



Strategic Visioning for a Dynamic Future: Implications for Regional School District 13 Utilization Planning Report to the Board of Education

November 14, 2018

DRAFT

THE NEED:

Regional School District 13 Board of Education has been involved for several years in decision-making regarding the impact of declining enrollment. In 2015, the decision was made to relocate staff and students at the Francis E. Korn Elementary School to Brewster Elementary School and Memorial Middle School as a first step toward more responsible building usage. The steady and continued enrollment decline and other relevant history resulted in the decision to close an additional school (see Appendix A for a fuller history of the issue). Based on engineering studies by Drummey, Rosane, and Anderson, Silver Petrucelli and Associates, and in-district expertise, John Lyman Elementary School was selected as the next school to close (Appendix B). With this decision was the need to determine grade level reconfiguration accompanied by decisions about how best to accommodate students Brewster and Memorial Schools.

THE PROPOSALS: Considered by the Utilization Committee and the Board of Education

- A. Renovate as new Brewster Elementary School and Memorial Middle School to accommodate two elementary schools, Pre-K-5 and K-5, and renovate Strong Middle School to accommodate grades 6-8. Cost estimated at \$52.3 million; \$30.7 million to the district after state reimbursement.
- B. Renovate as new Brewster Elementary School and Memorial Middle School to accommodate Pre-K-6 and K-6 at an estimated cost of \$56.6 million; cost to the district of \$31.5 million.
- C. Use the Korn School site for a Pre-K-5 district-wide school, with an estimated cost of at \$42.7 million; cost to the district of \$23.9 million.
- D. Additional variations: close John Lyman School and alter (not renovate) Brewster and Memorial Schools (to lessen the financial burden), with Pre-K-2 at Brewster and 3-5 at Memorial with an estimated cost of \$2 million; or two Pre-K-5 and K-5 configurations at Brewster and Memorial at an estimated cost of \$5.7 million.

THE CHARGE: Consider public engagement, program design, and choice

- A. **Engagement.** The Board of Education hosted a community information and a community engagement session to share and gather information from the public, and the administration facilitated a Strategic Visioning Team process to gather information from staff, students, parents, and community members in order to create an educational vision of the future for District 13 students. The Utilization Committee requested

information from the superintendent regarding the strategic visioning team's suggestions before bringing a recommendation to the full Board of Education for a final decision about the grade reconfiguration in December 2018.

- B. **Program Design.** The John Lyman School program features an Integrated Day (ID) approach along with a Higher Order Thinking (HOT) School model, which include a constructivist approach to learning as well as strong arts and arts integration in the curriculum. Democratic practices and student leadership are defining features of the HOT school model -- present, visible, and celebrated by staff, students, parents, and the community (Appendix C).
- C. **Choice.** The district has offered parents the choice of attending Brewster or Lyman Elementary Schools for the Contemporary or ID program; and program choice extends to grade 8. The Contemporary program is an educational approach that is not defined by an educational approach that is aligned to a particular philosophy or framework. Choice has been discussed at length by some parents, staff and former students who believe that option of choice is a positive and unique characteristic of the district, while others see choice as having an unintended consequence of competition that persists through high school. This topic was last reviewed comprehensively in a 2007 study by the New England Schools Development Council with recommendations for program choice modifications (Appendix D). Their report along with recent student achievement data, without the benefit of cohort analysis, does not indicate a significant difference in trend data between programs at the elementary level (Appendix E).

THE PROCESS:

The Strategic Visioning team (see Appendix F for membership) used a variety of protocols to gather information, using an asset model to identify the strengths of the district and as a starting point for identifying and planning for meeting the needs of the district (see Appendix G for a fuller description of the process). Teachers, students, parents, and community members gave feedback, which was organized into priority themes (Appendix H) and design elements (Appendix I) to be used as a guide in decision-making. Four "Theme Sets" were identified to define existing or desired student learning outcomes and experiences:

- Connection, Collaboration and Contribution
- Voice, Choice and Impact
- Innovation, Creativity and Movement
- Observation, Inquiry and Awareness

Design elements were aligned with the priority themes, such as establishing an integrated curriculum model in grades K-8; using a project-based learning model for all students; continuing multi-age and looping options; continuing the assembly program, continuation of an RSD 13-created "HOT" model including democratic practices and embedded student leadership Pre-K – 12; master schedules designed for student choice and presentation/performance; and daily movement including outdoor learning, play, and discovery. In addition, school building alterations including more natural light, open areas for collaboration, mindfulness spaces, and outdoor learning spaces were some of the suggested accommodations (Appendix I).

