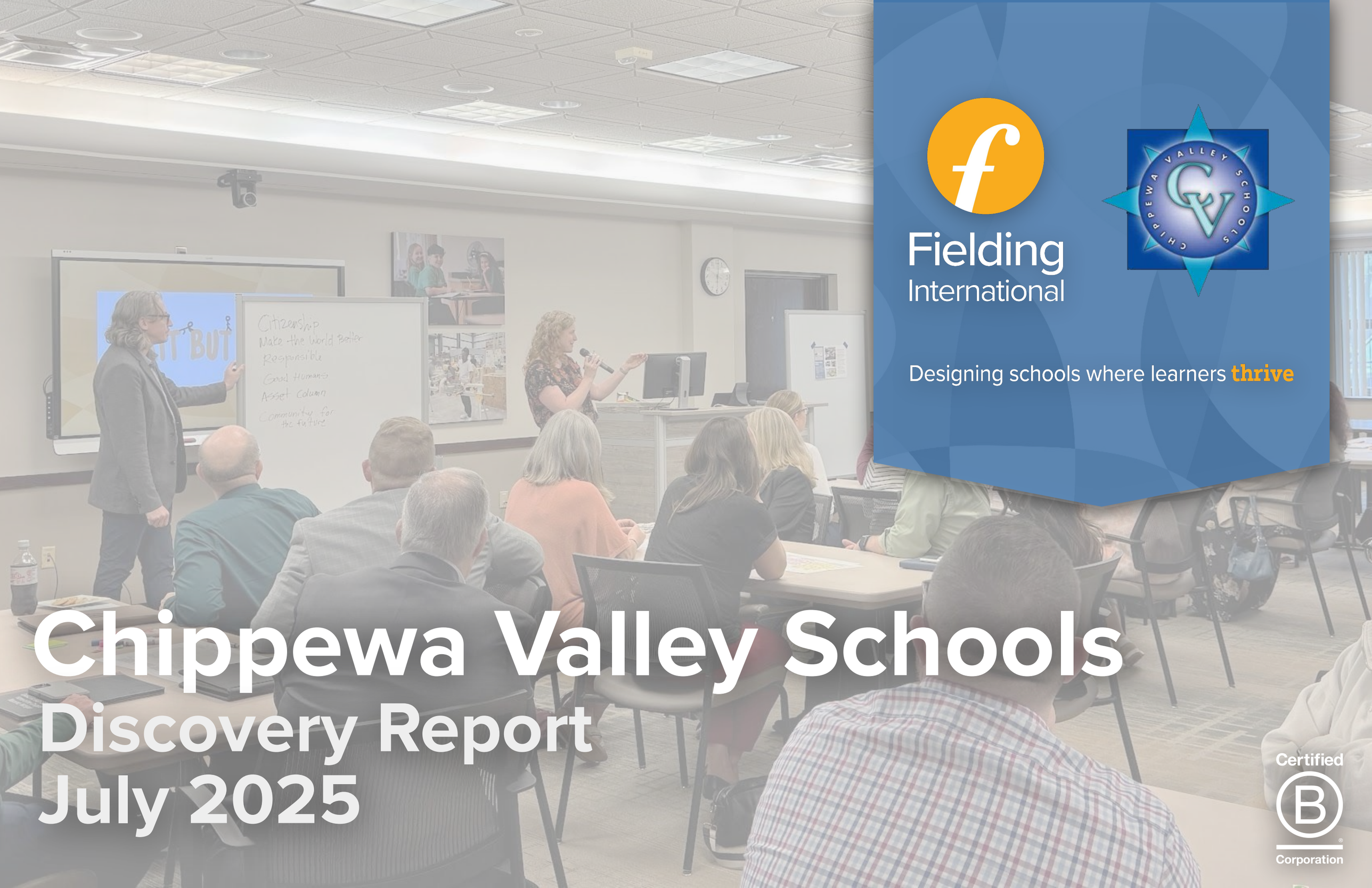


Fielding International

Designing schools where learners **thrive**

Chippewa Valley Schools

Discovery Report

July 2025

Certified B Corporation

Board Briefing Summary

This document provides the Chippewa Valley Schools (CVS) Board with an overview of the Discovery process conducted over the past several months, highlighting key findings and insights that have emerged.

Fielding International has worked alongside CVS leadership, staff, students, parents, and community members to explore how the district's vision, educational program, and physical environment can be aligned to create a thriving learning ecosystem.

The process has included:

- 14 district-wide focus groups that engaged over 100 administrators, educators, and staff
- Building tours of all facilities to assess current use, strengths, and needs
- Design Advisory Team (DAT) meetings with 60 diverse members to shape shared aspirations
- A community-wide survey with nearly 1,200 responses to gather broad input on skills, spaces, and priorities for the future

This summary is intended as a preview. The Fielding International team will present these findings in more detail on Monday night (7/21/2025), including the Guiding Principles for Design developed collaboratively with the Design Advisory Team to inform CVS's future planning and investments.

This update represents the culmination of all work completed during the Discovery and Visioning phases and will serve as the foundation for the upcoming Master Planning phase. The Master Plan will translate these insights and the Guiding Principles into actionable strategies for facility improvements, ensuring alignment with CVS's educational goals and community priorities.

