

Prairie Crossing Charter School (PCCS)
Strategic Planning Workshop May 31, 2008 -- Notes

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Introduction

The Strategic Planning Steering Committee of the PCCS Board of Education has outlined the following goals for the 2008 Strategic Planning process:

1. Review Guiding Principle Concepts
2. Review Mission Statement Structure & Content
3. Define Goal Areas
4. Develop Plan for Process Completion

On Saturday, May 31, 2008, a group of 27 PCCS board members, administrators, teachers and parents met to begin the process to review and update the PCCS strategic plan. An outside consultant (Susan Parks) was contracted to facilitate the process. The purpose of the work session was for all participants to gain a common understanding of the current state, and to gain alignment about the concepts that form the foundation of the school's the mission, values and goals.

Attendees:

Steve Achtemeier	Laura Fay	Wendy Richter
Steve Barg	Katherine Fields	Yvonne Schaefer
Mark Biersdorf	Sharon Gaughan	Jan Siegel
Bob Bentz	Eric Herbert	Kelly Smith
Kathy Beyer	Donna Krissek	Elizabeth Stearns
Marcelo Chiodi	Patrisia Mallin	Frances Verenski
Suzanne Coonan	Cynthia McGovern	Linda Wiens
Myron Dagley	Caryn Meyer	Roycealee Woods, Superintendent
Geoff Deigen	Dennis Munk	Kim Vander Yacht

Session Agenda

Call to order

Dr. Dennis Munk

Discussion

1. Review Guiding Principle Concepts
2. Review Mission Statement Structure & Content
3. Define Goal Areas
4. Develop Plan for Process Completion

Public Comment

Adjourn

Current State Analysis Review

The Strategic Steering Committee had developed the following SWOT Analysis (a listing of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) as a starting point for the work session and the italicized items were added during the work session.

Current Strengths	Current “Watch List” Areas or Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student test scores • Environmental curriculum • Parental Involvement • The Pupil/Teacher ratio • Quality of staff • Dedication of students to learning • Campus buildings and resources • Partners • Culminating projects • <i>The number of classroom assistant</i> • <i>Full-time environmental educator</i> • <i>Learning Farm affiliation</i> • <i>Dedicated staff</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of provided transportation • Perception of minimal diversity • Mission statement is too lengthy/unclear • School name • “Branding/identity” is not strong • Financial security • Cycle of five year re-chartering • <i>The level of administrative turnover; less stability in our leadership</i> • <i>Fundraising</i> • <i>Level of community outreach</i> • <i>Lack of environmental knowledge and commitment (affects our hiring, etc.)</i> • <i>Internal and external communication</i>
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Find way to transport students • Increase diversity • Create signage/public awareness • Market culminating projects • Establish a university affiliation • Green Charter School Network • Illinois network of charter Schools • <i>Fundraising</i> • <i>More integration in the use of technology</i> • <i>Increased parental involvement</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In fighting among factions of constituents • Lack of shared understanding of charter • Perception that school is private - not public • Established school name • Stand-alone district status

Discussion on PCCS Values

The current Guiding Principles for PCCS are in Appendix A. Discussion about changing them centered on the feeling that some were redundant, that there were too many to remember, and they were too wordy. In addition, some of the guiding principles are really strategies, rather than values (for example, maintaining small class sizes is a strategy to achieve excellence in education).

The facilitator challenged the group that these values should be the beliefs that PCCS stakeholders hold dear, that anchor the organization and its actions and that will not be compromised. Given that context, the participants gained alignment on the following concepts. *(The note in parentheses shows relationship to existing guiding principles)*

From the discussion, there are four key values that define PCCS and guide its actions: 1) Understanding and caring about the environment, 2) Character development and leadership, 3) Integrated instruction with the environmental/ecological context framing it and 4) Excellence in education.

1. Understanding and caring about the environment

- An environmental mindset is important. If we establish a “green mind” in our children, they will become the ecological leaders of the future.
- The world has finite resources and we must create a more sustainable life. Children must understand their role in this.
- Children need to understand how the world works, from an ecological point of view. If they understand how the world works, they can understand how to live their own lives. (GP 4)
- Learning in outside, natural settings makes it easy for children to “put it all together” about how the world works. PCCS students become committed to the environment and better stewards of it
- Ecology means “living environment” - a healthy environment leads to healthy people.

2. Character development and leadership

- Character development is an essential tool for life (GP 8)
- Leaders are people who make a difference in the world. Children can be taught leadership skills and can be leaders in many ways.

