



**Roseville Area Schools**  
*Quality Teaching & Learning for All*

## *Office of the Superintendent*

*Dr. John Thein*

*Executive Assistant: Merrie Zakaras*

*Phone: 651-628-6452 FAX: 651-635-1659*

June 4, 2010

TO: Roseville Area School Board

FROM: John Thein, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: Superintendent EPAC II Recommendations

**“Vision without action is a dream. Action without vision is simply passing the time. Action with vision is making a positive difference.”** Joel Baker

### **Mileposts and Cornerstones**

As Roseville Area Schools enters the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it is clear that District 623 must possess a clear vision of where it is heading and a plan of purposeful action steps to ensure that the District Strategic Roadmap is followed. I am proposing a number of action steps or “mileposts” that will assist the District in its journey along the vision highway. These “mileposts” or markers will help reassure the community that the District is moving forward, making progress and adhering to the District Strategic Roadmap. The “mileposts” will be time bound with enough detail to provide outcomes but flexible enough to allow for necessary adjustments by staff as conditions change. Arrival at each of the “mileposts” will not mean the District has achieved its vision but will indicate steady movement toward the ultimate district destination of “Quality Teaching and Learning for All....Equity in All We Do.”

While “mileposts” will mark our road toward our District Vision, I believe the strategic direction of Roseville Area Schools needs to be built upon a solid foundation of “cornerstones” that will provide concrete and long-term support. Community members, parents, staff and students need reassurance that Roseville Area Schools is committed to following a strategic roadmap guided by the District Mission, Vision, Equity Vision, Values and CLEAR (goals) Strategic Directions.

## **Superintendent Recommendations**

**“Strategic planning will help you fully uncover your available options, set priorities for them and define the methods to achieve them.”**

Robert J. McKain

## **The Mileposts - Six to 18 months**

### **Milepost #1**

#### **Promote and adhere to the District Strategic Roadmap**

It is vital that Roseville Area Schools not only adopt the proposed District Strategic Roadmap but also adhere to and promote the DSR as a living and breathing document. I believe that successful organizations are built upon the bedrock of a guiding document of direction. The Roseville Area School Board and administration, with the advice and counsel from staff, parents, students and community members, constructed a District Strategic Roadmap that will provide an over arching set of clear and understandable (goals) strategic directions to govern our actions. The success of Roseville Area Schools is directly linked to how well the District is able to align its actions with the Mission, Vision, Equity Vision and Values delineated in the District Strategic Roadmap.

### **Milepost #2**

#### **Utilize the District Vision Cards**

Accepting accountability and reporting measureable results are concepts the District works to instill in our students. Can anything less be expected from the school district? It is my recommendation that Roseville Area Schools develop a set of Vision Cards that will lay out measurable leverage points designed to show the progress or lack of progress toward the District Vision. The results of the District Vision Cards will be reported to the Roseville Area School Board on an annual basis and will also be posted on the Roseville Area Schools' web page for community review and comment. I will also expect our buildings, programs and individual administrators to develop vision cards for their buildings, programs and personal growth.

### **Milepost #3**

#### **Allocate Roseville Area Schools' resources to align with the District Strategic Directions**

Alignment of district resources with the District Strategic Directions is not only the wise and prudent course of action; it is absolutely necessary if Roseville Area Schools hopes to position itself for success. While allocating funding is an important task for the School Board and district administrative team, it is also imperative that the District aligns its resources to follow the District Strategic Roadmap. Maximizing the use of district facilities, partnerships with other organizations and the efficient use and training of staff is essential to ensure the District is following the DSR (District Strategic Roadmap) in the most productive manner possible.

### **Milepost #4**

#### **Improve instruction for all students, at all levels and in all programs**

Roseville Area Schools prides itself on relevant, timely and differentiated instruction for all students. Even with a district-wide desire to improve our practice of instruction, it takes more than a “wish and a hope” to improve instructional skills.

