEADERSHIP

- Collaborative
- Great Teaching Staff
- All Staff Student Focused

OPERATIONS

- Fiscally Responsible
- Visionary
- Technology





OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT

ACADEMICS/PROGRAMS

- Increasing academic opportunities
- STEM & Trades
- Club, language and sport varieties

CULTURE/LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

- Wait time on bus routes
- Temperature
- Buildings

COMMUNICATIONS/ COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- Engaging All Facets of Community
- Improving Public Perception
- Increased community involvement

LEADERSHIP

- Attracting varied Talent
- Staff needs
- Less Staff Doing More

OPERATIONS

- Buildings
- Busses
- Technology
- Air Conditioning





BARRIERS

ACADEMICS/PROGRAMS

- Declining Enrollment
- Course offerings
- Technology

CULTURE/LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

- Fractured Relationships
- Buildings
- Home life

**COMMUNICATIONS/
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

- Negativity
- Perception of Low Standards
- Inconsistent Communication

LEADERSHIP

- Staff Shortages
- Time
- Balance

OPERATIONS

- Funding
- Geographic size of district
- Lack of Support for Bond





VISION

ACADEMICS/PROGRAMS

- Programs Meeting the Needs of Every Student
- Preparedness for the Real World
- Improved Test Scores

COMMUNICATIONS/ COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- Community involvement
- Common message
- Hub of Community

CULTURE/LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

- Positive Relations among Staff
- School Pride among Students
- The School of Choice

LEADERSHIP

- Staffing needs met
- Attracting and Retaining the Best Staff
- Common Focus

OPERATIONS

- New facilities
- Fixed bussing route
- Technology





Data Driven Strategic Planning: River Valley School District

Based on analysis of data in this report, the following points are highlighted regarding the River Valley School District:

In general, the data revealed that when compared to state averages, about two-thirds of the grade level scores referenced here were below the state average while about one-third exceeded the state average. In all subjects, students performed on average comparably to peers from the reference districts.

Demographics

- Approximately 36.5% of residents attended some college or earned an Associate's Degree. In addition, 17.2% of River Valley citizens have an Bachelor's degree or higher. (B-1, B-2)
- The percentage of pre-school aged children attending private pre-school ranked 5th among the reference districts at 24%, it is 8.1% lower than the state average. The percentage of district-resident children enrolled in River Valley K-12 ranked 3rd among the referenced districts, and exceeded the state average by 3.9% points. (B-3)
- The district's 2016 mean household income is the 2nd highest of the reference districts and is approximately \$1,329 below the state mean. (B-4)
- Enrollment at River Valley has decreased over the past five years from 613 students in 2013 to 577 students in 2017; a net loss of 36 students. (B-5, B-6)
- River Valley has 387 students who choose to attend either other districts or charter schools. Brigman Public Schools (115), Buchanan Community Schools (102), and New Buffalo Area Schools (80) enroll the greatest number of resident River Valley students. There are 33 Schools of Choice students enrolled in River Valley. Buchanan Community Schools (15), Brigman Public Schools (6) and Niles Community Schools (5) have the greatest number of their resident children enrolled in River Valley. (B-7, B-8)
- The loss of students to Schools of Choice has increased by 80 students over the last five years. During the same time, River Valley lost 47 students via Choice. (B-9)
- The percentage of the River Valley students eligible for lunch assistance in 2017 ranked 4th among the reference districts, but above the statewide average by 9.7%. Free and reduced student lunch eligibility has risen .7% above where it was in 2013, after taking drops in 2014 & 2015, then rising again in 2016 & again in 2017; resulting in 55.4% of 2017 River Valley students qualifying for lunch assistance. (B-10, B-11)





Demographics – Cont'd

- The district's 2016 cohort graduation rate of 68.29% was below the statewide average by 11.36% points ranking it 6th among the reference districts. (B-12)
- River Valley's graduation rate has decreased steadily from 2012 to 2014, with a 15.75% increase in 2015 and a decrease of 13.53% in 2016. This shows a drop of 5.78%, meanwhile the State average graduation rate has increased by 3.22%. (B-13)
- For the class of 2011, River Valley's enrollment in college rate was 56.41%. However, after a five year period only 23.07% earned a qualifying certificate or degree. (B-14, B-15)
- The demographics of the district's student population has seen little change in the past 5 years. The 2017 demographic data is as follows: 88.73% White, 5.03% Hispanic, 4.16% Multiracial, .52% Asian, .69% American Indian, .87% African American, and 0% Native Hawaiian. (B-16 – B-17)
- River Valley student's chronic absence rate ranked 4th among the reference districts, and is 3% better than the state average. Over the past 5 years, it has dropped by 17.9%. (B-18 , B-19)