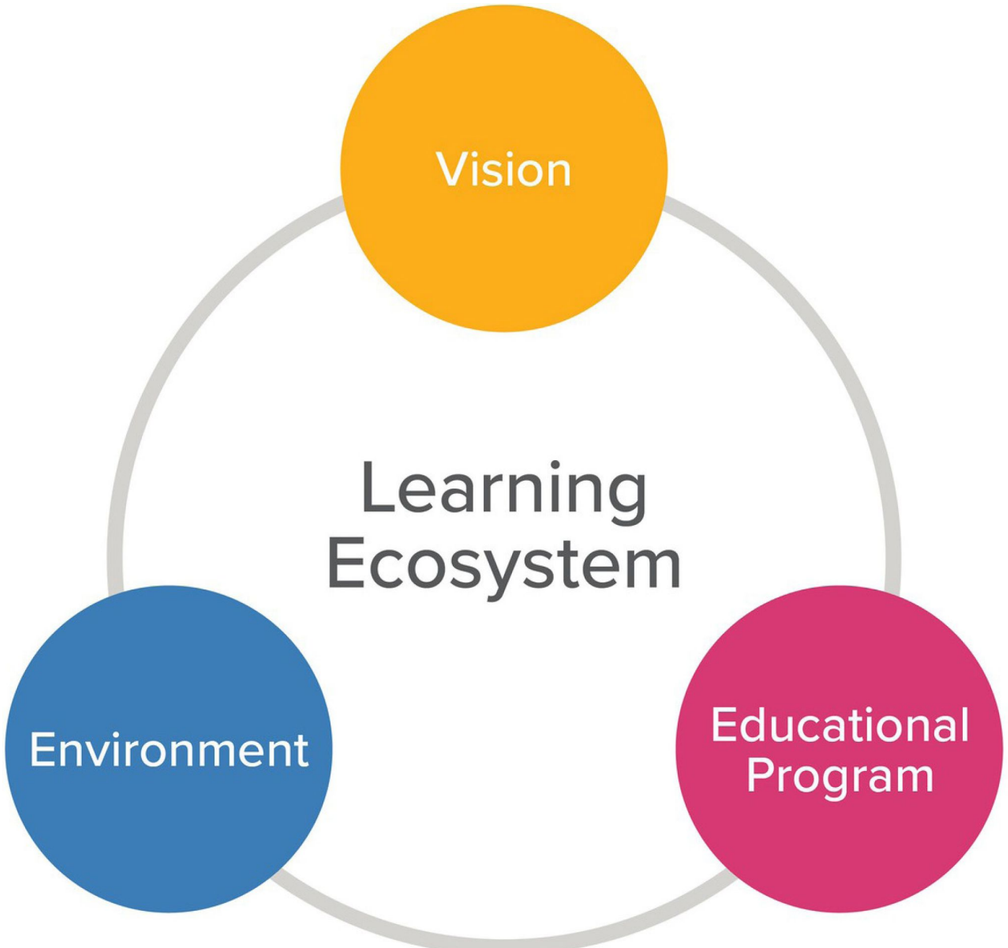
The Approach

An Aligned Learning Ecosystem

A healthy, vibrant learning ecosystem depends on the alignment of three essential elements: Vision, Educational Program, and Physical Environment. Vision sits at the top—defining a community's shared aspirations and purpose for learning. The Educational Program brings that vision to life through pedagogy, staff capacity, norms, curriculum, and daily practices. The Environment provides the physical spaces and infrastructure that make those practices possible and amplify their impact. When these three are aligned and inform each other, they create the conditions for learners and educators to thrive. Without alignment, even strong ideas or beautiful spaces fall short of their potential.

To prepare for the future, communities need clear Guiding Principles for Design—shared commitments that shape how physical learning environments are created, evolve, and adapt to changing needs. By defining these principles together, you ensure your spaces will continually support your vision and program in meaningful, responsive ways.

It involves a chance to pause, reflect, think ahead, and plan with thoughtful intention. This work can be a gift to your community.



The Vision & Alignment Process

The Opportunity

Chippewa Valley Schools (CVS) has been working with Fielding International (FI) to develop a plan that offers thoughtful and innovative ideas to support the district's vision and needs though the physical environment. Just like the world around it, CVS is changing and is at a point where investments in its school buildings and grounds are needed. To do this work, CVS engaged FI to lead a community-wide discovery process that would unearth the vision and program of the district so that it can ensure their next moves for facilities & grounds are aligned.