I believe it is paramount that Roseville Area Schools continue its long-standing practice of working closely with Education Minnesota–Roseville to bring all district schools and programs into the Alternative Teacher Professional Pay System. This joint commitment of the District and the teachers to improve instruction and accountability is one of the key building blocks to eliminate the district achievement gap.

I am also recommending that Roseville Area Schools continue to provide unflagging support of the Fairview Educational Development Center. In the medical profession general practitioners seek the advice and counsel of “specialists” in order to provide the best treatment possible. The EDC is staffed with instructional specialists who assist classroom teachers in providing the finest instruction possible to all district students.

I will also be recommending Roseville Area Schools develop a cultural competence (Domain Five) rubric based on the Charlotte Danielson Framework for school improvement to assist teaching staff in meeting the District Equity Vision.

### **Milepost #5**

#### **Ensure that the Rigor, Relationships and Relevance (“3 R’s”) will be part of each learner’s educational experience during their time in Roseville Area Schools**

Large organizations sometimes lose sight of the individual needs of their members. Roseville Area Schools is no different than many other school districts in that we sometimes “focus on the forest and overlook the trees.” I believe it is important that each learner of the 623 Family be offered a rigorous educational experience that is relevant and meaningful.

No student is an island unto themselves and, with that in mind, I will be asking our professional learning communities to create challenging learning opportunities that will promote student learning cohorts at the secondary level in one of the STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, Mathematics) areas.

I am also recommending the District develop a modern language cohort at the elementary level which I expect to progress one grade level each school year.

The District Vision Cards described in Milepost #2 will contain an evaluation process that will recognize and respond to the social and emotional needs of our students while affirming the learning and cognitive styles of each individual learner. I will also be directing district staff to create the conditions to ensure that each member of the learning community has the opportunity to cultivate relationships with other learners, staff and community members.

### **Milepost #6**

#### **Enhance Roseville Area Schools’ community involvement and communication**

In order for Roseville Area Schools to garner and maintain community support, I recommend the District develop an outreach program via the Department of Community Education. Roseville Area Schools has a long history of successful and meaningful interactions with the larger community, but the population the District serves continues to grow more diverse, is better educated, is more technologically savvy and remains actively engaged in the community for a longer period of time. As our community changes we must adjust our programming and services to ensure a place in the lives of all our constituents.

I recommend convening a standing Involvement/Communication Advisory Council (ICAC) comprised of staff, students, local media experts and citizens from a variety of age and demographic groups. The ICAC will provide advice, feedback and

recommendations to the Director of Public Relations on district community outreach and communication.

I am also recommending that the Roseville Area School Board host community outreach evening in all district schools. This will allow the community an additional opportunity to interact with the School Board members at the school their children attend.

### **Milepost #7**

#### **Provide current, appropriate and applicable technology tools for our staff, students and community**

To perform any task a person needs the appropriate tools and training. If we expect our students and staff to operate in the aura of technology, they will require the necessary tools. This includes high-speed communication between students, between buildings, with the community and world outside the walls of our district.

I am recommending additional district resources be allocated to increase the speed at which we transfer data and information. It is my hope a joint partnership between the District and other forms of local government will benefit both partners and allow Roseville Area Schools to complete this objective in a timely and efficient manner.

I also recommend funding be made available to our buildings though the use of lease purchase financing. This funding will not only maintain but also enhance our technology standing among Minnesota school districts. I will be directing the Supervisor of Technology, in concert with the EDC, to investigate the possibility of electronic textbooks and other personal education devices. I will also request that the District Technology Department upgrade the current student information system and work with the Department of Teaching and Learning to develop a long-distance learning experience for low-incident classes not available within the walls of Roseville Area Schools.

