

Frequently Asked Questions about the School District of West Salem Strategic Planning Process

What is Strategic Planning?

Strategic planning is an organizational activity that sets priorities, focuses resources, and strengthens operations. It does so by identifying shared goals to achieve an identified mission and vision. It provides a roadmap that clarifies the key work needed to improve future student success. This helps guide decisions and actions moving forward.

What is a Strategic Plan?

A strategic plan is a document that communicates the organization's goals, the priorities needed to achieve them, and the measures used to monitor progress. The plan will address both the academics and operations of the school district. The Strategic Plan is Board-approved and gives administration and staff direction to implement action plans to meet the plan's goals.

Why are we updating the School District of West Salem Strategic Plan?

We have seen great progress using the strategic plan developed in 2022 and implemented over the past five years. As the previous strategic plan sunsets, we want to ensure we have direction moving forward. Our strategic plan is a key tool to make progress in how we serve our students, staff, and community.

What is the process for updating the strategic plan?

The Board of Education elected to work with a firm, Excel Leadership, to facilitate the strategic planning process. The district will hold listening sessions for staff, parents, community members, and students. The district will also form a Strategic Planning Committee to guide the process. This Committee is working through four phases of strategic plan development: (1) Environmental Scan and Planning, (2) Collecting Community Input & Priorities, (3) Strategic Plan Development, and (4) Draft Plan Adoption and Communication. We will begin this fall and complete it by the end of the second half of the 2026-2027 school year.

Who's working on this strategic plan?

YOU, we hope! We will hold listening sessions in September to begin identifying key themes for the strategic plan update. Later this year, we will be asking for your participation in a Strategic Plan Survey. The district will be taking the important step of forming a Strategic Planning Committee to guide the strategic plan update. This dedicated group will include employees, parents, community members, school leaders, and school board members. The committee will meet regularly during this school year to draft the updated plan using input from the visioning sessions, community survey, school data, and a scan of the educational environment.

What is a Listening Session?

Listening Sessions are a key process for gathering input for the Strategic Plan from multiple stakeholders. Listening sessions are an in-person opportunity lasting approximately 60 minutes in which facilitators ask questions to gather input on the school district's strengths and opportunities for improvement. These Listening Sessions will include staff, parents, students, community members, school leaders, and board members. The committee will then identify key themes from all Listening Sessions and use them to craft the updated strategic plan.

Why are we conducting a survey as part of the strategic plan update?

A survey is the best way to gather broad feedback to guide strategic plan development. Ultimately, this is the district's plan. Since you're a staff member, resident, or parent of an open enrollment student of the school district, it's important you have a voice in what goes in the plan. Also, if you don't have time to attend a strategic plan listening session, this is your way to offer input.

Why should I take the strategic plan survey?

Your voice will make a difference. The Strategic Planning Committee will review all input carefully and use it to develop the strategic plan. It's also an easy survey to take and shouldn't take much time, but it can provide impactful information.

How do I take the strategic plan survey?

We are planning to release the strategic plan survey in the latter half of October. This timeline allows us to complete the analysis in November, giving the committee time to begin reviewing the feedback in November and December.

We will send more details, along with a direct link and a QR code to access the survey, as we get closer to the launch date in October.

How will the information from the survey be used?

We will analyze all survey responses for key themes. These themes will shape priorities in the updated strategic plan and guide the school district's actions over the next four to five years.

When is the plan going to be completed?

Once we gather all input from our in-person listening sessions and survey data, the strategic plan will begin to take shape in early winter. We will then submit the finalized plan to the School District of West Salem Board of Education for approval toward the end of the 2026–2027 school year.

Following Board approval, school leaders will work throughout the summer to establish action and communication plans to prepare for implementation as we begin the 2027-28 school year.

How will we use the plan?

We will create action plans to support the plan's identified priorities. We will also identify key performance indicators to monitor progress. Accountability is key to implementing the plan with fidelity.

What if I have more questions about the strategic plan survey or the strategic planning process?

We would love to hear from you! Your questions, ideas, and perspectives are vital to shaping our district's future. If you are wondering about any part of the strategic planning process, please don't hesitate to reach out.

You can share your thoughts or questions anytime by emailing me directly at rieber.ryan@wsalem.k12.wi.us. I am always eager to connect and discuss how we can best support our schools together.

As we look to the future of our school district, a clear, dynamic strategic plan is essential. It serves as our roadmap, guiding our decisions, aligning our resources, and ensuring every effort directly supports our students' growth, well-being, and academic success.

Whether you share your voice through the upcoming survey, join committee discussions, or offer feedback along the way, I sincerely appreciate your time, thoughts, and dedication. However you choose to participate, your insight is invaluable in shaping the path ahead for our district, our staff, and our community.

Thank you for your continued partnership and for all that you do to make our schools a wonderful place to learn and grow!

Ryan