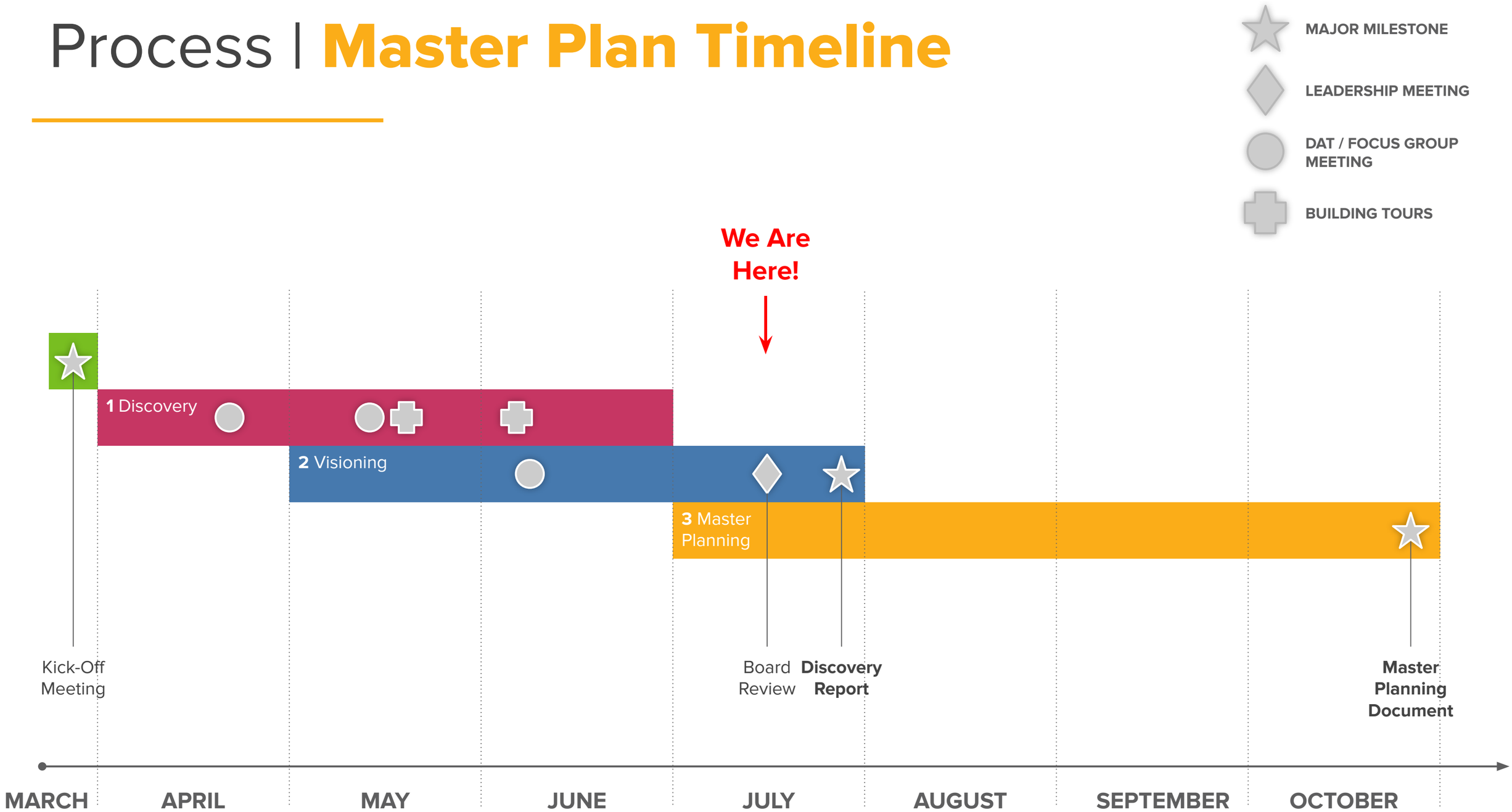
The Process & Report

The Vision & Alignment Process is one that digs into the foundational documents, practices, and current space that makes up Chippewa Valley Schools and then goes a few steps beyond to identify where the community wants to move next in order to best support a thriving future for all children. This Discovery Report reflects the joint work of CVS and FI to gather the necessary data and provide a framework by asking the following questions:

- How might the CVS Strategic Plan and other guiding documents influence the physical learning environments across the district?
- What is currently happening in CVS buildings & grounds and how successfully is that aligned with the vision of the district?
- How many buildings and what types of spaces are needed to support CVS's projected population?
- What shifts are happening in the realm of teaching & learning and how can facilities and grounds best support those shifts?
- How do we ensure CVS is prepared for future planning, growth, and change?
- How do we provide equitable access to opportunities for all CVS students?

The process steps are described in detail on the following slides. The culmination of this Vision & Alignment Process are the Guiding Principles for Design, found at the end of this report.

Process | Master Plan Timeline



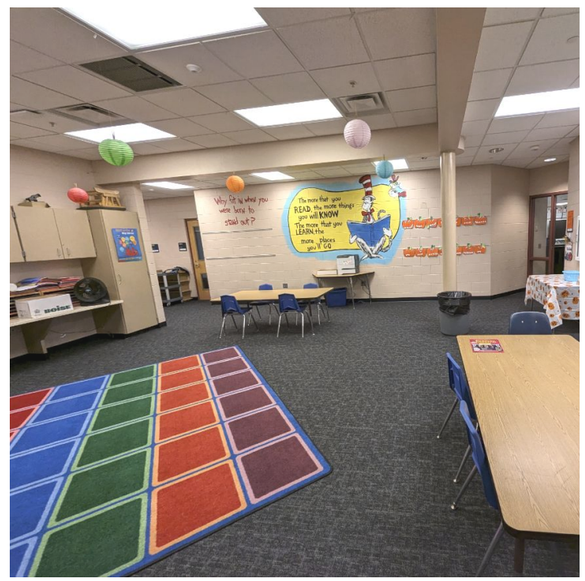
Process | **What We Did**

FOCUS GROUPS

14 District-Wide Focus Groups

+ Participation from Educators & Students
+ Surface barriers and opportunities

BUILDING TOURS



Spring 2025 Building Tours

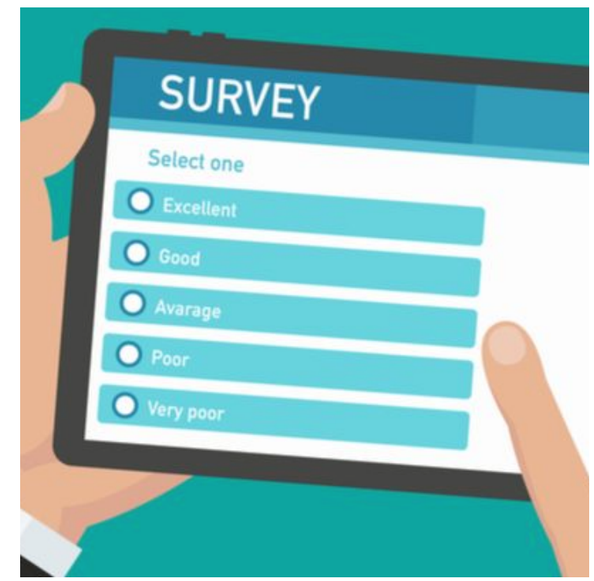
+ Tours were given during normal, daily practices at each facility
+ A space audit was conducted to better understand usage

DESIGN ADVISORY MEETINGS

April - June

+ In depth Vision & Alignment
+ 3 workshop sessions
+ 60+ participants
+ students, staff, parents, community members, elected officials

COMMUNITY-WIDE SURVEYS



June - July

+ Used to triangulate all of the data we've gathered so far
+ 1193 participants!
+ Rich and helpful responses

FOCUS GROUPS

Focus Groups | **Overview**

The goal of this phase was to uncover the points of pride, sources of satisfaction and excitement, as well as the barriers and needs within the physical environment that affect programs across CVS. We explored how the work of staff and the needs of students have evolved—and how the district's spaces might better align to support them. Our team conducted interviews with fourteen groups across the district, covering a broad range of departments and programs. These conversations included administrators, teachers, and staff members, providing an inside look at how the district operates day-to-day. While students and community members were engaged through separate parts of the process, this phase focused intentionally on internal perspectives to build a holistic and in-depth understanding of the educational program and the district's operational needs.

