


OUR CHILDREN, OUR SCHOOLS, OUR FUTURE



GRPS 
my choice®
Grand Rapids Public Schools

2022-2027 STRATEGIC PLAN



INTRODUCTION

2020 was a time of change for our country, our school district, and our families. This period of uncertainty also brought opportunities for innovation, growth and renewal.



GRPS hired a new superintendent who, while addressing the ever-changing demands to reassess and reimagine learning, engaged our community in a strategic planning process to position GRPS for the future.

The strategic planning process was based on extensive engagement of our community. Over the past year, we have conducted community surveys, focus groups, design sessions, community feedback sessions, open houses, and virtual idea exchanges. We also engaged community partners in planning teams alongside our district staff.

The process began in April of 2021 with an analysis phase, including assessment of our past performance and perceptions of stakeholders throughout our community.

We conducted a community-wide survey with over 1,300 respondents. We also held focus groups with representative community members from the following groups.



STAKEHOLDER FOCUS GROUPS

- ◆ Students
- ◆ Parent Action Leaders
- ◆ Principals
- ◆ Grand Rapids Education Association - Teachers
- ◆ GRESPA (facilities, operations and food service staff)
- ◆ Grand Rapids Education Association - Ancillary and other GRPS Unions
- ◆ Affordable Housing Advocates
- ◆ Business Leaders
- ◆ Higher Education
- ◆ Community Organization Leaders
- ◆ Kent School Services Network
- ◆ GRPS Equity Team
- ◆ Municipal Leaders
- ◆ Extended Learning Organization Network
- ◆ Neighborhood Associations
- ◆ Faith Leaders
- ◆ Foundations
- ◆ To College Through College / Our Community's Children



STRENGTHS AND ASSETS TO LEVERAGE FOR THE FUTURE

The strategic planning process provides an opportunity to celebrate and honor the many strengths and assets of our school district and our community. We will leverage these as we work collaboratively to implement this plan.

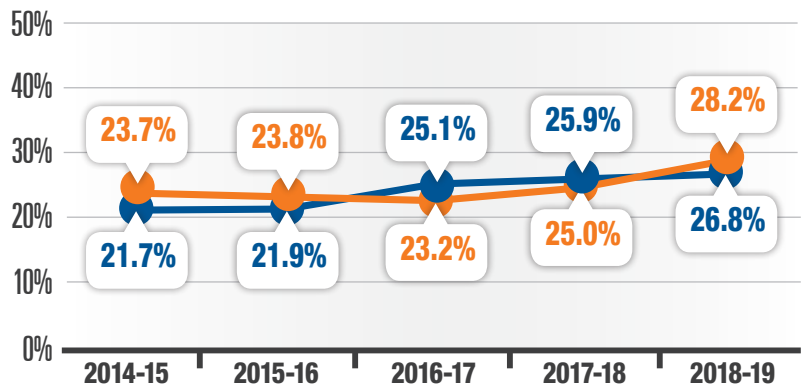


STRENGTHS AND ASSETS OVERVIEW

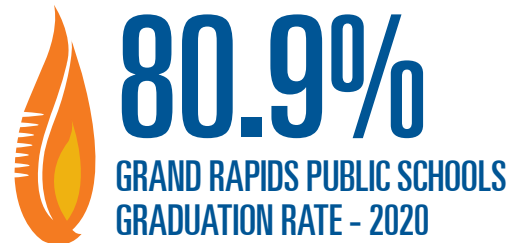
Our student performance on state assessments in 3rd grade has shown steady increases between 2015 and 2019 as demonstrated on the adjacent chart. Students performed at about the same levels in English/Language Arts (including reading) as in Math.



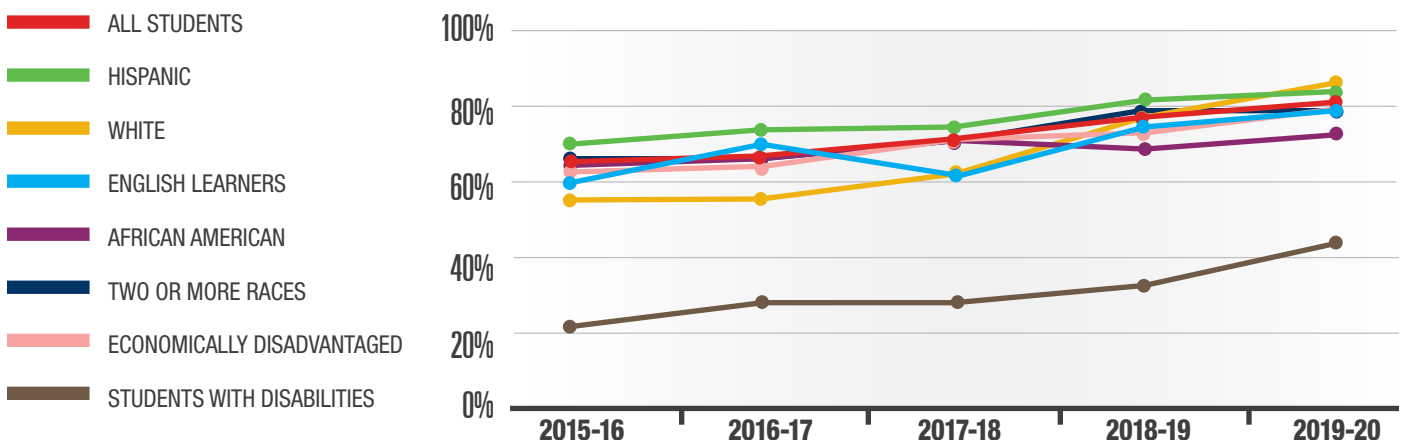
3RD GRADE GRPS Performance on M-STEP ELA and Math (% Proficient + Advanced)



