THE POWER OF ONE

STUDENTS LEADING THE WAY

Greatness doesn’t just happen. It is created one step at a time. A skyscraper starts with one plan. A masterpiece starts with one simple brushstroke. And a student fully prepared to lead and serve begins with one community pulling together for the benefit of all. One teacher can inspire. One caring adult can support. One idea can change everything. And when we come together as one with students leading the way, we can accomplish the incredible.
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LETTER FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

Over the next five years, Columbus City Schools is embarking on a path that is guided primarily by our students and their families. We have developed a new Strategic Plan that outlines where we are going and how we will get there, all with a focus on achieving our mission: to ensure that each student is highly educated, prepared for leadership and service, and empowered for success in a global community.

This new Strategic Plan was developed over two years in collaboration with our entire community. We sought the input of hundreds of partners, colleagues, and community members as we assembled information and defined priorities. In this plan, we illustrate our Portrait of a Graduate, which is our North Star and outlines our hopes, dreams, and aspirations for all students as they matriculate through Columbus City Schools.

We know our students are the future of our community. Our plan is one that is led by students — meaning that our decision-making is governed by what students need to succeed. Our community has identified those skills that our graduates should embody: Adaptability, Communication, Creativity, Critical Thinking, Global Empathy, and Technology.

Throughout this Strategic Plan you will read about how we will ensure that everything students learn in the classroom and beyond builds on those core skills. Our mission, vision, and Portrait of a Graduate are the basis of how we operate every day. Our strategic priorities are the compass points that keep us focused and directed toward our goals.

The past two years have challenged all of us in ways we could not have imagined. But it also proved to us that we are up to the challenge. It takes just one teacher or one principal to identify a spark in a student that can uncover great potential. It will take the Power of One community joining together to set our students up for success, who then set our communities up for success. And in the coming years, we are now more prepared than ever to meet any challenge in the future head on — and succeed with our Students Leading the Way.

Dr. Talisa Dixon
Superintendent/CEO
LETTER FROM THE BOARD PRESIDENT

There has never been a time when our Columbus City Schools community – our students, families, teachers, and staff – has been more excited for the future. We spent the last two years building this Strategic Plan as our road map to the bright future we are building together.

As the governing and oversight body for Ohio’s largest school district, it is the duty of the Board of Education to keep our students pushing forward and advancing in the face of any challenge. During the pandemic, we chose to innovate and to meet that challenge by adopting changes rapidly and frequently. Over the last two years, the pandemic transformed what learning is, how it feels, and what it looks like.

Now, our students are showing us what success looks like, and what it will look like in the future. This new Strategic Plan puts students, and their achievements, in the center of everything we do. With Students Leading the Way, we are forging a path to build on our innovation and momentum and to meet our goal to be a model of urban education for the 21st century.

Our Columbus City Schools Board of Education is confident that together with Superintendent Dixon and her team, we can meet that goal. We are committed to the future of education, the future of our students, and the future of Columbus.

Jennifer Adair
President
WHO WE ARE

Ohio’s largest school district and third-largest in the Midwest

Serving the needs of more than 47,000 students

113 SCHOOLS

9,000 teachers and staff

21st superintendent, Dr. Talisa Dixon, 7-member Board of Education

WHO WE SERVE

We serve a diverse student population within the vibrant Columbus community of just over half a million people.

Approximately 1 in 6 of our students come from homes where English is not the primary language spoken in the family.

The top non-English languages spoken by the families we serve are Spanish, Somali, Nepali, Arabic, and French.

We serve more than 6,000 students who are classified as vulnerable youth – those who are homeless, in foster care, or in a temporary or emergency living situation.

Students identified with special needs make up around 18 percent of the student population.

8% of students are identified as gifted.

Columbus City Schools participates in the federal free breakfast and lunch program, serving more than 10.5 million meals annually and 60,000 meals daily to PreK-12 students.

Student Enrollment by Federal Ethnicity

- Black - 53%
- White - 21%
- Hispanic - 14%
- Multiracial - 8%
- Asian - 3%
- American Indian - <1%
- Pacific Islander - <1%
STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

ESTABLISHING OUR VISION

In December 2019, Superintendent Talisa Dixon and the Columbus City Schools Board of Education began the process to create a new Strategic Plan to establish and define the district’s goals and direction for the next several years. The process began with Dr. Dixon and her team engaging the locally based and nationally respected education organization Battelle for Kids to establish the Portrait of a Graduate, which defines the six attributes that embody the community’s hopes, dreams, and aspirations for all students.