14 Groups | 100+ Individuals

- Elementary
- Middle School
- Comprehensive High School
- Athletics
- Career Technology Education
- Union Representatives
- Mohegan High School
- Technology
- Electives Staff
- Nutritional Services
- Early Childhood (0-5 programming)
- Preschool Programming
- Special Education
- International Academy of Macomb

Points of Pride

Key Challenges

Future Needs & Opportunities

Final Reflections

** Meetings were also held with the executive cabinet for feedback on the process*

Focus Groups | Pre-K as Example

Points of Pride

+ **Strong family connections and student growth** (particularly low-income and special needs)
+ **Commitment to equity** even with state rules changing
+ **Inclusive culture** with efforts to: provide early intervention, social-emotional supports, and developmental services
+ **Positive reputation**
+ **Collaboration across programs** including ECSE, walk-in speech services, and kindergarten-ready partnerships

Key Challenges

+ **Space limitations**; classrooms too small, lack of sensory spaces, limited playground equipment; programs across 6 schools
+ **Program growth and logistics**; rising special education needs; GSRP capacity limited; lack of full-day care in some programs
+ **Staffing and licensing complexity**; GSRP has higher staffing qualifications & regulatory requirements; difficulty hiring
+ **Barriers to inclusion**; limited integration between ECSE and GSRP students; special needs staff unpreparedness
+ **Transportation and support services**; complex bussing needs; shared resource strain; limited space for specialized staff

Focus Groups | Pre-K as Example

Future Needs & Opportunities

+ **Centralized or regional early childhood centers**; purpose-built spaces designed for pre-k; consideration for north & south center to balance geographic access
+ **Integrated program models**; co-teaching or co-located ECSE & GSRP programs; expansion of part-day and full-day options
+ **Infrastructure improvements**; playgrounds with age-appropriate equipment; professional spaces for staff
+ **Sustainable funding and staffing plans**; address pay, certification, and licensing differences to reduce internal barriers; plan for fluctuating funding levels

Final Reflections

+ Pre-K programs not only sense of pride, but **gateway for inclusion, equity, and long-term student success**
+ **Need intentional planning** that supports integrated, high-quality, and accessible early learning
+ Ensure **all children**, regardless of background or need, **enter kindergarten ready to thrive**

BUILDING TOURS

Building Tours | **Overview**

Tours:
The Fielding Team toured each building and grounds of the district looking for spaces where the emerging vision is already aligned with the physical environment. Here are some examples of the work:

Could consistent branding and a welcoming entrance support a sense of belonging?

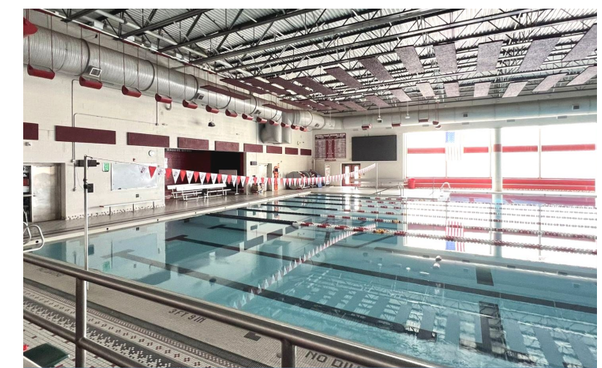
MAIN ENTRY, CAMPUS IDENTITY, SAFETY & SECURITY

What tools are needed to encourage more active, hands on learning in all subjects?

COMMUNITY GATHERING SPACES

To where are students gravitating and why and what can we learn from that?

STUDENT BREAK OUT SPACES

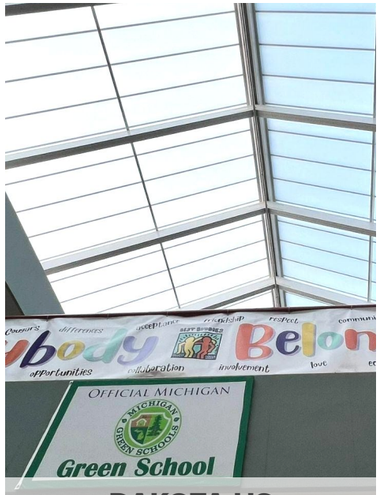


How are sport opportunities supporting the skills for thriving?