### **Milepost #8**

#### **Promote the programming and services of Roseville Area Schools and accept open enrollment students on a cost-effective basis**

Many district residents are unaware of the many diverse programs and services offered by Roseville Area Schools. Senior citizen programs, early childhood education, summer school, the AVID options, extended day programming and many other learning programs are available to our learners of all ages. We must do a better job of promoting the many learning opportunities and options to our citizens. I

recommend that the District enhance cable television programming and assist all buildings in providing regular “list serve” communication for their families.

I also recommend that a Facebook page be created that directly links to the district webpage. The ICAC described in Milepost #6 will be given the charge to provide advice and counsel for a district public relations plan used to assist in promoting the programs and services of Roseville Area Schools.

Stable enrollment is one of the reasons that Roseville Area Schools is able to offer a large variety of learning opportunities to our students. I recommend that the District continue to accept open enrollment students on a cost effective basis in all of our buildings and programs. At the present time, approximately 10% of the average daily attendance is students who are not residents of District 623.

### **Milepost #9**

**Expand partnerships with district municipalities, neighboring school districts, charter schools, non-public schools, special school districts, non-profits and local universities/colleges to expand educational options, improve services and reduce overhead**

Julia Gillard stated, “At the end of the day, government is about teamwork and partnerships.” I believe that Roseville Area Schools must form alliances and partnerships to provide additional options, serve our public in a more efficient manner and offer more comprehensive learning opportunities. District 623 currently partners with a number of organizations, and I believe the scope of these partnerships must be expanded so that both parties may thrive and prosper.

I am recommending the District explore the formation of a partnership with a distance-learning provider in order to offer low incidence academic options to our students. I envision the partnership will allow students to remain in the district but still access specialized programming not available in District 623.

I will also ask the Director of Operations to explore the possibility of partnering with the City of Roseville on the joint use of excess district facilities and land. This partnership would not exclude the possibility of a district/municipality recreation community center.

## **Milepost #10**

### **Lobby the Minnesota State Legislature**

There is an old saying, “The silent will starve.” It is the obligation of Roseville Area Schools and its leadership to make the Minnesota State Legislature is aware of the educational needs of our learning community. This is most efficiently accomplished via professional organizations like AMSD, MSBA, MASA, MASSP and other education groups, but the most effective method is direct communication with legislative leaders. Roseville Area Schools is blessed with supportive and positive legislative leaders, but they need our support and feedback to assist them in their efforts to secure stable and adequate resources for Minnesota schools. I will also request support from our local legislators in reducing a number of time-consuming and costly State imposed school district mandates.

I am also recommending that Roseville Area Schools continue to work closely with the District Legislative Action Committee and show support by assigning a District administrative liaison to the LAC.

## **Milepost #11**

### **Strengthen Roseville Area Schools’ Early Learning Programming**

Stacia Tauscher stated, “We worry about what children will become tomorrow, yet we forget that they are someone today.” I believe strengthening the district Early Learning programming is the best and most efficient way to reduce the district achievement gap. I am advising a multifaceted approach that includes a completely renovated Early Childhood Education Center, an expansion of the district Early Childhood Screening Program, continued support of the Early Childhood Special Education program at the Fairview Community Center, an expansion of the Targeted Services programming in the primary grades, and maintaining instructional support for the Reading Recovery Program in each of our elementary buildings. The closer the District is to having EVERY student reading at grade level by third grade, the narrower the achievement gap will become.

I propose funding the ECFE Early Childhood Center renovation by accessing the district’s alternative facility bonding authority. This would make funding available but still allow the District to keep its levy commitment to taxpayers.

Great programming will not carry the day unless the families have access to programming. I will request that the district Department of Transportation explore cost-effective methods of transporting students to the programs already in place. It is clear that not all our students enter kindergarten at the same place.

I will ask our Director of Summer School to expand the current pre-school programming to include a “Summer Start” option. This option will assist in closing the gap for students entering kindergarten who are less prepared than the majority of the incoming kindergarten students.

