Achieve
Care
Thrive

Minnesota State Academies

Strategic Plan for 2018-2023

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Introduction

The Minnesota State Academies (MSA) include the Minnesota School for the Blind (MSAB), the Minnesota School for the Deaf (MSAD), and statewide services. Established in 1858 as an agency, MSA is the leader in the State of Minnesota in providing services to students who are Blind, Visually Impaired, Deaf, Hard of Hearing or DeafBlind and their families. As part of this strategic plan, we aspire to providing greater levels of service and support for students and families throughout the state of Minnesota.

The MSA 2018-2023 Strategic Plan articulates the schools' and agency's goals for the next 5 years. The mission, vision and guiding beliefs, which were meticulously reviewed and revised as part of the strategic planning process, reflect the values of MSA and provide the foundation for all decisions, actions and activities to be taken during the life of this plan.

Dedicated staff, empowered students, involved parents, supportive alumni and invested stakeholders are committed to working together to accomplish the strategic goals. They will continue to enhance MSA as the foremost resource in the state and region for Deaf, Blind, and DeafBlind education.

Vision, Mission, Guiding Beliefs

Vision
MSA empowers every student to achieve, care, and thrive in an ever-changing world.

Mission
MSA provides a rigorous, student-centered educational program in a fully accessible, language-rich environment to maximize each student's full potential. Additionally, MSA provides statewide resources and professional expertise to parents, families, partners, and educational programs in Minnesota.

Guiding Beliefs

MSA Believes:

- Families are valued partners in fostering the development of each student's full potential.

- Students are the primary focus of all decisions and they will have opportunities to participate in decision-making.

- Students thrive by becoming independent, active, lifelong learners to the greatest extent possible.

- Students' development of understanding, appreciation, and respect for individual and cultural diversity is valued.

- Students require an accessible language and communication-rich environment so continuous opportunities for planned and incidental learning can occur in and outside the classroom.

- Students require ongoing opportunities to directly interact with a variety of peers and role models to develop positive self-identity, as well as social-emotional and advocacy skills.

- Students gain valuable life skills and benefit from other learning opportunities in a safe, caring, supportive, and accessible environment during school, after school (Student Life*), and community-based activities.

- Students must be given the tools necessary to locate, access, and use resources/supports within their school and community.

- Students prepare for a successful transition to education, work, and citizenship after graduation through an array of quality programs, services, and the use of state-of-the-art technology.

- Students achieve communication competency and gain access to the world by maximizing their use of assistive technology.

- All staff members need to have high expectations for all students, so that students can develop high expectations for themselves.

- All instructional and residential staff members are responsible to provide appropriate resources, universal design for learning, and differentiated instruction to meet the needs of all students.

- All staff members require ongoing quality professional development and support to optimize their ability to meet the needs of students.

- All staff members are responsible for contributing to the achievement of the school's vision, mission, and guiding beliefs.

- All MSA community members thrive with effective communication and collaboration.

- MSA is a valued resource for information and outreach activities to support students, parents, families, and school districts statewide.

For Our Blind, Visually Impaired, and Deafblind students, MSA Believes:

- The Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC)* is foundational to the instructional program and provides a pathway to independence.

- Instruction in Braille and the use of Braille throughout the student's educational program, as appropriate to the strengths and needs of the student, is vital for maximizing students' literacy and academic development.

- Accessible Educational Materials (AEM: Braille, large print, audio, digital) are vital for maximizing every student's academic, cognitive, social-emotional, and self-identity potential.

- Orientation and Mobility (O&M) skills are vital for students to know where they are and how to safely navigate their world.

For Our Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Deafblind students, MSA Believes:

- Having a cultural and linguistic perspective of Deaf/Hard of Hearing/DeafBlind people is a core value.

- A comprehensive, bilingual (American Sign Language & English) education that results in proficiency in both languages is vital for maximizing every student's academic, cognitive, social-emotional, and self-identity potential.

- Providing auditory, spoken, and tactile language services, as appropriate to the strengths and needs of the student, is an important component of our bilingual instructional program.

- Ongoing direct communication using American Sign Language with peers and staff is a foundational aspect of our program.

Strategic Goals, 5-Year Goals, Objectives, Action Steps

Goal Area #1: School Climate

Strategic Goal:
Minnesota State Academies (MSA) is a place where all are welcomed, informed, involved and safe.

5-Year Goal:
Minnesota State Academies (MSA) will create and implement systems for timely, consistent and effective internal and external communications, student support and professional development.

