

**A Community Strategic Plan
School District of Rhinelander**

"Build the Future" 
2005-2010

**"Excellence is never an accident;
it is always the result of high intention,
sincere effort, intelligent direction, skillful
execution and the vision to see
obstacles as opportunities."
- Unknown**

October, 2005

"Build the Future"

Schools play a central role in the economic development of a community. Together, we are aggressively responding to significant changes in 21st Century public education. Meeting the needs of all children extends beyond state and federal mandates.

Funding shortfalls, changing demographics, and emerging populations with exceptional needs require that our children acquire the skills and resources necessary for success in a modern, global economy. The stakes are high and failure is not an option.

The Rhinelander community has come together to "**Build the Future**".

Build the Future reflects our passion for excellence, our commitment to being a partner in the economic and cultural advancement of our community, our mission to reinvent ourselves by adapting to a dynamic educational climate, and our effort to create excitement and support among some 20,125 Hodag alumni and friends to help us achieve our goals.

- **Build the Future** creates a financial framework to support dynamic programming, high quality facilities, and an exceptional faculty and staff.
- **Build the Future** is distinguished from previous plans by its participation and heightened level of community involvement.
- **Build the Future** identifies an overall plan to provide the highest quality environment for our children and community. This is what the Rhinelander community deserves.
- **Build the Future** provides the Rhinelander community with competitive programs that invigorate our economic development by promoting future growth and prosperity, and attract future enrollment. This, in turn, will make the Rhinelander area a more attractive place to live, raise a family, work, and retire.
- **Build the Future** is based on the pride and traditions of our citizens

Please read the Strategic Plan and if you have any questions contact Roger Erdahl at erdahrog@rhinelander.k12.wi.us or by phone at 365-9750.

Our Process

1. February, 2005 - - Board of Education called for development of a long term strategic plan.
2. March, 2005 -- May, 2005 - Steering Committees comprised of community and district representatives organizes, prepares and researches the objectives for a strategic plan. Steering Committee met 7 times and dedicated more than 200 person hours.
3. May, 2005 - June 2005 -- Steering Committee gathers input from community through focus groups, one-on-one interviews, and on-line surveys. Parents, senior citizens, business leaders, teachers, administrators, students, clergy, and public officials participated.
4. June 2005 - July, 2005 -- Strategic Planning Committee of 52 volunteers formed formal strategic planning sessions conducted on June 13, June 16, June 28, July 6, totaling 20 committee hours.
5. July, 2005 -- Strategic Planning Committee develops Vision Elements and Strategic Directions for the Plan, based on public input. Three sub-committees formed.
6. August, 2005 -- Strategic Planning Committee combines sub-committee results to create goals, objectives, and action steps for the draft Plan.
7. August, 2005 - September, 2005 -- Subcommittees of the Strategic Planning Committees met to edit and revise the draft Plan.
8. September - October, 2005 -- Strategic Planning Committee presents draft Plan to the Board of Education and the community. Board of Education and community provide insight and opinions.
9. By this time, Community members have committed literally thousand of person hours to the development of this plan.
10. October, 2005 -- Plan finalized and presented to Board of Education

The process included building the following vision elements:

Our Vision:

- Individual Academic Success for Every Student
- Innovative, Educational Opportunities
- Instructional Excellence and Recognition
- Protective, Respectful, Inclusive Learning Environments
- Open and Informative Communication
- Collaborative and Trusting Relationship Within Our Community
- Quality Community Facilities
- Proactive, Responsible System of Leadership
- Increased School - Family Participation

And, the process included building the nine new strategic directions:

Our Strategic Direction:

- Importance of Strategic Plan
- Partnerships for Change
- Financial Opportunities and Efficiencies
- An Inclusive, Healthy Learning Environment
- Strengthened Families
- An Effective Volunteer Program
- Effective Internal Communication System
- System of Effective External Communication
- Multi- Representational Advisory Councils