3. Integrated instruction

- Children learn by doing, by being actively engaged and by starting with what they know and building from there (GP 2, GP 7)
- An integrated curriculum, where all subjects are connected and reinforce each other and where the environment / the natural world is woven throughout is the best way for children to learn. (GP 1)

4. Excellence in education

- All children deserve an excellent education. Excellent education for all PCCS students is a result of the above (integrated curriculum, character development, etc.). The PCCS model creates a community of learners and lifelong learners, where curiosity and problem solving are encouraged (GP 3, GP 6)
- To maintain education excellence, PCCS has an obligation/responsibility to learn from others but also to share with others. (GP 10)

The Values Administrative Task Force will work on the next draft of the values statements (see Next Steps section).

Discussion on PCCS Mission Statement

The current PCCS mission statement is:

“Prairie Crossing Charter School is a child-centered community of learners. We use an ecological, integrated, experiential approach to learning, which utilizes unique environmental and community resources. We develop students who demonstrate environmental stewardship and responsible, global citizenship.”

Discussion followed about the desire to “tighten” the mission statement, to make it more memorable and more compelling, making clear what is special and unique about PCCS. The first exercise was to create a list of verbs that describe the work that PCCS does.

Strong verbs that could describe what PCCS does (for use in mission statement fine-tuning)

- Verbs that convey the training and education portion of the mission:
 - ***Educate, Teach, Instill, Learn, Enlighten***
- Verbs that convey the desire to have each child reach his/her potential:
 - ***Inspire, Motivate, Discover, Encourage, Stimulate***
- Verbs related to the work of preparing students for high school, citizenship, life:
 - ***Enable, Empower, Prepare, Cultivate, Develop, Promote***
- Verbs that convey the change that occurs in the children:
 - ***Evolve, Transform, Build, Extend, Improve***
- Verbs that convey the collaborative effort involved:
 - ***Lead, Connect, Engage, Serve***
- Verbs that convey concern, compassion and responsibility:
 - ***Nurture, Protect, Save, Dedicate***
- Other verbs:
 - ***Understand, Articulate, Demonstrate, Provide***

Ideas for enhancements to the mission statement were drafted:

- PCCS is a public charter school that educates children and builds future leaders through an integrated curriculum with an environmental context.
 -transforms, inspires and empowers children....
- PCCS is a public school that prepares children for understanding and successfully negotiating their world, and for contributing actively and intelligently to the well-being of our planet.
- PCCS is a public charter school that inspires its students to become lifelong learners and leaders.
- to empower young learners to understand their role in the natural world and to take action to sustain the earth
-to inspire the next generation of environmental leaders/stewards / citizens

The Mission Administrative Task Force will work on the next draft of the mission statement (see Next Steps section).

Discussion on PCCS Short-Term (1 - 3 Year) Objectives

The starting point for this discussion was the list of long goals approved by the Board (see Appendix C). The participants divided into smaller breakout groups to discuss and brainstorm on short-term (1 - 3 year) objectives and desired accomplishments for the following areas:

- Education/curriculum
- Staffing
- Physical plant./ campus operations
- Finances / fundraising
- Communications and external relations
- Governance

The breakout groups brainstormed on at least three of the above categories, generating lists of strategies, tactical ideas, and desired outcomes for each category. These ideas are included in Appendices D through I.

The facilitator summarized these ideas, based on common themes, which are presented below for each category. These themes can be used as the starting point for establishing short-term (1 - 3 year) objectives for PCCS.

Education/ Curriculum

Long-term goal: *“Prairie Crossing Charter School will develop and have in place a curricular model which includes a cohesive, integrative curriculum for K-8th grade; staff development to understand, design, and teach the curriculum well; and assessment of student progress on the goals as indicated in the PCCS mission statement.”*

Draft - themes for short -term objectives:

- Review the curriculum, strengthen the integration and ensure that it supports the mission and values and results in excellence for all students
- Ensure that staff is equipped to execute the curriculum in consistent ways
- Create a transition path for 8th graders
- Leverage school and community resources to the full extent
- Measure our results
- Utilize technology and integrate it with the curriculum

The Education/Curriculum Administrative Task Force will work on the next draft of the short-term objectives, strategies and priority tactics/activities (see “Next Steps” section).

Staffing

Long-term goal: *“Prairie Crossing Charter School will effectively support its staff by successfully integrating recruitment, mentoring, professional development and retention techniques that mirror the mission, vision and guiding principles of the school.”*

Draft - themes for short -term objectives:

- Hire, train, and mentor staff to be able to fulfill the environmental education mission
- Ensure standards and expectations are being met
- Implement practices and policies to retain staff

The Staffing Administrative Task Force will work on the next draft of the short-term objectives, strategies and priority tactics/activities (see “Next Steps” section).

