



Strategic Plan

2022 - 2027

Draft Date: January 19, 2022

About the District

Mokena School District 159 is comprised of three schools (Mokena Elementary, Mokena Intermediate, Mokena Junior High) serving approximately 1,500 students in the Southwest suburbs of Chicago. The district employs over 240 staff and has a student to teacher ratio of 19:1. Mokena Public Schools generally rank highly in student achievement among Illinois school districts. Mokena Intermediate School and Mokena Junior High School were ranked among America's Best Middle Schools in 2020 by U.S. News and World Report.

About the Strategic Planning Process

The Strategic Planning Process began in Spring 2021. A group of stakeholders consisting of parents, teachers, support staff, administrators, and members of the Board of Education met as a steering committee on April 12, 2021. At this meeting the steering committee heard presentations about the state of the District from the Administration. A SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) exercise helped identify potential areas of study. A similar exercise was undertaken by the Board of Education at their regular Board meeting on April 26, 2021.

In May of 2021 a community wide survey was conducted. This survey asked for community feedback on facilities, curriculum, communication, finance, technology, student growth and achievement, and student well being. Open-ended questions were a part of the survey as well, asking the respondents the following questions:

- What are the greatest strengths of the Mokena School District 159?
- What are the greatest opportunities and/or improvements needed for Mokena School District 159?
- What are the greatest challenges for Mokena School District 159?
- What steps should Mokena School District 159 take in the next 3-5 years to improve?

292 individuals responded to the survey. 243 were parents of students in the District, 68 identified themselves as community members, and 43 respondents were District staff. Out of the 292 participants, 69 chose to not fill in any free-response questions. Responses that were mentioned by at least 3% of the remaining 223 respondents (7 responses or more) are listed below.

What are the greatest strengths of the Mokena School District 159?

- Teachers (87)
- Communication (35)
- Caring & Supportive Environment (24)
- Staff (22)
- Community, Parents, Families (20)
- Administration (17)
- Technology Implementation (12)
- Administration/Principal Communication (11)
- Academic Rigor / Curriculum (8)
- Flexibility and Adaptability (7)

What are the greatest opportunities and/or improvements needed for Mokena School District 159?

- Improve condition and cleanliness of facilities (29)
- Communication - General (12)
- Lack of Enrichment (11)
- Technology (10)
- ELA / Reading Curriculum (9)
- Renovate / Replace the MES Playscape (8)
- Academic Growth / Rigor (8)
- Communication - Among Staff (8)
- MIS Outdoor Space (7)
- Post-COVID-19 Challenges (7)
- Student mental health / SEL (7)

What are the greatest challenges for Mokena School District 159?

- Recovering from the COVID-19 Pandemic (24)
- Finances and Budgeting (20)
- Communication (12)
- Facility Condition (9)
- “Keeping up” instructionally, continuing to grow (8)

What steps should Mokena School District 159 take in the next 3-5 years to improve?

- Continue to repair and improve facilities (15)
- Continue to improve technology (15)
- Improve Communication (12)
- Strengthen Curriculum (9)
- Invest in Teacher PD and Instructional Improvement (9)
- Increased opportunities for enrichment (9)
- More attention to Social / Emotional Learning and Behavioral Health (8)
- Expand Extracurricular opportunities (7)

Other topics that appear multiple times across open-ended responses:

- Need for innovative practices
- Teach 21st Century skills (technology, communication, collaboration, etc.)
- Improve elective / exploratory options (STEM, Art, Music, etc.)
- Maintain a focus on the basics (Math, ELA)
- Reduce staff and administrative turnover
- Competitiveness of compensation
- Morale and culture
- Strength of the Dual Language program
- Social Science and ELA curriculum concerns
- Intervention services for students that need more
- Concern about a lack of diversity in staff
- Having appropriate staffing levels and small class sizes

On June 9th, 2021 the strategic planning steering committee met with the full Board of Education to review the results of the community survey. The steering committee and Board of Education distilled the survey feedback into 5 distinct areas of study. They were:

- **Curriculum** - What students know and are able to do. Programs of study including special services, interventions, enrichment, and electives
- **Instruction** - How to maximize learning. Involves technology, professional learning, knowledge of students, monitoring student growth
- **Finance** - Topics include budgeting, facilities, capital planning, infrastructure, and technology
- **Human Resources** - Staffing, onboarding, growth and development, retention, culture, and diversity
- **Communication** - To both internal and external stakeholders. Website, email, social media, etc.