Build the Future Goals:

- ***SECURE OUR FINANCIAL FUTURE THROUGH PARTNERSHIPS AND PLANNING***
- ***PROVIDE INNOVATIVE OPPORTUNITIES FOR INDIVIDUAL ACADEMIC SUCCESS***
- ***SECURE A TRUSTING SCHOOL/COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIP THROUGH EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION SYSTEMS***

Our Mandate

The Plan will succeed through ongoing review to ensure appropriate planning and accountability for the School District of Rhinelander

SECURING OUR FINANCIAL FUTURE THROUGH PLANNING AND PARTNERSHIPS

GOAL:

Create and implement a planning process incorporating operational efficiencies, partnerships with the community, and planning, and to promote future growth opportunities and prosperity.

Objective #1:

Set minimum and maximum policy targets to keep school district financially strong and bond rating high.

Action Steps:

1. Create a policy with a minimum and maximum range of operating capital in order to make sure that bond rating remains high and interest payments remain low.
2. Manage operating capital so that when operating capital levels are higher than target, these dollars can be expended on district operations or returned to the taxpayer.
3. Review all short-term goals incorporated in strategic plan that need funding and propose that sale of buildings be used to fund the immediate needs of the strategic plan.

Objective #2:

Conduct a comprehensive use study of all facilities. Review capital improvement of schools that can be updated, and refinance bonds/debt equivalent up to an amount of \$20-\$23 million for a period of 2005-2027 to benefit these objectives at no additional cost to the taxpayer.

Action Steps:

1. Develop partnerships with the City Council, Economic Development Corporation, Oneida County Board, and community to find out what is needed to increase enrollment.
2. Update the existing study of all buildings and grade configurations and determine what improvements and potential changes could be made to maximize learning and modernize facilities.
3. Update and modernize facilities to advance student learning and promote economic development.

4. Review plans for future consolidation by adding money to schools that can be improved for the next generation rather than to those that will eventually be closed.
5. Refinance and re-issue bonds for up to \$23 million for capital improvements and to negate tax levy increases.
6. Formalize partnerships with local companies, hospital, YMCA, Nicolet Area Technical College, parochial schools, other agencies and governmental units, as well as economic development groups.
7. Build a multipurpose fieldhouse/musical/theatrical performance center for use by the entire community.
8. Develop naming rights qualifications for individuals and corporations to help sponsor the funding of the plan that is not incorporated in the refinancing of the bonds.

Objective #3:

Develop or partner with educational 501c3 foundation to provide opportunities for growth.

Action steps:

1. Review existing 501c3 foundations that exist to partner or have district file own application.
2. Set up automatic gifting/matching levels from corporations to directly contribute from employee pay deductions to the 501c3 organization.

Objective #4:

Establish Grant writer to develop prospects for future revenue contributions

Actions steps:

1. Review hiring a talented and experienced grant writer full time, or partner with other school districts to share the costs. Set compensation based on success of grants executed.

Objective #5:

Develop comprehensive review of all real estate the district owns.

Action steps:

1. Provide a complete market analysis of all real estate owned, broken down into land for schools, forestry, and additional land.
2. Find out all deed restrictions on land and what deeds could be rescinded or re-negotiated.
3. Review value of land that should not be sold according to community use and long-term potential value (CAVOC, etc).
4. Develop partnerships to enhance the forest/timber management, to promote School District of Rhinelander as the forestry and environmental specialist.

5. Review value of land that could be sold and used to directly benefit the school district and funding for the short or long term strategic plan.

Objective #6:

Provide ongoing review of competitive benefit packages.

Action steps:

1. Administration reviews carriers on annual basis for competitive bids to explore options, including health care, retirement, etc.
2. Explain to the community the competitive packages that exist and are under review by our district.

Objective #7:

Develop and nurture partnerships to stabilize programs and services.