Our high school graduation rates have steadily increased for all groups of students as demonstrated on the chart below. Our overall graduation rate of 80.9% in 2020 is closing in on the Michigan graduation rate of 82%, although it is below the most recently reported U.S. graduation rate of 85%.

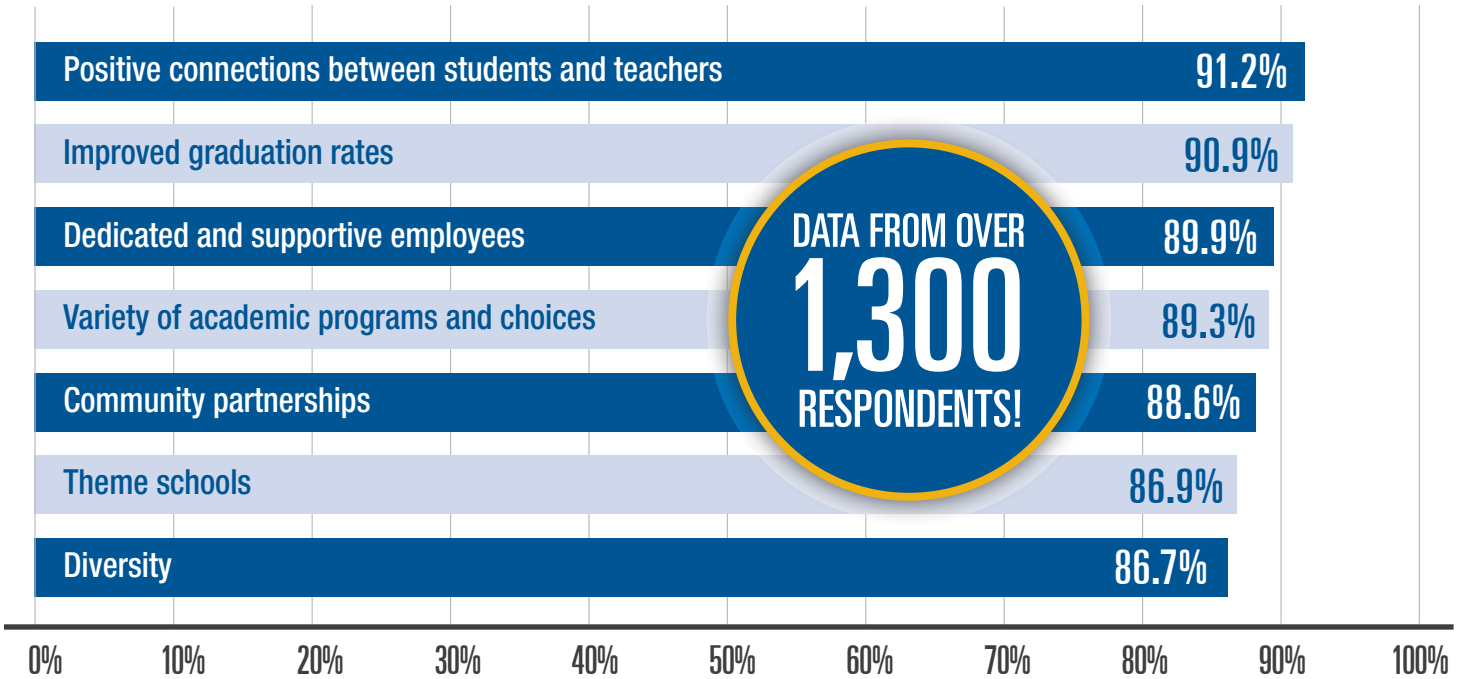


2016-2020 Graduation Rate by Year



The entire community was provided the opportunity to rate their perceptions of the district through an online survey. The highest rated strengths and assets among the over 1,300 respondents are shown below.