OUTCOMES OF THE PROCESS:

The Strategic Visioning Team agreed that regardless of the ultimate grade level configuration, a district-wide approach that integrated the themes and design elements in a developmentally appropriate manner from Pre-K through grade 12 was a priority. The team was not able to reach consensus regarding one grade level configuration as more likely to support the identified themes and design elements, although all team members were able to share their perspective on the two grade configuration options.

Assets of the one track design (all students attending the same schools throughout their education in RSD 13) were noted: establishment of early childhood and intermediate schools which address developmental needs of children; resources to support staff expertise targeted to the developmental needs of children; enhanced grade-level expertise and collaboration; possibilities for multi-age and single-age options within the same building; curriculum alignment by school as designed by Common Core State Standards and Next Generation Science Standards; reduction in competition between programs/schools; enhanced student, staff, parent, and community connections; and responsiveness to high school students' desire to be with more grade-based peers at an early point in their school experience.

Assets of the two Pre-K-5 and K-5 configuration were also noted: possibilities for multi-age and single-age options within the same building; building lasting relationships; assemblies with upper grade role models; a wider span of ages creating a richer learning environment; a six year connection with peers, teachers, and the building; a greater likelihood of siblings in the same school, and sustained parent involvement over a six year grade span.

The primary concerns for the one-track design included the total number of building transitions, the absence of older role models, and the impact of fewer consecutive years on potential parent involvement and community building. The primary concerns cited for the two elementary school design included dividing the communities by geographic boundaries and potentially re-creating a system that perpetuates competition.

TIMELINE AND NEXT STEPS:

The suggested timeline for implementation for a new grade level configuration and associated building alterations is 2021-2022 at the earliest, with a two-year timeframe for planning and preparation for implementation. School-based design teams would work together to further refine the curricular design, instructional approaches, master schedule, staffing, and implementation plan. District-wide work with the Center for School Change is recommended in order to complete "The Vision of the Graduate" process to framework our approach and commitment from Pre-K-12. While out-of-district expertise would be utilized, significant in-house specialization exists, and the option of allowing teams of teachers and staff to be relieved of current responsibilities in some fashion in order to dedicate time to the development of a dynamic educational experience for students and staff is a priority.

Appendix A: Relevant History

Regional School District 13, similar to many other school districts in Connecticut, has experienced declining enrollment. In 2013, the significance of the decline led the Board of Education to enlist the services of Drummey Roseanne and Anderson (DRA) to assist them in understanding short and long term enrollment projections and their impact on building capacity and needs. The study included enrollment projections that were originally generated and later updated by Milone and MacBroom. Actual enrollment data show a decrease over a ten year period from the 2001-2002 school year of 2,086 students to the 2011-2012 school year of 1,982. Enrollment changes in the following ten year period from 2012-2013 to 2022- 2023 school year indicate a projected decrease from 1,953 students to 1,463 students. Enrollment predictions for the current 2018-2019 school year are 1629 students with the current enrollment at of October 1, 2018 at 1587 students. The most recent enrollment projections include enrollment through 2026-2027 of 1,403 students.

The Board of Education and the school administration agreed that in order to maximize resources that most directly impact students experience and student learning, redundant building space should be eliminated.

After careful consideration, the Korn School building was closed at the end of the 2015-2016 school year. Rising third graders began fourth grade at Memorial School and rising second graders remained at Brewster School. This configuration was decided upon due to two factors: available space and the projected next phase of grade reconfiguration. At the time, although not formally voted upon or approved by the public via referendum, the Board intended to move forward with a two elementary school design with Memorial School accommodating students in grades K-5 and Brewster School accommodating students in grades Pre-K-5. The sixth grade was slated to be moved to Strong Middle School due to available space and the developmental and academic benefits of a grade 6 through grade 8 middle school configuration.