Action steps:

1. Partner with various organizations and groups to provide services to programs that were cut: YMCA, various activity groups, etc.
2. Identify reduction in services in budget that should be restored, and approach the community to improve and compliment programs that have been lost.
3. Create co-curricular needs-based scholarship fund.

Objective #8:

Form partnerships to develop alternative ways to deliver programs

Actions steps:

1. Meet with various organizations to find out how we can develop and promote the School District of Rhinelander. Examples: Northwoods Advantage, Regional Economic Development, Service Corps of Retired Executives, Northwoods Manufacturing Professionals Group, Nicolet Area Technical College, etc.
2. Develop robust, revenue neutral community education programs to promote partnerships and enhance the community's appeal.
3. Establish relationships with local businesses to create and develop partnerships that can lead to increased learning and business skills for students, and promote economic growth and community unity.
4. Locate local business sites in school facilities to teach students business skills, and to promote economic growth and community unity.

**PROVIDING INNOVATIVE OPPORTUNITIES
FOR INDIVIDUAL ACADEMIC SUCCESS**

GOAL:

Become a leading school district in Wisconsin for academic achievement.

Objective #1

Achieve "proficient" ranking in all categories by all students on the Wisconsin Knowledge Concepts Examination.

Action Steps:

1. Maintain 95% daily student attendance.
2. Decrease drop-out rate annually and steadily until the school district has no drop-outs.
3. Publish comparisons of test scores - Wisconsin Valley Conference, CESA, and State.
4. Increase student involvement in co-curriculars.
5. Offer only healthy, nutritious food choices.

Objective #2

Provide innovative educational opportunities to ensure that academic success is attainable for all students.

Action Steps:

1. Diversify instructional opportunities to meet the needs of all students.
2. Develop alternative schools based on successful models and / or career fields that actually exist, beginning with environmental charter school at CAVOC. (See Appendix A)
3. Develop career academies inside Rhinelander High School (See Appendix B)
4. Provide staff training that focuses on a variety of instructional methods and require monitoring and reporting.
5. Recognize innovative teachers/support staff/administrators. Involve students in the process of celebrating innovation.
6. Implement virtual partnerships.

Objective #3:

Create a school culture in which students are motivated to learn.

Action Steps:

1. Research how other districts have been successful in nurturing student motivation.
2. Collect data from students regarding motivation factors. (e.g. Hope Study)
3. Educate students about diversity, acceptance, and tolerance.
4. Create learning opportunities through which students develop innate skills and talents.

Objective #4:

Increase parent involvement in their child's educational experience.

Action Steps:

1. Develop parent/teacher/student governance councils.
2. Create neighborhood liaisons to connect the school and community.
3. Redefine the role/responsibility of the Parent Advisory Council (PAC) to include mentoring new families and establishing positive relationships between the school and home.
4. Establish parent-friendly schedules to meet the individual needs of families.
5. Obtain data/input from parents regarding their issues, needs, concerns, etc. (survey)
6. Create opportunities for parents/citizens to volunteer to help in schools with daily activities.

Objective #5:

Increase the number of students who come to school prepared to learn.

Action Steps:

1. Require all PreK-Grade 3 staff to complete a formalized family involvement training.
2. Identify the profoundly different home experiences/needs that our children have.
3. Introduce parents to community resources through parent/teacher conferences and a variety of meetings that will be held at the schools.
4. Distribute to all parents "10 Qualities of Children Who Do Well In School."

5. Include community volunteers and high school students in the mentoring of younger students. Develop collaborative tutoring program through community volunteers, businesses, and students.
6. Create community centers equipped with technology resources before and after school to reduce the digital divide.
7. Partner with the YMCA, Family Resource Connection, and other family support organizations.

Objective #6:

Combine community and school resources to strengthen the educational environment.

Action Steps:

1. Survey/inventory community to determine community needs and resources available.
2. Develop promotional/marketing materials to distribute and to present to future community members that focus on the strengths of our schools and our community.
3. Increase awareness through media coverage, community breakfasts, presentations, etc.
4. Establish Senior/Community days at schools to promote intergenerational relationships.
5. Establish and maintain service-learning experiences for students/community.

