

## Colorado Graduation Guidelines Promising Practice

**District** Roaring Fork RE-1

**School**

**Contact Information**

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**Title of artifact** Strategic Plan Summary – Roaring Fork

**Type of practice** Implementation process

### Brief description of artifact

This summary describes the foundations (mission, commitments, and values), results-based approach, process, result, monitoring plan, data development agenda, and recommendations of the district's strategic planning efforts.

### Brief description of the process resulting in the artifact

Roaring Fork underwent a visioning process which led to a strategic planning process. A local nonprofit organization facilitated meetings to involve all stakeholders. Following strategic planning, this summary was developed to recap the strategic planning process and outcomes.

#### ***Types of practices in the CDE Graduation Guidelines Promising Practices collection:***

1. Communications, such as announcements to school community and business community
2. Implementation process plans, such as strategic plans and timelines
3. Implementation tools connected to local graduation requirements, for instance:
  - Testing implementation (ACT, AP, ASVAB, CMAS, IB, PARCC, SAT), such as classes and retreats, administration procedures and agreements
  - Capstone implementation, such as instructions and samples
  - Concurrent Enrollment implementation, such as classes and agreements
  - Career/academic assessment implementation (e.g., ACCUPLACER, COMPASS, Work Keys), such as administration procedures and agreements
  - Industry Certificates implementation, such as samples
4. Local graduation requirements aligned with state guidelines, such as board policies
5. Regarding students with exceptionalities
6. Other: \_\_\_\_\_



## **Strategic Plan Summary Report May 22, 2014**

### **Strategic Plan Overview**

The 2014 Roaring Fork School District Strategic Plan is the culmination of a year-long community engagement process that involved nearly 1500 parents, community members, teachers, students and district administrators in a comprehensive discussion of where the district should be heading, how it should get there, and how it should measure progress. The outcomes of that process are summarized below and outlined in more detail in the accompanying documents. What follows is an explanation of the key ingredients of the plan, how they fit together, and how they are designed to be monitored as part of an ongoing continuous improvement process.

### **Mission and Commitments**

Our Mission: Roaring Fork schools will ensure that every student develops the enduring knowledge, skills and character to thrive in a changing world.

#### Priorities from Community Visioning:

- High academic standards: academic knowledge/skills, basic skills, college readiness
- Critical thinking skills: problem-solving, creativity, and having the ability to work through difficult situations
- Character skills: resilience, determination, and the belief that they can succeed
- Social skills, collaboration and civic responsibility
- Attract and retain the best teachers
- Safe school environment
- Strong differentiated supports: struggling students, students with special needs, advanced students, English Language learners
- Hands-on, project-based, experiential learning

These priorities laid the foundation for a set of commitments that guided the rest of the

process, and the evidence of the commitments is woven throughout the remainder of the plan.

## Core Values

Throughout the visioning process, it was clear that RFSD is infused with strong values that are embodied in both the language people use to describe their hopes and visions, as well as in the behaviors and practices of the staff and community. The core set of values that emerged in this process are:

- High Expectations
- High Reliability
- Respect
- Transparency
- Equity
- Trust

Some of these values are clearly evident and deeply rooted already (e.g. respect and trust), while others are aspirational (e.g. equity and high expectations). Ideally, these values will become the source of “true north” when making decisions and guiding strategy as a district. To leverage their full power as a source of unity and focus for the district, it will be important to intentionally bring them into the everyday operations of school life, from the classroom to the boardroom. As they are invoked, their meaning becomes clearer and their impact grows deeper.

