2015-2018

**Upper Arlington
City School District**

STRATEGIC PLAN
December 9, 2014

UPPER ARLINGTON CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT
STRATEGIC PLAN
January 2015–June 2018

FOCUSING ON WHAT MATTERS MOST

In the fall 2018 at the close of this three-year strategic plan, the Upper Arlington community will celebrate the 100th anniversary of the founding of its school district. From the outset, a strong and reciprocal relationship between home, school, and community has been considered essential for growing the unique talents, abilities, accomplishments, and dreams of each child. The first "school" was established in the basement of a private home, and the theme of the first high school yearbook was "endeavor to be true" to self, school, and society. Over the last century, we have crafted a high-quality school system that simultaneously performs well on academic performance metrics and personalizes the learning experience for individual success.

As our second century dawns, swiftly changing economic, social, and technological conditions are shaping the future for our students. We must focus on what matters most in an educational approach that advances academic and personal success in a balanced and healthy way. The community discussion during the fall 2013 clearly called for a disciplined focus on efficiency, accountability, and results. An increased attention on efficiency in our operations and facilities is a just and reasonable expectation from the community, and one that will be of paramount importance in protecting resources for the classroom and implementing this strategic plan.

The strategic plan consists of five goals: **performance, personalization, accountability, efficiency,** and **ownership**. While each goal includes a small set of objectives and strategies, the overall plan centers on three big moves. **First**, we will invest in personalized learning strategies that reinforce our strengths, such as highly effective instruction, and move us forward with greater student choice and ownership of learning. **Second**, we will implement an Upper Arlington Quality Profile that will support our efforts to increase performance, personalization, accountability, efficiency, and ownership. The profile will go well beyond state assessments designed for external accountability, and it will include metrics that inform and develop how we address the unique needs, talents, and abilities of all of our students. The profile will allow us to engage regularly students, parents, staff, and the community in a conversation about how we define and pursue quality.**Third,** we will constantly identify and act on operational and facility efficiencies that help us build the reserves necessary for making strategic investments.

Implementation discipline is key to the success of the plan. The district will not undertake any major strategic initiatives over the next 3.5 years that are not in the plan. We will follow a pragmatic and results-driven approach—building awareness of the strategic plan, embedding a new vision and mission throughout the culture of the district, attaining greater levels of efficiency, reaching a higher level of community trust, and graduating unique and accomplished students who are prepared to serve, lead, and succeed. The 2015–2018 Strategic Plan will build off a century of commitment to growing the whole child by guiding the Upper Arlington City School District and community to greater educational results, operational efficiency, and accountability.

THE IMPORTANCE OF A GOOD PLANNING PROCESS

From April through November 2014, we developed this plan through broad and deep inquiry and engagement. The first phase involved study groups led by UA citizens who produced reports on the critical issues of accountability, results, and efficiency. The second phase involved district-wide community and staff meetings, conversations on the quality of learning experiences at every building, and online feedback around the three study group reports and the first draft of the plan. The total process involved more than 3,800 in-person and online engagements. We captured student voices through surveys, focus groups, and online feedback. A Strategic Coordination Group composed of UA community and business leaders, parents, and school staff guided the work from beginning to end. Documentation of this work is available on the district website.

VISION

Uniquely Accomplished students prepared to serve, lead, and succeed.

MISSION

Challenge and support every student, every step of the way.

A RELENTLESS FOCUS ON LEARNING

The Upper Arlington City School District must continue to set clear and high learning expectations. The strategic plan is designed to advance our capacity to challenge and support learners, teachers, principals, support staff, central office, and the Board. We recognize that the quality of student learning is shaped significantly by effective professional learning. We must continue recent efforts to make our professional learning support system more relevant, job embedded, customized, and grounded in peer-to-peer sharing of effective practices. Moreover, we must endeavor to be true to the following organizational values:

- *Focus*: We pursue a small set of strategic goals aligned to our vision and mission. Everyone is focused on student learning and success.
- *Feasibility*: We ensure we have the capability to deliver promised results. We efficiently and effectively manage financial and human resources prioritized around our five strategic goals.
- *Commitment*: We stay the course on what matters most. We work collaboratively and creatively on successful implementation of the strategic plan.
- *Reliability*: We assess progress through multiple, reliable measures, scale what works, and make changes when needed.
- *Trust*: We are honest with each other about our strengths and opportunities for improvement. Our communication and relationships are defined by mutual accountability, respect, and support.