Physical Plant / Campus Operations

Long-Term goal: *“The Prairie Crossing Charter School campus will be a strong, positive support to the School’s ongoing functioning and development. The whole campus will be set up and used in a manner that reinforces a sound organizational structure and a sense of place.”*

Draft - themes for short -term objectives:

- Complete the landscape plan and maintain the grounds
- Highlight and use the campus (grounds and building) as a teaching and outreach opportunity
- Develop and implement a strategic technology plan
- Improve the campus infrastructure
- Outsource some functions that others can perform more cost effectively than PCCS
- *Facilitator note: should there be an objective category about maintaining the overall sustainability plan for the campus? Air/energy? Waste reduction/recycling? Water? Green building?*

The Physical Plant /Operations Administrative Task Force will work on the next draft of the short-term objectives, strategies and priority tactics/activities (see “Next Steps” section).

Finances / Fundraising

Long-term goals: *“Prairie Crossing Charter School will provide a comprehensive financial framework to assure that resources are available and prudently managed to optimize the educational opportunities for our learners.*

Prairie Crossing Charter School will effectively utilize parents and staff members to fundraise in support of both the capital campaign and the operating budget. The School will fundraise for purposes and with methods that address the targeted financial needs of the School.”

Draft - themes for short -term objectives:

- Dedicate resources to fundraising
- Develop a fundraising plan and targets
- Diversify and maximize funding/revenue sources
- Use public relations and marketing to raise awareness of PCCS “brand” to gain attention of donors
- Institute best practices to manage finances and budgeting process, including financial transparency

The Finances Administrative Task Force will work on the next draft of the short-term objectives, strategies and priority tactics/activities (see “Next Steps” section).

Communications / External Relations

Long-Term Goals: *“Prairie Crossing Charter School will develop and have in place a reliable system of distributing information whereby all parents, administration, staff, and board members are provided timely access (electronic and/or print) to regularly updated information about the School and its operations, and which allows others to obtain general information about the School.*

Prairie Crossing Charter School will develop and have in place a reliable internal communication process in place, whereby parents, administration, staff, and board members enter into dialogue regarding important school issues. Prairie Crossing Charter School will develop and have in place a reliable system of external communications with the larger community in order to promote the School and its mission and vision, and enhance relationships.”

Draft - themes for short -term objectives:

- Create more opportunities to engage and involve stakeholders
- Develop and implement protocols for effective communication
- Implement a public relations strategy
- Create effective vehicles for internal communication
- Develop vehicles to keep external partners/stakeholders informed

The Communications Administrative Task Force will work on the next draft of the short-term objectives, strategies and priority tactics/activities (see “Next Steps” section).

Governance

Long-term goal: *none*

Draft - themes for short -term objectives:

- Document and enforce policies to comply with our charter and increase transparency
- Clearly define governance and leadership roles and responsibilities
- Transition board members to a sustainable governing body

The Governance Administrative Task Force will work on the next draft of the short-term objectives, strategies and priority tactics/activities (see “Next Steps” section).

“Parking Lot Issues

The following issues were raised but there was not time in the agenda for discussion. Typically these comments were written on a card and handed in to the facilitator. Some are tactical in nature and should be discussed at the implementation planning stage of the strategic planning process. Others can be discussed by the Administrative Task Forces as part of their assignments.

Internal Communications

- Develop and publish a process for parents to follow when they are filing a complaint or a general concern. Who, how, where to file a complaint. How to keep track of complaints. Concerns and what was the resolution (for historical purposes and reference to past practices and to ensure consistency of application.
- Staff in-service in August should have a strategic plan review so teachers can set goals and integrate the mission, values and goals into the classroom
- Articulation and transition to high school should not be lost. Following student performance into high school is an important measurement for achieving school goals

Technology as part of the curriculum

- How to integrate technology into the curriculum though the grades - how to search the web, how to determine the quality of information. Partner with a library?

Governance

- Orientation of new board members is a requirement.
- Require board members to attend a board workshop each year and facilitate from the outside.
- Perform board self-evaluation
- Board should set goals each year
- Hold Board members accountable with consequences for unacceptable behaviors
- Recognize difference of opinions, and that’s OK.

Curriculum

- Formal Language Arts instruction cannot fall off any time in K-8. The students need to keep learning the basics.

Student Test Scores

- Are we testing well because we have a superior curriculum or because our students are the children of well-educated parents who care about their success and help them? This issue matters. We need to always question if we are doing this the best way and not become complacent about PCCS’s success. What can we do to cause improved test scores?

