

**Vestaburg Community School  
2018-2023  
Strategic Plan Summary Document**



High Expectations for Every  
Student Every Time

*Vestaburg Community School, building a foundation and preparing students for their future.*



## Letter from Board President and Superintendent

*Vestaburg Community School 2018-2023 Strategic Plan: Participants Help Shape the Vision and Goals for the Future of Vestaburg Community School.*

This document contains the 2018-2023 Vestaburg Community School Strategic Plan. We're excited about this plan and the possibilities it provides for our students, parents/guardians and community to improve education at Vestaburg Community School.

Community, parent/guardian, staff and student forums as well as an electronic survey resulted in 217 people providing input for the planning process. A Strategic Planning Team of 21 community members, parents/guardians, staff and students participated in an all-day planning retreat on February 3, 2018.

Throughout the planning process the community expressed high expectations of Vestaburg Community School becoming a world class school district and having all students graduate from high school. Even though some of the goals are extremely high, they reflect the strong desire that has been expressed to embrace significant change and dramatically improve the school system.

There were several clear and consistent themes that emerged from this process.

1. While much more work needs to be done; Vestaburg Community School is headed in the right direction with positive momentum behind the new strategic plan, instruction reforms and innovative new school initiatives.
2. The future growth and success of Vestaburg Community School must be a top community priority that requires support from all stakeholders (students, parents/guardians, taxpayers, businesses, non-profits, foundations, government agencies, etc.).
3. As a district, we must do a better job of positively engaging and aligning internal (students, parents/guardians, staff and the school board) and external (taxpayers, community organizations, businesses, non-profits, government agencies, elected officials) stakeholders around common goals and strategies to significantly improve academic achievement.

Our Strategic Planning Team, comprised of a broad and diverse group of 21 stakeholders, developed the goals. We look forward to continuing to work in partnership with all sectors of our community to implement these goals and suggested strategies.

Lynn Van Sickler, President of the Board

Brandon Hubbard, Superintendent



## Introduction

Strategic Planning is the process of determining what an organization wants to be at some point in the future, and how it will get there. In the current environment where schools are challenged to do more with scarce resources, planning for the future is more important than ever. An effective strategic planning process results in stakeholders focusing on critical priorities that will meet the mission of a quality educational program for all students.

In November 2017, the Vestaburg Community School Superintendent and the Board of Education made a commitment to create a three to five-year strategic plan. The School Board created a partnership with the Michigan Association of School Boards to serve as facilitators for this project. The district, under the leadership of the School Board President and Superintendent, completed a process that was data-driven, inclusive of district stakeholders and focused on the priorities that will help the district succeed.

There were several criteria relative to the strategic planning process established by the School Board and the leadership team:

- The process must be inclusive where all stakeholders have an opportunity to provide structured input.
- The School Board must be an integral part of the process—providing input, support and commitment.
- There must be clarity in the respective roles of the School Board, administrators, staff, parents/guardians and community.
- There is alignment between the strategic planning process and current strategic initiatives, and critical issues facing the district.
- Timelines, responsibilities and reporting schedules must be built into the planning processes.
- There must be ongoing communication about the planning process with all internal and external stakeholders.

This strategic plan is a living document. It will serve as a ‘road map’ to future planning, resource allocation, staff development and decision-making over the next several years.

As part of the planning process, the vision, mission statement, and belief statements were developed. Based on qualitative and quantitative data and a new vision, mission and belief statements; strategic goals and objectives were developed. Regular monitoring of progress and renewal is critical to the plan’s success.



## **The Strategic Plan Process**

This overview describes the planning process, including the survey, data analysis, planning team roles and responsibilities, and timelines.

### **Stakeholder Input**

Input from students, parents/guardians, community and staff were gathered through a comprehensive electronic survey as well as a series of community, student and staff forums. The community engagement process was conducted to:

- Identify and assess strengths
- Gauge values and perceptions of the community
- Provide an opportunity for input
- Identify areas for improvement
- Gather data to use as a decision making tool
- Develop communication plans and tools

The response rate of 217 indicates that the school community cares about the future of the district and desires to engage in the process of creating the future (see Attachment 1 for summary).