GOAL 1: PERFORMANCE. *Every Upper Arlington student attains academic excellence.*

Rationale: The successful pursuit of academic excellence for all Upper Arlington students involves a whole child philosophy that respects intellectual, emotional, and social learning and growth. From this perspective, academic **PERFORMANCE** is assessed through many measures at the student, building, and district levels.

We focus on fostering each student's unique interests and talents, as well as on ensuring development of the critical reasoning skills that are crucial to success in today's world. From artistic to scientific endeavors, we help each student become accomplished in his or her personal pursuits—ready to serve, lead, and succeed.

Currently, a great number of Upper Arlington students are achieving at high levels, but we can do even better. A relentless focus on the whole child means that personal well being is critical for students to be confident, academically successful, and capable of pursuing their dreams of success. In particular, data indicates we must be more attentive to early literacy and numeracy skills, intervention services, and real-world problem solving.

Our performance objectives and strategies are designed to bolster teaching and learning by increasing the quality, timeliness, and clarity of feedback, which research shows is the number one factor in improving learning performance. We need to bring more coherence to our core instructional, curriculum, and assessment practices. We also must ensure that exceptional practices are shared across the district to advance the quality of the system overall.

What matters most? We will ensure that our graduates have the most valuable and highly esteemed diploma possible as defined by a Quality Profile that includes state and local goals and metrics.

Objective 1.1. Students learn through instructional practices that are grade, subject, and student appropriate. *Data Source: Classroom walkthroughs, teacher-developed assessments, and teacher evaluations.*
Objective 1.2. All subsets of student populations, schools, and the district at large earn above-average student growth results, ensuring that the district accelerates achievement and growth for all students. *Data Source: Student growth measures, such as Student Learning Objectives and Ohio Department of Education value-added and achievement data.*
Objective 1.3. Students attain the desired characteristics of a uniquely accomplished student: complex thinker, communicator, collaborator, critical thinker, innovator, global citizen, and self-directed individual. *Data Source: District and grade-level rubrics and classroom observations.*
Objective 1.4. All buildings and the district rank among the top five percent on national and international benchmarks for success. *Data Source: Relevant measures, such as PISA, ACT, and SAT.*

Leading Strategies
1. Apply formative practices to assess students in ways that address each student's needs using a progress monitoring system, Response to Intervention (RTI), and special education and gifted audit, as well as a focus on literacy and numeracy at the elementary level.
2. Define clear learning and teaching targets and ensure understanding and depth of knowledge within each academic content standard (e.g., conduct curriculum mapping and develop common assessments).
3. More deeply embed district 21st century learning rubrics in all grade levels and develop more relevant impact measures for learning experiences, such as capstone and service learning.
4. Ensure that the core elements of the Quality Profile focus on key measures around academic achievement, learning opportunities, and community engagement. Ensure that each building aligns its performance goals with the Quality Profile.

GOAL 2: PERSONALIZATION. *All Upper Arlington students experience a personalized learning environment that maximizes time and resources to support their success.*

Rationale: Upper Arlington schools have a solid tradition of seeing and serving the whole child as well as promoting service learning within and across all grade levels. This means all students have a rich variety of opportunities to engage in learning environments that feed their passions and serve a greater purpose.

The **PERSONALIZATION** necessary to challenge and support every student, every step of the way demands that we are extremely thoughtful in how we organize learning and instructional time, talent, and technology. Greater access to new technological tools and devices is not enough. Our personalization objectives and strategies make sure that every student has access to and the capacity to use technology to amplify and advance the development of his or her interests, knowledge, and skills.