The projected costs for building renovations associated with the grade reconfigurations ranged from \$23 M to \$42 M. At the beginning of the 2017-2018 school year, the Board of Education, in concert with administration, determined that the scope and associated costs of the intended project were unlikely to be supported by the community because of experienced and anticipated decreases in state funding, uncertainty regarding state reimbursement levels for building projects, anticipated town projects in particular in the town of Durham, and the general tax burden for Durham and Middlefield residents.

Appendix B: Lyman School Building

All plans exclude the John Lyman School building as a potential building site for the future. Based upon a comprehensive review of all buildings, existing property, mechanical systems, proximity to other schools, existing limitations ie. Brewster School deed, it was determined that this building was the least viable of the three schools (Brewster Elementary School, John Lyman School and Memorial Middle School) to be maintained for the foreseeable future. This decision was made based upon the following facts:

- Memorial School is 16,062 square feet larger than John Lyman thus requiring an additional 4,000 square feet (rather than 20,000 square feet at Lyman)
- Memorial School has a larger kitchen and has a cafeteria that is separate from the gym/stage area
- Lyman School's cafeteria, gym and stage area are in one room.
- Lyman has 4 portables, while Memorial has 2.
- The land available at Memorial School allows for ease of expansion both for building and parking lot purposes.
- Both schools have capital and critical system needs that are somewhat similar in scope at approximately \$4M per building.

Appendix C: John Lyman School Program: Integrated Day/Higher Order Thinking Program Design

The Integrated Day (ID) and Higher Order Thinking (HOT) School model at John Lyman School make it unique. The ID philosophy comprises a constructivist approach to student learning which features:

- students “making meaning” of their work and learning experiences and
- engendering student ownership and personal responsibility for their learning,
- providing choice within the curriculum,
- integration of the curriculum,
- project-based learning and inquiry as a key element in lesson design,
- the teacher as facilitator and
- the development of a community of learners within the classroom and school at-large

Some of the design elements of the ID model include:

- multi-age classrooms in grades 1 and 2 and in grades 3 and 4,
- project-based work that encourages student choice and exploration
- presentation of their work project or discoveries
- opportunities for “plan your work” time.

The Higher Order Thinking or HOT School model components include the following:

- strong arts, arts integration; arts are an essential facet of a child’s education
- artist in residence
- democratic practices: including student “voice” and leadership opportunities beyond the classroom in the following areas:
 - Weekly Assembly
 - ECHOs (Enhanced Curricular HOT Opportunities)
 - Literary and Art Student Boards
 - Nature Trail Committee
 - Gardening Committee
 - Tech Crew
 - Hello Chorus
 - Songwriting Committee
 - Yearbook Committee
 - Go Far Committee
 - Student Senate

Appendix D: 2007 New England School Development Council Study

The most recent comprehensive study that involved school choice was completed in 2007 by the New England School Development Council (NESDEC). This study was commissioned by the Board of Education to examine the two program design at the K-4 level and assist in future planning by reviewing factors associated with student success. Facility usage and staffing were also examined. Transportation costs were projected based on a change to a single non-choice design. The findings of the report included:

- Program choice has much support from educators, parents and community members.
- Teachers perceive that RSD 13 encourages and supports innovation as exemplified by program choice.
- There are many similarities at each grade level across the district, regardless of program.
- There is a need to better educate parents and community members about the operations and advantage of program choice.
- Program choice can be divisive among parents, community, students, and even staff especially during budget deliberations.
- There are concerns about competition between the programs, affecting children, parents and educators.
- In conjunction with concerns regarding the cost of education, concerns have arisen regarding transportation costs.

The primary outcomes of the study comprised four possible recommendations, including:

1. Have program selection begin after attendance at kindergarten neighborhood schools,
2. Introduce school choice rather than program choice,
3. Continue program choices at each school with choice made at the end of kindergarten,
4. Use the lessons learned from 35 years of offering both programs by implementing the best practices in all grades at all schools.