Academic Performance

- 2013 MEAP Reading-River Valley students' exceeded the state average at the 5th, 6th and 8th grade levels.
- 2014 MME Reading-River Valley students scored .7% below the state average.
- 2017 M-STEP ELA (English Language Arts)-River Valley 3rd, 5th and 7th grade students exceeded the state average while 4th, 6th and 8th grade students scored below the state average. (C-2, C-6, C-11, C-16, C-20, C-25)
- 2017 MME EBRW (Evidence Based Reading and Writing (SAT)-River Valley students scored .3% below the state average. (C-33)
- 2013 MEAP Mathematics-River Valley students' exceeded the state average at the 6th grade, but were below the state average at grades 3,4, 5, 7 and 8.
- 2014 MME Mathematics-River Valley students scored 14.3% below the state average and had the lowest scores among the reference districts.
- 2017 M-STEP Mathematics-River Valley 5th graders exceeded the state average while 3rd, 4th, 6th, 7th, and 8th graders were below average. (C-1, C-5, C-10, C-15, C-19, C-24)



**Academic Performance – Cont'd**

- 2017 MME Mathematics-River Valley ' 11th graders tested 6.8% below the state average but ranked 4th highest among the reference districts. (C-32)
- 2013 MEAP Writing-River Valley ' 4th grade scores were slightly below the state average by .5%, while 7th grade scores fell below the state average by 11.5%. Compared to reference districts, River Valley's 4th and 7th grades both ranked 2nd lowest.
- 2013 MEAP Science-River Valley's 5th graders scored .5% above the state average while 8th graders fell below the state average by 6.2%. While 5th grade ranked 2nd highest, 8th grade ranked 2nd lowest among the reference districts.
- 2014 MME Science-River Valley's 11th graders tested 7.9% above the state average and were third highest among the reference districts.
- 2017 M-STEP Science-River Valley's 4th grade fell below the state average and 7th graders scored above state average. Although the 4th grade scores were lowest among the reference districts, 7th grade scores were the highest. (C-7, C-21)
- 2017 MME Science-River Valley's 11th grade scores fell below the state average by .4% and were the third highest scores among the reference districts. (C-30)
- 2013 MEAP Social Studies-River Valley's 6th grade scores were 4.3% above state average and 9th grade scores exceeded the state average by 8.6%. 6th grade scores were 3rd highest among the reference districts while 9th grade scores were the highest.
- 2014 MME Social Studies River Valley's 11th graders were 7.7% above the state average and were the 3rd highest among the reference districts.
- 2017 M-STEP Social Studies-River Valley's 5th graders scores 7.9% below the state average and 8th graders scored 11.4% below the state average and were the lowest among the reference districts. (C-12, C-26)
- 2017 MME Social Studies-River Valley's 11th graders exceeded the state average by .1% and had the 4th highest scores among the reference districts. (C-29)
- 2014 MME ACT-River Valley's 11th graders scored 19.5 which is .3% below the state average and 3rd highest among the reference districts.
- 2017 College Readiness-31.1% of River Valley's 11th graders were deemed college ready. This was 3.8% below the state average, and third highest among the reference districts. (C-34)
- Dual enrollment has steadily decreased since 2013. At 59 students in 2017, this represents a decrease in 52 students. (C-41)



**Finance and Personnel**

- River Valley has had the cycle of increasing and decreasing its instructional spending over the last five years, resulting in a net increase of \$1,222. At \$8,092 per student it ranks 2nd among the reference districts and is also above the state average of \$6,231, by \$1,861. (D-1, D-2)
- Only one of the five reference districts spends more on instructional support than River Valley. At \$1,290 per student, the district's spending is also above the state average of \$1,010 per student. Over the past 5 years, the district has increased spending by \$561. (D-3, D-4)
- Business and administration spending has taken a cycle of increasing from 2013-2015 and decreasing since, for a total increase of \$678. Spending is \$1,079 above the state average and also ranks 2nd among the reference districts. (D-5, D-6)
- General fund expenditures at \$14,132 per student ranks 2nd among the reference districts, and well above the state average of \$9,864, by \$4,268. Expenditures have increased over the last 4 of 5 years, with just a slight decrease of \$89 from 2016 to 2017. (D-7, D-8)
- River Valley's Fund Balance has increased the last four years, since taking a dip from 2013 to 2014. (D-9, D-10)
- The potential revenue per millage of property tax levied in River Valley in 2017 was the highest of the reference districts for homestead and 2nd for non-homestead properties. The district's homestead tax surpassed the state average by \$414,745 and the non-homestead by \$657,329. (D-11)
- In the last 5 years, general fund expenditures have exceeded revenues. Although, the disparity has decreased drastically since 2014. (D-12, D-13)
- River Valley's 2017 Foundation Allowance of \$7,752 is only surpassed by one district, whereas the other four are equal at \$7,511. The district has received small increases the last five years, which equates to an average of a 1.01% increase annually. (D-14, D-15)
- River Valley's cumulative student loss of 113 students since 2013 has resulted in a loss of revenue in the amount of \$839,713. (D-16)
- Only one of the comparative districts have a lower student-teacher ratio than Hastings. The district's student-teacher ratio is lower than the state average of 23 and has remained similar for the past five years. (E-1, E-2)
- At \$52,782 River Valley's 2017 average teacher salary has slightly increased as compared to their average teacher salary in 2013, by 1.14%. The average teacher salary ranks third among the reference districts, but below the 2017 state average salary by \$9,498 (E-3, E-4)





