

# **Gardiner Public School**

## **Strategic Plan**

### **2023**

## **Overview**

**In 2014, the Gardiner Public School** created a new direction for the school district to strategically focus its resources on identified wants, preferences, and needs of its community. As part of this process, the Gardiner Public School began a strategic planning and thinking process that led to a stronger and more vital school district. This process is ongoing as the Gardiner Public School moves into the future. This Strategic Plan is intended to help the Gardiner Public School in focusing its resources in a manner that will best benefit the students enrolled in the Gardiner Public School.

As part of its preparation for planning strategically in 2014, the Gardiner Public School brought in staff from the Montana School Boards Association (Debra Silk and Joe Brott) with expertise in strategic planning for public schools to help facilitate the group through the initial strategic planning process.

On December 10, 2014, the Gardiner Board of Trustees formally adopted its new strategic plan. This plan was reviewed in 2017 and again in 2023 by the 2022-2023 Board of Trustees, current Gardiner staff, and community members.

### **2023 Review Committees:**

**Board of Trustees:** Pat Baltzley (chair), Patrick Klein (vice-chair), Dana Riley, Heidi Saunders, Laura White, and Rebecca Stoneberger

**Gardiner Staff:** Mike Baer, Hali Kirby, Christy Cote, Tammy Dalling, Julie Reinertson, Jeanne Johnson, Ryan DeVries

**Community Members:** Bianca Klein, Jess Warren, Jim Warren, Amy Tuning, Shawn Darr, Laura Chastain

The Gardiner Board of Trustees views strategic planning as an ongoing process within the school system. This is not a “strategic planning project” that is completed. Nor is it intended as the end of a conversation, but rather as the beginning of one – a conversation regarding how the Gardiner Public School can best serve the community and maximize the focus and impact of its resources on its Core Purpose. The Gardiner Public School intends that this plan will become the means by which the Gardiner community’s values, needs, and priorities can be regularly discussed, clarified, documented, prioritized, and pursued by our school system over time.

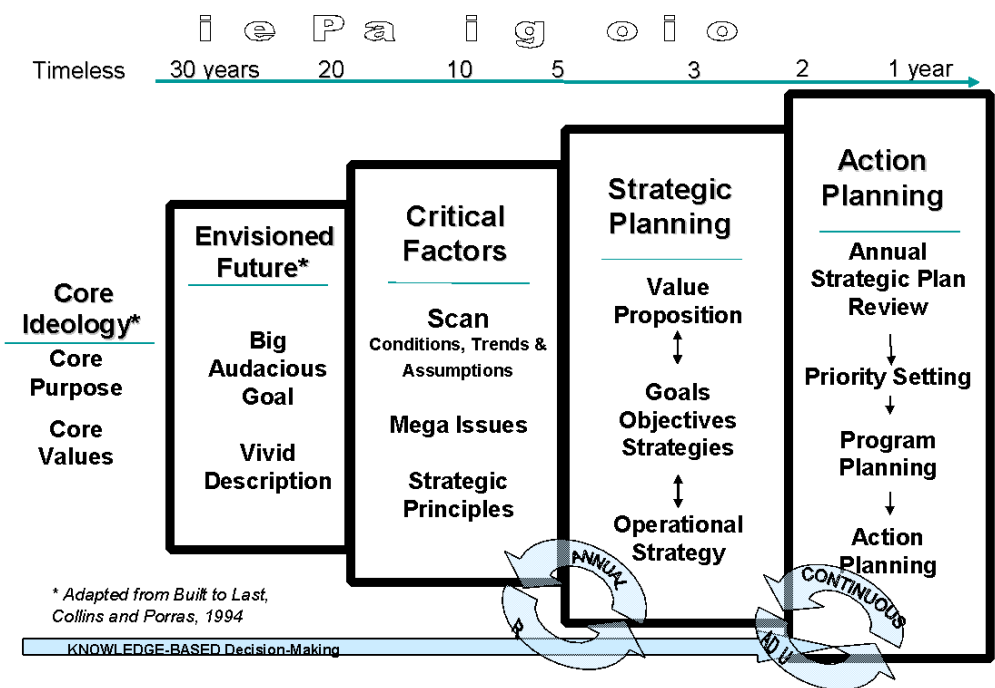
Adoption of a plan is an affirmation of the initial general intent and direction articulated by the Core Ideology, Envisioned Future, and Goals and Strategic Objectives. It is understood that the strategies identified in this document will change over time as we implement the plan and gain a

deeper understanding of what does and does not work and incorporate the feedback of our constituents to ensure that the plan remains relevant and contemporary over time.