## **Milepost #12**

### **Consider the Sale of Excess District Property**

At the current time, Roseville Area Schools owns a piece of property that may be considered surplus. The site of the former Lake Owasso Elementary School is now partially occupied by a short-term lessee. The physical structure is in very poor condition, and I believe it is in the best interest of the District to examine the possible sale of the property with the proceeds to be invested in the district infrastructure. I am recommending Roseville Area Schools look to Milepost #9 and work with the City of Roseville to develop a long-term vision for the Lake Owasso property that will benefit both parties as well as the communities the District serves.

## **The Cornerstones: One Year to Five Years**

### **Cornerstone #1**

#### **Focus on improving instruction, staff training and staff development**

The centerpiece of Milepost #4 is to bring all Roseville Area schools and programs into the Minnesota ATPPS program. The emphasis of Cornerstone #1 is the continued improvement of classroom instruction, providing training to all staff members and ensuring on-going staff development. Roseville Area Schools has a standing practice of allocating resources for staff training and staff development in excess of that required by Minnesota State Statute. Even when the District was in Statutory Operating Debt, the District maintained support for the Educational Development Center, staff training and staff development. I recommend that the District not only continue the current support of these programs and services but look at ways to ensure the Educational Development Center at Fairview remains an active and vibrant part of the District now and in the future.

I am also recommending that staff training and development be improved to meet the challenges of a shrinking resource pool. Better-trained staff will make the district more effective, productive, and efficient which is the key to improving student achievement and ultimately closing the district achievement gap.

I also believe a respectful and productive partnership with Education Minnesota – Roseville and all our employee groups is crucial to the long-term success of Roseville Area Schools. I will be asking the Director of Operations to continue the district practice of meeting with our employee groups on a regular basis in Labor Management Council discussions to ensure the minor concerns do not grow into major issues at the negotiations table. Employees who know they are partners with management perform at a higher level with the wellbeing of the organization as a top priority.

### **Cornerstone #2**

#### **Ensure that Roseville Area Schools' district standards are aligned with the Minnesota State Standards**

Roseville Area Schools will ensure that the district instruction and curriculum are in alignment with the Minnesota State Standards. This will be accomplished by the continued support outlined in Cornerstone #1 and by maintaining close and open communication with the Minnesota Department of Education. This will require District 623 staff to not only be aware of changes in standards but also require the District to encourage staff members to be active participants in MDE study groups, advisory committees and curriculum design groups.

Under the leadership and guidance of the Assistant Superintendent for Teaching and Learning, the Roseville Area Schools District Curriculum Advisory Council will keep the district standards and Minnesota State Standards in alignment. The staff at the Educational Development Center will provide support for this endeavor along with local educational experts.

### **Cornerstone #3**

#### **Renew the current General Fund Operating Referendum in 2013**

One out of every five dollars supporting district operations is raised via the General Fund Operating Referendum. The current operating referendum levy authority must be reauthorized in fall of 2013 or sooner. It is my belief that this local investment in Roseville Area Schools should be indexed to inflation to ensure a stable and secure foundation of revenue for District 623. Non-renewal of this source of General Fund revenue would devastate the programming currently in place and force the District to dismantle many of the current programs. No other Cornerstone or Milepost is as vital to the fiscal health of Roseville Area Schools as renewal of the General Fund Operating Referendum.

#### **Cornerstone #4**

##### **Roseville Area Schools will meet or exceed all Minnesota State and Federal academic requirements**

The stakeholders of Roseville Area Schools expect that District 623 will meet or exceed all Minnesota State and Federal academic requirements. The District Vision states, “Each learner meets rigorous academic standards and is prepared for future learning and success in a multicultural society.” As a teaching and learning organization, it is Roseville Area Schools’ responsibility to labor tirelessly to place all our learners in position to successfully meet or exceed all State and Federal academic requirements. Improvement plans for any school or program failing to meet rigorous academic standards will be a district requirement.

Building and program Vision Cards will be an additional tool to hold District 623 accountable to our learners, their families and our community. While I do expect the Federal academic requirements to change over the next year, the local expectations for “rigorous academic standards” and ensuring each learner “is prepared for future learning” will remain solidly in place.