### **Local Area and School Demographic Data**

An analysis of district demographics and quantitative data was completed. The analysis included demographic, enrollment, educational, financial and personnel trends over the previous five years, 2008-2016, as applicable, in comparison with districts selected by the Board and Administration and state averages, where available (see Attachment 2 for the data analysis summary). The reference districts used for Vestaburg Community School were Carson City-Crystal Area Schools, Fulton Schools, Lawrence Public Schools, Montabella Community Schools, and Shepherd Community Schools.

### **Strategic Planning Team**

A Strategic Planning Team was formed to take a primary role in developing the strategic plan. The team consisting of 21 parents/guardians, community members, board members, students and staff members, were selected with input from the Board of Education and key stakeholder groups. The team participated in a retreat workshop as well as additional committee meetings to develop a mission statement, vision, beliefs, and strategic goals. During the retreat the team reviewed and discussed relevant quantitative and qualitative data as essential elements in the formation of goals and objectives contained in this document (see team members on page 5).

*Collaborating with the Vestaburg Community School Board of Education, administration, staff and the entire community really illustrated their level of care for the school, the community, and most of all, the students.*

*—Debbie Stair, MASB Assistant Director  
of Leadership Development*



**Strategic Planning Team Members**

Mark Alexander

Katie Bissell\*

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Ken Carl\*

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Jody Vissman\*\*

Matt Walderzak

Darby Weaver\*

Tammie Windischhofer

Lori Wolfe\*\*

\*Indicates participation in the retreat and implementation workshops

\*\*Indicates participation in implementation workshop only



## **Retreat Workshop**

A retreat workshop was held on February 3, 2018. The workshop covered included:

- An overview of the strategic planning process and timelines
- Superintendent report of current and planned initiatives
- An analysis of demographic, quantitative and qualitative data
- A review and renewal of the vision, mission and belief statements
- The establishment of strategic goal areas and key objectives
- Assignment of planning team leaders to develop action plans for each goal and objective, including responsibilities, timelines and measurements

## **Vestaburg Community School 2018-2023 Strategic Plan Vision Statement:**

Describes what you want to happen in the long term. It's a statement about your hopes and expectations for the future. The vision statement below was validated during the Strategic Planning Team Retreat Workshop:

*The Vision of Vestaburg Community School is to empower all to create and achieve their goals and dreams.*



## **Mission Statement:**

Establishes, in the broadest terms, the purpose of a school district. It should answer the question “What ultimate end will the district pursue and in the broadest sense, how?” The following mission statement was renewed during the Strategic Planning Team Retreat Workshop:

*The mission of Vestaburg Community School is to build a foundation and prepare students for their future.*

**Beliefs:** The basic beliefs/core values of the district—those things that we believe of utmost importance, providing guidance for how we behave and relate to others. The following beliefs were developed during the Strategic Planning Team Retreat Workshop:

### **We Believe:**

- All students can learn.
- The learning environment should be safe and non-threatening, built on mutual respect and positive behavior.
- Learning needs to be engaging, individualized, and prepare students for their future.
- Parent and community involvement are vital to the success of the school.
- Significant learning is achieved through meaningful relationships.
- Addressing educational and social needs of all children leads to success.






## **2018-2023 Strategic Goals**

Strategic Goals: Areas of priority importance in which the district will focus their work (1-5 years). Strategic goals achieve the organization's vision, mission and beliefs. Objectives are SMART—**S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**chievable, **R**elevant and **T**imely

The Strategic Planning Team, at the February 2018 retreat, developed goal statements and specific objectives. The goal areas are categorized below:

## **2018-2023 Goals**

- Academics/Programs
- Culture/Learning Environment
- Communication Engagement
- Personnel/Leadership
- Operations



Following the retreat, administrators were charged with developing specific objectives based on strategic goal areas identified by the team.