Objective 1:
Establish mechanisms for improving internal communication

    1a: Create teaming opportunities—e.g., dorm/school, aides/teachers, MSAB/MSAD, and within departments
- Identify potential teams and prioritize most needed teaming opportunities
- Create a protocol for teams, to include identifying purpose, participants, schedule, agenda, facilitation, note taking and dissemination
- Implement

    1b: Increase communication from administration to staff
- Review and get feedback from staff on existing communication activities
- Develop new methods for information sharing with feedback component and revise as needed

    1c: Develop staff survey
- Design and administer survey and analyze results related to issues of importance to staff; e.g., employment conditions; supervisory support; effectiveness of communication from administration, among staff, with families; morale; safety

    1d: Increase communication from administration to students
- Review and get feedback from students on existing communication activities
- Develop new methods for information sharing with feedback component and revise as needed

    1e: Develop student survey
- Design and administer survey and analyze results related to issues of importance to students; e.g., effectiveness of communication from administration, from staff, safety, behavior, health, academic rigor, social opportunities, cultural diversity, critical mass

Objective 2:
Establish mechanisms for improving external communication with parents/families

2a: Increase communication from MSA to parents/families
- Review and get feedback from parents on quality and frequency of existing communication from administration, teachers, dorm staff, athletic staff
- Review and get feedback from parents on quality and frequency of existing communication methods; e.g., newsletters, website, email, classroom letters, social media
- Develop new or revise existing methods for information sharing with feedback component; make modifications as needed

2b: Increase parent to parent communication
- Explore developing a student/parent directory
- Create more social opportunities/events for parents/families to connect

2c: Increase parent/family engagement
- Offer opportunities for virtual participation
- Collect data on parent/family engagement during 2018-19 School Year

Objective 3:
Establish mechanisms for improving external communications with partners/stakeholders

3a: Increase communication from MSA to external partners/stakeholders
- Identify current and potential partners/stakeholders
- Review and get feedback from partners/stakeholders on existing communication activities; e.g., website, social media, newspapers, annual reports, town hall meetings
- Develop new methods for information sharing with feedback component and revise as needed

3b: Increase collaborative activities with agencies/stakeholders
- Identify current collaborative activities with partners/stakeholders
- Review and get feedback from partners/stakeholders on existing collaborative activities
- Develop new opportunities for collaborative activities with feedback component and revise as needed

Objective 4:
Establish mechanisms for ensuring student and staff safety and a positive working/learning environment

4a: Create clear and consistent expectations
- Review staff handbook(s) for clarity and comprehensiveness of expectations; e.g., professional behavior, dress code, boundaries with students, confidentiality, attendance; revise as needed; share with staff
- Review student handbook for clarity and comprehensiveness of expectations; e.g., behavior, attendance, harassment

4b: Review student safety
- Investigate, identify and prioritize issues related to student safety; e.g., bullying; cyber bullying; marginalization based on disability, race, status, other protected areas; need for support groups; use of drugs and alcohol

- Develop action plans for prioritized issues, including data component
- Implement

4c: Review crisis prevention plans and response
- Review current crisis protocols, to include: technology infrastructure; defining of staff roles; practice schedules; communication with parents/others during/after event; post crisis debrief/evaluation
- Revise protocols as needed
- Develop plan for securing infrastructure upgrades as identified

4d: Explore Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) or other school-wide behavioral support programs

Objective 5:
Establish mechanisms for providing professional development for all staff

5a: Provide training
- Review strategic plan and school improvement plan to determine training priorities
- Survey staff to determine needs
- Develop training plan aligned to priorities
- Implement

5b: Provide ongoing support
- Create ongoing support plan for reinforcing training provided

5c: Develop tracking system for professional development (individual and school-wide)

Goal Area #2: Student Life

Strategic Goal:
The Student Life program supports and develops educational goals by providing student-centered programs, activities and social opportunities that allow all day and residential students to discover self-identity and enrich their lives now and in the future.

5 Year Goal:
Student Life will provide an increasing array of quality programs and activities, facilitated by appropriately trained staff that result in higher student engagement and maximize services and resources between both campuses.