**SECURING A TRUSTING SCHOOL - COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIP
THROUGH EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION SYSTEMS**

GOAL:

Create and deploy a communication process that efficiently and effectively reaches all relevant audiences in order to inform, educate, and promote support for the School District of Rhinelander.

Objective #1:

Establish a System of Communications within the school-community, which creates a climate of inclusion and trust and shared responsibility between recipient and communicator.

Action Steps:

1. Contract with a professional communication consultant or firm to conduct an audit of what needs to be done to develop an effective system of communication.
2. Develop and adopt district community relations policies, and guidelines that ensure the implementation of the objectives defined in the Community Strategic Plan.
3. Create staff position(s) for community relations and partnership development.
 - a. Two year or Bachelors Degree in communications, public relations, marketing.
 - b. Experience and expertise in the areas of communication, public relations and marketing.
 - c. Working knowledge of internal and external communication.
 - d. Understanding of the importance of two-way communication.
 - e. This position would interface with an advisory committee.
4. Foster honesty, respect and accountability from all members of the community.
5. Change the name of "Fund Balance" to "Operating Capital".
6. Support conditions for building trust which embody the following:
 - fault-free environment
 - accurate, free-flowing information
 - opportunities for dialogue
 - clear understanding of roles
 - mutual respect

Objective #2:

Elevate the importance of district-wide communication.

Action Steps:

1. Establish a district communications office to serve as the "clearing house" for general information and to direct specific inquiries to appropriate persons.
2. District Communications Office will designate a contact at each school site to facilitate staff and community information services.
3. Maintain a pro-active communications relationship with the press and local media.
4. Respond to misrepresentations in the press.
5. Distribute press releases and media coverage updates to all staff.
6. Provide concise information on current district issues and policies to management, staff, and the community.
7. Maintain dialogue among all district sites.
8. Promote participation at school board committee meetings and school board meetings, when appropriate.
9. Recruit support from professionals in the community with a background in communications and explore partnerships (job sharing, internship, curricular offerings).

Objective #3:

Foster positive, effective, and timely communications between district management and staff.

Action Steps:

1. Establish systems for accurate and free-flowing information between and among district staff and management.
2. Distribute board highlights and similar documents reflecting decisions made by the management team to all staff in a timely matter.
3. Promote first-hand communication between and among staff and district management.
4. Include staff representation at management team meetings.
5. Hold regular district-wide staff meetings.
6. Conduct an annual survey of staff to solicit feedback on positive practices and suggestions for improvement.

Objective #4:

Create opportunities for inclusion in decision-making.

Action Steps:

1. Host focus groups and public forums to collect ideas from constituents on relevant policy issues.
2. Communicate issues as they arise while there is still time to take action.
3. Provide background material that will support discussions prior to these sessions.
4. Assign knowledgeable and experienced facilitators.
5. Hold district-sponsored training for staff and community members in vision-building, group processes, and communication skills.
6. Establish non-threatening opportunities for staff to give input and express concerns.
7. Report outcomes of requests for suggestions and/or feedback.
8. Provide opportunities for staff to develop agenda items for staff meetings.

Objective #5:

Ensure that communications are timely, concise and relevant to intended audiences.

Action Steps:

1. Produce a regular district newsletter that addresses issues of public concern.
2. Make available to the community-at-large informational brochures and district newsletters.
3. Engage key community resources.
4. Convey Board of Education meeting content in a timely and comprehensive manner to the community.
5. Post agendas for all committee and regular school board meetings five days in advance on the district website.

Objective #6:

Make appropriate use of current technologies to advance communications.