Appendix E: Student Performance Data

Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium
2014-2015 through 207-2018
Grade 3 and 4

English Language Arts: Grade 3 % Met or Exceeded

School	2014/2015	2015/2016	2016/2017	2017/2018
Korn/Brewster 3rd grade	62.7	54.5	55.6	73.8
Lyman 3rd grade	65.1	66.7	52.4	73.3

English Language Arts: Grade 4 % Met or Exceeded

School	2014/2015	2015/2016	2016/2017	2017/2018
Korn/Memorial 4th grade	61.1	63.5	65.9	62.7
Lyman 4th grade	77.4	74.0	62.9	58.1

Mathematics: Grade 3 % Met or Exceeded

School	2014/2015	2015/2016	2016/2017	2017/2018
Korn/Brewster 3rd grade	60	51	61.9	60
Lyman 3rd grade	63.6	66.7	57.1	71.1

Mathematics: Grade 4 % Met or Exceeded

School	2014/2015	2015/2016	2016/2017	2017/2018
Korn/Memorial 4th grade	58	54	62.2	61
Lyman 4th grade	62.9	62	65.9	62.8

**Graduation Rate and Post High School Plans
2014-2018**

Coginchaug Regional High School Graduation Rate and Plans								
Year	Class Size	Grad Rate	2 Yr College	4 Yr College	Career Ed	Military	Employment	Other
2018	126	100%	8%	78%	3%	1%	2%	8%
2017	144	99.30%	16%	68%	2%	2%	4%	8%
2016	144	99.30%	20%	69%	1%	2%	3%	5%
2015	143	100%	16%	73%	4%	2%	3%	2%
2014	137	97.80%	22%	66%	1%	1%	6%	4%

Appendix F: Strategic Visioning Team

- CRHS: Tim Fisher: Director of Bands; Matt Thompson: Career Center, History
- Strong Middle School: Amy Schaeffer: Art; Tina Hurlbert: Technology and Innovation
- Memorial Middle School: Maureen Hamilton: Grade 5/6 ID; Jennifer Keane: School Psychologist/Teacher's Union Co-President
- Memorial/Strong Middle School: Melinda Aronson-Bailey: Math Specialist
- John Lyman Elementary School: Sharon Berndt: Kindergarten; Amy Sorensen: Grade 3/4; Carrie Howes: Art
- Brewster Elementary School: Jessica Loffredo: Kindergarten; Jeff Bernabeo: Grade 2
- John Lyman/Brewster Elementary: Jenny Lussier: Library Media Specialist
- Central Office: Kathy Veronesi: Superintendent

Appendix G: Strategic Visioning Team Process

The team's charge was to make a suggestion about the best possible academic experience, including suggested grade level configurations, for our students as we move into the future. The work of the team was organized around an asset approach or asset model, an approach that can be used with individuals or institutions that involves the identification of existing skills or assets as a foundation for building towards a desired outcome. This approach differs from a deficit model that begins with the identification of absent or deficit skills or conditions that need to be addressed before, or as a method of, moving towards a desired outcome.

The asset approach was used throughout the process because it is characteristic of the Regional School District 13 community members individually and the community at-large collectively. Additionally, a protocol of "more of/less of" was used and can be seen in the discussion of the priority themes. These discussions generally focused on student experiences that either parents, students, and/or staff identified as either enhancing or detracting from a positive learning environment or learning experience. These discussion points and feedback caused the team to identify certain conditions or practices as one to continue as is, increase, decrease, or eliminate.

The process involved a variety of protocols used to gather information from staff members and students throughout the district as well as parents and community members. Open meetings were held in order for parents and community members to attend and work as a part of the group with district staff team members and Board of Education members in attendance. Other forums and methods were used to gather greater parent and community input including a Community Information session, a Community Engagement meeting, Board of Education meetings and the availability of direct communication with individual Board members and the superintendent.

The first meeting began with a question that the team addressed as a group and later gathered information from colleagues and students who addressing the same questions: What strengths exist in our district in terms of people, programs and places? Discussion protocols for staff, students and community members included a prompt that encouraged participants to "Dream Big" and openly discuss what they wished for. Community members and parents who chose to attend meetings and gave feedback on their child/ children's experience in school, and the history and evolution of the district. Ultimately the team organized the feedback gathered over the course of several months into themes within our strategic coherence goal areas: student achievement, well-being and engagement. After a high school focus group was facilitated by the superintendent, members of the team determined that it was important for them to gather information from a diverse group of students across the district.