Community members were invited to a community stakeholder engagement meeting on October 6, 2021 to engage in discussion around these five areas of study. Approximately 50 parents, community members, administrators, and Mokena 159 staff participated in crafting goals and objectives within each strategic area.

The Strategic Plan for Mokena School District 159 published here is reflective of the entirety of the feedback from the steering committee, community survey, community stakeholder engagement meeting, and the Board of Education. A draft of this plan was then presented to this same group of community stakeholders on February 7th, 2022 for revision and feedback.



Strategic Plan Area # 1 - Curriculum

Goal 1A - The District shall research and adopt a new ELA curriculum and resources to support student growth in phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, comprehension and vocabulary.

Who is responsible/accountable for this goal?

- Assistant Superintendent of Instruction
- ELA Committee (Mokena 159 Teachers)

What is the expected timeline for completion?

- 3 years

Comments:

At the time of this plan's adoption preliminary work on this goal had already begun. This work is expected to take three years as the district's ELA committee explores, recommends, adopts, and implements curricular resources as aligned to the district's curriculum renewal cycles. This work also includes professional learning related to the CCSS, best practices in instruction, and program implementation.

Goal 1B - The District shall provide students educational options and opportunities that extend learning in exploratory curriculum areas including the creative and performing arts, technology, engineering, and economics with the goal of preparing students for the challenges of the 21st century.

Who is responsible/accountable for this goal?

- Superintendent
- Assistant Superintendent of Instruction
- Building Administrators

What is the expected timeline for completion?

- 1-4 years

Comments:

Mokena Junior High exploratory options are already under consideration by the administrative team. Other changes to curriculum will be incorporated in the District's curriculum review cycle.

Goal 1C - The District shall set high expectations for and engage all students in rigorous programs of study while offering all students access and pathways to more rigorous and enriched coursework.

Who is responsible/accountable for this goal?

- Superintendent
- Assistant Superintendent of Instruction
- Building Administrators

What is the expected timeline for completion?

- 2-4 years

Comments:

The District does not currently have an identified program for enrichment opportunities outside of Mokena Junior High School. The District shall, as a part of its curriculum review cycle, identify opportunities for enrichment and support those opportunities with resources.

Goal 1D - The Administrative Team shall conduct a Dual Language program review and make its findings known to the Board of Education and the parents of students in the program.

Who is responsible/accountable for this goal?

- Superintendent
- Assistant Superintendent of Instruction
- Building Administrators

What is the expected timeline for completion?

- 2-4 months

Comments:

The District has offered a Dual Language program to Mokena 159 students for over 7 years. As its first students approach the end of junior high school the Administrative team shall conduct a program evaluation and present its findings to the Board of Education. Student outcomes, enrollment, resource utilization, and staffing will all be studied and considered in making program decisions.

Goal 1E - The District shall support and monitor a developmentally appropriate benchmark, formative, and summative assessment system that aligns with academic standards and includes screening, monitoring, and diagnosing to ensure students stay on track to meet or exceed the standards.

Who is responsible/accountable for this goal?

- Superintendent
- Assistant Superintendent of Instruction
- Building Administrators

What is the expected timeline for completion?

- 2-3 years

Comments:

The District has used the Fastbridge assessment system since 2015 to assess student achievement and identify students who may be at risk. The District is currently assessing the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on student performance and adopting a new ELA curriculum; for these reasons it makes sense to keep Fastbridge for consistency and to be able to make apples-to-apples comparisons. In the future the District will consider the alignment of Fastbridge with the new ELA curriculum to determine if it is the best tool for the District to measure student growth and achievement. The District also will consider any potential changes to the State of Illinois accountability system in making a decision on a benchmark assessment system.

Additionally, the District shall continue to support and refine its common assessments at each grade level and in each subject area. As curriculum is reviewed, common assessments shall be as well.

Goal 1F - The District shall develop and implement a technology skills scope and sequence based upon the ISTE and State of Illinois Technology Standards.

Who is responsible/accountable for this goal?