#### **Cornerstone #5**

##### **Create alternative learning opportunities and options with a focus on a modern language option and explore specialized STEAM cohorts in district secondary schools**

It is my recommendation that one of the District K – 6 elementary schools be selected to house a dual language program. The dual language program will be introduced with two Kindergarten sections and be an option for district residents in the same fashion as Parkview Center School. Each school year the previous cohort will move forward and additional cohorts of students will enter the dual language program as Kindergarten students. It is my vision that the cohorts will remain in place through elementary, middle and high school.

The feasibility of specialized Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics cohorts within RAMS and RAHS will be examined. I believe allowing students to specialize their study within a group of like-minded learners will produce individualized rigor and relevance for the students and assist them in forming relationships between staff and students. The STEAM cohorts would also meet the District Vision of preparing each student for “future learning.” It is my recommendation that the District start with a pilot project with the Freshman Class in the fall of 2011.

### **Cornerstone #6**

#### **Establish a plan for future district leadership at all levels**

As Roseville Area Schools moves into the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, it is paramount that the District cultivate leadership at all levels of the organization. The administrative staff within District 623 is graying and some members will be leaving the district within the next five years. Promoting, recruiting and retaining a diverse cluster of leaders with an array of skills and talents will position the District to better meet the challenges of the next decade and beyond. It is my recommendation that the District provide additional opportunities, development and training for promising district leaders.

### **Cornerstone #7**

#### **Continue to work with District municipalities and other partners on cooperative ventures**

Roseville Area Schools has a long and positive history of collaboration with the municipalities within the boundaries of District 623. From joint recreation facilities, to sharing of grounds maintenance, to programming and publications, the seven municipalities and Roseville Area Schools have always looked at ways to “measure twice and cut once”. This type of cooperation will need to expand in the current era of reduced State support. Local municipalities are faced with steep reductions in LGA that will require additional teaming with other cities and the District. Areas of cooperation will include maintenance, shared facilities, shared recreation resources, specialized programming (senior citizens, youth activities etc.), technology support and other joint opportunities.

I will be requesting the Roseville Area Schools’ Director of Operations to work with his counterparts in district municipalities and neighboring school districts to establish a “Council of Cooperation” between the area schools and cities as a first step in exploring ways to be more efficient, effective and productive.

I am also recommending that Roseville Area Schools examine our district relationships with East Metro 916, EMID, ESCU and other joint endeavors to ensure that District 623 is taking full advantage of the opportunities offered in these joint partnerships. I do believe that it is also time for the leadership of these joint organizations to reevaluate their mission, vision and values. As time passes, sometimes the clear vision of years past is not as relevant, current or meaningful to the membership of the organization.

### **Cornerstone #8**

#### **Prepare Roseville Area Schools for continued demographic changes**

During the past twenty years Roseville Area Schools has experienced a 28% increase in diversity among the students it serves. The rate of demographic change during that period of time has been steady and predictable. It is clear that the Roseville Area Schools' learning community will continue to experience demographic changes over the next five years.

In order to prepare for these demographic changes, I have four concrete recommendations. First, I believe it is important for Roseville Area Schools to develop an annual local Equity and Integration plan that aligns with Minnesota State Statutes and at the same time provides guidance in reducing the achievement gap between students of color and non-students of color in District 623.

I am also recommending that the Superintendent of Schools and the district representative to the East Metro Integration District request a reevaluation of the current EMID structure, programming and mission. EMID was established a number of years ago with Roseville and St. Paul as original members. Since that time, additional members have joined and left EMID. I do think the time is ripe for a review of the purpose and vision of this joint enterprise.