GRPS Strategic Plan Community Input Survey Summer 2021 Percentage Who Agree or Strongly Agree that Item is an Asset or Strength



A NUMBER OF ADDITIONAL STRENGTHS AND ASSETS WERE MENTIONED IN OUR STAKEHOLDER FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS.

- ◆ **District teachers and staff are viewed as caring, student-focused, and dedicated.** This was voiced by students, families, and community members. During the Covid pandemic in 2020 and 2021, teachers, principals and school staff went outside of their normal duties to support students and families, not only to access learning but also basic needs and services.
- ◆ **Grand Rapids is a community with a strong sense of pride that extends to the school district.** Community partners across faith, business, nonprofit, and government organizations are keen to work with the school district to support student success.
- ◆ **General academics are viewed as strong overall.** There is common acknowledgment of the increasing high school graduation rates.
- ◆ **GRPS provides a wide variety of academic choices for families that are appreciated and highly regarded.** The opportunity to choose options that best meet the needs of individual students is seen as a tremendous asset. The district is viewed as innovative in its efforts to define new programs that respond to student needs and interests.
- ◆ **Parent engagement is clearly a focus of the district with many opportunities for parents to be involved.**
- ◆ **Recently renovated facilities are seen as community assets.** There is a great deal of pride in the visual appeal and design of these buildings.





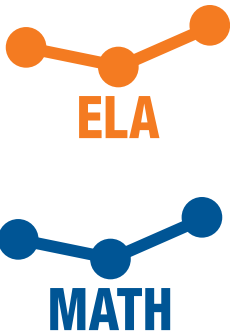
OPPORTUNITIES TO ENHANCE GRPS IN THE FUTURE

We have also taken honest stock of our opportunities to improve, and ensured this strategic plan is grounded in data and stakeholder input that identify the highest leverage areas of our work to enhance in the future.

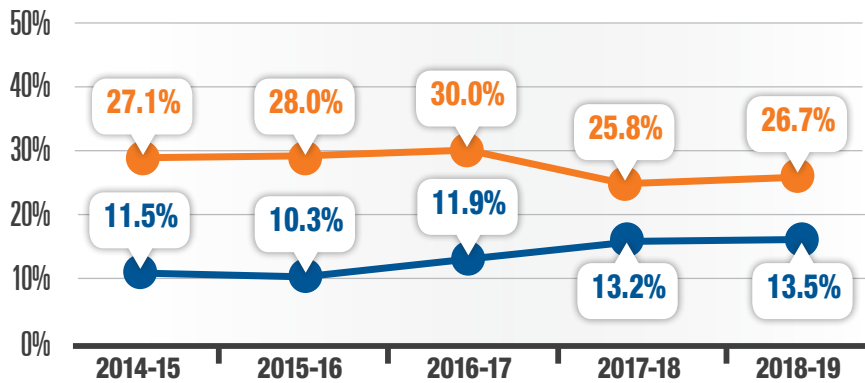


STUDENT SUCCESS

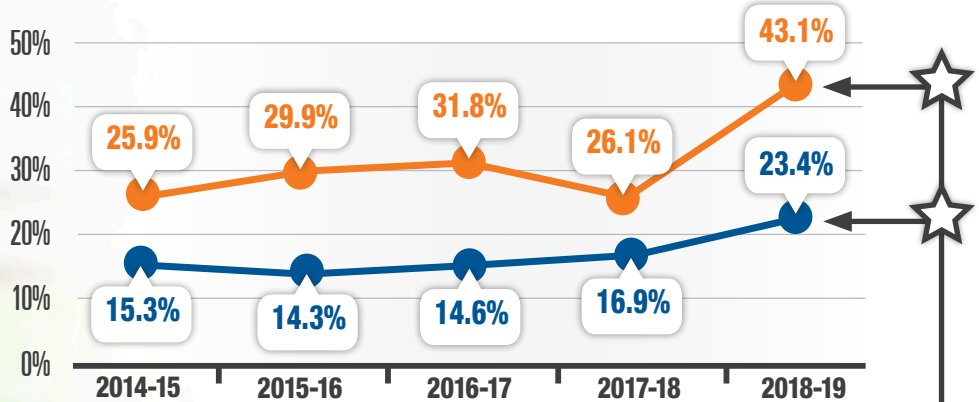
From 2015 to 2019 our student achievement on state assessments in 5th and 8th grade was relatively flat. Note that there was an assessment change in 8th grade so the results are not comparable to prior years. In these grades, our students performed at much lower levels in Math than in English/Language Arts.