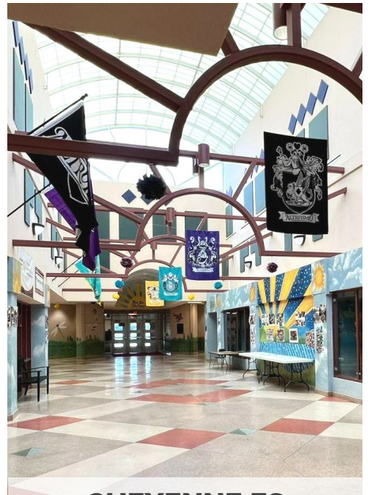
ATHLETICS, SPECIALS, CTE & PERFORMING ARTS

Building Tours | **CVS Exemplars - Daylighting**

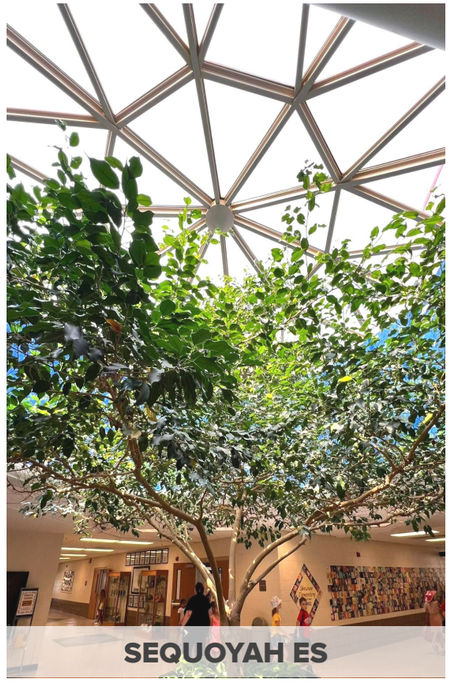
OJIBWA ES



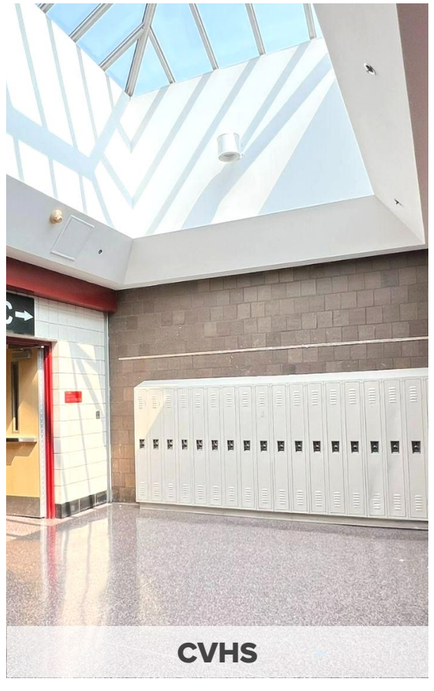
DAKOTA HS



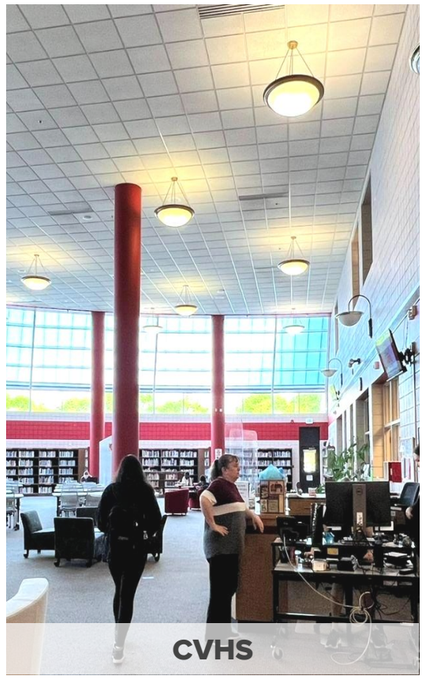
CHEYENNE ES



SEQUOYAH ES



CVHS



CVHS

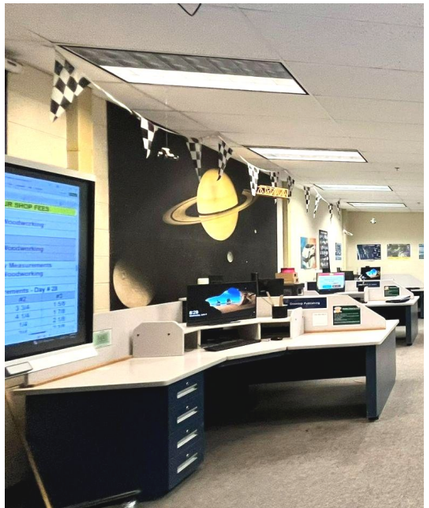
DAKOTA HS

Building Tours | **CVS Exemplars - CTE**

SENECA MS

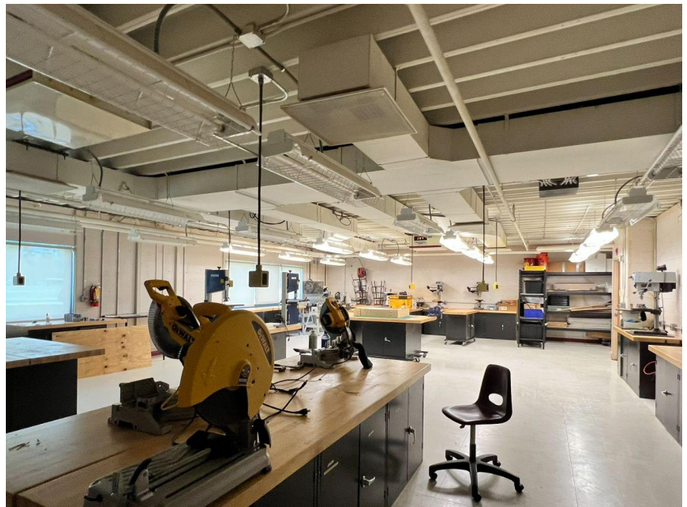
IROQUOIS MS

SENECA MS



IROQUOIS MS

DAKOTA HS



CVHS

DAKOTA HS

DAKOTA HS

DESIGN ADVISORY MEETINGS

Design Advisory | **Overview**

60 members including:

+ Students
+ Parents
+ Businesses
+ Elected officials
+ Building staff
+ District-wide staff

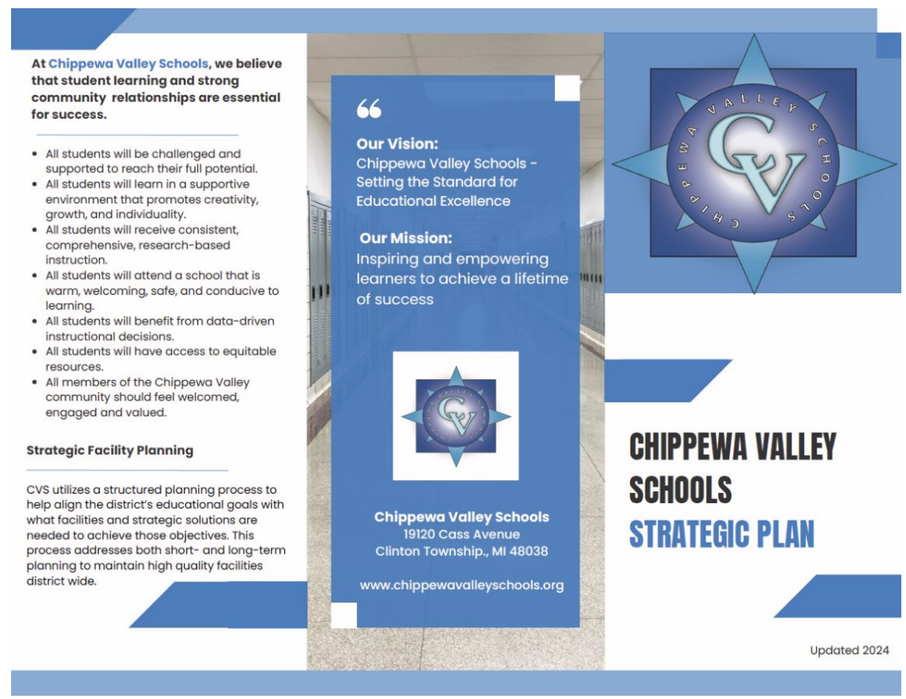
The Goal:

+ Discover how the community would describe "*thriving in today's world*"
+ Define the school system's purpose
+ Look for clues in the district's intended vision, Strategic Plan, mission & vision statements, and other guiding documents
+ Translate the discoveries into Guiding Principles that drive the vision for the physical environment

Design Advisory | **Engagement #1**

04/15/2025

The Design Advisory Team (DAT) convened for the first time and was tasked with discerning why their school district exists, what skills are needed to thrive in today's world, and where they see all of this already existing in the district's guiding documents.