Next Steps

Proposed Schedule

Week	Task	Responsibility
June 2	Complete session notes and send to M. Dagley for distribution	S. Parks
June 2	Finalize small group Administrative task Forces	M. Dagley
June 9	Provide email feedback to facilitator only on session notes, or additional ideas (if not able to participate in an Administrative Task Force	Workshop invitees who cannot participate in task forces
TBD -- June	Administrative Task forces meet to develop next drafts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conference call with facilitator • Meetings and/or email reviews within specific Administrative Task force only • Send drafts to facilitator for feedback, compilation 	Administrative Task Forces
TBD - early July	Reconvene as a group to review draft , provide feedback and prepare to submit work to the Board Strategic Steering Committee	Workshop Invitees
Late July Open Meeting date TBD	Prepare recommendation for Board	Board Strategic Steering Committee
August Board meeting	Review recommendations and next steps	Board of Education
August- Sept	Communicate results <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents • Teacher in-service • Other key stakeholders 	
September	Create annual Plan	M. Dagley
Every Fiscal Quarter	Monitor strategic plan status and progress of priority initiatives	Board of Education

Administrative Task Forces - Assignments by M. Dagley

Values	Steve Barg, Elizabeth Stearns, Geoff Diegan
Mission	Steve Barg, Elizabeth Stearns, Kim VanderYacht, Eric Hebert, Wendy Richter
Education / Curriculum Goals	Cynthia McGovern, Sharon Gaughan, Katy Fields
Staffing Goals	Kim Vander Yacht, Marcelo Chiodi, Caryn Meyer
Physical Plant / Operations	Geoff Diegan, Mark Biersdorf, Eric Hebert
Finance	Wendy Richter, Geoff Diegan, Marcelo Chiodi
Governance	Suzanne Coonan, Bob Bentz, Mark Biersdorf, Eric Herbert
Communication	Marcelo Chiodi, Elizabeth Stearns

APPENDIX A -- Current PCCS Guiding Principles

- 1. An integrated approach to learning centered around the environment.** The natural world is inherently interesting to children and therefore serves as a setting and springboard for learning all subjects at Prairie Crossing Charter School. Teachers help students to deepen their understanding of the world by connecting all disciplines and to communicate their awe and understanding to others.
- 2. Love of learning.** Prairie Crossing Charter School students have time and opportunity to learn through their senses, experiences, and discoveries, sparked by curiosity and a sense of wonder. They experience the joy and excitement that comes when hard work leads to understanding and competence.
- 3. Search for excellence in all we do.** We seek to define and achieve excellence in all we do. We recognize many different types and measures of excellence. We strive to achieve it personally and collectively.
- 4. A sense of place.** The children of Prairie Crossing Charter School will experience firsthand the ecology of the land that surrounds the school. They will understand that we are all part of the earth and it is part of us. A strong sense of place within the natural and human community, both local and worldwide, will be the legacy of Prairie Crossing Charter School.
- 5. A small school that fosters learning.** The best learning takes place when teachers can give individual attention to each child and the overall school community is small enough for everyone to know and support each other. Therefore we will stay a small school with small classes.
- 6. A community of learners.** Prairie Crossing Charter School is a dynamic endeavor where teachers can learn and students can teach, where young people see adults grow in knowledge, adults take pleasure in watching children's knowledge expand, and where people delight in sharing information and wisdom.
- 7. A constructivist way of learning and teaching.** Constructivism helps students build meaning from their experiences, prior knowledge, and observations. It also confronts them with new situations that require them to reconstruct their knowledge.
- 8. Character development woven into the fabric of learning.** Prairie Crossing Charter School intentionally incorporates character development into its daily curriculum and activities. Teachers, administrators, students, and families work together to assure the healthy development of every child and to address moral and ethical issues so that each has the knowledge, skills, and resiliency to act with integrity.
- 9. Accountability and responsibility:** We pay close attention to leadership, governance, and management at Prairie Crossing Charter School. This includes maintaining our charter, meeting state requirements, and ensuring financial viability. Ultimately we are most accountable for the children learning.
- 10. Contribution to public education.** In return for the freedom it has been granted as a charter school, Prairie Crossing Charter School seeks ways to offer its integrated environmental curriculum to other schools. We document the effective and innovative aspects of our programs

and teaching methods, offer professional development programs to other educators, and partner with other schools in the exciting enterprise of learning.

APPENDIX B -- Current PCCS Vision Statement

Vision of Prairie Crossing Charter School. We envision a small, public school where...