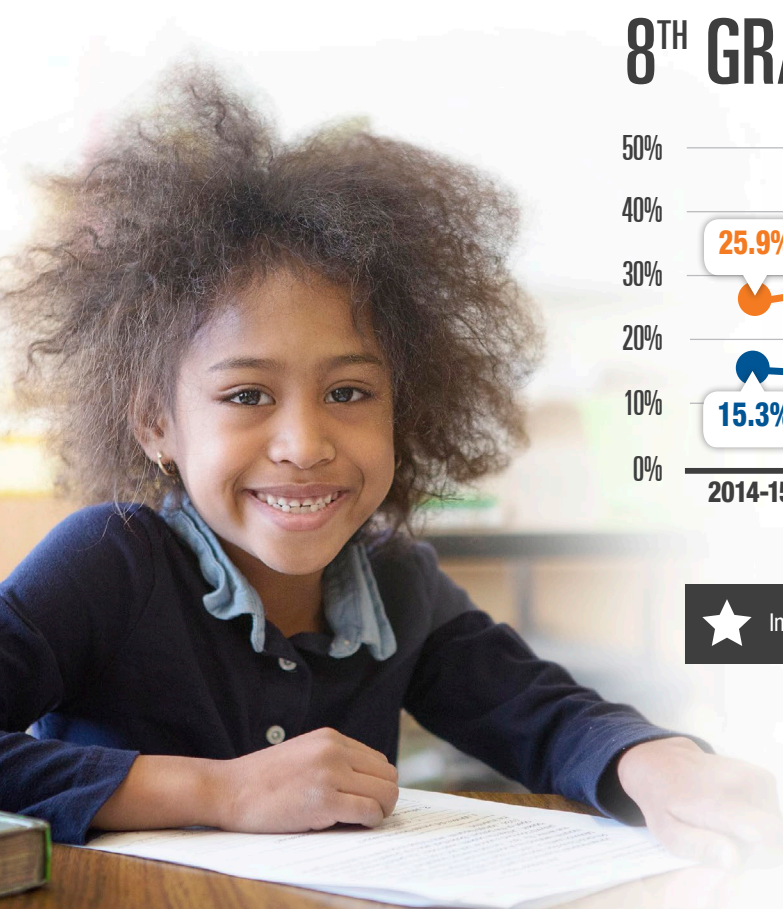
5TH GRADE GRPS Performance on M-STEP in ELA and Math (% Proficient + Advanced)



8TH GRADE GRPS Performance on M-STEP and PSAT in ELA and Math (% Proficient + Advanced)



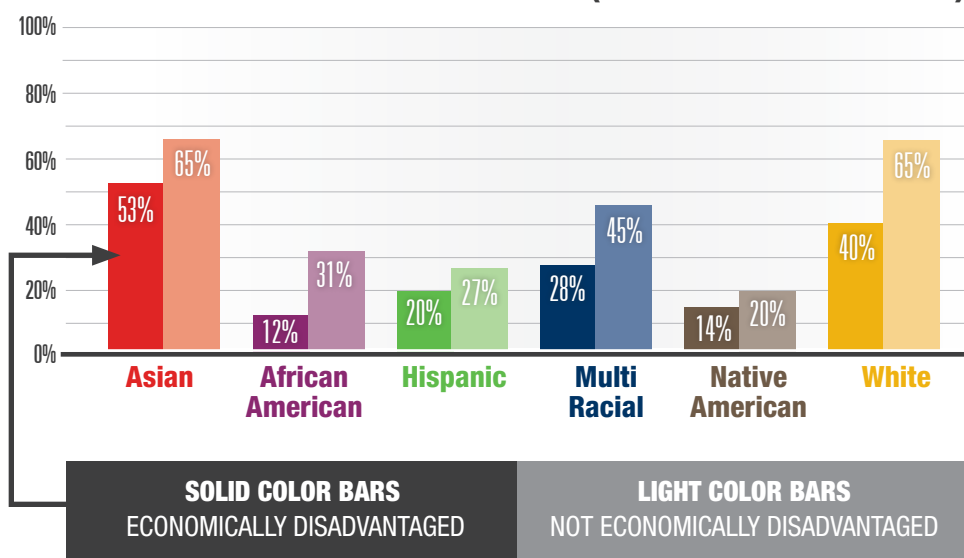
★ In 2018-19 the PSAT replaced M-STEP as the state assessment for 8th grade



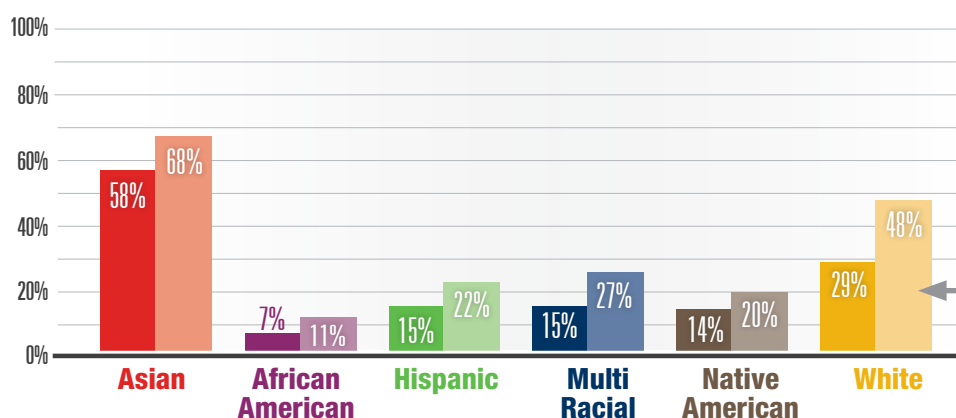
Not all of our students achieve at the same levels. Students from lower income families consistently achieve at lower levels than other students as illustrated by the solid bars on the adjacent charts.