At Chippewa Valley Schools, we believe that student learning and strong community relationships are essential for success.

- All students will be challenged and supported to reach their full potential.
- All students will learn in a supportive environment that promotes creativity, growth, and individuality.
- All students will receive consistent, comprehensive, research-based instruction.
- All students will attend a school that is warm, welcoming, safe, and conducive to learning.
- All students will benefit from data-driven instructional decisions.
- All students will have access to equitable resources.
- All members of the Chippewa Valley community should feel welcomed, engaged and valued.

Strategic Facility Planning

CVS utilizes a structured planning process to help align the district's educational goals with what facilities and strategic solutions are needed to achieve those objectives. This process addresses both short- and long-term planning to maintain high quality facilities district wide.

Our Vision:
Chippewa Valley Schools - Setting the Standard for Educational Excellence

Our Mission:
Inspiring and empowering learners to achieve a lifetime of success

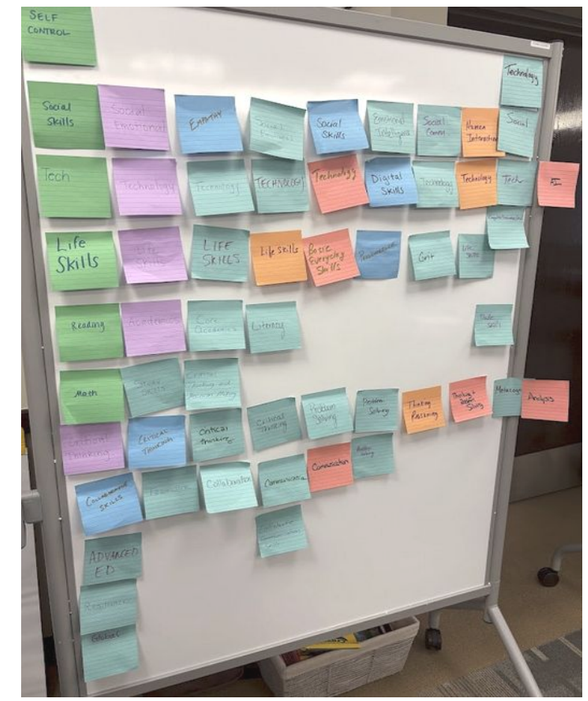
Chippewa Valley Schools
19120 Cass Avenue
Clinton Township., MI 48038

www.chippewavalleyschools.org

CHIPPEWA VALLEY SCHOOLS

CHIPPEWA VALLEY SCHOOLS
STRATEGIC PLAN

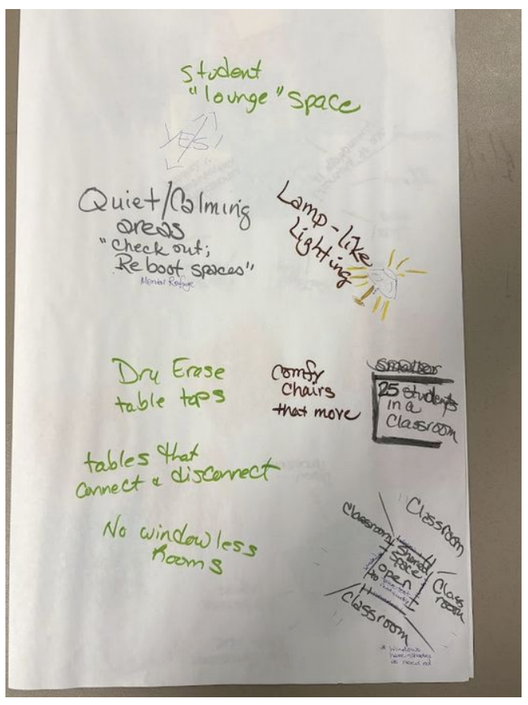
Updated 2024

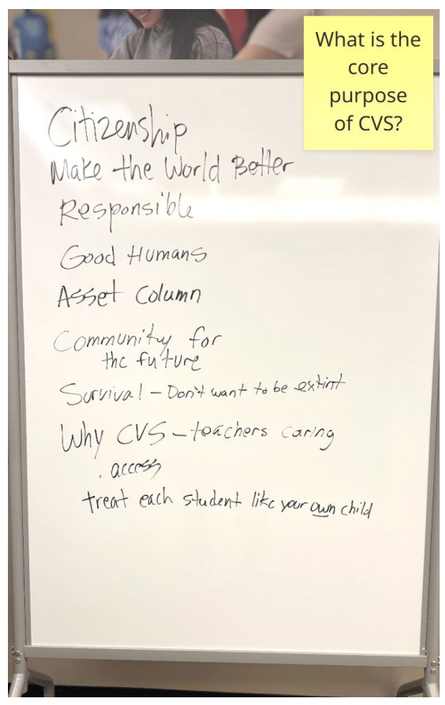


Design Advisory | **Engagement #2**

05/13/2025

The second convening of the DAT included a review and affirmation of what emerged from from our first meeting and stretched the group to think through what type of opportunities and spaces would be necessary for CVS to help build the skills they identified. We explored ways aligned space can solve problems through Design Patterns.