What matters most? We will enhance personalization of learning through the smart use of new technologies that connect the child and the teacher to the world and provide high-quality feedback at the student, teacher, school, and system levels. We will strengthen our service learning efforts by intentionally connecting with technology and personalization initiatives.

Objective 2.1. Students have direct one-to-one access to a technological device that appropriately supports and maximizes their learning. *Data Source: Upper Arlington Schools Department of Technology, staff, and student/parent survey.*
Objective 2.2. Educators personalize instruction by leveraging technological resources and engaging in well-structured and meaningful collaborative planning time. *Data Source: Building schedules, PowerSchool, and staff survey.*
Objective 2.3. Grades 6–12 students participate in practical learning experiences, such as high-quality internships, other career-ready learning pathways, and implementation of college credit pathways to increase college and career readiness. *Data Source: Middle and high schools, PowerSchool, and Ohio Department of Education data.*
Objective 2.4. Grades 6–12 students have access to various extra- and co-curricular activities that capture their interests. *Data Source: PowerSchool.*
Objective 2.5. Throughout their elementary, middle, and high school experience, students participate in high-quality service learning at the local, national, and/or international levels. *Data Source: Service learning database and student survey.*

Leading Strategies
1. Maximize the capabilities and use of the Schoology learning management system, conduct site visits on specific personalized learning implementation questions, develop professional learning and technology plans, and improve technological reliability.
2. Develop daily instructional schedules, provide professional learning around instructional strategies, and reduce interruptions.
3. Create 15- and 30-semester-hour college credit pathways for students, bolster classroom guidance accessibility and activities, and facilitate career activities for freshmen to augment the existing shadowing program.
4. Develop a system to identify students who are not participating in activities and help them find activities in which they are interested.
5. Improve the data monitoring system for service learning and capstone experiences.

GOAL 3: ACCOUNTABILITY. The *Upper Arlington Quality Profile provides a transparent, sensible, and reliable accountability framework to measure and communicate academic performance, learning opportunities, and community engagement.*

Rationale: Upper Arlington will not rest on its laurels. Our **ACCOUNTABILITY** comes down to how well we deliver on greater performance and personalization through prudent and productive expenditures of resources. Based on benchmarking with similar high-performance school systems across the region, state, and nation, we need to deepen and broaden our approach to accountability. Our accountability objectives and strategies include more global benchmarking, more of an emphasis on co-curricular and extra-curricular opportunities, and a more integrated approach to Pre K–12 21st century learning rubrics and assessments.

What matters most? We will establish an annual Quality Profile that provides a continual focus on the goals, achievement, and performance of our district, and identifies if those measures meet or exceed the expectations of our students, parents, the community, and state performance standards.

Objective 3.1. Eighty percent or more of surveyed community members view the Quality Profile as a valuable accountability tool. *Data Source: Annual community scientific survey.*
Objective 3.2. Eighty percent or more of surveyed community members believe the district listens to the public and is responsive to its needs and preferences. *Data Source: Annual community scientific survey.*

Leading Strategies
1. Launch, use, and refine the Quality Profile annually. Engage the public around the profile through regular community forums and an interactive web portal.
2. Conduct ongoing, systemic professional development around the Quality Profile's value and use.
3. Engage departments and schools in setting goals aligned to Quality Profile metrics.
4. Ensure that strategic goals align with Quality Profile metrics.
5. Integrate the Quality Profile in the monitoring and decision making routines of the Upper Arlington Board of Education, the superintendent, the treasurer, and all school buildings.

GOAL 4: EFFICIENCY. *The Upper Arlington School District manages resources efficiently and effectively—prioritized to meet strategic goals and performance expectations.*

Rationale: Upper Arlington expects fiscal and operational excellence. Greater **EFFICIENCY** is critical to fulfill all the other goals in this strategic plan. Our efficiency objectives and strategies formalize the ongoing operational improvement planning process, including creation of appropriate metrics. This is important as part of a broader strategy to improve educational performance and direct as many resources as possible to classroom and more personalized instruction.