However, even when considering differences in household income, our students who are African-American, Hispanic, and Native American perform at lower levels than Asian and White students.

GRADES 3-7 2019 ELA Performance on M-STEP All Students (% Proficient + Advanced)



GRADES 3-7 2019 Math Performance on M-STEP All Students (% Proficient + Advanced)

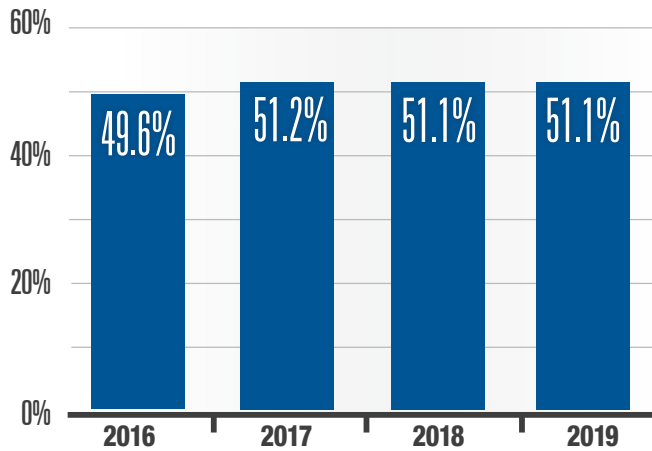


Students in our high schools have the opportunity to participate in a variety of advanced academic coursework, including Advanced Placement, dual enrollment, and International Baccalaureate courses. The students in Advanced Placement and dual enrollment courses reflect our overall student population, but the student makeup of our International Baccalaureate courses includes a higher proportion of White and Asian students.

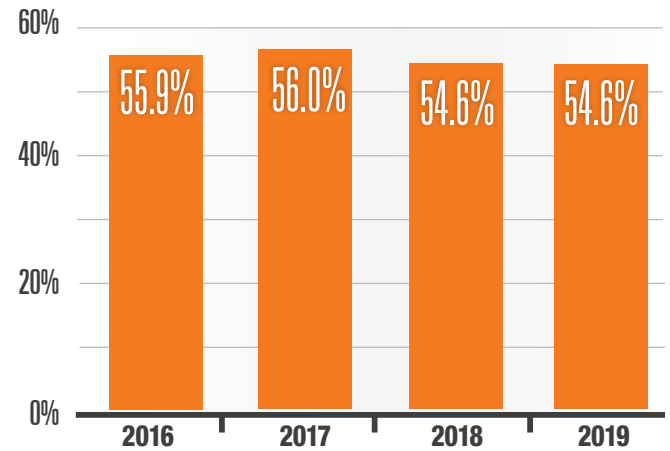
We also see disparities in our disciplinary practices. While African American students represent 32% of our overall student population, they represent 55% of the students who are expelled or suspended from school.

The proportion of our graduates who enroll in a 2- or 4-year college has remained fairly stable as seen in the graphs below. Our most recent rate of college enrollment within 6 months of high school graduation was 51.1%, which was below the national average of 66.2%.

% of GRPS High School Graduates Enrolled in College within **6 Months** of Graduation



% of GRPS High School Graduates Enrolled in College within **12 Months** of Graduation



We also value graduate options to move directly into work and/or career certification programs, including the military.

Reliable data to track our students' progress in these areas is not currently available.



Our focus group conversations surfaced some additional areas where we can enhance student success.

- ◆ While the many school options in GRPS are highly valued, schools that operate as traditional neighborhood schools have not always obtained the same level of district or community attention. Many stakeholders perceive a comparative lack of resources and student opportunities in our neighborhood schools, and in the past, theme schools have been heavily promoted while neighborhood schools have not. Additionally, the theme school application process can prove daunting and cumbersome for many families causing disparities in access.
- ◆ Some students and families experience cultural bias and a lack of inclusion in classroom, school, and district interactions. This not only creates an unwelcoming environment, but it results in students and families being excluded from programs and services that support their success.
- ◆ There are opportunities to better support students in preparing for life after high school graduation, whether that be immediately pursuing a college credential or a career pathway. Community stakeholders in the business, higher education, and philanthropic communities are poised to support greater focus in this area.
- ◆ The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in disruptions in learning for many students.