1. Students and teachers are outside daily, immersed in the natural world learning about nature and culture through rich, first-hand contact with world around them. Children and teachers are guided by the cycles and patterns of growth, rainfall, migration, and the changing of the seasons as they learn about the natural world.
2. Children learn about the life cycles of animals and plants as well as the interdependence of life, including our use of plants and animals for food, through their observations, projects and real work on the farm, prairies, woodlands and wetlands that surround the school.
3. Every child is known well by the teachers, and his or her gifts, talents and special needs are recognized and addressed.
4. The school day and year are driven by curiosity and a commitment to learning rather than by mandates or the bell. Teachers have the freedom to shape day-to-day activities based on learning opportunities and teachable moments as well as on a set of rigorous academic standards.
5. The school serves as the anchor of a Conservation Learning Center that includes a conservation resource library, educational workshops and conferences. Teachers, administrators, and other staff members and parents model lifelong learning and environmental stewardship through consistent practices and behavior both in and out of the classroom. Parents, community members, and other individuals share in the learning experience through symposia and round tables sponsored by the PSO and other community organizations.
6. Learning experiences involve a broad community of learners. Children of different ages and abilities work together and with members of other schools, citizens groups, and service organizations. Sometimes they learn within single-grade level classes, sometimes in multi-age classes, and sometimes in groups that include multiple grade levels. All members of the community share questions, misunderstandings, and knowledge both to deepen their own knowledge and to help others do the same.
7. Members of the community show respect and care for each other, for those in the communities that surround us, and for people throughout the world. Children learn to understand and appreciate other cultures. Through their study of the Spanish language in every grade, they gain an enriched sense of Hispanic cultures.
8. Students practice the art of learning and discover how it leads to high achievement. They work on projects that are needed and useful to learn why technique, accuracy, clarity of thought and clear communication are important. Adults hold high expectations for students and help them unfold their potential.
9. Teachers, administrators, and other staff members collaborate to promote a sense of collective purpose. Teachers reflect together on their practices, critically analyze learning situations in their classrooms, and suggest and engage in creative strategies to provide settings that enable each child to meet the high expectations.
10. Parents play an integral role in the educational experience of the children through volunteer opportunities inside and outside the classroom, leadership positions, and reinforcement at home.
11. Children experience and practice the arts and humanities as an integrated part of their studies in social studies, science, and mathematics.
12. Students come to understand that natural and human communities are one and that environmental stewardship and civic responsibility go hand in hand. They gain a love for

learning and a care for the earth and its citizens that continue to develop after they have graduated.

APPENDIX C - PCCS Long-Term Goals

*Prairie Crossing Charter School - Strategic Plan Goals and Action Steps for January -June 2008
Goals Adopted 2005; Re-affirmed November 2007; Progress Update- April 2008*

<p>Goal Area: Educational Curriculum Prairie Crossing Charter School will develop and have in place a curricular model which includes a cohesive, integrative curriculum for K-8th grade; staff development to understand, design, and teach the curriculum well; and assessment of student progress on the goals as indicated in the PCCS mission statement.</p>	<p>Progress as of April 2008</p>
<p><i>Action Steps:</i> 1. Establish a board-level Curriculum Committee that is charged with working collaboratively with the school administration in the ongoing development, evaluation, and dissemination of the school's academic programs. The committee will monitor alignment of the school's academic programs with the school charter, mission and vision statements, and guiding principles.</p>	<p>Board voted to create "Excellence in Educational Program Advisory Committee" at April meeting.</p>
<p>2. Re-evaluate the role or need for the existing PCCS Advisory Group and adapt the makeup of this group to bring credentials and experience that will be helpful to the school.</p>	<p>No activity to report at this time.</p>
<p>Goal Area: Staffing Prairie Crossing Charter School will effectively support its staff by successfully integrating recruitment, mentoring, professional development and retention techniques that mirror the mission, vision and guiding principles of the school.</p>	<p>Progress as of April 2008</p>
<p><i>Action Steps:</i> 1. Direct and support the school administration in development and implementation of a process for soliciting staff input and feedback on issues related to their performance and satisfaction</p>	<p>No activity to report at this time. Personnel Committee will undertake this Action Step.</p>
<p>2. Collaborate with the school administration to evaluate preparedness of the teaching staff to deliver an academic program that meets the mission of our school.</p>	<p>No activity to report at this time.</p>
<p>Goal Area: Communications and External Relations Prairie Crossing Charter School will develop and have in place a reliable system of distributing information whereby all parents, administration, staff, and board members are provided timely access (electronic and/or print) to regularly updated information about the School and its operations, and which allows others to obtain general information about the School. Prairie Crossing Charter School will develop and have in place a reliable internal communication process in place, whereby parents, administration, staff, and board members enter into dialogue regarding important school issues. Prairie Crossing Charter School will develop and have in place a reliable system of external communications with the larger community in order to promote the School and its mission and</p>	<p>Progress as of April 2008</p>