Action Steps:

1. Continue to explore effective and innovative methods of communication.
2. Deliver information via two formats when adopting a new technology until such time as the change becomes standard practice.
3. Ensure adequate technological support for communication systems.
4. Dedicate computer services support to maintain and address hardware problems.
5. Provide staff training in use of new technology.
6. Maintain a dynamic, accurate, and user-friendly district website that expands on highlights presented in district newsletters.
7. Post detailed information that addresses pertinent issues, decisions, and activities and recognizes students, staff, and community.
8. Set up a district electronic bulletin board as a forum.

Objective #7:

Ensure open, honest, and direct school-home-community communication.

Action Steps:

1. Offer training opportunities to all stakeholders (teachers, parents, community) on effective communication techniques.
2. Briefly cover meeting protocol procedures at the beginning of every Board of Education meeting.
3. Provide formal and informal opportunities throughout the year for parents to learn about district programs.
4. Ensure timely delivery of home-school communications.
5. Acknowledge parent questions and requests in a prompt and professional manner.

Objective #8:

Provide an on-going means for measuring effectiveness of communications strategies.

Action Steps:

1. Conduct an annual audit of communications tools, both internal and external.
2. Provide opportunity for feedback on communications materials and methods through a reply device or similar call to action.
3. Involve end-users in development and evaluation of new communications.

Objective #9:

Create a school board committee structure that focuses on planning and accountability

Action Steps:

1. Discontinue present school board committee structure and create a Committee on Planning and Development for strategic and operational planning decisions, i.e. strategic and operational planning decisions in academics, administration, finances, etc.
2. Discontinue present school board committee structure and create a Committee on Performance Oversight and Evaluation for past and present monitoring of educational programs, administrative and financial performance reports, and long-term evaluations of educational effectiveness.
3. Add a student representative to the school board.

Appendix A

Rhineland Area Environmental Science Academy

While we realize that *CAVOC* is a special learning environment, the development of an environmental charter school on that site would make it unique. We propose opening a charter school located, but not confined to, *CAVOC*. This could involve some construction at the site to provide labs and classroom space.

It is our belief that few, if any, Wisconsin school districts have as much sophisticated environmental research going on in close proximity to its schools as does the SDR. This school would provide both academic rigor and project-driven curriculum developed under the guidance of environmental agencies and institutions in the area.

Employees of the school should explore the development of partnerships with agencies such as:

- the UW Experimental Farm on Hwy C
- the UW Experimental Farm on Hwy K
- the Kemp Biological Research Station on Lake Tomahawk
- Trees for Tomorrow in Eagle River
- Treehaven
- the US Forest Service Research Station in Harshaw
- the US Forest Service Station on Hwy K
- the US Forest Service Admin Center
- the DNR Co-Regional Service Center in Rhineland, which employs experts in forestry, wildlife biology, fisheries, solid waste, air quality, drinking water and septic fields

Additionally, a specific curriculum designed to prepare students for this type of rigorous study of environmental issues should be developed at RHS and JWMS.

It seems unlikely that this type of charter school with close relationships to sophisticated environmental research could be duplicated anywhere in Wisconsin. This gives the SDR an edge in the economic development sphere.

Appendix B

Development of Career Academies

Develop career academies at RHS that are based on career clusters in the real world. Career clusters are broad occupational groups. They are a way to organize occupations for research and study. Many school districts in Wisconsin use this method of grouping occupations. The district should launch career academies in each of the following areas during the 3-5 year span of the strategic plan, beginning with Technology and Engineering.