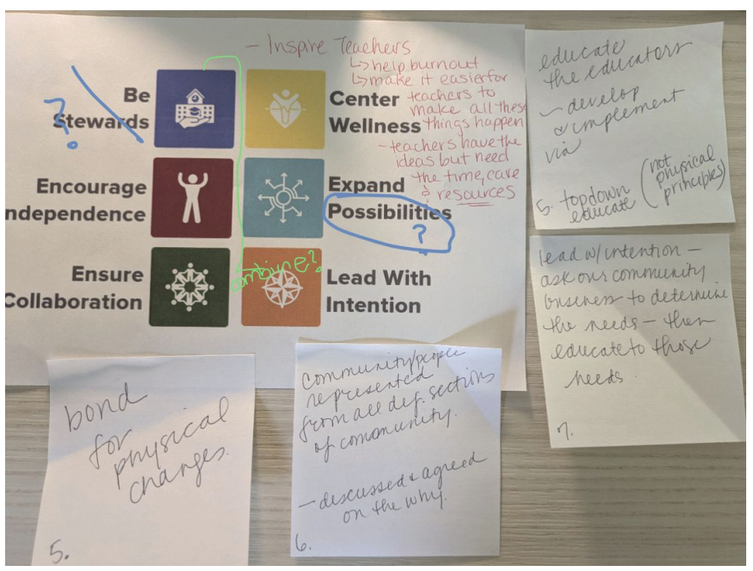


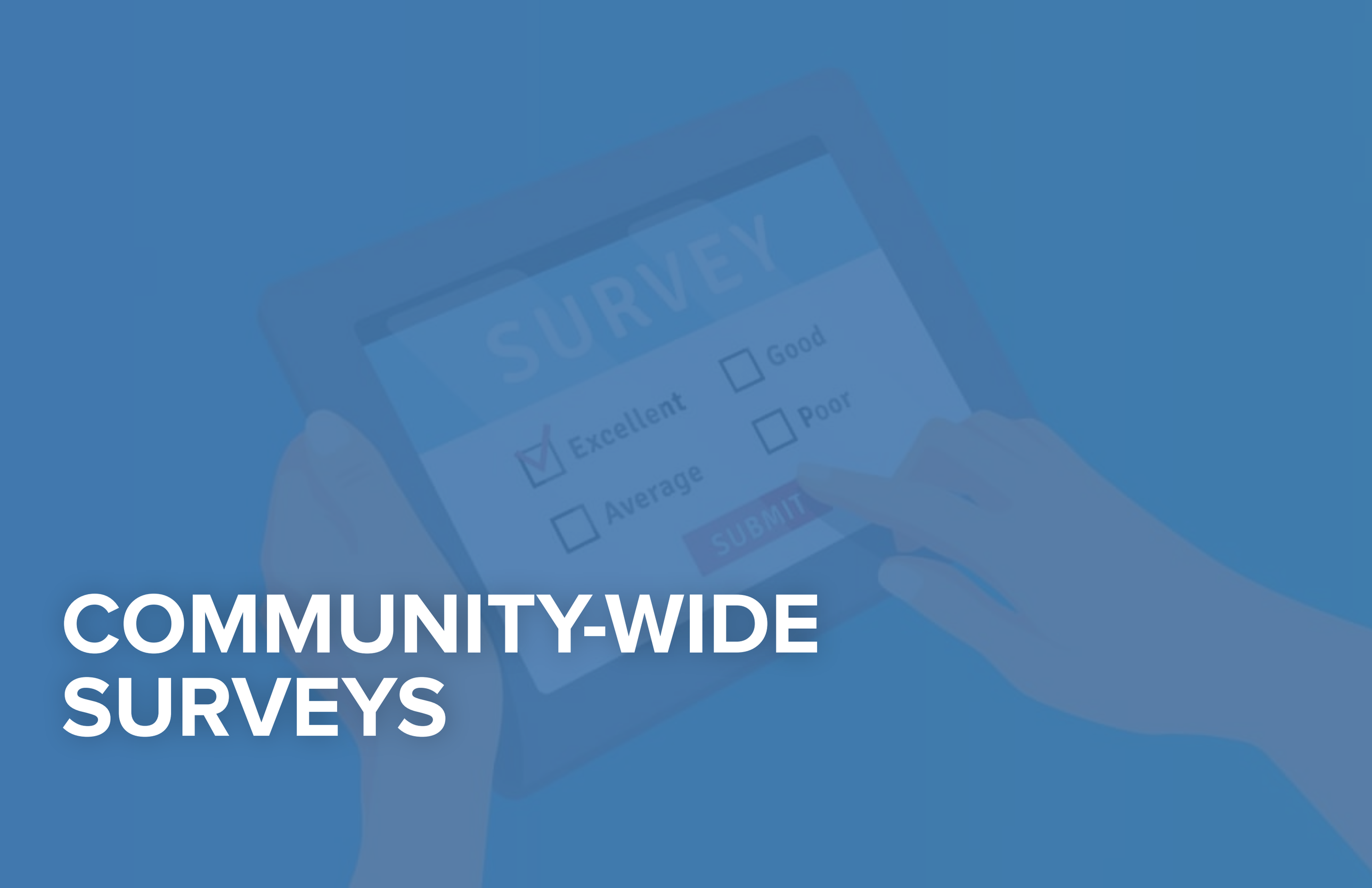


Design Advisory | **Engagement #3**

06/03/2025

During the third DAT gathering, the team worked to solidify language that would properly convey the vision that had emerged in the form of Guiding Principles. The Guiding Principles are intended to inform future changes and investments in the learning environment.





COMMUNITY-WIDE SURVEYS

Surveys | **Overview**

To offer the community at large the chance to participate in the process, we created a survey that went out to all of those living or working in the Chippewa Valley area. Since the Design Advisory Team had a clear direction emerging, questions were crafted to verify, refine, or disprove the work already done. It was so exciting to see **1193** surveys pour in, and the resounding validation of the work was energizing for everyone involved!

With the survey, we asked about skills needed to thrive in today's world, the spaces needed to support growing those skills, and in what ways children in the CVS area currently go about practicing those skills.

Here are the questions we asked...

Future of Our Schools: Community Survey

1. What is your connection to our school district?

2. If you were to give Chippewa Valley Schools buildings and grounds a grade, what would it be?

3. If you had to pick 3 to 5 skills that young people need to thrive in the future, what would you choose?

4. Thinking about the 3–5 skills you just listed, what kinds of spaces do you think are important to support students in practicing those skills?