vision, and enhance relationships.	
<p><i>Action Steps:</i></p> <p>1. Collaborate with the school administration to satisfy directives from the ISBE regarding outreach and communication.</p>	<p>1. Most recent update on corrections was provided to the ISBE on March 28.</p> <p>2. The ISBE has not notified PCCS of any concerns in addition to those cited in October 2007 letter.</p> <p>3. Outreach Task Force is generating final report.</p>
<p>2. Collaborate with the school administration to implement an annual evaluation of the school's comprehensive communication plan to parents and the larger community.</p>	<p>Board to review previous report from Communications Task Force.</p>
<p>Goal Area: Financial Management</p> <p>Prairie Crossing Charter School will provide a comprehensive financial framework to assure that resources are available and prudently managed to optimize the educational opportunities for our learners.</p>	<p>Progress as of April 2008</p>
<p><i>Action Steps:</i></p> <p>1. The Board will secure long-term financing that significantly reduces the school's debt load.</p>	<p>At March meeting the Board approved firm of Griffin, Kubik, Stephens, & Thompson, Inc. to pursue long-term financing at lower rate.</p>
<p>2. The Board will approve a 2008-09 budget that eliminates or significantly reduces reliance on fundraising and donations.</p>	<p>Draft budget under consideration in Finance Committee includes significant reductions in projected income from fundraising and donations. Board will review budget at May meeting.</p>
<p>Goal Area: Fundraising</p> <p>Prairie Crossing Charter School will effectively utilize parents and staff members to fundraise in support of both the capital campaign and the operating budget. The School will fundraise for purposes and with methods that address the targeted financial needs of the School.</p>	<p>Progress as of April 2008</p>
<p><i>Action Steps:</i></p> <p>1. Board members will commit to personal giving to the school.</p>	<p>All board members have made a personal contribution.</p>
<p>2. Board members will participate in at least one meeting with a potential donor.</p>	<p>Five board members have participated in meetings with potential donors.</p>

<p>Goal Area: New School Campus The Prairie Crossing Charter School campus will be a strong, positive support to the School’s ongoing functioning and development. The whole campus will be set up and used in a manner that reinforces a sound organizational structure and a sense of place.</p>	<p>Progress as of April 2008</p>
<p><i>Action Steps:</i> 1. Collaborate with the school administration to develop a multi-year, campus master-plan that includes priorities, budget needs, and opportunities for volunteer contributions.</p>	<p>In progress- addressed in Finance Committee plans for refinancing and annual budget.</p>
<p>2. The Board will collaborate with the school administration and staff to create a Sense of Place with the campus that can be utilized as a tool for marketing, increasing awareness of environmental and educational issues, and inviting and attracting visitors.</p>	<p>No activity to report at this time.</p>

Appendix D -- Education/Curriculum Brainstorm Ideas

The following is the list of brainstormed ideas from all of the groups that chose this topic. The facilitator grouped them by common theme after the work session.

Review the curriculum, strengthen the integration and ensure that it supports the mission and values and results in excellence for all students

- Implement Education Excellence Committee
- Re-evaluate curriculum to ensure that it starts with the environment and ensure it meets charter and mission
- Allocate funds and hire a curriculum specialist
- Form a committee to include curriculum specialist, environmental specialist, farm educators and a teacher from each grade band.
- Ensure curriculum builds each year and becomes progressively advanced
- Develop interventions for all spectrum of learners (advanced and challenged)
- Ensure documentation of curriculum
- More integration of special education and regular education
- Standardize the curriculum's scope and sequence
- Develop scope and sequence for vertical articulation

Ensure that staff is equipped to execute the curriculum in consistent ways

- Make sure teachers in the same grade band are teaching consistently, yet also allow for some teacher freedom/flexibility within the grade band
- Professional development for teachers, especially in environmental components
- Mentoring for new teachers (also mentioned in Staffing goal)
- Professional development in areas of our uniqueness and evaluate on whether they are using it

Create a transition path for 8th graders

- Ensure transition plan is in place for 8th graders; collaborate with schools that graduating 8th graders will attend to encourage them to continue to utilize and expand their environmental skills

Leverage school and community resources to the full extent

- Ensure we fully utilize human and community resources
- Integrate the Learning Farm more deeply into the curriculum
- Ensure that we are making the best use of the environmental resource at our disposal
- Invite schools from other schools - partner/exchange with other schools
- Create relationships with local colleges for teacher preparedness

Measure our results

- Evaluate current assessment procedures and ensure consistency and fidelity
- Track student performance, post graduation

Utilize technology and integrate it with the curriculum

- Include technology component to the curriculum
- Make sure technology in the classroom is up to date

Appendix E - Staffing Brainstorm Ideas

The following is the list of brainstormed ideas from all of the groups that chose this topic. The facilitator grouped them by common theme after the work session.