## Results-Based Approach

Following the approach laid out by Mark Friedman in his ground-breaking work *Trying Hard is Not Good Enough*, RFSD has built its strategic plan on a framework that includes three levels of accountability: **population level, performance level, and process level**. At the population level, we began by defining the results that reflect what the community wants for the whole population of students in the district—those high-level outcomes all students must meet in order to fulfill the mission of having the “enduring knowledge, skills and character to thrive in a changing world.” These results are paired with measurable indicators used to assess progress toward them. At the performance level, the staff outlined strategies that build on the input of the community and that they believe are most likely to lead to the intended results. Progress on strategies will be monitored through performance measures, which are interim measures of progress on strategies that answer the questions of “How much have we done, how well have we done it, and is anyone better off because of it?” Overtime, specific performance targets will need to be established so that specific, measurable,

and time-bound goals can be set and achieved. Finally, at the process level, every strategy is further broken down in a set of concrete activities that must be taken to turn the strategy into demonstrable action. Activities lead toward measurable milestones that mark progress along the journey toward results.

The following outline explains the three levels of accountability and the corresponding measures involved:

<b>Level</b>	<b>Key Element</b>	<b>Measure</b>
Population	Result: A condition of well-being desired for all students in the district.	Indicator: A measure that helps quantify the achievement of a result.
Performance	Strategy: A coherent collection of actions that has a reasoned chance of improving results.	Performance Measure: A measure of how well a program, agency, or system is working.
Process	Activity: A concrete step that is necessary to carry out a strategy.	Milestone: A completed activity involved in the implementation of a strategy.

### **Turning the Curve and Gathering Public Input**

Once the high-level results were set, the leadership team went through a “turn the curve” exercise, where they analyzed the current baseline trends of results data, analyzed the root causes of the current data patterns, and identified potential strategies the district might use to improve the outcomes. A similar process was conducted with community members as well, and following on the strong public participation in the visioning meetings held in the fall of 2013, over 400 parents and community members gathered in April 2014 to help determine the kinds of strategies they felt would most likely lead to all RFSD students reaching the high expectations outlined in the district’s set of student results. These input sessions in Basalt, Carbondale, and Glenwood Springs generated a list of hopes and ideas that school and district leaders then analyzed and refined into a set of specific strategies for how best to achieve the results for all students. The combination of public input and educator expertise showed remarkable overlap, and provided a strong foundation for building the overall strategic plan.

### **The Strategic Plan**

The Strategic Plan is presented here as a series of layers or views that move from broad overview to detailed action plan. These views also play different roles, providing

a **theory of action** (Strategic Plan Summary), an **alignment of efforts** (Strategy Summary), and a **project management** tool (RFSD Strategic Plan Google Doc).

While the Board will spend most of its time reviewing the higher level summaries of the plan, the layout and rationale of the work plan are worth clarifying. In the plan, each Strategic Pillar is broken down into strategies, and each strategy is broken down further into the actions that are required to implement the strategy. Actions are given a relative priority and color coded as “high, low, or no” based on three factors: whether it provides high leverage towards outcomes, whether it is core to the school district's mission and competencies, and whether it is within the district’s locus of control and therefore uniquely positioned to influence activity.

Each activity is also given a start and end date, which are established based on the natural sequence of related activities (e.g. “implement assessments” must necessarily follow “develop assessments”) as well as on the capacity of the district in terms of time, people and money. Milestones are identified that define what success and/or completion means for that activity, and responsibility is assigned for monitoring that activity. Progress will be reported through the % Complete line as the work unfolds, and oversight is assigned to a specific person or people to oversee completion of the activity.

Strategy	Activity	Priority (High, Low, No)	Start	End	Milestone	% Complete	Individual Responsible	Performance Measure
Create a culture of college and career readiness							High School Principals, MS/HS Counselors and PCP Director	College and Career “going rate”: Increased numbers of college and career pursuits; CDHE College Enrollment and Retention
	Introduce or expand college/career advising in schools (ICAP, etc)	High	Fall 2014	Ongoing	College advising program in all high schools		High School Principals, MS/HS Counselors and PCP Director	
	Parent and community engagement and education around college and career readiness	Low	Fall 2015	Ongoing	All parents attend sequence of college/career prep meetings prior to grade 12		High School Principals, MS/HS Counselors and PCP Director	
	Coordinate volunteers to provide college/career support	Low	Fall 2016	Ongoing	Secure external partnership to coordinate volunteer		High School Principals, MS/HS Counselors	