In partnership with Battelle for Kids, Columbus City Schools established a Portrait Design Team comprised of more than 150 internal and external stakeholders who represent the various groups of our community including families, students, teachers, administrators, staff, partners, policymakers, and business leaders. This Design Team enabled CCS to engage diverse perspectives to build a shared vision for our students.

Over the course of the 2019-2020 school year, including virtual meetings during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Portrait Design Team explored the questions:

• What are the hopes, dreams, and aspirations that our community has for our young people?
• What are the skills and mindsets that our children need for success in this rapidly changing and complex world?
• What are the implications for the design of the learning experiences — and equitable access to those experiences — we provide in our school systems?

What resulted was a final Portrait of a Graduate unique to Columbus that includes six attributes that we envision for every CCS student to embody: Adaptability, Communication, Creativity, Critical Thinking, Global Empathy, and Technology.

Prepare
Establish timelines, tasks, participants, logistics, etc. (Fall/Winter 2019-2020)

Envision
What are the hopes, dreams, and aspirations for its students? (Winter/Spring 2019-2020)

Inquire
What is the current reality relative to the Portrait of a Graduate aspirations? (Fall/Winter 2020-2021)

Design/Develop
What are the priority areas of work going forward to make Portrait of a Graduate a reality? (Winter/Spring 2022)

Implement/Succeed
How does the work get resourced and organized and the progress monitored to realize the Portrait vision? (Fall 2021)
The Portrait of a Graduate is our North Star that ensures we prepare students for success, now and in the future. As a result of the extensive stakeholder engagement, the Portrait is a collective vision that articulates our community’s aspirations for every student in Columbus City Schools.

**SETTING OUR PRIORITIES**

With the Portrait of a Graduate established in the fall of 2020, Columbus City Schools set about to create new priorities and objectives that would focus the district on the work needed to realize this new student-centered vision.

Working with the Board of Education, and in partnership with Battelle for Kids, Dr. Dixon and her team developed four strategic priorities that detail specific actions the district will take to ensure that student achievement aligns with the Portrait of a Graduate.

Simultaneously, the Board began working with the Council of the Great City Schools to establish three distinct and measurable goals for the district, as well as “guardrails,” which are the methods and practices that the district will follow to meet the goals.

Assembling this set of goals, priorities, and objectives and the planned path to achieve them was a process that required gathering input from all stakeholders once again. The superintendent, her team, and the Board accessed the best research in the field on student achievement, met with hundreds of students and families, community partners, teachers, staff, principals, and administrators. Even during a global pandemic, CCS managed to engage a diverse group of stakeholders throughout the strategic planning process.

This years-long process to create the Portrait of a Graduate and accompanying priorities has resulted in an action-oriented plan that includes the best thinking and input from every group of stakeholders. It’s the strongest Strategic Plan Columbus City Schools has had and is a critical tool in the successful attainment of the district’s goals over the next five years.

**BOARD ADOPTS GOALS, GUARDRAILS, AND PORTRAIT OF A GRADUATE**

In April 2021, the Board of Education voted to officially adopt the Portrait of a Graduate along with its Board Goals and Guardrails. This action by the Board of Education signified its commitment to supporting the ambitious work ahead, as Columbus City Schools focuses on producing positive outcomes for all students.

**STUDENTS LEADING THE WAY**

At the heart of Columbus City Schools’ strategic planning work is the concept of “students leading the way.” Every decision we make and initiative we put forth will keep students at the center of our work — as they were during the process to create the Portrait of a Graduate and strategic priorities. Students will continue to be engaged in the process and help shape the opportunities offered to them. Students must have a voice in our district and be active participants in determining the outcomes we strive to achieve. Our students will lead Columbus City Schools into the future.
MISSION
Each student is highly educated, prepared for leadership and service, and empowered for success as a citizen in a global community.

VISION
A world-class model of public education that prepares all students to be Portrait-ready graduates and reach their full potential.
ADAPTABILITY
Our students will be agile in thoughts and actions, responding productively to positive and negative feedback while balancing diverse views to reach workable solutions.

COMMUNICATION
Our students will effectively express thoughts and ideas using oral, written, and nonverbal skills while being active listeners able to decipher meaning and intention.