**Goal Area 1: Academics/Programs**

**Strategic Goal Statement:** Expand learning opportunities that promote growth and increase student achievement.

**First Year Objectives:**

- Improve/expand Special Education programming
- Ensure interventions at all levels/subjects
- Boost First Good Instruction



## **Goal Area 2: Culture/Learning Environment**

**Strategic Goal Statement:** Build a learning environment built on a culture of respect.

### **First Year Objectives:**

- Complete and implement components of our schoolwide behavior process
- Institute administrative systems that encourage schoolwide respect and improve student behavior
- Behavior plans are followed with fidelity



### **Goal Area 3: Communication/Engagement**

**Strategic Goal Statement:** Improve communication and relationships among staff, students, parents, and the community.

**First Year Objectives:**

- Build and maintain a positive relationship between school, community, parents, and students
- Execute surveys for recent graduates, alumni, and parent involvement
- Develop a comprehensive communications plan




## **Goal Area 4: Personnel/Leadership**

**Strategic Goal Statement:** Evaluate and structure programs and personnel assignments to enhance personnel and leadership.

### **First Year Objectives:**

- Increase administrative staffing support
- Fill all open support staff positions
- Increase categorical support and programming



## **Goal Area 5: Operations**

**Strategic Goal Statement:** Maintain and improve facilities to provide a safe, clean environment for learning.

### **First Year Objectives:**

- Improve the current ticket system to better address needs
- Have two new buses in use and successful inspection of the others
- Carry out a successful ballot initiative

## Strategic Plan Implementation

The first year objectives were developed collaboratively by the superintendent and key staff members at a meeting held on March 12, 2018. Alignment with current school improvement plans will be an integral part of the implementation plan. The district priority goals identified during the strategic planning retreat and the first year objectives will be translated into action plans with measurements, timelines, responsibilities and a board monitoring calendar.

Recommendations for keeping the momentum of the process are the following:

1. Finalize Action Plans for each objective
  - Measurements
  - Timeline
  - Responsibility
  - Resources
2. Develop reporting/board monitoring calendar
3. Develop communication plan
  - Community
  - Staff
4. Schedule Mid-year progress report
5. Schedule Annual Plan update

# Attachment 1 – Input Summary

## Strengths

### Academics/Programs

- Emphasis on college connection, CTE
- Curricular initiatives
- Online learning options

### Culture/Learning Environment

- Small, Tight-knit
- Single campus
- Atmosphere of cooperation

### Communications/Community Engagement

- Close relationship between school and community
- Staff involvement in the community
- High number of engaged parents

### Personnel/Leadership

- Caring staff who meet individual learners' needs
- Positive staff/administration relationship
- Small class sizes

### Operations

- Technology hardware/infrastructure
- Clean facilities
- Safety



# Attachment 1 – Input Summary – Cont'd

## Opportunities for Improvement

### Academics/Programs

- Meaningful and hands-on learning opportunities
- Challenging all learners/raising expectation/enhancing rigor
- Focus on improvement in core academics
- More electives

### Culture/Learning Environment

- Behavior management
- Bullying
- Support for art, music, band to increase participation

### Communications/Community Engagement

- Engagement with all parents including accountability
- Support for ballot initiative
- Communication with community

### Personnel/Leadership

- Clarity in administrative roles
- Talent attraction/retention
- Substitutes

### Operations

- Facility needs repairs/upgrades
- Bus replacement
- Lunch options

# Attachment 1 – Input Summary – Cont'd

## Barriers

### Academics/Programs

- Funding for additional or enhanced programs
- Focused, aligned curriculum in all core subjects
- Over reliance on technology

### Culture/Learning Environment

- Students with intense needs
- Poverty
- Consistent discipline and behavior management approaches

### Communications/Community Engagement

- Lack of support for ballot initiative
- SOC: parents not living in district
- Perception issues
- Parent involvement

### Personnel/Leadership

- Staff wearing multiple hats
- Common direction and training
- Pay to attract and retain talent
- Resistance to change

### Operations

- Funding
- Competing priorities
- Low taxable value

# Attachment 1 – Input Summary – Cont'd

## Vision

### Academics/Programs

- High academic achievement/high test scores
- Programs that attract and challenge
- All students prepared for their future

### Culture/Learning Environment

- A place where students want to be
- Pride
- Every student engaged and connected with his/her needs met

### Communications/Community Engagement

- Destination district
- All parents and community members engaged
- A district known for its accomplishments

### Personnel/Leadership

- All staff engaged in continuous improvement
- Clear focus on prioritized initiatives
- Staff feel valued and rewarded. "The place to work."