- Superintendent
- Assistant Superintendent of Instruction
- Building Administrators
- Director of Technology

What is the expected timeline for completion?

- 2-4 years

Comments:

The 2015 Strategic Plan had the goal of developing a technology scope and sequence aligned to the Common Core Standards. This goal was not realized by the District. The International Society for Technology in Education has a set of standards that encourage students to be collaborative, innovative, and empowered digital citizens. Currently the State of Illinois is also in the process of developing a set of technology standards. These skills and standards should not be addressed as a standalone curriculum; rather they should be thoughtfully integrated into other areas of the curriculum as a part of what students do every day.



Strategic Plan Area # 2 - Instruction

Goal 2A - The District shall continue to ensure that all students are provided differentiated instruction, and when needed, proven intervention strategies for students not yet meeting standards.

Who is responsible/accountable for this goal?

- Superintendent
- Assistant Superintendent of Instruction
- Director of Student Services
- Building Administrators

What is the expected timeline for completion?

- Ongoing

Comments:

Grade level teams currently analyze student assessment data and implement targeted intervention strategies to close the achievement gap between student groups. The District shall continue to provide resources and professional learning opportunities for staff so that they may incorporate a coherent system of timely, accelerated intervention for underperforming students, with particular emphasis on special education pupils, English learners and traditionally underperforming and underserved students.

Goal 2B - The District shall provide high-quality professional development that increases the staff's capacity to collaborate, design, and implement innovative curriculum.

Who is responsible/accountable for this goal?

- Superintendent
- Assistant Superintendent of Instruction
- Building Administrators

What is the expected timeline for completion?

- Ongoing

Comments:

The District shall provide ongoing professional development on research-based, developmentally appropriate instructional practices to support academic achievement. Emphasis shall be in the areas of literacy, numeracy and development of social-emotional and physical skills. These professional learning opportunities shall be aligned with School Improvement Plans as well as District goals. Professional learning opportunities shall be planned in collaboration with and based on feedback from teachers via surveys or through building leadership teams. School-based coaches will help contribute to the growth of teacher professional practice.

Goal 2C - The District shall analyze student assessment data at the District, Building, and Grade level and implement instructional strategies to support the progress of all learners based on the analysis.

Who is responsible/accountable for this goal?

- Superintendent
- Assistant Superintendent of Instruction
- Director of Student Services
- Building Administrators
- Grade-level teams

What is the expected timeline for completion?

- Ongoing

Comments:

This goal encompasses yearly school improvement planning, trimesterly benchmark data reviews, and unit assessment analysis. Beginning in the 2021-2022 school year all three Mokena schools created and implemented school improvement plans based upon student and school data. Principals continue to monitor their school's progress toward their goals and will report out to the Board of Education annually. Grade level data analysis is ongoing and the District shall continue to support the efforts of the grade level teams. The District aspires to have grade level teams function as professional learning communities. Supporting the growth of these PLC's will take place over the next few years.



Strategic Plan Area # 3 - Finance & Infrastructure

Goal 3A - The District shall continue to update and modernize its school buildings and infrastructure in accordance with the Facilities Master Plan.

Who is responsible/accountable for this goal?

- Superintendent
- Chief School Business Official
- Director of Buildings and Grounds

What is the expected timeline for completion?

- Ongoing

Comments:

Mokena School District 159 has three school buildings. Mokena Elementary was originally built in 1956 and has had multiple additions. Mokena Intermediate was built in 1972 and also has had several additions. Mokena Junior High was completed in 2000.

Mokena School District 159 retained Wold Architects and Engineers in the Spring 2019 to perform a detailed Facilities Conditions Assessment (FCA) on its three school buildings with the intention of laying the foundation for developing a Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). Upon completion of an initial Facility Conditions Assessment in January 2020, all facility improvements were organized into the planning matrix based on preliminary prioritization established in the FCA. The improvements called for in the CIP include HVAC and roof replacement, repaving and drainage work, and accessibility and safety issues.

In 2019 the Mokena community demonstrated their support for the Mokena Public Schools by passing a referendum to support the improvement and care of the school buildings. Per Board of Education Policy 4:35, all deferred maintenance and infrastructure issues must be resolved before turning our attention inward to projects that significantly change the learning environment. The facilities plan shall be kept updated on the District website.