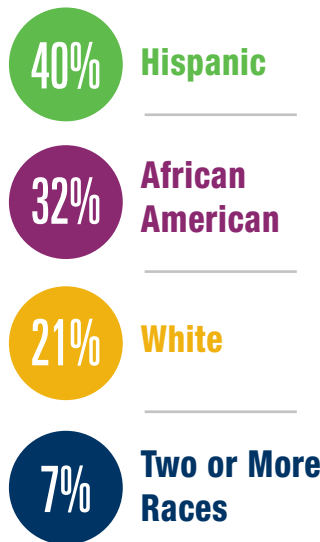
EMPLOYEE IMPACT

Focus groups with all stakeholders indicated that employee compensation and retention are significant problems across all employee groups.

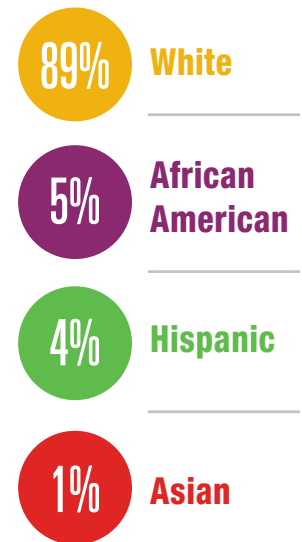
Students voice that extended teacher vacancies are negatively affecting their learning (even prior to the pandemic). Additionally, many stakeholders feel that the district is not allocating a sufficient number of non-teaching staff to meet student needs, such as counselors, social workers, custodians, and maintenance staff.

As shown in the adjacent chart, the percentage of teachers who are White (89%) is dramatically greater than the percentage of students who are White (21%). Across the United States, the proportion of teachers who are White exceed the proportion of students who are White; however, the national teaching pool is 79% White while 89% of GRPS teachers are White. Exacerbating this problem, in the 2020-21 school year, teachers of color were more likely to leave GRPS and less likely to be hired.

**2020-21 GRPS
Students by Race/
Ethnicity**



**2020-21 GRPS
Teachers by Race/
Ethnicity**



Students and caregivers in focus groups expressed that the lack of demographic representation among school-based employees creates a climate that can feel exclusive and culturally unresponsive.

ENGAGING OUR STAKEHOLDERS

Community partnerships provide expanded opportunities to meet student needs. There are many ready, willing, and capable community partners in Grand Rapids, but the internal GRPS systems to engage and leverage partners are sometimes circuitous and inconsistent.

We have an opportunity to enhance parent and community engagement in decisions about our schools, particularly in our neighborhood schools.

Our students also express an interest in having greater influence over their education. Students in strategic planning focus groups offered astute perceptions about enablers and barriers to their learning that could be leveraged for change.





OUR EQUITY VISION

Our strategic plan development was guided by an Equity Vision Statement that details our aspirations for our district, our scholars, our staff, and our families.



EQUITY VISION STATEMENT

Grand Rapids Public Schools will implement equitable and culturally sustaining practices and strategies to ensure that ALL GRPS scholars — inclusive of race, color, age, religion, national origin, ethnicity, language, immigration status, ability, sex, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, socioeconomic background, and mobility — are educated, productive, and self-directed members of society. We will remove barriers contributing to disproportionate outcomes by incorporating anti-racist and inclusionary practices. The diverse identities of scholars will be valued, celebrated, and represented throughout the district in order to ensure a sense of belonging.

“We will remove barriers contributing to disproportionate outcomes by incorporating anti-racist and inclusionary practices.”





OUR STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

Following our analysis, a group of over 100 community stakeholders including students, family members, principals, district administrators, and community organization leaders participated in a session to craft a draft strategic plan framework.