### Operations

- Modern, upgraded facilities
- Refreshed bus fleet
- Room for growth in enrollment and programming

## Attachment 2 – Data Summary

### ***Data-Driven Strategic Planning: Vestaburg Community School***

Based on analysis of data in this report, the following points are highlighted concerning Vestaburg Community School:

In general, the data revealed that when compared to State averages and the reference districts selected for this report, Vestaburg Community School emerges as a district which needs improvement in academic performance but is maintaining fiscal responsibility.

#### **Demographics**

- Enrollment at Vestaburg Community Schools has decreased over the past five years from 699 students in 2013 to 576 students in 2017. This is a decrease of 123 students. (B-1, B-2)
- Vestaburg Community Schools has 130 students who choose to attend either other districts or charter schools. Alma (30), Montabella (22) and Berrien Springs Public Schools (20) enroll the greatest number of resident Vestaburg students. There are 147 Schools of Choice students enrolled in Vestaburg Community Schools. Alma (52), Montabella (46), and Carson City (28) have the greatest number of students enrolled in Vestaburg Community Schools. (B-3, B-4, B-5)
- The loss of students to Schools of Choice has steadily increased each of the last five years by an average of 10 students per year, while at the same time the number of students entering Vestaburg via Choice has also increased by an average of 7 students per year. (B-5)
- The percentage of the Vestaburg students eligible for lunch assistance in 2017 ranked second among the reference districts and also significantly above the statewide average. Free and reduced student lunch eligibility decreased slightly between 2016 and 2017 and resulted in 63.4% of 2017 Vestaburg students qualifying for lunch assistance. (B-6, B-7)
- The district's 2016 cohort graduation rate of 88.46% was above the statewide average by 8.81% points. It ranked second best among the reference districts selected. (B-10)
- While the state's average graduation rate has increased by 3.41% over the past five years, Vestaburg's average graduation rate has increased by 9.21%. (B-9)
- For the class of 2011, Vestaburg's enrollment in college rate was 47.27%. However, after a five year period only 11.73% earned a qualifying certificate or degree. (B-10, B-11)

## Attachment 2 – Data Summary – Cont'd

### Demographics - Cont'd

- Approximately 35.3% of residents attended some college or earned an Associate's Degree. In addition, 12.3% of Vestaburg citizens have an Bachelor's degree or higher. (B-12, B-13)
- Although the percentage of pre-school aged children attending private pre-school ranked second among the reference districts at 16.7%, it is approximately one-half of the state average. The percentage of district-resident children enrolled in K-12 ranked fifth among the referenced districts, and was less than the state average by 1.7% points. (B-14)
- The district's 2015 average household income (\$53,107) is the third highest of the reference districts, and is below the state average (\$59,271). (B-15)
- The demographics of the district's student population has seen almost no change in the past 5 years. The 2017 demographic data is as follows: 92.2% White, 5.4% Hispanic, .7% Multiracial, .2% Asian, 1% American Indian, .5% African American,. (B-16, 17)
- In 2017, Vestaburg reported 19.1% of students meeting the Federal definition of Chronic Absence (absence rate of 10% or more). Vestaburg had the highest Chronic Absence rate among reverence districts and exceeds the state average by 3.5%. (B-18, 19, 20)

### Academic Performance

#### 2017 M-STEP Results ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

- All tested grade levels had fewer students meeting state standards than the state average, ranging from 29.6% lower in 6th grade to 1.7% lower in 7th grade. (M-STEP Summary)
- When compared to reference districts, Vestaburg scores ranged from the lowest (6th grade) to the 2nd-highest (7th grade). (M-STEP Summary)

#### 2017 M-STEP Results MATHEMATICS

- Five of six grades levels had students meeting standards at a rate lower than the state average, ranging from 5th grade which exceeded the state average by 4% to 8th grade in which scores were 23% lower than the state average. (M-STEP Summary)
- Compared to reference districts, Vestaburg scores ranged from 2nd highest in grades 5 and 7 to the lowest in grades 6 and 8. (M-STEP Summary)