Hire, train, and mentor staff to be able to fulfill the environmental education mission

- Hire those with a passion for the mission
- Use best practices in recruitment and compensation
- Mentorship program for new teachers
- Formal professional staffing plans in place
- Awards and recognition for teachers who demonstrate mission/passion
- Mentoring program needs to be established/developed/implemented
- Support staff for mentoring
- “Staff” topic should include all staff - teachers, teacher assistants and administration
- Need professional development for all staff on technology that we have, how to develop web pages, work on the web page

Ensure standards and expectations are being met

- Effective performance evaluations with remediation plans
- Define teacher and student expectations
- Staff-parent relations

Implement practices and policies to retain staff

- Gather and report on exit interview data
- Individualized retention plans (flex work schedule, additional professional development)
- Foster collaboration and moral
- Conduct annual staff engagement survey
- Maintain good teachers (teacher retention)

Appendix F - Physical Plant / Campus Operations Brainstorming

The following is the list of brainstormed ideas from all of the groups that chose this topic. The facilitator grouped them by common theme after the work session.

Complete the landscape plan and maintain the grounds

- Create a Building and Grounds committee
- Finish landscaping
- Maintain and improve campus
- Keep it clean (the campus)
- Get donor for landscaping
- Make master landscaping plan available to anyone
- Teachers doing more with gardens/landscaping outside of their classrooms. Have a resource in place to facilitate this and include it as a goal in the curriculum
- Process for reviewing plan issues and needs
- Preventive and corrective maintenance procedures

Highlight and use the campus (grounds and building) as a teaching and outreach opportunity

- Put up interpretive signs, use the actual buildings as a teaching tool and do an in-service for staff about it
- Have signs on Hwy. 45, map when people enter the campus to orient themselves
- Visible and accessible to broad community as a model resource or space

Develop and implement a strategic technology plan

- Technology Lab
- Need strategic technology plan (updating computers, “other” technology)

Improve the campus infrastructure

- Victoria Post Panney Library and Resource Center
- Have emergency plans in place, with contingency plans for different situations
- Connect the buildings - physically trade classrooms before moving to a new building
- Underground tunnels
- Create a capital fund and projects tied to the budget
- Secure the environment (gate)
- Create environment with effective acoustics (not have to use gym for all purposes)

Outsource some functions that others can perform more cost effectively than PCCS

- Let Grayslake Park District handle the rentals of the gym and other rooms; obtain intergovernmental agreements to do this

Facilitator note: should there be an objective category about maintaining the overall sustainability plan for the campus? Air/energy? Waste reduction/recycling? Water? Green building?

Appendix G - Finance / Fundraising Brainstorm Ideas

The following is the list of brainstormed ideas from all of the groups that chose this topic. The facilitator grouped them by common theme after the work session.

Dedicate resources to fundraising

- Board position dedicated to fundraising
- Solicit expertise from parent community to free up Development Director's time
- Development Director to manage volunteers and submit grants and corporate donors
- Development Director not responsible for public relations
- Teachers on fundraising committee

Develop a fundraising plan and targets

- Specific targets and goals for the amount of money to attain
- Development of a long-term capital improvement fund
- Set up an endowment fund
- Endowment
- Comprehensive fundraising plan

Diversify and maximize funding/revenue sources

- Create and activate 501(c)3 fundraising
- Grants and corporate sponsors, especially those with environmental education
- Maximize reimbursement
- Maximize state grants - collecting entitlements
- Foundations, Grant writing
- Reach out to the community network
- Build on green issues and corporations
- Establish a foundation

Use public relations and marketing to raise awareness of PCCS "brand" to gain attention of donors

- HGTV, ads, mini spots
- PSAs and Public Relations plan
- Identify donors and ask them
- Create a 10 minute DVD
- Specific wish list brochure
- Community partnerships

Institute best practices to manage finances and budgeting process, including financial transparency

- Use public school accounting practices
- Use of technology to track finances (have the infrastructure in place)
- Evaluate cost of budgeting systems
- Long-term plan and budget and prioritize spending
- Balanced budget, tied to strategic plan, and annual plan tied to budget
- Communicate to parents and community how PCCS is funded

Appendix H - Communications / Public Relations Brainstorming

The following is the list of brainstormed ideas from all of the groups that chose this topic. The facilitator grouped them by common theme after the work session.