Objective 1:
Establish a mechanism for improving the quality of Student Life activities, the level of student engagement in planning and participation, and the most effective use of resources

1a: Determine best method for improving student engagement
- Investigate existing committees or groups that could focus on improving student engagement (e.g., site council, Student Body Government, Student Council) and identify most appropriate avenues for gathering input/fostering engagement.
- Assign committee or group the responsibility for carrying out activities in 1b

1b: Develop, disseminate and analyze survey:
- Develop audience-friendly survey questions for students, staff and parents to give feedback on current activities and programs and suggestions for revised or new activities and programs
- Create survey
- Determine strategies to maximize responses and timelines for survey completion
- Distribute and collect surveys
- Analyze survey data
- Determine next steps

1c: Review individual and shared resources at MSAB and MSAD, and determine opportunities for collaborating on student-centered activities/programs.
- Identify modifications/accommodations to allow all students to participate
- Identify preparation needed for staff and students to ensure activities and interactions are effective and positive
- Plan ongoing evaluation of joint programs and activities to determine needed adjustments

1d: Explore opportunities to include community resources and activities as part of the Student Life program

Objective 2:
Provide support to staff on increasing staff engagement with students and on motivating students to engage in Student Life programs and activities

2a: Provide staff/professional development on topics such as:

- Awareness & understanding of legal obligations (e.g., accessibility, IEP) and documentation
- Universal Design for planning activities
- Addressing cultural needs of students in a responsive and effective manner
- Supporting the health of our students (physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual, etc.)
- Awareness and understanding of student development, and the effective and appropriate management of student discipline, behavior and motivation
- Effectiveness of school-home communication including but not limited to family awareness of Student Life opportunities and their children's level of engagement in activities
- Monitoring and motivating student engagement

Goal Area #3: Instruction and Assessment

Strategic Goal:
MSA is a place where students receive accessible, rigorous and standards-based education and related services with assessments that accurately reflect student growth.

5-Year Goal:
MSA will create and implement a system that fosters collaboration and coordination between the two schools to ensure the provision of curriculum, instruction and assessment in alignment with our Guiding Beliefs.

Objective 1:
Ensure accessibility
> 1a: Identify and prioritize need areas (e.g., materials, environment, communication, testing)
> 1b: Develop plan to meet prioritized needs
> 1c: Purchase accessible equipment and materials and provide professional development to staff and students

Objective 2:
Provide appropriate assessments
> 2a: Inventory existing assessments
> 2b: Identify and purchase appropriate assessments
> 2c: Accurately assess all students with valid tools
> 2d: Measure student growth
> 2e: Share individual data with students and families and aggregate data with appropriate stakeholders
> 2f: Examine assessment data to guide instruction

Objective 3:
Identify curriculum and resources
> 3a: Inventory existing curriculum resources
> 3b: Expand the variety of resources and increase the capacity to meet all student needs
> 3c: Examine/revise existing curriculum cycle to include each subject area, electives, and address needs of students with additional needs as well as new courses in the future. During the review process include review of cultural diversity, accessibility, equity, and validity
> 3d: Increase opportunities for Advanced Placement (AP) and Post-Secondary Enrollment Options (PSEO) courses, including online courses offered through universities
> 3e: Review Expanded Core Curriculum and develop implementation approaches

Objective 4:
Provide Professional Development

 4a: Consistently use staff performance evaluation measures, surveys and state/national trends to determine professional development areas

 4b: Strengthen the mentoring program for new staff

 4c: Provide professional development around teaming and educational responsibilities

 4d: Provide professional development in the area of interpreting assessment data to drive quality instruction

Objective 5:
Provide technology for staff and students

 5a: Inventory existing devices and software

 5b: Provide staff training on existing technology and devices

 5c: Review and determine future technology needs (purchasing cycle)

 5d: Expand technology curriculum to include applicable apps, programs and digital learning platforms

 5e: Develop a process for determining the need for and use of assistive technology

Objective 6:
Strengthen instruction

 6a: Ensure coordination of instructional opportunities between both campuses for all students

 6b: Create a course catalogue including course description, prerequisites, location

 6c: Raise staff expectations for academic rigor appropriate to each student, including up to or exceeding grade level

 6d: Provide appropriate test preparation through teaching test-taking strategies and practice opportunities

 6e: Increase distance learning opportunities and services for both MSA and non-MSA students

Goal Area 4: Statewide Visibility

Strategic Goal:
MSA will be known by families and all school districts as a leader and partner in the education of students who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing, DeafBlind, Blind or Visually Impaired for its campuses, as well as a resource center for information and outreach activities to support school districts and families statewide.

5-Year Goal: (2 goals – 4A and 4B)
Goal 4A:
MSA will develop resources for school districts and families to support students who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing, DeafBlind, Blind or Visually Impaired around the state.