## Attachment 2 – Data Summary – Cont'd

### 2017 M-STEP Results SCIENCE

- Vestaburg 7th grade students exceeded the state average by 29.4%, while 4th grade students scored 5% lower than the state average. (M-STEP Summary)
- Compared to reference districts, 7th grade science scores were the highest while 4th grade scores were the lowest. (M-STEP Summary)

### 2017 M-STEP Results SOCIAL STUDIES

- 5th grade students scored 2.1% lower than the state average and 8th grade students scored 3.2% lower. (M-STEP Summary)
- Compared to reference districts, Vestaburg 5th graders scores ranked third best while the 8th grade scores were third worst. (M-STEP Summary)

### MICHIGAN MERIT EXAM (11th grade)

- MATHEMATICS-Vestaburg scores were 20.7% below the state average and had the second lowest scores of the reference districts. (M-STEP Summary)
- EVIDENCE BASED READING AND WRITING-Vestaburg students scored 15.1% below the state average and had the third lowest scores of the reference districts. (M-STEP Summary)
- SOCIAL STUDIES-Vestaburg students scored 15.1% below the state average and had the second lowest scores of the reference districts. (M-STEP Summary)
- SCIENCE-Vestaburg students scored .9% above the state average and had the highest scores among the reference districts. (M-STEP Summary)
- COLLEGE READINESS-Vestaburg students met college readiness standards at a rate 18.8% below the state average and had the second lowest scores among the reference districts. (M-STEP Summary)
- Three year trend data shows that Vestaburg's College Readiness, English Based Reading and Writing, and Mathematics scores significantly lag behind the state averages and do not indicate a trend line moving upward. (C-35)

## Attachment 2 - Data Summary – Cont'd

### Finance and Personnel

- Vestaburg has increased its instructional spending four of the last five years. At \$6,617 per student it ranks first among the reference districts and is also above the state average of \$6106. (D-1, D-2)
- Only two of the six reference districts spend more on instructional support than Vestaburg. The district's spending is well below the state average by \$300 per student. (D-3, D-4)
- Business and administration spending is slightly above the state average and also ranks third highest among the reference districts. Business and administration spending has remained relatively flat over the past five years. (D-5, D-6)
- General fund expenditures at \$9710 per student rank the highest among the reference districts, yet below the state average of \$9996. (D-7, D-8)
- Vestaburg's Fun Balance stands at 9.9%, substantially increased from the low points of 2012 and 2015. It is the third lowest among reference districts. (D-9, D-10)
- The potential revenue per millage of property tax levied in the Vestaburg Community Schools District in 2016 was the second lowest of the reference districts for both homestead and second lowest for non-homestead properties. The district's homestead and non-homestead tax was significantly below the state average. (D-11)
- In both 2015 and 2016 general fund expenditures exceeded revenues. (D-12, D-13)
- Vestaburg's 2017 Foundation Allowance of \$7511 is equal to all reference districts. The district has received small increases the last five years, averaging 1.56% annually. (D-14, D-15)
- Vestaburg's cumulative student loss of 134 students since 2013 has resulted in a loss of revenue in the amount of \$954,224. (D-16)
- Vestaburg has the lowest student teacher ratio of the reference districts. The district's student-teacher ratio is significantly below the state average and has declined over the past five years. (E-1, E-2)
- At \$43,056 Vestaburg's 2016 average teacher salary has decreased over the past five years. The average teacher salary ranks last among the reference districts, and is significantly below the 2016 state average salary by \$17,619 (E-3, E-4)

Submitted by: Mark Dobias

January 6, 2018

# Attachment 3 – Environmental Scanning

**The Wave** – In the arena of education, what are incoming and outgoing trends, ideas, practices, paradigms, etc.?

## Emerging

MDE Top 10 in 10	Individualized learning	Athletic transfer rule
Staff and teacher shortage	CTE/career focus	Vestaburg Parent Union
Decline in student athletes	Equity Funding (funding per student)	More self-directed learning
Social-emotional learning	100% cloud based	STEM/STEAM
Drug related problems	Staff/guns	