1. The Academy of Technology and Engineering
2. The Academy of Natural Resources and Agriculture
3. The Academy of Business and Marketing
4. The Academy of Arts and Communications
5. The Academy of Human Services

These academies would be more than a simple list of courses for a student to take. Each would be a school within the school that includes intensive work experiences in actual career fields, as well as co-mingling high school and college coursework. Additionally, students in an academy work with the same group of teachers through various courses and projects during the time they are in the academy (four years—unless the student opts to join another academy). Characteristics of these academies include:

- a. Several academy-only classes in grades 9-12
- b. Self-selected cross-disciplinary team of teacher-managers, with a lead teacher/coordinator
- c. Voluntary enrollment, cross-section of students; size limited to maintain personalization
- d. A family-like atmosphere with a motivating, supportive, disciplined instructional tone
- e. When possible, academy classes blocked back-to-back in the daily schedule
- f. Support from district and school administrators and counselors
- g. Students given opportunity to engage in full range of non-academy courses, electives, and other school activities
- h. Several academic courses per year that meet high school graduation and college entrance requirements
- i. One or more course(s) per year in a broadly defined career field that lets students explore a full range of career options
- j. Academic classes that illustrate applications in the career field

- k. Common planning time for teachers in each academy to allow curricular integration
- l. Projects that bring together skills across academic and career classes, possibly a school-based enterprise
- m. Counseling to ensure post secondary plan which may include college, work, or both
- n. Articulation with postsecondary institutions, particularly Nicolet College
- o. Locally selected career field with a cadre of employer partners
- p. Steering Committee that governs program operation
- q. Parental involvement in students' decision to enroll, and in various program activities
- r. Business representatives who provide role models and show students career options and paths
- s. Regular field trips/intensive job shadowing to illustrate work environments
- t. Mentors, employee volunteers that serve as career-related "big brothers and sisters"
- u. Workplace experiences (paid or unpaid internships, community service) in the last year or two
- v. Concurrent enrollment in postsecondary institutions

Research tells us that thematic education, that is education in which all course work is taught around a common theme, can be a very powerful stimulus to learn. Currently, there is no real theme to our secondary school, other than "work hard" and "get ahead." While these generalities might appeal to many students, few have the support system in place that would be necessary to use these vague concepts as dynamic motivators to learn.

Almost all assignments would be projects, and almost all projects would be based on the demands of the career cluster on which the academy is focused. (This is the model used in career academies throughout the country. We don't have to re-invent this).

The lead teacher(s) in the academies would be from technology, engineering, health, business, marketing, natural resources and agriculture. The academy would have no departments based on academic disciplines. While the teachers in the academy could remain members of academic departments, the decisions regarding the academy would be based on the needs of the students in that academy and the career cluster—not the needs of an academic department.

The academies will be for any students interested in each career cluster—from those who intend to go directly into the work force to those who are preparing for rigorous college admission standards. The common bond around which these students, teachers, and people in the career field could unite, will be their interest in the career cluster.

Each student would have an ongoing experience in the world of work (partnerships). School-to-Work initiatives, while at first intended for non-college-bound students, have been broadening their approach of late to include college-bound students. This will provide them with two of the most powerful motivations to learn known to us in education:

- a. Adult-like responsibilities
- b. An audience outside the classroom

Additionally, the SDR must maintain its current charter schools and alternative programs. The SDR needs to create conditions in which all students are motivated under the belief that all motivated persons will learn. Recently, our guidance counselors listed twelve characteristics that successful students bring to school. They are:

- Have hope—they believe tomorrow will be better and that their teachers and parents have something to do with that
- Can postpone gratification
- Can work without supervision (usually)
- Have longer attention spans
- Have a sense of responsibility—gradually hold themselves to higher and higher standards
- Expect success and are animated when they do not do well
- See a relationship between effort and payoff—are persistent
- Accept authority (mostly)
- Have an internal locus of control
- Set goals and develop at least rudimentary strategies to achieve them
- Can transition from one unrelated course to another
- Can cope with the intimidating aspects of new challenges -may even welcome them

Our traditional school provides great opportunities to those who bring these qualities with them to school. However, we have large numbers of students who will require very different learning situations if their natural motivation to learn is ever going to “kick in.” These students often need a compelling reason to learn something or to perform tasks. Doing the highly practical work of preparing for a career they have chosen is our best chance to have them actually learn the important ideas and information we are asked by our society to pass on to them.