As Roseville Area Schools continues to change and develop, I believe it is important for the District to examine the current racial makeup of the district. In order to remain in alignment with the District Equity Vision, it is my recommendation that the district administration, in conjunction with the District Office of Equity and Integration, develop a plan to eliminate any racially isolated schools within the District. I propose that the plan be reviewed by the Equity and Integration Advisory Committee, be adopted by the School Board and be enacted over a period of time.

My final recommendation of this Cornerstone is to continue and enhance cultural outreach through liaisons for our more diverse communities. This is the most efficient and effective method of maintaining communication with our non- English speaking families. It is also another strategy for reducing the achievement gap.

### **Cornerstone #9**

#### **Plan for facility maintenance, remodeling and improvements**

The need to maintain, retrofit and improve district facilities will continue to grow as time passes. In order to meet the current facility and maintenance needs and also acquire the resources necessary to fund these repairs, it is my recommendation that the district administration prepare a five-year maintenance plan that will prioritize the

needed repairs. Once the maintenance plan is in place, I recommend Roseville Area Schools investigate the possibility of an Alternative Bonding levy as a funding bridge to address the facility concerns addressed in the five-year maintenance plan. Alternative bonding is similar to the Minnesota State Bonding Bill or a home (school) equity loan.

In 1992, Roseville Area Schools successfully passed a bond issue that provided funds to remodel, retrofit and add additional classroom and community space to the district's facilities. As the District approaches the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the passage of the 1992 bond issue, it is my recommendation to review the current status of our physical plant.

I believe the current number of buildings and location of buildings meet the needs of the District, and I recommend the District conduct a professional review of district buildings to provide an objective overview of necessary maintenance, remodeling and suggested improvements. In each of our homes we are faced with upkeep, repairs and necessary upgrades to protect our investment. Roseville Area Schools' buildings and property are valued in excess of \$175,000,000. It is sound management to protect these important community investments with an eye toward future infrastructure improvements.

## Conclusion

**“Too much flexibility with too little direction is a mistake. Too much direction with too little flexibility is a bigger mistake.”** Anonymous

In the fast paced world of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, it is absolutely necessary for the District, its staff and its community of learners to be able to react in a thoughtful, prudent and the most expedient manner possible to the changes that will inevitably take place. The purpose of this document is to provide a clear and overarching sense of direction, but with the mindset that our school district, our State, our Nation and the world in which we live are in a continual state of flux. The ability to adjust “on the move” while maintaining a steady course is, and will continue to be, one of key factors of a successful organization.

I believe that the constant theme for Roseville Area Schools will be the District Mission of “Quality Teaching and Learning for All...Equity in All We Do”. While the society our students, their families and our staff live in will be always be changing and evolving, the bedrock for our learning community will be the District Strategic Roadmap anchored by the District Mission, guided by the District Vision and supported by the District Values.

The key to achieving any ambitious mission is planning, preparation, patience and pacing. I believe the mileposts and cornerstones contained in this document will provide guidance in

planning and preparing for the district's journey to 2015 and beyond. There is an old saying that "timing is everything," and I believe the time-bound recommendations in EPAC II will provide the pace and patience to meet district "opportunities" with the right resources, for the right reason and at the right time.

To assist me in planning for the District 2015 Vision, I have utilized the advice and counsel from a large cross-section of community members. I am especially grateful to the Educational Planning Advisory Council II, under the leadership of Gregg Cummings, Pamela Harris, Wayne Hayes, Brian Koland, Terry Newby, and Matthew Sundeen for providing sound advice and creative ideas on which to build my mileposts and cornerstones. The constructive suggestions I received during open and lively discussions at staff meetings in each of our district facilities allowed me to view our future challenges from a different perspective. Visiting with community leaders and receiving testimony at community public forums allowed for the grassroots feedback that helped me form many of my recommendations. I appreciate all the community involvement in this process and thank each person for the valuable contributions.

It is my belief the above Mileposts and Cornerstones will provide the concrete steps necessary to keep Roseville Area Schools on the path toward our strategic mission of 'Quality Teaching and Learning for All...Equity in All We Do'.