Objective 1:
Establish new and strengthen existing relationships and share information about available resource support with statewide stakeholders

> 1a: Identify opportunities to attend statewide and regional professional and family-focused meetings and events; i.e., Low Incidence Leadership Forum, Directors Forum, Hands and Voices, advisory councils
> 1b: Create a plan for attendance (who will go to which events/meetings/activities)
> 1c: Actively share information about MSA
> 1d: Establish a process for data collection regarding contacts, presentations, inquiries
> 1e: Increase collaboration with teacher training programs and offering practicum opportunities
> 1f: Increase attendance and/or presentations at conferences
> - Develop topics and identify staff who can present
> - Collect contact information from participants for follow up

Objective 2:
Offer professional development to meet region- or district-specific needs

> 2a: Collaborate with school districts to identify needs
> 2b: Develop an interpreter evaluation procedure and mentoring program and pilot it with volunteer districts
> 2c: Develop on-line trainings and supports based on district-identified priorities
> 2d: Host statewide training and/or webinars on low incidence topics
> 2e: Open MSA trainings/information events to non-MSA students and educators

Objective 3:
Form a mobile assessment team to provide in-district evaluations

3a: Establish pilot team
3b: Develop a process for service provision
3c: Conduct 3-5 evaluations
3d: Collect feedback from districts receiving the service, share results, and determine statewide need
3e: Request resources to establish ongoing mobile team

Goal 4B:
All school districts in Minnesota will recognize MSA as an educational option and include it in the IEP/placement discussions for students who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing, DeafBlind, Blind or Visually Impaired.

Objective 1:
Improve public relations and branding

1a: Revise/redesign/update all aspects of the MSA website to include MSAB, MSAD and statewide events and resources
1b: Review/redesign/update MSA publications; e.g., The Companion, MSA pamphlets, newsletters, white papers, Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs), World's Best Workforce, MSA Annual Report
1c: Review current use of social media; revise and update as appropriate
1d: Develop logo(s) & branding strategies, exhibit booth displays, campus banners, freeway signs

Objective 2:
Host MSA -sponsored statewide and regional events for families and district stakeholders

2a: List and analyze benefit of established programs
2b: Create more opportunities to bring students, families and district staff to campus
2c: Share information about MSA events and resources (open house, social events, short-term programs, town hall meetings) with district staff and non-MSA families
2d: Host MSA-sponsored activities and events in various regions of the state
2e: Conduct events and collect feedback from participants regarding value/benefit for future planning

Goal Area #5: Transition

Strategic Goal:
The transition programs at MSA provide an array of quality programs and trainings that lead to independence in an ever-changing world.

5-Year Goal:
The MSA transition program develops and supports transitional goals by providing student-centered programs, resources, courses, trainings, and work experiences that allow students to successfully transition to life after school.

Objective 1:
Strengthen transition programs/resources
> 1a: Create an inventory of existing programs, resources, and curriculum
> 1b: Develop, disseminate and analyze survey:
> - Develop audience-friendly survey questions for students, staff and parents (including parents of recent graduates) to obtain feedback on current activities and programs, and suggestions for revised or new activities and programs
> - Create survey
> - Determine strategies to maximize responses and timelines for survey completion
> - Distribute and collect surveys
> - Analyze survey data; determine next steps
>
> 1c: Create a survey for graduates related to their preparation for life after high school and their current school or work status (1, 3, 5 years)
> 1d: Locate resources/partners/organizations to increase MSA's transition program capacity
> 1e: Provide opportunities for transition staff to tour and/or contact other transition programs to gain ideas and establish a support network (in state programs, schools for the deaf or blind)
> 1f: Develop information about the MSA transition program and distribute statewide
> 1g: Evaluate current practices regarding individualized transition program development for students; revise process as needed.

Objective 2:
Review/design courses
> 2a: Inventory existing courses
> 2b: Develop/expand transition courses based on survey, needs
> - Vocational/Career & Technical Education (CTE)
> - Work
> - College
> - Independent Living/Assisted Living

2c: Develop or find a self-awareness/career interest inventory; implement process for students to complete and utilize results
2d: Develop or find a transition-based skills checklist; implement process for students to complete and utilize results
2e: Strengthen current portfolio process for students to collect and use all transition materials and resources
2f: Develop early career-awareness (K-8) class activities

Objective 3:
Develop short term programs to support transition skills
    3a: Identify potential short term transition programs
    3b: Establish, revise, and/or expand summer transition programs
    3c: Establish, revise, and/or expand school year short term transition programs
    3d: Develop information-sharing materials re: short term programs and distribute statewide