What matters most? We will institute a new way of doing business where ongoing efficiency improvement enables us to improve productivity and fiscal stability to steadily advance learning performance and personalization.

Objective 4.1. The district's bottom line improves by at least $4.5 million by the end of the 2016–2017 school year through enhanced operational efficiencies. The $4.5 million is added to a separate Budget Stabilization Fund. *Data Source: 5-year forecast.*

Objective 4.2. Measureable long-term efficiency in operations and facilities is a top priority and essential to the sustainability of the strategic plan. *Data Source: OFCC report and facilities master planning process.*

Objective 4.3. Seventy-five percent or more of the community surveyed reports that the Upper Arlington School District does a good or excellent job of managing its finances. *Data Source: Annual scientific-based community survey.*

Objective 4.4. Implementing measureable timesaving and cost-effective performance and information systems ensures operational excellence. *Data Source: District technology department and treasurer's office.*

Leading Strategies
1. Investigate, and when appropriate, implement cost-saving measures from the Productivity and Efficiency Briefing Paper.
2. Create an annual financial report (e.g., Popular Annual Financial Report).
3. Engage the community in a facilities master planning process.
4. Ensure sustainable employee salary and benefits.
5. Improve operational excellence by adopting proven business improvement methodologies.

> **GOAL 5: OWNERSHIP.** *Upper Arlington Schools use clear, honest, open, and interactive communication to build ownership of the 2015–2018 strategic plan.*

Rationale: Upper Arlington parents, faculty, and community members recognize that two-way communication is vital to the successful implementation of this plan. The **OWNERSHIP** of this strategic plan will be broad and deep. While the planning process has involved a large number of people in a variety of ways, all stakeholders need to have an understanding of the positive impact the plan will have on students and our community. Our communication objectives and strategies are designed to mobilize the entire Upper Arlington learning community (e.g., students, parents, educators, and citizens).

What matters most? We will build awareness and ownership of a results-driven strategic plan through open, accessible, and interactive communication.

Objective 5.1. There is a strong and broad community understanding of the strategic plan vision, mission, values, goals, objectives, and strategies—as evident through the district's ongoing efforts to share specific practices and benefits aligned to the plan. *Data Source: Scientific Survey.*

Objective 5.2. District employees have ownership of and are engaged in implementing the strategic plan to ensure student success. *Data Source: Scientific Survey.*

Objective 5.3. Parents and students are aware of, and engaged in, the important roles they play in achieving the strategic plan's goals around personalization, student success skills, and maximizing learning time. *Data Source: Scientific Survey.*

Objective 5.4. The business community and citizens without children in the district are aware of, and ready to engage in, the support of the district's strategic initiatives. *Data Source: Scientific Survey.*

Leading Strategies
1. Promote ongoing, open, and two-way communication among all stakeholders to maintain a culture of respect, integrity, and inclusion.
2. Identify and provide opportunities to increase parent, business, and community participation to support every student's personal and intellectual success so that he or she can be uniquely accomplished.
3. Use the Quality Profile as a communication and engagement vehicle.
4. Use all district communication tools to provide strategic plan timelines and progress updates on a regular basis (e.g., website, newsletter, social media, annual State of Schools meeting, etc.).

NEXT PHASE
Upon board approval of this plan, we will move immediately into the first phase of implementation. Work on the Upper Arlington Quality Profile is already well under way and will be part of the State of the Schools meeting in February 2015. We will complete a district-wide scope of work that includes essential communication, implementation and evaluation processes no later than May 2015. The first six months will involve:

establishing an implementation work group and plan;
building awareness and commitment;
focusing on developing the Quality Profile and aligning with building goals;
making sure management and operational processes are aligned and streamlined; and
hearing and responding to feedback about initial implementation challenges that need to be overcome for the plan to gain traction.