Goal 3B - The District shall continue to monitor and improve the appearance and cleanliness of the school buildings.

Who is responsible/accountable for this goal?

- Superintendent
- Chief School Business Official
- Director of Buildings and Grounds

What is the expected timeline for completion?

- Ongoing

Comments:

Comments from the community survey and from the steering committee discussed the need for improvements in the appearance of our school buildings. Staff shall fill out cleanliness report cards on a weekly basis to give feedback. An exterior maintenance and beautification plan shall also be developed. Improvements in the

interior school environment, including the use of paint colors, was cited as a need for our buildings. To support this a regular schedule of painting shall be supported through the buildings and grounds budget. The District shall also support annual projects including lighting and flooring through the buildings and grounds budget.

Goal 3C - The District shall continue to improve technology infrastructure as it relates to supporting student learning.

Who is responsible/accountable for this goal?

- Superintendent
- Chief School Business Official
- Director of Buildings and Grounds
- Director of Technology

What is the expected timeline for completion?

- 3 years/Ongoing

Comments:

Over the last 5 years the number of devices supported by the technology department has increased by 300%. There are nearly 3,000 connected devices in the District today. The Director of Technology has the responsibility for maintaining and updating a three year forecast in order to plan and budget for needed infrastructure upgrades to student and staff devices, security devices such as door locks and cameras, switches, firewalls, phones, copiers, etc.

Technology is an important part of the educational process in the 21st century. Teacher and staff input is crucial in the technology planning process as it serves to support learning and teaching. The technology plan is not static; it is often adjusted based upon trends and the needs of students. The technology plan shall be kept updated on the District website.

Goal 3D - The District shall engage in sound, responsible financial stewardship through the alignment of resources with district strategic goals.

Who is responsible/accountable for this goal?

- Superintendent
- Chief School Business Official

What is the expected timeline for completion?

- Ongoing

Comments:

The District Administrative team has the responsibility of ensuring that resources are allocated properly by instituting needs-based, results-focused budgeting. The Administrative Team shall continue to update the Finance Committee and the Board of Education on financial scenarios and present updated forecast models to the District.

Presentations to the Finance Committee and the Board of Education related to tax levies, budgets (including revenue and expense projections), and other financial matters shall be kept updated on the District website.

Strategic Plan Area # 4 - Human Resources

Goal 4A - The School and District leadership shall provide training and resources across the system for ALL certified and classified staff, in alignment with the vision and strategies outlined in the Strategic Plan.

Who is responsible/accountable for this goal?

- Superintendent
- Administrative Team

What is the expected timeline for completion?

- Ongoing

Comments:

A needs assessment shall be conducted in May on an annual basis seeking input from all staff regarding professional development opportunities. The District will make every attempt to provide high-quality, site-based, and district-wide professional development for all employees.

Goal 4B - The District leadership allocates resources (people, time, money) equitably and appropriately, based on student, school and community needs.

Who is responsible/accountable for this goal?

- Superintendent
- Administrative Team

What is the expected timeline for completion?

- Ongoing

Comments:

Annually the Superintendent shall present a staffing plan to the Board of Education that attempts to maximize available resources in support of student learning needs. This staffing presentation with recommendations shall be posted to the District website. The staffing plan shall seek to maintain equitable and appropriate class sizes and supports for all students while remaining within budget guidelines.

Goal 4C - The District shall ensure that the onboarding process fully informs and prepares newly hired staff for the expectations of their assigned position.

Who is responsible/accountable for this goal?

- Superintendent
- Assistant Superintendent of Instruction
- Human Resources Coordinator
- Administrative Team

What is the expected timeline for completion?

- 6-12 months

Comments:

The Human Resources Coordinator shall, in conjunction with the Superintendent and the Administrative Team, develop and maintain a set of resources for the onboarding of new employees. Input from staff shall be considered in developing materials and planning training for new employees. The Assistant Superintendent of Instruction shall support the mentoring and induction of new certified staff, while all administrators support the training of new classified staff.

Goal 4D - The District shall regularly review compensation trends in the region in order to attract and retain talented, diverse, and dedicated employees.

Who is responsible/accountable for this goal?