Appendix H: Priority Themes

Connection, Collaboration, and Contribution

Connection is the theme that was cited most often and most passionately and intersected many other areas. The most frequent portrayal of a district asset was the connection between people. Listed as a significant strength was the connection that students experience with each other, with teachers and staff and with the community at-large. Staff members indicated the same experience, in particular noting that their enjoyment of working in the district is linked to their colleagues, often referred to as “friends” or “school family” whom they respect, work with and count on day to day. Staff members describe the students as unique in terms of their care and compassion for others, their interest in and commitment to learning and the communities of Durham and Middlefield. In addition to the concept of connection as it relates to relationships, there were other links that were noted as important including connections to the environment, curriculum connection in terms of authentic learning, connections to universities and colleges, and links to local, state and international peers and causes.

Collaboration was also discussed within the lens of what happens as a result of connection and that the greatest benefit is not simply being linked in some way but in using that link as an opportunity for action, a chance whether for a brief or extended period of time to work or collaborate together. Described was a phenomenon of the “whole being greater than the sum of its parts” or a sense of collective efficacy for students, staff and the community. In many ways people of all ages described being confident that they would be able to achieve a goal or make something beneficial happen for others by virtue of collaborating together on a shared endeavor. This was described at the classroom level with teams of students as young as kindergarten and as old as seniors in high school coming together in a purposeful yet somewhat organic way to accomplish something that could not be accomplished on their own.

Finally, linked to connection and collaboration was contribution. These three themes were linked and viewed in terms of the framework of connection, the action of collaboration that is created because of the connection and the result of that action being contribution. The sense of working on something for the “greater good” was common within the school environment and within the community at-large. Examples cited were the Community Round-Up, Go Far, PTA’s, Benchwarmers, Unified Sports, Lyman School Assembly, and the Durham Fair. Additionally, there were very personal examples shared of the school and town communities coming together to support individuals and families who had experienced great need or loss. All examples shared regarding positive contributions were examples that were the result of a collective effort rather than the act of a single person.

Voice, Choice and Impact

The theme of student voice was discussed within the context of many settings and was not isolated to the spoken voice. Student voice was discussed as expression in general and individuality that was unique, respected and celebrated and not restricted nor directed by rigid criteria or expectations. Voice was also discussed in terms of the individuality that is demonstrated through writing, art, athletics, and other forms of expression. The example most often cited was the assembly program at John Lyman School where students are responsible for planning and performing. While this format includes music and artistic displays, students, staff and parents highlighted the benefit of having the skill and confidence to have a public voice, to be able to speak in front of an audience. Noted as well were the choral and instrumental programs throughout the district, athletic programs, and more “hands-on” classes and opportunities such as outdoor education, innovation lab, woodworking; places where students could exercise and visibly demonstrate their individuality.

Choice was primarily centered on student learning and students being able to make a range of decisions including what to learn, how to learn, where to learn and work, how to demonstrate their knowledge, and what human and non-human resources to access in the process of learning and discovery. The act of being able to make a choice meant that those conditions had to exist either through lesson plan design, learning environment options, or subject matter. High school students noted the significant importance of choice in terms of who to spend time with both socially and academically, noting the absence of time with peers based on academic groupings. Middle school students expressed concern about the restriction of choice based on certain structures that prohibited them from being with peers. In particular was the change from lunch tables that seat twelve at Memorial Middle School to lunch tables that seat eight at Strong Middle School. Choice was also discussed within the context of school choice with many community members, staff and parents noting choice, primarily the option of choosing John Lyman School, as a distinct benefit of being a part of Regional School District 13. When students talked about their experience at John Lyman or Brewster School they did not describe it within the context of choice, they simply talked about fond memories and specific teachers that had a lasting impact on them. Students from Brewster most often talked about their connection to their teachers, while John Lyman students talked about specific memories of “Teddy Bear Land” (an outdoor recess areas) and assembly. Both talked about outdoor education experiences. Students more so than any other groups talked about the less positive and unintended consequence of choice namely competition. Students in high school discussed this openly and almost always followed this comment by stating a desire that they had been together as grade level peers at an earlier age to have more time to be together as friends. As one student commented, “I met him in high school and I could have known him since kindergarten.” Some parents and staff also identified competition among students, staff and parents as a downside of choice.