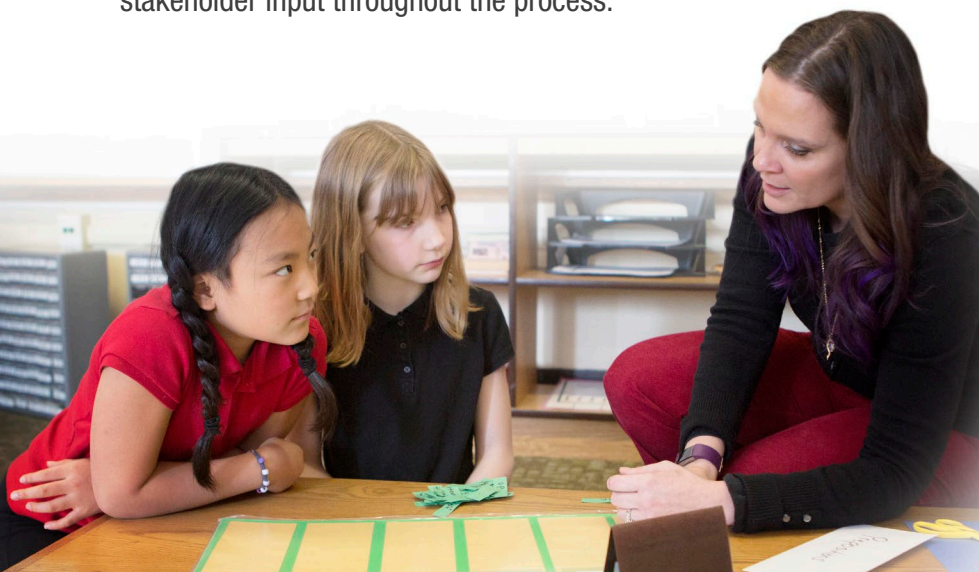
FRAMEWORK

This framework was then tested through community input sessions with employees, families, and community members at schools, neighborhood associations, and community organizations across Grand Rapids. In addition to the in-person sessions listed below, we also conducted a virtual meeting for the general public, a virtual meeting specifically for employees, and an online survey.

Representative students also discussed the strategic plan framework and provided insights on how the district could best address their interests and aspirations. Student sessions were held during the school day at every GRPS high school as well as with students at Bridge Street Ministries and the Boys and Girls Club.

After analyzing all of the stakeholder input and incorporating the recommended changes, our Board of Education adopted a set of priority outcomes, strategic themes, and objectives designed to attain our equity vision.

Multi-dimensional teams of district staff and community leaders then worked to develop strategic initiatives to achieve these objectives, continuing to incorporate stakeholder input throughout the process.



COMMUNITY INPUT SESSIONS

- ◆ CA Frost Middle High
- ◆ City High Middle
- ◆ Grand Rapids Montessori High
- ◆ Grand Rapids Museum High
- ◆ Grand Rapids University Prep Academy
- ◆ Innovation Central High
- ◆ Ottawa Hills High
- ◆ Southwest Middle High
- ◆ Union High
- ◆ Garfield Park Neighborhood Association
- ◆ Neighborhood Association Leaders
- ◆ Grand Rapids Association of Educational Office Personnel
- ◆ Grandville Avenue Arts and Humanities
- ◆ Padres Fuertes/Strong Fathers
- ◆ GRPS University
- ◆ Southwest Community Campus (Elementary, Middle, High)
- ◆ Hispanic Center of Western Michigan
- ◆ LINC UP
- ◆ Treetops Collective with Youth
- ◆ National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
- ◆ Tribal Council Leaders



THE STRATEGIC PLAN


We will attain our Equity Vision by driving our strategic plan toward a set of priority student outcomes that represent our greatest opportunities to enhance student success.




PRIORITY STUDENT OUTCOMES

These priority student outcomes will be defined by measurable progress indicators, and our performance on these outcomes will be reported to our community annually.


 **Increase** literacy proficiency

 **Reduce** academic disparities for Black and Latino students

 **Increase** student empowerment, belonging, and agency

 **Increase** math proficiency

 **Reduce** Black students exclusionary discipline

 **Increase** successful transitions from high school to college or career

STRATEGIC THEMES

Based upon our data and stakeholder input, we have identified six Strategic Themes that represent the highest leverage areas of district practice that we must enhance to achieve these priority outcomes. Each strategic theme is defined by a set of specific objectives, which are detailed on the following pages.



Meet holistic student needs

We recognize that our student success goes beyond academic achievement, and it is our responsibility to acknowledge and support our students' emotional, behavioral, mental, and physical health.

OBJECTIVES

- ◆ Increase student engagement and influence
- ◆ Empower families to support students
- ◆ Expand direct supports and services for student success and wellness



Optimize and value all school options

While our theme schools are recognized as innovative approaches to address the interests of our community and provide opportunities for our students, our neighborhood schools should be afforded the same level of attention, pride, and innovation.

OBJECTIVES

- ◆ Ensure all GRPS schools are valued options for families



Ensure equitable access and outcomes

While our students do not have the same needs and interests, they must all have equitable learning experiences and opportunities that lead to success.

OBJECTIVES

- ◆ Create equitable systems to distribute resources to schools based on student needs
- ◆ Incorporate anti-racist and inclusionary practices that advance student participation in programs and opportunities



Enhance curriculum and program opportunities

As we emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic, now more than ever we must ensure that our learning systems lead to student mastery and preparation for an ever-changing world.

OBJECTIVES

- ◆ Ensure all students experience an aligned, culturally responsive curriculum at or above grade level
- ◆ Ensure curriculum and academic programs align with college and career readiness
- ◆ Expand applied, hands-on opportunities that align with student interests



Cultivate an engaged, impactful, more diverse workforce

In order for students to succeed, we must cultivate a district culture and design human resource processes that value our employees.