Objective 4:
Provide training
    4a: Identify existing training needs.
    4b: Determine and define the roles of school and dorm staff in the transition programs
    4c: Expand the participation for both school and dorm staff in the planning and implementation of the IEP transition plan
    4d: Establish comprehensive 14-21 training plan for school/dorm staff
    4e: Implement a student-driven IEP process in which students lead their own meeting as appropriate; design and implement training for staff and students

Objective 5:
Expand work experience
    5a: Identify existing and expand on and off campus work experience options/partners (work sites, job shadowing, volunteer opportunities, apprenticeships)
    5b: Collaborate with State Services for the Blind (SSB) and Department of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) and other stakeholders to identify work placements in students' home communities
    5c: Create on-campus summer work opportunities for students
    5d: Identify a work readiness checklist for use in preparing and evaluating students on the job
    5e: Prepare students for employment; e.g., developing a resume, filling out an application, interviewing, daily work behaviors

Communication Plan

Mission and Purpose of the Communication Plan

The purpose of the Minnesota State Academies (MSA) communication plan is to identify and effectively engage with MSA's diverse stakeholders. The plan provides a roadmap for sharing the MSA strategic plan with staff, families, students, and local and state stakeholders. It seeks to inform and build the collective commitment of the MSA community.

Practice-Policy Communication Cycles

The Board, Superintendent, Instructional Leadership Team, and Steering Committee are responsible for the overall implementation of and communication about the strategic plan.

Stakeholder Group: Students
Methods of Communication: Friday Forums (D); Student Council (B)/SBG (D); Assemblies (B); Trojan Forum (D); The Companion; Daily announcements; Facebook; Superintendent videos
Frequency of Communication: Introductory kickoff assembly; Quarterly (The Companion); Monthly (Special short updates; Superintendent Videos)

Stakeholder Group: Parents and Families
Methods of Communication: Email/Letters; The Companion; MSA website; Annual report; Facebook; Superintendent Videos; Parent events; Open House
Frequency of Communication: Yearly (annual report); Quarterly (The Companion); Monthly (Special mailings with short updates; Superintendent Videos)

Stakeholder Group: Staff
Methods of Communication: All-staff meetings; Instructional staff meetings; Dorm staff meetings; Start-of-school-year meeting; Email; Superintendent videos; Daily announcements; Annual report; The Companion; Site Council; Department Team meetings; Facebook; Website
Frequency of Communication: Yearly (annual report); Quarterly (The Companion); Monthly (Special mailings with short updates; Superintendent Videos); Daily/Weekly (announcements, various meetings)

Stakeholder Group: Board
Methods of Communication: Middle and end of year reports; Superintendent reports during board meetings; Superintendent Videos; The Companion; Email; Facebook; Website
Frequency of Communication: June and December (Middle and annual report); Quarterly (The Companion); Monthly (Special mailings with short updates; Superintendent Videos)

Stakeholder Group: Alumni
Methods of Communication: Maroon and Gold (D); Alumni meetings; Alumni officer meetings (B); Updates at summer reunions; Town hall meetings; Monthly phone calls (B); Superintendent videos; The Companion; Facebook; Website; Annual Report
Frequency of Communication: Yearly (annual report); Quarterly (The Companion); Monthly (Special mailings with short updates; Superintendent Videos); Daily/Weekly (email, various meetings)

Stakeholder Group: Department Heads
Methods of Communication: Instructional Leadership Team/Department Heads meetings; Email; Superintendent Videos; Daily announcements; Annual report; Facebook; The Companion; Website
Frequency of Communication: Yearly (annual report); Quarterly (The Companion); Monthly (Special mailings with short updates; Superintendent Videos); Daily/Weekly (announcements, various meetings)

Stakeholder Group: Site Council
Methods of Communication: Monthly meetings; Email; Facebook; Superintendent Videos; Daily announcements; Annual report; The Companion; Website
Frequency of Communication: Yearly (annual report); Quarterly (The Companion); Monthly (Site Council meetings, special mailings with short updates; Superintendent Videos); Daily/Weekly (announcements, various meetings)

Stakeholder Group: Agencies-Organizations
(i.e. State Services for the Blind (SSB); Vocational Rehabilitation (VR); Minnesota Commission for the Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing (MNCDHH); Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Services (DHHS); DeafBlind services (DB); Minnesota Management and Budget (MMB); Blind Inc.; Minnesota Association of Deaf Citizens (MADC); Vision Loss Resources; Minnesota Association of School Administrators (MASA); Minnesota Administrators for Special Education (MASE); National Federation of the Blind (NFB); Duluth Lighthouse for the Blind; Minnesota School Boards Association (MSBA); Minnesota Rural Education Association (MREA); American Council for the Blind (ACB); Minnesota chapter of National Association for Parents of Children with Visual Impairments (MNAPVI); Hands and Voices, Parent Advocacy Coalition for Educational Rights (PACER): Multi-Disabilities and Visual Impairment Services (MDVI); Family Mentor Program)
Methods of Communication: Email; Annual report; Website; Facebook; The Companion; Superintendent Videos; LISTSERVs
Frequency of Communication: Yearly (annual report); Quarterly (The Companion); Monthly (special mailings with short updates; Superintendent Videos)