## Monitoring for Continuous Improvement

**Dashboards:** A strategic plan is only as good as the quality and quantity of time that one spends monitoring and adapting it. Developing an effective monitoring process for RFSD at multiple levels will be a critical component of the district’s ongoing success. To assist in that process, the Board will need to rely on clear and informative

dashboards of information that help monitor the high-level results set out in the strategic plan. Enclosed is a sample of what such a dashboard might look like. The staff has included the development of such dashboards in the plan itself that is scheduled to occur this summer. While these dashboards are fairly straightforward in some ways—they are linked directly to the results and indicators themselves and are fairly limited in number—there are nuances to be considered in the ways the data is sliced and presented. Over time the Board should consider what the ideal level of disaggregation is, what types of trends to include, and what types of comparisons to use. This will come with continued review of the data.

Review Cycles: Since most of the indicator data that tracks the results is updated annually, the cycle of review at the results level will be annual as well. Best practice suggests creating a ritual around an **annual review of population results**, where data is released, reviewed, and lessons are learned, and strategies are updated. Since the annual review will always be a set of lagging indicators—data that shows what has already happened—it will be important to also have at least **bi-annual performance updates** on how the interim measures are trending, both in terms of academics and character as well as in the areas of talent development, strategic use of resources, and community partnership. Finally, we recommend having **quarterly process updates**, from district leadership on the progress of completing the activities related to key strategies, and any insights gained from their implementation. These reports will help drive accountability at the executive committee level as well as at the school level, keeping a focus on the “important but not urgent” work outlined in the plan that can counteract the tyranny of the urgent that can so often take over. The preparation of reports will also provide a useful opportunity to ensure the various parts of the plan are reviewed in an integrated manner to best leverage the various efforts, preventing both duplication of efforts as well as potential fragmentation.

The Board will need to strike the right balance of establishing these as both learning opportunities for the district as well as moments of accountability. Creating a spirit of inquiry, support, and rigorous commitment to achieving results will be necessary to ensure the optimal conditions for district-wide improvement.

### **Data Development Agenda**

As the district reviews its progress over time, and dives deeper into the data that has been identified thus far, there will inevitably be realizations around what data is missing, and what information the Board and staff will need in the future to truly understand current realities and drive change toward an intended future. Tracking that on a data development agenda, which is carried out by core staff at the district level—possibly in

partnership with other data providers and consumers in the area—will become an important addition to the overall strategic planning process, and require its own tracking mechanisms to ensure the best efforts are made to gather the data that is needed in service of district improvement.

### **Final Recommendations**

While district staff are to be commended for the thoroughness and thoughtfulness of the plan, it should be acknowledged that it is a work in process and will necessarily need to be adapted and improved over time. There are already a number of known “design challenges” that have been identified and which will take some time to remedy over the summer and into the fall. These include:

- Tightening up the alignment between strategies and performance measures to make sure the data from the measures is a valid assessment of progress on the strategy
- As baselines are established for the performance measures, they will also need to be translated into performance targets so that the proper rate of progress can be properly assessed
- Responsibility for ensuring task completion is too diffuse to be completely reliable at this point, and more focused leadership for each of the main strategies will need to be identified as the plan rolls out
- There are a number of areas that lack key performance measures, including the area of student engagement, that will need to be identified, ideally through existing efforts such as the student survey

In closing, we hope that your monitoring of the strategic plan provides a welcomed routine and a refreshing review of what matters most to the success of the district. Done well, it is neither so frequent that it feels overly consuming, nor so infrequent that it feels nearly forgotten. Ideally it is a reassuring routine, like a set of adventurers orienteering through an unknown landscape who regularly check their map, line up a spot in the distance as a next milestone, and who then trudge confidently along their route toward their goal. We wish you all the best in that noble pursuit.