OBJECTIVES

- ◆ Increase effectiveness of hiring processes with an emphasis on diversity
- ◆ Create a culture that demonstrates value of all employees
- ◆ Establish employee roles and competencies for effective district programs and services

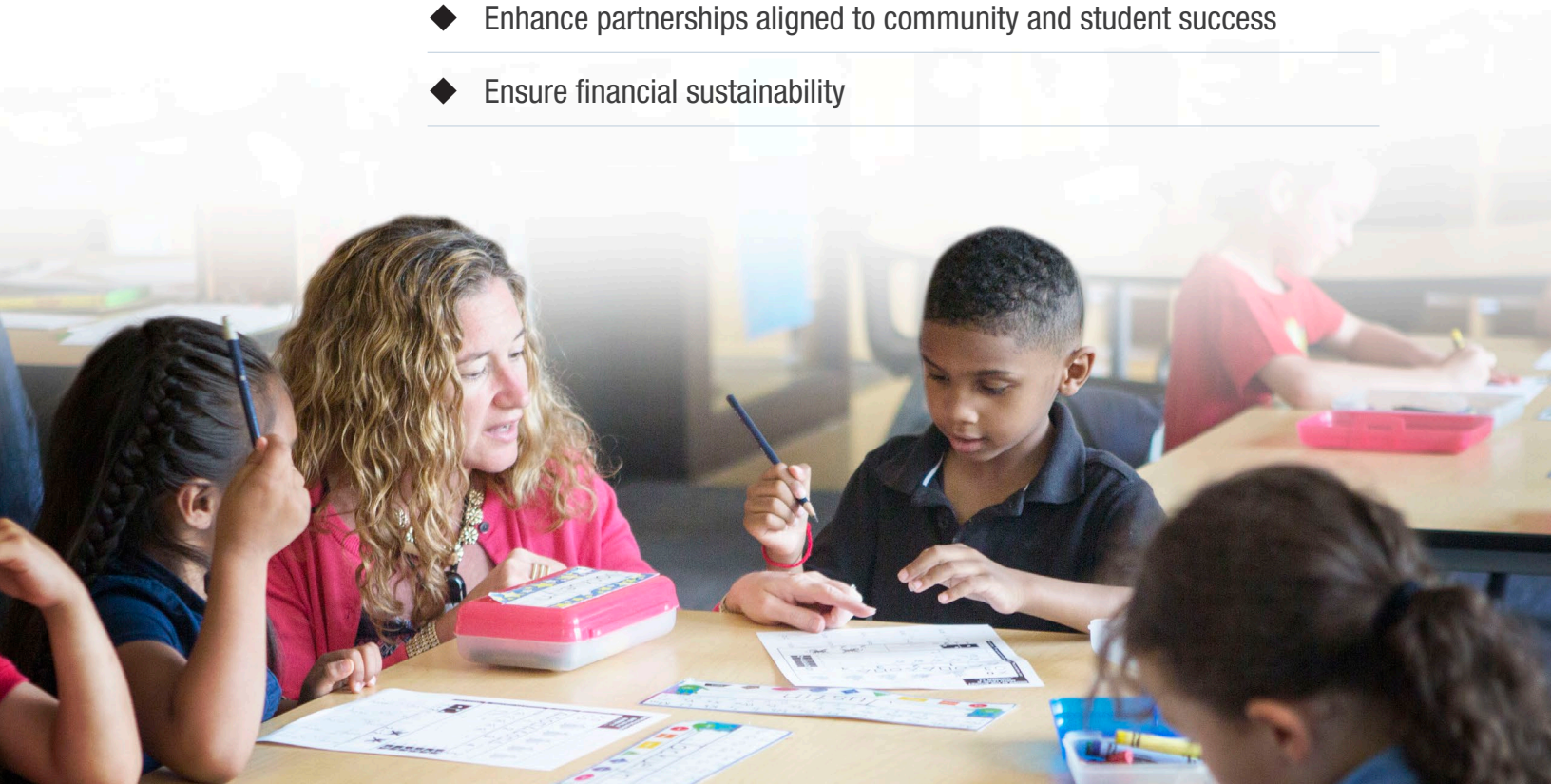


Create a culture of trust, collaboration, and stewardship

As stewards of public resources, we must build trust by engaging our community as partners and customers and ensure our financial sustainability.

OBJECTIVES

- ◆ Ensure open, responsive, and transparent practices
- ◆ Enhance partnerships aligned to community and student success
- ◆ Ensure financial sustainability





IMPLEMENTATION

Our strategic plan objectives will be accomplished through a set of comprehensive strategic initiatives that will be implemented in stages over the next five years.

We will continue to provide our community with details on this phased implementation and our progress throughout the life of our strategic plan. Please visit www.grps.org/strategic-plan for the most current strategic plan information.



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