Stakeholder Group: Minnesota Department of Education (MDE)
(Advisory Councils; DeafBlind Project; Regional Low Incidence Facilitators; Blind/Visually Impaired Specialist; Deaf/Hard of Hearing Specialist; Help Me Grow program; Low Incidence Leadership Forum; Institute of Higher Education Forum; Summer Transition Program)
Methods of Communication: Updates at advisory council meetings (get on agenda); The Companion; Email; Annual report; Website; Facebook; Superintendent videos; LISTSERVs
Frequency of Communication: Yearly (annual report); Quarterly (The Companion); Monthly (special mailings with short updates; Superintendent Videos); Various (advisory council meetings)

Stakeholder Group: Community and General Public
(I.e. Lions Club; Sertoma Club; Work Experience Partners)
Methods of Communication: Email; Annual report; The Companion; Website; Facebook; Presentations
Frequency of Communication: Yearly (annual report); Quarterly (The Companion); Various depending on partner

Stakeholder Group: School Districts (Special Education Directors)
Methods of Communication: Email; Annual report; The Companion; Website; Facebook; Superintendent Videos; LISTSERVs
Frequency of Communication: Yearly (annual report); Quarterly (The Companion); Monthly (Director Forum meetings, special mailings with short updates; Superintendent Videos)

Stakeholder Group: Governor's Office and Legislature
Methods of Communication: Annual report; The Companion; Website
Frequency of Communication: Yearly (annual report); Quarterly (The Companion); Various as needed

Stakeholder Group: Advisory Boards/Councils
Methods of Communication: Updates/presentations during meetings; Annual report; The Companion; Website; Facebook
Frequency of Communication: Yearly (annual report); Quarterly (The Companion); Various (advisory council meetings)

Appendix—1:
Strategic Plan Development Process

In July 2017, the MSA Board included a presentation on strategic planning as part of its annual retreat. The Board decided to enter into a strategic planning process beginning spring 2018, which led to the development of a 5-year plan for MSAB, MSAD and expansion of statewide visibility and services.

The strategic planning process, which was facilitated by Jane Mulholland and Ron Stern of Planning for Student Success, began with two days of stakeholder meetings at MSAB and MSAD during which participants identified current strengths and areas for improvement. Stakeholders included: students, staff, parents, alumni, Site Council members, the MSA Board, and community.

The MSA Strategic Planning Steering Committee, made up of students, parents, staff, administrators and Board members, met for a total of 6 days over several months. It was tasked with the following responsibilities:

- Review/revise MSA's vision, mission, and guiding beliefs
- Review stakeholder meeting comments
- Identify strategic goal areas
- Conduct a Strengths/Weaknesses/Opportunities/Threats (SWOT) analysis
- Develop strategic goals, 5-year goals, objectives, and action steps
- Design a communication plan

Accountability for implementing the strategic plan is ensured in two ways. Administrators are assigned to lead and be responsible for the completion of each of the 5 strategic goals. In addition, a communication plan, which addresses all internal and external stakeholders, outlines the method(s) and frequency of communication and the responsible party. The communication plan includes biannual progress reports to the MSA Board, and annual reports to the Office of the Governor and the Minnesota State Legislature.

Accreditation is a foundational aspect of the educational programs offered at MSA. MSAB is currently accredited, and MSAD will complete the process by the end of this 5-year strategic plan. During years 4 and 5, the self-studies required for AdvancED and CEASD accreditation will be compiled, with the site visits occurring before the end of SY 22-23. The resulting school improvement plan and the subsequent 5-year strategic plan will be aligned, providing a clear pathway to the future.

Appendix—2:
SWOT Analysis
Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats

The MSA Strategic Planning Steering Committee conducted a Strength, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis. The committee identified strengths and areas for improvement for each of the 5 strategic goal areas: School Climate, Student Life, Instruction and Assessment, Statewide Visibility and Transition. It then considered opportunities and potential or existing threats facing MSA in the next five years.