## Horizon

Dual enrollment	Career Tech Focus	Specialized schools (virtual/online)
MTSS (Multi-Tiered System of Support)	Special Education Programming-What does support look like?	STEM/STEAM
Online courses eliminating teachers	Integrated curriculums	Seclusion and restraint laws
MSTEP ???	Decline in enrollment	3rd grade Reading Law
Virtual Instruction		



## Attachment 2 – Data Summary

### Established

Accountability	Common Core/Michigan Merit Curriculum	Everybody Wins! NO LOSERS
State Assessment	Technology	Google
RTI MTSS Response to intervention		Curriculum/Common Core
PBIS (Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports)		

### Disappearing

Pillars of character	Special Ed segregation	Physical Activity
The arts	Student ability to problem solve	Support for Arts
Handwriting... cursive and printing	Understanding concepts (kids)	Teacher-Based Instruction Online shift Student exploratory
Text books	Parent support	Ed. Athletics
Practical life skills	Funding... Adequate and equitable	Textbooks

# Attachment 4 – Data Considerations

## Academic Performance

### ELEMENTARY ACADEMICS

- We need to improve ELA-further behind state average than in any subject area
- (Correlates with other scores in SS and Science)
- Higher % of special education-more taking test and included in scores
- Social Studies and Science below the state average. Correlation to ELA scores?
- Below state average in every area. 2<sup>nd</sup> highest to 2<sup>nd</sup> lowest in comparison model
- Celebration-5<sup>th</sup> grade math above state average

### SECONDARY ACADEMICS

- Most areas below the state average
- College readiness trend line is not moving
- 11<sup>th</sup> grade math is decreasing
- 8<sup>th</sup> grade math and ELA are decreasing
- Lower achieving bubble groups-apples vs. oranges

# Attachment 4 – Data Considerations – Cont'd

## Demographics and Enrollment

### Enrollment

- Why are we losing students?
- Why do our residents choose to go elsewhere?
- Truancy rates above state average

### Demographics

- Vestaburg has a high rate of high school graduation.
- Vestaburg has a low rate of college graduation. (47.27% enroll, 11.73% graduate after five years)
- Vestaburg has a low rate of college preparedness. (18.8 % below state average)

### Finance

- We spend more \$ on direct instruction (in the classroom) with smaller class sizes
- Foundation allowance (at base)
- General fund-spending more per student. \$8,006 in 2012, \$9,710 now
- Average teacher salary \$43,056-lowest. State average \$61,875. Pay freezes. New hires.

# Attachment 5 – Suggested Goal Area Objectives

## Academics and Programs

Expand academic opportunities	More electives	Opportunities for arts
More Special Education classrooms	Job Shadowing	More classroom materials
Before/After school programs	Alumni recognition/scholarship	Band-make it an elective rather than extracurricular
Restructuring early college/dual enrollment	More structure on playground	Tutoring/summer school
Increase test scores	Special Education curriculum	

## Communications/Community Engagement

Welcome packet	Grade level rep	More parent volunteering
Centralized communication tool (to and from school)	More engagement from community/parents with academics	Exit interview/survey
More user-friendly website; new student tab	Personal invites to community	Support groups
School enrollment survey/interview (why Vestaburg?)	Parent/staff and community social hour	Community activity -PRIDE-
	College preparedness exit survey (through alumni groups)	PTO? PTA?
		Job Fairs

# Attachment 5 – Suggested Goal Area Objectives – Cont'd

## Learning Environment/Culture

Culture of respect, pride, understanding and empathy

Strong, clear behavior management system

Pillar of character

Allowing more time for physical activity

Reward character

Teach life lessons

Build pride

Reward academic achievement

Trust/accountability

Behavioral support, sensitivity, understanding

Possibilities and not limitations

## Operations and Finance

Roof

Additional staff; maintenance, bus drivers, substitutes

Buses

Balanced calendar

\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$

Bus Barn

Preventative maintenance, i.e.. smells

Gym bleachers

## Personnel/Leadership

Full staff

Another admin

Accountability

Clear roles-less hats

\$ pay increase (ALL)

Training time

More support in early grades

More Special Ed Teachers

Art/Specials teachers

Incentives for substitutes/sick days

Increase in relationships with ISD

Custodial contract; time spent in class

## Attachment 2 – Data Summary