The concept of impact was discussed slightly differently than contribution in terms of a sense of “making something happen” individually or collectively. For example, student performers at the high school were noted as impacting the audience and the community through their individual and collective work whether through acting, singing, playing an instrument or artistic displays. Other examples including fundraising for local, national and international causes, being a member of EDGE and any effort that caused a change in people’s lives was seen as impact.

Innovation, Creativity, and Movement

The concept and act of innovation was raised primarily within the context of technology and STEAM as students at all levels are exposed to more unique problems and challenges and given more opportunities to solve these problems using unique and novel methods. Regional School District 13 students, not unlike students everywhere, are attracted to the puzzle or discovery of “how things work” and applying their understanding of various methods to think critically and build new understandings and models, whether those models are tangible or figurative. This was described in our Makerspace experiences at the elementary school, ECHOS and “plan your work” at John Lyman School, the Technology and Innovation Lab at Strong School, and primarily in science classes including Oceanography, and Physics at Cuginchaug. All were examples of process-oriented learning endeavors.

Creativity was expressed by students, parents and teachers alike as a critically important facet of a student’s learning experience. In particular in our district, student involvement in the visual and performing arts is an area of tremendous public pride, especially our music program at all levels, most notably at the high school. Students spoke enthusiastically about how they felt in

the libraries, music and art rooms and lab settings as places where they feel safe and engaged and not confined by space or furniture. Many students at the high school level talked about the importance of art and music in their lives as a place where they felt unique and connected to the school and in the case of music and musicals, to the community.

Movement was a significant topic that was shared and discussed from several perspectives. Most notably was the lack of movement in a student's day and the fact that although student learning does not require being stationary, much of a student's day is spent sitting. Clearly there was a relationship noted between the pressure teachers feel to make sure that various topics are "covered" and many student learning outcomes are met and students sitting more. Students reported "loving" gym and recess and simply being able to be outside to walk and talk with friends. One high school student noted, "Teachers don't understand the sheer joy we derive from being outside." For students with more unique physical and learning needs from Pre-K through grade 12, movement was seen as a critical step in learning and development. Recently, students and staff have benefited from yoga classes both as offered through physical education classes and as an after school activity.

In this theme set, creativity was discussed in terms of the creation of something tangible including a performance while innovation was seen not only in terms of a tangible outcome but by a way of thinking, a mindset of innovation. Both involve cognitive processing that is not reliant on movement, yet movement is often necessary to the process of innovating and creating. Movement was seen as critical to the well-being of students whether as a standalone activity (movement for movement's sake) or as deliberately linked to the learning activity. In either case movement was described as a phenomenon that enhances learning and simply put, makes people happy. Research on brain-based learning was cited as critically important to consider when assessing just how important movement is to learning.

Observation, Inquiry, and Awareness

The act of observation was a topic that was discussed more by teachers and members of the Strategic Visioning Team rather than students. The team talked about the benefit and importance for everyone in the learning environment to "be still" and quiet and take the time to simply notice without action. This applied to teachers seeing the value in observing students as a method of understanding them more as individuals and learners. Teachers also discussed how quick to action students are even in completing tasks that require or at least allow for time to think and observe; however, students and teachers reported the pace of learning could be to the detriment of true observation and deeper learning.

Scientific inquiry is an important facet of the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) that the district is involved in implementing, as was inquiry in general which was discussed by the team in terms of the importance of formulating questions before solving problems, the importance of problem-finding and true curiosity in academic settings and subjects as well as life in general. Our students, who expressed the desire for "chocolate fountains" and "swimming pools" in the schools were described as individuals who are interested and interesting and curious about the world around them. The impact of pace was once again discussed as something that diminishes time and opportunity for inquiry, yet inquiry in an unhurried fashion is seen as critically important in the development of good citizens in the classroom, the school, the community, and the world-at-large.