Progress toward achieving identified strategic objectives will be assessed at least annually, and the plan will be updated based on achievement and changes in the needs of the students served by the Gardiner Public School.

## Strategic Planning Framework

The framework used by the Gardiner Public School for its strategic planning process was adapted from a model developed by Jim Collins, author of “Built to Last” and “Good to Great.” The Board and Staff Leadership Team focused on five different planning horizons, starting with the long term issues first to provide focus on shorter term efforts.



## Core Ideology of the Gardiner Public School:

**Core ideology** describes a school district's consistent identity that transcends all changes related to its relevant environment. It consists of two elements - **core purpose** - the school district's reason for being - and **core values** - essential and enduring principles that guide a school district. **Envisioned future** conveys a concrete yet unrealized vision for the school district. It consists of a **big audacious goal** - a clear and compelling catalyst that serves as a focal point for effort - and a **vivid description** - vibrant and engaging descriptions of what it will be like to achieve the big audacious goal.

### Core Purpose:

*The Core Purpose of the Gardiner Public School is to provide world-class education experiences and opportunities for our students while maintaining the uniqueness and values of our small community.*

### Core Values:

The Core Values of the Gardiner Public School are:

- ***The strong relationship between the School and the Community***
  - *We value our small, rural community and what it has to offer.*
  - *Our school is the hub of the community.*
  - *We believe students are our most valuable commodity.*
  - *Community interest and ownership are vital to our success.*
  - *We value open, positive relationships between parents and teachers.*
  - *We value community involvement, input and support.*
  - *We are all stewards of all of our resources.*
- ***High expectations for ALL***
  - *We are committed to excellence.*
  - *We expect quality.*
  - *We value high academic standards*
    - *Creative thinking*
    - *Experiential learning environment*
  - *We value high quality and diverse extra-curricular activities/opportunities.*
  - *We value high quality staff.*
- ***Respect, integrity, and work ethic***
  - *We value respect.*
  - *We work hard.*
  - *We respect ourselves and others.*
  - *We value sportsmanship.*

# 15-20 Year Planning Horizon

## Envisioned Future of the Gardiner Public School:

### Big Audacious Goal:

*The Gardiner Public School is recognized at the state and national level as a leader in education involving a united partnership of school staff, school board, students, parents, and community, where learning happens constantly on all levels regardless of time or place.*

### The Following is a Vivid Description of Our Desired Future:

- **Setting the Standard**
  - We set the gold standard that other schools and staff wish to model.
  - 100% of our students graduate and will be college or career ready.
  - We have parent and community buy-in who are actively involved with the school.
  - Our school atmosphere is safe and provides an encouraging learning environment.
- **Well-educated and well-prepared Staff**
  - We recruit and retain the best staff.
  - We challenge and stimulate our staff through our committed, high quality professional development program.
  - We reward our teachers for high performance.
- **Quality Education and Programming for the Benefit of our Students**
  - We provide state of the art educational materials for our students.
  - We provide the best available technology to each student.
  - We provide an opportunity for students to learn world languages for credit through alternative sources.
  - We have established programs that allow students to graduate with a high school diploma while obtaining college credits through virtual sources.
  - We provide a personalized learning plan for each student.
  - We have created a rich variety of experiences beyond the classroom.
  - We have the most current mobile devices available to allow students access to various resources they need to learn the best.
  - We have expanded our classrooms outside of the building and into the surrounding Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem and communities.
  - We have developed a curriculum which allows students and teachers to teach within and outside of the bricks and mortars and by way of virtual classroom settings.

- We have developed on-going relationships with our regional colleges and Yellowstone National Park.
- **Involvement of our Parents and Community**
  - We have created an environment where students, staff, and our community want to come and where everyone takes great pride.
  - Our parents and community have buy-in and involvement in our school and school activities.
  - Every person in the community takes responsibility for the success or failure of every student.
- **Facilities**
  - We have improved our facilities to allow for more individualized and/or group instruction.
  - We have state-of-the-art facilities that meet the future needs of our students.