CREATIVITY
Our students will be imaginative and explore original ideas and innovative solutions by transcending traditional thoughts, patterns, and relationships.

CRITICAL THINKING
Our students will analyze and apply evidence-based reasoning to understand “big picture” challenges and how solutions affect other parts of a system.

GLOBAL EMPATHY
Our students will value and engage diverse cultures and unique perspectives through mutual respect and open dialogue while taking action to make the world more equitable and inclusive.

TECHNOLOGY
Our students will leverage traditional and emerging technology to consume, create, communicate, and connect while practicing responsible citizenship in an increasingly digital world.
The Board of Education adopted three measurable goals that align with the district’s mission and vision and support the Portrait of a Graduate. The Board of Education will continually monitor the district’s progress toward achieving these goals and evaluate the target outcomes annually.

**STRENGTHEN READING PROFICIENCY**
The percentage of third-grade students proficient in Reading on the Ohio State Test will increase from 43% in School Year 2018-2019 to 55% by June of 2026.

**DEVELOP PORTRAIT-READY GRADUATES**
The percentage of the Class of 2028 who earn the Portrait of a Graduate Seal will increase from 0% in June 2022 to 25% by June 2028.

**CLOSE OPPORTUNITY GAPS**
The percentage of 4-year graduation cohort students who complete state and district graduation requirements will increase from 81.2% in August 2020 to 86% in August 2026.
STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

WHOLE-CHILD FOCUSED
Columbus City Schools will design and implement curriculum with a holistic approach so that students find their education more relevant, rewarding, and rigorous.

EQUITABLE OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL
Columbus City Schools will ensure equitable outcomes for all students and employees in order to create communities that promote excellence, personal and professional growth, and a culture of belonging.

STRONG LEARNING COMMUNITIES IN EVERY REGION
Columbus City Schools will strengthen a high-quality, interdependent set of learning communities so that within and among these centers of growth are reliable sources of support, identity, and hope.

AUTHENTIC ENGAGEMENT
Columbus City Schools will actively engage all stakeholders to ensure that every experience with the district engenders mutual trust, develops quality relationships, and strengthens collective support for the benefit of our students.

FOUNDATIONAL SYSTEMS OF SUPPORT
Columbus City Schools will identify strategic objectives within its business and operations teams to provide a foundation of support that enables the organization to produce its targeted student outcomes.
WHOLE-CHILD FOCUSED
Columbus City Schools will design and implement curriculum with a holistic approach so that students find their education more relevant, rewarding, and rigorous.

Objective 1
Columbus City Schools will ensure the students are taught and learn from a guaranteed and viable curriculum delivered by highly skilled teachers.

Objective 2
Columbus City Schools will ensure students demonstrate Portrait of a Graduate attributes as defined by the Portrait of a Graduate PreK-12 Continuum.

Objective 3
Columbus City Schools will ensure all students have access to their neighborhood school or school of choice.
Columbus City Schools will implement a comprehensive equity model that utilizes data to develop high-leverage strategies to transform systems that impact equity across all organizational levels.

**Objective 1**

Columbus City Schools will implement a system-wide attendance improvement strategy focused on prevention and early intervention to reduce the chronic absentee rate.

**Objective 2**

Columbus City Schools will implement a human capital strategy to further develop a high-quality staff that is culturally responsive and increasingly reflects the cultural background of its students.
Columbus City Schools will strengthen building-based leadership quality across all its schools through the implementation of the Wallace Principal Pipeline strategies.

Objective 2

Columbus City Schools will provide more flexibility, choice, and relevant course offerings for improved student learning experiences.

Objective 3

Columbus City Schools will collectively improve the district’s implementation of a 21st century school culture.
AUTHENTIC ENGAGEMENT
Columbus City Schools will actively engage all stakeholders to ensure that every experience with the district engenders mutual trust, develops quality relationships, and strengthens collective support for the benefit of our students.

Objective 1
Columbus City Schools will grow and strengthen school-based family engagement.

Objective 2
Columbus City Schools will develop a multi-tiered engagement strategy for marginalized students and their families (including, but not limited to, New American/immigrant families, displaced students, and other historically underserved youth).

Objective 3
Columbus City Schools will promote and strengthen its ecosystem of community engagement, increasing the depth and quantity of resources and partners in each region.
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