The topic of awareness was discussed within the context of self-awareness and awareness of others and the environment. As noted in the discussion about connection, a deep and abiding

sense of compassion and concern was described as a defining characteristic within both towns, all schools and between groups and individuals. What was described was an interest in others that is born from awareness. Although not isolated to situations that involve need of some sort, this was used as an example to demonstrate the existence of compassion; people in our schools and community are there for each other. Of particular importance in discussing a sense of personal responsibility, self-regulation and social emotional learning was the critical importance of students' developing a sense of self-awareness, self-acceptance and individuality.

This theme set involves highly individualized acts and outcomes that are seen to add dimension to the individual student and honor the process and the outcome of noticing, being curious, asking questions, and gaining more sophisticated insight into the self, others and the world. While the district's core ethical values of respect, responsibility, kindness, honesty and courage could be highlighted and discussed within and across all of the theme sets, the evidential existence of these core ethical values appears to reside most profoundly within individuals. People of all ages within and outside of our schools appear to have a sense of the core ethical values and demonstrate them through words and actions. People from outside of our district who visit or people who observe or interact with our students outside of the district (field trips, performances) often comment about the existence of a uniquely positive quality that can be described, by those who know, as the presence of our core ethical values.

Appendix I: Design Elements

The discussion of design elements occurred throughout the strategic visioning process. The team discussed what is present and working and what is should be eliminated/lessened or created/increased (more of/less of). Design elements can be understood in terms of the tangible evidence that demonstrates a commitment to sustaining and improving the lives and learning of everyone within the learning environment as identified in the priority themes. Specific design elements are the answer to the question, “How does Regional School District 13 value and support connection and innovation (for example)?” Throughout the strategic visioning process it became evident that the priorities and outcomes identified for students and how best to sustain and strengthen them applied to all students from Pre-K to grade 12. There was no single outcome or experience that could be isolated to just one grade, age or school. Priorities in developmentally appropriate ways aligned with the mission statement, “Through engagement in authentic learning experiences, all Regional School District 13 students are empowered to thrive and contribute as global citizens” Due to the fact that the most significant change in grade level configuration would apply at the elementary level, the discussions could have been directed to that level; however, the cross grade level representation and accumulation of perspectives from students, staff, parents and community members all contributed to a district-wide conclusion. The following chart is a general district-wide framework for more fully realizing what has been identified as most meaningful to us as a learning community.

Included in this chart are building and physical plant suggestions.

Design Elements
Connection, Collaboration and Contribution Reaffirm core ethical values throughout the district and community at-large Maintain and strengthen opportunities for positive relationships between students/teachers/staff /parents/community Develop project-based learning model to guide teaching and learning Integrate grade K-grade 8 curriculum with consideration for organization around science and civics Develop Pre-K-12 STEAM learning continuum Expand school partnerships at local, state, national and international level including university partnerships Expand local community opportunities for students to contribute to the community and the community to contribute to and benefit from the school Sustain “multi-grade” options Sustain “looping options” Expand within district school partnerships Partner with PTAs and use National PTA guidelines to enhance parent involvement

Voice, Choice and Impact

Sustain assembly program at the elementary level
Consider/Create RSD13 "HOT School" model at elementary level
Create democratic practices at middle and high school level
Establish student leadership for school and district-wide operation and decision-making
Share student process and work products widely
Develop extended learning opportunities within existing frameworks
Create opportunities for middle and high school students to explore interests
Design master schedules that support identified priorities

Innovation, Creativity and Movement

Guarantee a curriculum that includes innovation, creativity and movement
Create school, district and community opportunities that require innovation, creativity and movement
Develop extended learning opportunities at the elementary and middle levels
Guarantee daily time for movement
Create research and development opportunities for students and staff

Observation, Inquiry and Awareness

Reassess purpose and reduction of homework
Create instructional and lesson design that promotes observation and inquiry
Develop social-emotional learning curriculum and supports
Identify and support targeted well-being practices
Guarantee daily time for quiet and stillness

Building and Physical Plant Design Elements

Redesign/Design learning spaces to support and sustain priority themes
Create spaces for families and community members
Create more natural light in schools and classrooms
Apply colors that are deliberately chosen to enhance learning and well-being
Use furniture that supports and enhances learning and collaboration
Create outdoor learning, exercise and play spaces
Create mindfulness/quiet areas inside and outside
Integrate therapy dogs and more living things