## **5-10 Year Planning Horizon**

### **Assumptions Regarding the Relevant Future for the Gardiner Public School**

In order to make progress towards the long term Envisioned Future of the District, the Gardiner Public School must constantly anticipate the strategic factors likely to affect its ability to succeed, and to assess the implications of those factors. This process of building foresight about the future will help Gardiner Public School constantly recalibrate its view of the relevant future, a basis upon which to update the strategic plan on an annual basis. As the outcome-oriented goals that will form the basis of the long-range strategic plan will be based on this foresight, annual review of these statements will be an appropriate method of determining and ensuring the ongoing relevance of the strategic plan.

Creating the Assumptions - during the Strategic Planning Process, the Gardiner Board of Trustees, staff, and community members made many assumptions about the future. While many different assumptions were made, what follows are those assumptions that are likely to have the greatest influence on the development of the Gardiner Public School Strategic Plan.

### **Assumptions about the future**

#### **Demographics**

- We anticipate that real estate prices will continue to rise making it difficult for new staff to secure housing thereby making it difficult for the district to recruit high-quality school staff. Along those same lines, we anticipate that housing will continue to be scarce due to the conversion to vacation rentals.

- We anticipate more community members working in Gardiner and the Park that are forced to live out of town and consequently out of district. This may impact the number of parents with a vested interest in passing future school levies for funding purposes.
- Local demographics will continue to fluctuate due to Federal government budgets and hiring, the nature of tourism, and seasonal labor.
- We will continue to collaborate with the State of Wyoming and Yellowstone Park families.

### **Business/Economic Climate**

- Housing and our location limits business opportunities. However, our location is what drives our tourism and recreational opportunities. We anticipate that this paradox will continue to be a challenge for our community.
- We anticipate that geographic and housing limitations will continue to drive housing costs up thereby limiting new staff's ability to secure housing and our ability to attract quality staff.
- We anticipate the lack of affordable housing, and may need to bring about the creative exploration of housing options.
- We anticipate that our school budget will decline with the decline of enrollment.
- We anticipate that the economy will likely remain stable, if not improve.
- The Gardiner Resort Tax will create opportunities for the school.

### **Legislation/Regulation**

- We anticipate fewer federal funds in the future which could be a permanent trend.
- We anticipate a continuous influence on local control and increased state control.
- We anticipate changes to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), we just do not know what to expect.
- We anticipate continuous interest in public school curriculum and other national initiatives.
- We anticipate alternatives to public schools in the future (i.e. charter, homeschool, distance learning).

### **Technology /Science**

- We anticipate increased development and cost of needed technology in rural areas that will benefit our community.
- We anticipate that our budget will need to be aligned to ensure that technology is a high priority and that our budget meets our technology needs.

- We anticipate that we will need to devote resources to high quality, continuous professional development for teaching best technology and science practices.
- We anticipate that an Annual Technology Plan will be necessary in order to stay ahead of the curve.
- We anticipate that in order to provide the best opportunities for our students, we will need to enhance our cooperation, communication and collaboration with the National Park Service, regional professionals, businesses, and colleges.
- We anticipate that in order to meet the needs of our students and staff, we will need to have access to well-versed IT personnel.
- We anticipate increased opportunities in career fields for Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM).

### **Politics and Social Values**

- We anticipate that polarization in this area will ebb and flow.
- We are not sure how our local demographics will have an effect on the political future.
- We anticipate that any change in our local government will change the local political climate.
- We anticipate that national politics will continue to change, thereby having the same impact on our local politics.
- We anticipate continued family involvement and responsibility.
- We anticipate an increased emphasis on outdoor activities.
- We anticipate an increased awareness, demand, and emphasis on mental health.
- We anticipate an increased interest in school safety and security.

## **5-10 Year Planning Horizon**

### **Mega Issues facing the Gardiner Public School**

**Mega issues** are issues of strategic importance, which represent choices the school district will need to make in defining the ultimate direction of its long-range plan. These issues represent potential impediments to achievement of the Envisioned Future, and form a basis for dialogue about the choices facing the school district. These questions can serve as an ongoing “menu” of strategic issues that, using a knowledge-based approach in gathering insights relative to the Gardiner Public School strategic position and directional choices for each of the issues, can be used by the Board to create regular opportunities for strategic dialogue about the future issues facing the school district.

Note: The mega-issue questions are not necessarily arranged in priority order.