Create more opportunities to engage and involve from stakeholders

- Additional workshops
- Regular face-face meetings
- Opportunities for working together (small groups)
- Consider all constituent groups - teachers, parents, administration, board, community, after school programs, ISBE, PSO
- Actively recruit new volunteers to be involved; ask people to do a specific task/job
- Do more communication centered around task forces - to actively involve more volunteers
- New parent “indoctrination” / orientation
- Communicate the strategic plan to staff

Develop and implement protocols for effective communication

- Guidelines for standards in communication between parents and teachers
- Guidelines for chain of command/hierarchy - who is responsible/accountable for what
- Establish guidelines/norms for effective communication, including conflict
- “Get to know your teacher” articles
- Have policies in place to safeguard stakeholder identities (external communication)

Implement a public relations strategy

- Information beyond school (to community)
- System to identify opportunities for good public relations, such as presentations at conferences, articles
- Identify exceptional activities that will generate “positive press”
- Reach out to Green magazines
- Develop a strategy to communicate about the school on a large scale (about the school, vision, mission)
- Develop a nationwide campaign to communicate about PCCS
- Develop a strategy to use the internet (You-Tube, MySpace) to market PCCS
- Communicate the PCCS brand

Create effective vehicles for internal communication

- Good and regular communication
- Create a monthly internal newsletter and post it on the website
- Need emergency communication plan
- Look at the communications plan previously presented to the board
- Friday newsletter
- Identify ways to disseminate information to parents
- Have teachers provide a list of books that will be read (and why) for parents
- Empower teachers and give them the ability to add content to their web pages
- Create a homework link on teacher’ webpage for all teachers to input

- Research alternative ways to disseminate homework
- Scan/PDF homework and put on website

Develop vehicles to keep external partners/stakeholders informed

- Keep ISBE informed
- Involvement/affiliations with appropriate organizations (Green Charter School Network)
- Foster better relationships with Fremont and Woodland

Appendix I - Governance Brainstorming

The following is the list of brainstormed ideas from all of the groups that chose this topic. The facilitator grouped them by common theme after the work session.

Document and enforce policies to comply with our charter and increase transparency

- Enhance communication between the board and administration and adhere to OMA
- Enhance our compliance with delivering and holding public documents
- Finish the board policy manual
- Compliance with the Charter
- Identify necessary policies

Clearly define governance and leadership roles and responsibilities

- Clearly articulate the governing structure of the school with an organization chart
- Define the governing structure and define the chain of command
- Define governing roles for speed
- Clarification of Board-Director responsibilities, including task descriptions
- Make sure staff knows who to go to for certain decisions

Transition board members to a sustainable governing body

- Recruit outside of the community for board members
- New board member orientation
- On-going board development, best practices
- Look to other agencies for training - IPRA, ALA, NSLS
- Stay focused - on mission, vision, values, goals...strategic plan
- Separate governance from management. Transition to a board that governs rather than manages.
- Don't look as much for board members with specific skills (for managing)

APPENDIX J - Participant Expectations for the Work Session

During the introductions exercise, each participant was asked to share his/her expectations for the work session and the strategic planning process. The following responses were given:

Alignment through a participative and inclusive process

- Everyone is on the “same page” so we can move forward
- Recognize the difference of opinions and address the concerns, but try to get us all on the same page
- Understand the issues/concerns and how we can help to resolve them
- That this session be open and we have an opportunity to provide input
- Have this session be the beginning of a process to clarify who are, and what we want to be
- That this session is a positive experience to build on
- Use this as a beginning and keep moving forward

Define and clarify path to the future

- Get ideas for our future direction
- Create more clarity around our mission and goals
- Get clarity about who we are and what makes us unique
- Get consensus on what we’ll spend our time and energy on.
- Clarify our mission and guiding principles
- Discuss the basics and fundamentals for what works to achieve excellence in public schools

Refocus on our environmental mission

- Remind us all on the environmental focus for our school
- Clarify the concept of using the outdoors as a classroom for learning; we need this commitment clearly defined and our stakeholders united in their conviction

Better understanding of each other’ perspectives

- Bring the classroom perspective to the discussion, thereby providing some balance
- Find out what the expectation is for me as a teacher
- See different perspectives through the discussion

Review what we have accomplished and what we can learn from

- Celebrate the wonderful things we have done (and do)
- Take a look at our strengths and weaknesses. Address the weaknesses and use the strengths to reach our goals
- Look at what can be “tweaked” and what can work better. Create an agenda for our school to be the best and also be sustainable

APPENDIX K - Strategic Planning Terms and Mission Statement Structure

Definition

- An official statement of the purpose and nature of the enterprise -- the mission statement describes reason for the organization's existence. It outlines the primary emphasis and clarifies the nature and scope of the organization's offerings. Mission statements are broad and expected to remain in effect for an extended period of time.

Also known as:

- Statement of purpose

Answers the question

- What are we?
- Why do we exist? What is our purpose?
- What is our area of focus? What makes us unique?
- What is our passion?

Basic structure

- "We are a ...(what we are)... whose mission is to ...(purpose and why we do it)...through...(our focus areas; how we do it and what makes us unique.)"

Use strong active verbs

- Keep it short and memorable
- Should "rally the troops" and convey the passion of the organization.

PCCS Strategic Planning Model