Finance and Personnel – Cont'd

- 65.9% of River Valleys' teachers have a Master's degree or higher. (E-5)
- Over half of River Valleys' teachers have been with the district six years or longer. (E-6)

Submitted: June 10, 2018





The Wave | In the arena of education, what are incoming and outgoing trends, ideas, practices, paradigms, etc.?

EMERGING

Proficiencies- Essential reporting standards		whole child
Whys of behavior- restorative justice- relationship building		STEM
Data-Driven Decision Making	Project-based learning	Teacher Evaluation
Vocational Training/Voc Ed	Second language support	global community
developing critical thinking citizens	wellness	differentiated instruction
teachers are now facilitators	focus on ability not grade level	integrated instruction
standards based grading	trauma informed instruction	High stakes testing
more child focused	need to look to the future	change is the constant
dedication to student learning	social-emotional focus	individualized instruction
inclusivity of teachers (better balance of male/female)		meeting the social needs of
families/students	focus on literacy	school security

ON THE HORIZON

Less emphasis on testing- colleges not requiring
Whole Student Focus





ESTABLISHED

Use of Technology	Cooperative learning	Growth Mindset
Diversion of public funds for private schools		Virtual
decisions based on data	working to meet social & economic needs of students	
Collaboration	public school bashing	technology
teachers are: nurses, mothers/fathers, refs, social workers		Schools of choice
academic expectations higher at younger ages		schools are staffed differently
pressure from charter schools		higher levels of accountability
speech and language needs skyrocketing		human relationships
data driven test scores- testing- high stakes testing		family engagement

DISAPPEARING

limited resources	Parental support and accountability	chalkboards
parent involvement	traditional classrooms	funding
one size fits all plans	school identities	Vocational Education





Academic Performance

Aligned Curriculum

Focus on Student success

6th Grade- Reading trend data

7th Grade- Reading, Science

11th Grade- Social Studies

District- Social Studies & Science

Gap between testing and Teaching

Bad tests

Different test --→moving target

Cohort data

Math, district-wide needs attention





Enrollment and Demographics

Enrollment

Demographics

Finance

Fund balance

Operating within means

Pay for personnel





Personnel

High Teacher retention rate

Need for Teacher recruitment coming

Need to improve competitive wage while maintaining budget constraints





Student Achievement

- Expand CTE
- Math & Low Achiever interventions
- Expand STEM/STEAM
- Mentor programs
- Advanced Math offerings
- Stronger ESL
- Continue ELA programs
- Improve standardized test scores

Professional Development

- Focus on Teacher retention
- Encourage staff continued ed
- Administration continue to listen to support staff
- Succession plan for personnel replacement
- Plan for more staff involvement
- Continue staff leadership opportunities





Communication/Community Engagement/Marketing

- Athletics
- Overtime
- Career Week
- Social Media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram) Remind
- PTO
- SIT
- Weekly Teacher newsletters

Learning Environment/Culture

- Whole Child- Physical & Emotional wellness, support, arts
- Parent Involvement
- Celebrate Diversity- both in academics & culture
- Provide global connections between/for students, broaden horizons
- Continued technology growth
- Love
- Student responsibility in learning- jobs, input





Financial

Maintain Fiscal Responsibility

Facilities

- Upgrade facilities
- Improve maintenance of facilities and grounds
- Climate control
- Improved bus route times
- Increase bus route supervision
- Facilities for CTE programs
- Increase access and transportation to trade programs





Technology

Increase Technology support





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