### **Mega-Issue Questions for consideration by the District:**

- What can we do to attract and retain high quality staff in order to ensure that our students get a world-class education?
- How can we address the issue of geographic isolation to ensure that our students are not negatively impacted by our location but benefit from it?
- How do we maximize the resources that we have right here in Gardiner to enhance opportunities for students and staff and to strengthen our partnerships with the community and collaboration with others?

### **Knowledge-Based Decision Making Questions**

The Board should prioritize the above-referenced mega issues and decide which of these issues require immediate attention on the part of the Board. Once the identified mega-issues are prioritized, the Board will set aside time at scheduled meetings to analyze a particular mega issue. At such meetings, the Board's primary focus will be on the mega-issue at hand. All other business (routine or otherwise) will be conducted at the end of the meeting once the dialogue and deliberation on the mega-issue has been concluded for that meeting. When analyzing mega issues, the Board will utilize a knowledge-based decision making process. This will keep the focus of the Board on relevant factors to consider as it develops strategies to overcome particular impediments/barriers that may impact the Board's strategic direction. The Board will analyze mega-issues by answering the following questions:

1. What do we know about the wants, needs and preferences of our constituents that are relevant to this decision?
2. What do we know about the current realities and evolving dynamics facing our constituents/community that is relevant to this decision?
3. What do we know about the capacity/strategic position of our school district that is relevant to this decision?
4. What are the ethical implications of our choices?

## **Five Year Planning Horizon**

### **Outcome-Oriented Goals and Strategic Objectives**

The following thinking represents goals for the next five years. They are areas in which the Gardiner Public School will explicitly state the conditions or attributes it wants to achieve. These



outcome statements will define, “what will constitute future success.” The achievement of each goal will move the school district toward realization of its Envisioned Future.

Strategic Objectives provide direction and actions on how the school district will accomplish its articulated goals. All strategies included in the strategic plan should be considered accomplishable at some point in the future. Strategic Objectives will be reviewed annually by the Gardiner Board of Trustees, staff and interested community members.

## **Goals of the Gardiner Public School:**

### **Goal Area 1: Enhanced Instructional Programs**

**Statement of Intended Outcome, Five years:** We have provided every opportunity available to our students to have access to a world-class education right here in Gardiner.

#### **Strategic Objectives – Two Year Plan:**

- We will improve curriculum through an alignment with a grade-to-grade transition structure to ensure the maximum impact on students.
- We will continue to incorporate Junior High and High School language experiences for students through opportunities within and outside of the academic schedule and the school day.
- We will provide opportunities for a variety of academic options not available at school, including but not limited to online courses and college/dual credit courses.
- We will increase cultural enrichment opportunities for students, including Native American education K-12, living history, and field trips.
- We will involve students in setting their educational goals and aspirations.
- We will identify and support efforts of early intervention for students that are struggling academically, socially, emotionally, or behaviorally.
- We will reimagine the school day to provide the opportunity for students to meet their educational goals and aspirations.
- We will utilize the resources within our extended community partners to provide enhanced educational opportunities for students.
- We will incorporate experiential learning in the curriculum with an emphasis on place-based learning, particularly in the areas of School to Work (in person or online) and outdoor activities.
- We will develop an effective, innovative K-12 technology instructional plan that incorporates:
  - Staff/Teacher training/professional development;
  - Opportunities for students to learn 21st century skills and critical literacy in order to be proficient in the digital age and to create content using visual media;

## **Goal Area 2: Legal, Business, and Fiscal Responsibility**

**Statement of Intended Outcome, Five Years:** Gardiner Public School has recognized that the community is changing. The tourism industry remains strong and has resulted in housing that was traditionally occupied by families are now rental units supporting short-term, transient occupants that do not utilize or support the school. There is a trending decline in enrollment and thus a decline in funding. Knowledge-based decisions are critical in navigating our legal, business, and fiscal responsibilities to all stakeholders..

### **Strategic Objectives – Two Year Plan:**

- We will create a Finance Committee that will be responsible for review, evaluation, and exploration of innovative ways to help support operations and manage risks appropriately; and for making fiscal recommendations to the full Board.
- We will make decisions that are responsible and reduce the risk to the school districts to as low as reasonably practicable.
- We will be transparent about our financial forecasts and impacts to our school districts and programming.
- We will work with our supporters and partners to leverage funding opportunities.