Strengths and Areas for Improvement

School Climate

Strengths:
- Relationship between students and instructional staff
- K-12 students' familiarity with and acceptance of one another
- Staff willingness to step up as needed
- Improving website and social media and their accessibility for all
- New position of Communications Director and its role to bring increased MSA visibility
- Daily staff newsletter
- Monthly family newsletters
- Communication with families of children ECE through 5th grade
- Daily/weekly communication logs in MSAB's MCC program
- Accessible, favorable school environment (as expressed by MSAB students)

Areas for Improvement:
- Consistent, accurate and timely communication between school (including Student Life) and parents (as expressed by parents)
- Consistent communication between the instructional departments and dorms
- Clear, identified points of contact at the school for MS/HS parents
- Staff morale
- Consistent, across-the-board, positive work attitude
- Meaningful expression of appreciation for and recognition of employees and their accomplishments
- Equitable assumption/assignment of employee tasks and responsibilities
- Clear, effective and consistent avenues for staff expression of ideas, issues and concerns
- Clear, effective and consistent communication between teachers and SEPAS
- Greater caring and commitment among MSAD students about their education
- Academic rigor
- Clear understanding and consistent, effective application of attendance and student behavior policies
- Effective, consistent communication about positive developments at MSA with external stakeholders in the state
- Sometimes staff other than the classroom teacher communicates with parents about their child and may give inaccurate or incomplete information.

Student Life

Strengths:
- Array and quality of age-appropriate after school programs and activities (including athletics)
- Involvement of family/alumni with after school and athletic activities
- Reasonable activity fees
- School pride
- Staff-to-student dorm ratios
- Relationship with local business community leading to opportunities for student work experience
- Student involvement in activities
- New, state-of-the-art dorm at MSAD
- Parent input is welcome
- A+ House – a semi independent living/learning program at MSAB

- Student opportunities for travel in and out of state for various competitions and activities

Areas for Improvement:
- Quality, adequacy and variation of food served at school (expressed by students)
- Opportunities for MSAB's MCC students to interact outside of classroom with peers who are language models
- Greater opportunities for widespread student participation in activities such as drama
- Available gym/activity space especially during winter
- Balance between supervision and student independence
- Greater, more effective and consistent staff interaction with students
- Training for dorm staff on providing effective after-school academic support to diverse students
- Consistency of parental expectations relating to student independence and discipline at school (including dorms)
- Opportunities for dorm staff to participate in school-provided in-service with instructional staff
- Opportunities for appropriate dorm staff participation in the IEP process and meetings

Instruction & Assessment

Strengths:
- Caring teachers are committed to students and their outcomes
- Assessment/evaluation team
- Improving curriculum compliance with state standards
- Licensure and qualification of DHH teachers, support staff and other staff
- Most MSAB teachers licensed in B/VI
- Adherence to state testing requirements
- Completion of ASL receptive testing component with current MSAD students
- Professional development training for SEPAs this year
- Professional Development training for teachers
- Delivery of an array of services at MSAB (i.e., OT/music/pool)
- Health clinic
- Direct communication with peers and staff for students
- Communication-accessible environment throughout the school day and after school on campus
- Braille knowledge among staff at MSAB
- Incidental learning opportunities

- Availability of technology devices for the individual student
- Student-teacher ratio in the classroom
- Use of formal and informal assessments
- Flexible group scheduling
- Use of ActivPanels in the classrooms
- Support for students to attend public schools as appropriate
- Interpreting services
- Curriculum development opportunities during the summer for staff

Areas for Improvement:
- Accessibility of statewide assessments and NWEA for students
- Training on use of devices/technology to support student learning
- Resources/capacity to provide services for specialized student needs
- Coordination of services between both campuses
- Coordination of services for Deafblind students
- Provision of Vocational/CTE courses
- Curriculum for MCC students
- Availability of elective courses (impacted by low number of students)
- Relevance of state reports on actual school performance – in turn affects accurate perception of the schools
- Academic rigor of classes as perceived by students and parents
- Appropriate, relevant assessments for all students (especially for academically challenged students)
- Consistent staff performance evaluations
- Opportunities for staff/teachers to meet to bring on multi-disciplinary approach to working with students
- Mentoring program for new staff
- Language arts curriculum
- Collaboration between teachers; across the board integration of language arts instruction in the classroom
- Consistent communication, consequences and support for students on Academic Probation (AP)

Statewide Visibility

Strengths:
- Minnesota Resource Libraries
- Relationship with Minnesota Department of Education (MDE); Deaf/Hard of Hearing (DHH) and Blind/Visually Impaired (BVI) advisory boards
- Summer school programs

