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Dist. 113 lays out beliefs, values

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Township High School District 113 has formally adopted a set of beliefs and values to frame school improvement initiatives and spending priorities over the next three years.

The school board Monday lent approval to a Strategic Plan that was developed over the course of a year with input from more than 1,000 people who participated in interviews, focus groups and online surveys.

Participants included staff, students, parents and community members from Deerfield, Highland Park, Bannockburn, Highwood and Riverwoods.

One theme that emerged was a desire for greater consistency in curriculum and practices between Highland Park and Deerfield high schools.

"Both internal and external stakeholders expressed a desire to have certain commonalities within and between district schools," according to a summary of themes contained in the plan.

Participants mentioned a desire for common course offerings, instructional materials and extracurricular opportunities as well as common achievement outcomes across courses, departments and schools, the report said.

A goal mentioned in the plan is to "ensure students in different sections of the same course will have similar curricular experiences."

The district also pledged to examine common schedules for Deerfield and Highland Park high schools to provide curricular consistency and make optimal use of district resources.

Participants frequently brought up the importance of addressing students' social and emotional needs, the report said.

Other themes included the importance of recruiting and retaining top-notch teachers, ensuring a safe learning environment and preparing students to attend a four-year college or university and achieve success in a career.

The Strategic Plan, as approved by the board, is a list of aspirational beliefs and values. Board members said the plan will be further refined by staff to include specific steps, actions and timelines, as well as performance metrics for judging progress.

The Strategic Plan is entitled, "Cultivating Passion, Unlocking Potential, Inspiring Excellence — Everyone, Everywhere."

Among other points, the plan speaks of providing resources to struggling students; creating hiring and accountability protocols and applying equitable disciplinary policies that focus on restorative justice practices when appropriate.

Board member Debra Hymen expressed hope that the same constituent groups that contributed to the development of the strategic plan would be part of the review process.



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