- Superintendent
- Human Resources Coordinator
- Administrative Team

What is the expected timeline for completion?

- Ongoing

Comments:

Mokena 159 seeks to attract, develop, and retain a highly qualified workforce that is committed and responsive to the needs of all students and families. The District shall continue to monitor trends in compensation and employment for certified and classified staff as the minimum wage continues to rise and inflation has its impact on our local, state, and national economy. The District will also seek to develop partnerships with local university systems to build a pipeline of diverse, highly effective new hires.

Goal 4E - The District shall seek to ensure that all employees are included, respected, and supported.

Who is responsible/accountable for this goal?

- Superintendent
- Human Resources Coordinator
- Administrative Team

What is the expected timeline for completion?

- Ongoing

Comments:

Mokena 159 seeks to create a positive, welcoming, and supportive environment for all of its employees. The culture of the District is essential to our success. Recognition of accomplishments, celebrating successes and milestones, and open lines of communication within the organization are essential to maintaining a positive District culture. The District and schools will look for opportunities for community-building among staff throughout the school year. The 5 Essentials survey will be a tool used to monitor culture in the schools.

Strategic Plan Area # 5 - Communication

Goal 5A - The District shall update its website making it more accessible, more visually appealing, and more transparent.

Who is responsible/accountable for this goal?

- Superintendent
- Administrative Team

What is the expected timeline for completion?

- 2-4 months

Comments:

Upgrades to the District's website are in progress. Information will continue to be added to the site throughout the rest of the year and must be maintained going forward.

Goal 5B - The District shall make better use of social media and develop a district app to give the community another source of information about Mokena Public Schools.

Who is responsible/accountable for this goal?

- Superintendent
- Administrative Team

What is the expected timeline for completion?

- 6-10 months

Comments:

As a part of the transition to a new website comes the increased capacity to share information in a timely and accessible manner to families. Administrators shall have access to a variety of social media touchpoints, including its own app, via Apptegy.

Goal 5C - The District shall make more information about programs easily accessible to the public via its website and app.

Who is responsible/accountable for this goal?

- Superintendent
- Director of Technology
- Administrative Team

What is the expected timeline for completion?

- 6-10 months

Comments:

Information requested from the strategic planning steering committee, survey respondents, and participants in the stakeholder engagement session requested easier access to information concerning lunch, curriculum, accessing digital platforms and information (Skyward), and welcome information for students new to the

District. This is in addition to the requests for more information to be easily accessible by the public in other goal areas such as finance.

Goal 5D - The District shall seek to create avenues for better and more frequent communication between teachers and families.

Who is responsible/accountable for this goal?

- Superintendent
- Director of Technology
- Administrative Team

What is the expected timeline for completion?

- 10-12 months

Comments:

Recent changes to legislation (SOPPA) have put limits and restrictions on tools previously used to communicate with families. Tools like Remind and Class Dojo must be paid subscriptions in order to be secure. The District will investigate the feasibility of using tools such as these across grade levels for communication.

Goal 5E - The District Office shall work to provide more frequent and engaging communication with staff and families.

Who is responsible/accountable for this goal?

- Superintendent
- Human Resources Coordinator
- Cabinet Level Administrators

What is the expected timeline for completion?

- 6-8 months

Comments:

The District shall seek to find ways to regularly communicate with families and, once COVID-19 has relented, welcome them into our buildings to be a part of our learning community. The District will also seek ways to better engage all internal stakeholders and staff through improved communication. Shorter social media posts and more substantial news stories will provide just-in-time information about district events and developments through the District's new tech tools. A more regular communication from the District to all stakeholders shall be established based around significant school milestones including but not limited to the beginning of the school year, state accountability testing, etc.



Acknowledgements

The 2022-2027 Strategic Plan is the result of months of work by the Board of Education, members of our community, parents, advisory committees, staff, and the administrative team. The District would like to recognize and thank all of the individuals who have contributed to the creation of this plan. These stakeholders gave us their time and perspective to help shape the future of Mokena School District 159 and ensure the success of its students now and in the future.

Board of Education

Eric Bush, President
Lisa Zielinski, Vice-President
Anna Briscoe, Secretary
Jim Andresen
Mike Everett
Jennifer Riedl
Jamie Staley

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