- Relationship with State services for the Blind (SSB)/Department of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR)/Region 10
- Capacity to serve students
- Facilities to host local and statewide events and trainings
- 150+ years of service to students and families
- Increasing visibility with legislators
- Support for MSAD from the Commission for the Deaf
- Relationship with Faribault public schools/Shattuck-St. Mary's School
- Relationships between MSAB and the National Federation of the Blind, American Council of the Blind, and the American Printing House for the Blind
- Parent Child Institute
- Family Immersion Weekend

Areas for Improvement:
- Messaging about the two schools
- School districts' awareness of MSA programs, services and facilities
- Local, regional and statewide awareness/understanding of MSA
- Partnerships with districts, organizations, and agencies
- Greater provision of programs/services
- Capacity to provide outreach/short-term programs
- Consideration of MSA as a first-stop school placement for families
- Updated informational/public relations materials
- Clear and shared budget line items
- Consistent relationships with Special Ed directors and other external stakeholders in the state
- Capacity to follow through on ideas and strategies

Transition

Strengths:
- Transition Programs at MSAB: Academy Plus and 14-18
- Relationship between MSAB and State Services for the Blind (SSB) (transition workshops)
- Hosting job/resource fairs
- Relationships with Department of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR)
- Career exploration course for juniors
- Assessment tools and evaluation team
- Number of graduates that go on to college or training program after high school
- Involvement of family/alumni with after school and athletic activities

- Availability and student use of Post-Secondary Educational Options (PSEO)

Areas for Improvement:
- Independent living skills programming at MSAD
- Clarity of parental understanding of transition programming and requirements at MSAB
- K-12 staff knowledge of entire transition process
- Pathway options for students (e.g., for college, work)
- Variety of vocational/CTE classes
- Availability of Advanced Placement classes
- Collaboration and communication between the instructional division and dorm
- Five-year tracking of graduates and their outcomes
- Work study on campus and off-campus, internships and community service opportunities and requirements
- Onset of career planning
- Staffing for transition programming
- Identification and monitoring of the different components of transition programming

Opportunities for MSA

- Family Immersion Weekend – resulted in 3 family tours; increase these activities
- Expand our summer program offerings (i.e., camps) for specific groups (both D and B) – themed camps
- Satellite programs (if funded) – MSA could support kids across the state
- 18-21 program (MSAD) opening this fall
- Pair up MCC and other students with typical peers in the community
- Dormitory space—have room to grow
- More after-school programs (music/art/dancing)
- Offer opportunity for the community to use the gym, auditorium, other campus spaces
- Open ASP to community students
- Share resources between MSAB and MSAD campuses
- Strengthen relationship with local and statewide legislators
- MSAB – artist in residence program is wonderful—consider establishing at MSAD
- Connect with school districts serving D, HH, B, VI or DB students to help them better understand what MSAB and MSAD offer

- Establish an ASL club after school for non-MSAD students
- Provide school district training on how to work with deaf or blind child
- Offer free/reduced evaluation for families (invite them to stay overnight on campus) – get them to visit and see the program for themselves
- Design and offer distance-learning opportunities.
- Make MSAD the first stop (at birth)
- Develop a deaf mentor program
- Expand/maintain White Cane Day – creates a lot of exposure – brings in non-locals
- Consider diversity-specific programs (Somali, Latinx); utilize MSA's mental health team to host these events
- Host Town Hall meetings in various locations across the state
- Partner with Hands and Voices to offer literacy night activities on a regular basis across the state
- Purchase Live streaming equipment for MSA to share its events/activities
- Collaborate with D/HH and BVI teacher prep programs
- Complete strategic planning process and implement plan
- Provide opportunities for staff to travel the state to spread awareness of the MSA schools/programs
- Utilize students/parents as spokespeople for the schools

Potential or Existing Threats

- Enrollment
- Budget
- Relationships/partnerships between MSA and school districts
- Accuracy of perceptions and understanding about MSAB and MSAD's programs and services among school districts, parents and other relevant stakeholders
- Statewide visibility of MSA
- Validity and appropriateness of MDE-required tests for many MSAB and MSAD students
- Aging campus infrastructure
- Capacity of qualified applicants for vacant professional positions
- Pushing statewide visibility before improving MSAB and MSAD
- Competitiveness of salaries and benefits offered by MSA

Appendix—3: Acknowledgements

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MSA Strategic Planning Steering Committee:
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- Brittany Thomforde, MSA Director of Student Support Services
- Jody Olson, MSAD Assistant Director of Education
- Jessica McBurnett, MSAB Dorm Director
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