## **Goal Area 3: Technology**

**Statement of Intended Outcome, Five Years:** Gardiner Public School has made technology a priority for our students, staff, and community and have aligned our budget to ensure that we have the financial and human resources to meet our technology needs.

### **Strategic Objectives – Two Year Plan:**

- We will create a Technology Committee that will be responsible for continuous-research and exploration of innovative ways to enhance the programs and services we provide, review an annual Technology Plan that prioritizes our technology needs, reviews our strategic objectives on an ongoing basis, and makes knowledge-based recommendations to the Board that addresses the following areas:
  - Identify and use possible experts/consultants in our community that can assist us with our technology needs;
  - Ensure that our technology program meets the needs of all;
  - Seek input on technology from all users;
  - Identify possible grants and other funding;

- Ensure effective, high quality, high capacity connectivity/internet access in coordination with our Facilities Committee;
- Coordinate periodic technology audits/evaluations that examine all aspects of our technology from infrastructure, hardware, software, electrical, etc.;
- Develop a proposed budgeting and purchasing/replacement plan for the Board's consideration;
- Ensure technology systems/platforms are functional and effective for communication.

## **Goal Area 4: Recruitment and Retention of High Quality Staff**

**Statement of Intended Outcome, Five Years:** Gardiner Public School has a progressive recruitment program and retention incentives that attracts and retains high quality staff members that enhance our educational programming for our students and promote a positive, professional atmosphere.

### **Strategic Objectives – Two Year Plan:**

- To ensure that our staff remain motivated and enthusiastic about their positions within the District and committed to contributing to a positive environment, we will highlight the efforts and successes of our staff and students through staff and student recognition and school-wide incentives.
- We will maintain communication and support for staff from the administration and from parents.
- We will monitor our evaluation process and tools to ensure it continues to provide constructive input to our staff with a focus on improving instruction, support and programs that benefit our students.
- We will support and maintain a high quality professional development program that supports a culture of having well-educated and well-prepared staff.
- We will explore ways to incorporate and fund competitive wages and benefit programs for our staff.
- We will continuously enhance our psychologically safe school environment to create a culture where staff and administration work collaboratively and where we continuously promote teamwork, respect, professionalism and gratitude.
- We will work with the North Yellowstone Education Foundation and other local organizations to provide housing opportunities for teachers and other staff.

## **Goal Area 5: School/Community Relations**

**Statement of Intended Outcome, Five Years:** Gardiner Public School has developed a true partnership with the community where the community fully understands our needs and supports our programs and services and where the school likewise fully supports community efforts and initiatives.

**Strategic Objectives – Two Year Plan:**

- We will develop a Communications Plan that will identify strategies to carry out our initiatives identified throughout this Strategic Plan.
- We will develop a systematic approach to educating our staff and community members about the District's budget and business practices.
- We will identify community resources (arts, science, cultural, etc.) that may be willing and able to enhance our programs and services for our staff and students.
- We will use multiple forms of media to ensure that our communications, internally and externally, are effective, transparent, and user-friendly.

**Goal Area 6: Facilities**

**Statement of Intended Outcome, Five Years:** Gardiner Public School has developed and implemented a facilities plan with the necessary human and financial resources that meets the needs of our students, staff and community on an ongoing basis.

**Strategic Objectives – Two-Year Plan:**

- We will maintain a Facilities Committee that will be responsible for considering the needs, wants and preferences of our school and our community, developing a plan that prioritizes our facility needs, reviewing the following strategic objectives on an ongoing basis and making knowledge-based recommendations to the Board:
  - Leverage staff/volunteers to accommodate increased community use of facilities
  - Environmentally friendly enhancements to our existing facility and any future improvements to our school facilities;
  - Maintain flexibility in facility management to adapt to changing student populations, budget challenges, or other unforeseen circumstances in a manner that allows efficient operation while maintaining student learning opportunities;
  - Conduct routine security/safety audits to enhance the safety and security of our facilities and infrastructure;
  - Conduct facilities and maintenance analysis to set priorities for building and maintenance needs establishing short and long range priorities on immediate 5-, 10-, 20-, and 30-year increments.
  - Stay engaged in discussions regarding housing trends and needs in the greater community;
  - Continue to seek grant opportunities and leverage local partnerships for continued success and excellence.