5. What are the 3 most important kinds of teaching and learning you hope to see more of in the future?

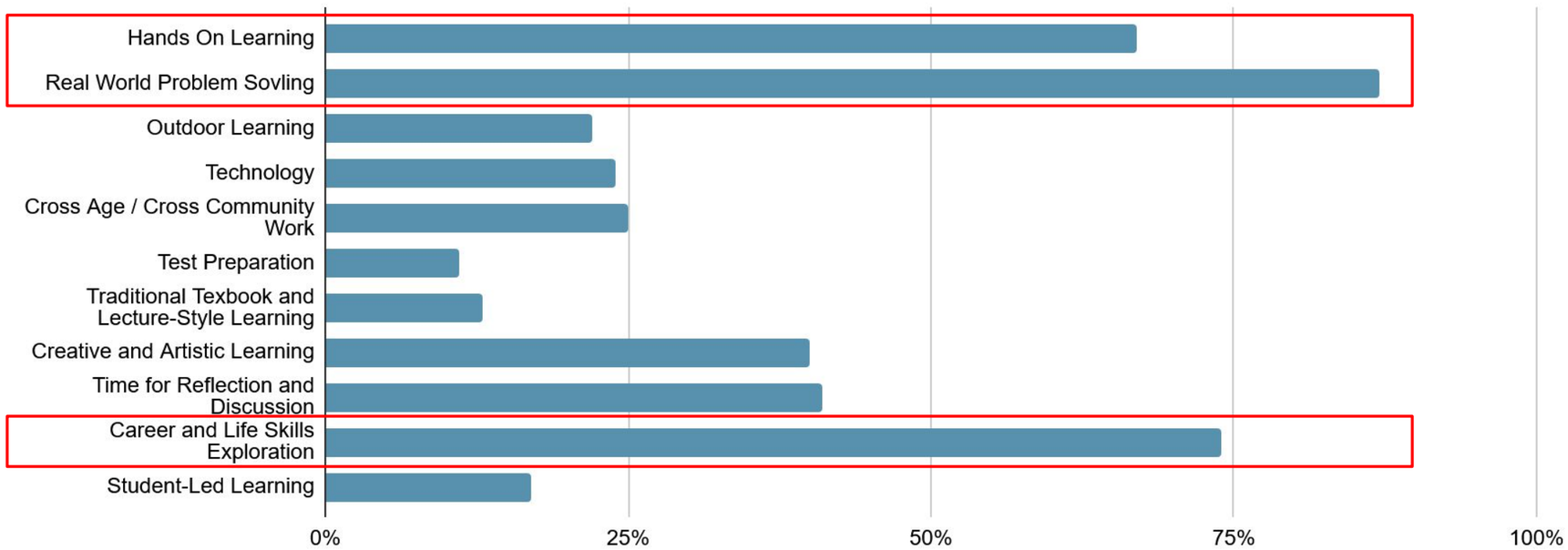
6. Imagine it's 10 years in the future. What would an amazing school look and feel like?

7. How have children in your community had opportunities to make decisions, take risks, or follow their curiosities at school, at home, or in other parts of their lives?

8. What's one big idea you have for making our schools even more relevant and impactful in today's educational world?

Surveys | **Emergent Themes**

To support skill growth, what types of teaching and learning would you like to see more of?



Here is a word cloud of the most hoped for skills...

Surveys | **Emergent Themes**

- The survey platform **revealed trends** among respondents and **highlighted differing viewpoints** for each question.
- It also **identifies commonalities across those varied groups**.
- You'll see the **similarities in the middle** white boxes.

Side A

Academic Skills

Many responses emphasize the importance of traditional academic skills, such as reading, writing, and math, as foundational elements for young people to thrive. These skills are considered essential for further education and career prospects, ensuring students have the basic knowledge needed in various fields. Some responses also highlight STEM or STEAM education as crucial for developing a strong foundation in science, technology, engineering, arts, and math.

Common ground

Communication Skills

Both categories agree on the importance of communication skills, which encompass effective speaking, writing, and the ability to collaborate with others. Communication is recognized as a bridge between academic skills and life skills, enabling individuals to express ideas, work in teams, engage socially, and succeed in both personal and professional contexts. Developing strong communication abilities is seen as vital for thriving in future environments.

Side B

Life Skills

A significant number of the responses focus on practical life skills that young people need to manage daily tasks and prepare for adulthood. This includes skills like financial literacy, personal finance management, cooking, and home economics. These skills are seen as critical for fostering independence and helping young individuals navigate the complexities of everyday life outside the academic realm.

Side A

Modernization & Expansion

Many responses emphasized the need for modernization of both the buildings and grounds, highlighting issues such as outdated infrastructure and a lack of space for the current number of students. Suggestions included adding more windows, creating more inviting and stylistically appealing environments, updating heating systems, and constructing additional stories to accommodate growing enrollments. Respondents also suggested equitable updates across different schools to ensure all locations are up to date and meet the changing needs efficiently.

Common ground

Equitable Quality Improvements

Despite differing focuses, there is a common acknowledgment of the need for quality improvements across all schools to ensure safe, functional, and inviting environments. This includes modernizing facilities, maintaining cleanliness and safety, and providing equitable resources and upgrades across the district. Emphasizing both modernization and regular maintenance can create an optimal learning atmosphere for students across various locations, bridging the gaps between outdated infrastructure and ongoing maintenance issues.

Side B

Maintenance & Repair

Numerous comments focused on the poor state of repair affecting both the buildings and grounds. Issues such as leaking ceilings, malfunctioning bathrooms, and deteriorating playground facilities were frequently mentioned. Common solutions included fixing basic facilities, improving pest control, regular upkeep of cleanliness, and ensuring that repair projects are well thought out and not merely temporary fixes. Respondents highlighted how maintenance struggles contribute to uninviting environments, emphasizing the need for better care and attention to repairs.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Guiding Principles | **Overview**

Recalibrate Space

Recalibrate Resources

Prioritize Wellness, Safety & Belonging

Expand Learning

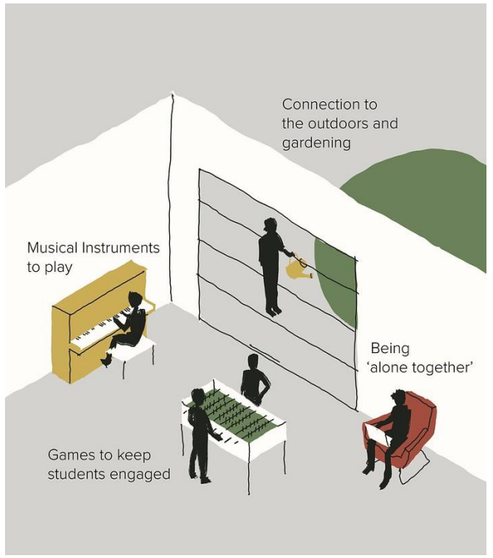
Build Durable Life Skills

Guiding Principles | **Prioritize Wellness, Safety, and Belonging**

- **Holistic experience** of all building users
- Ensure **decisions advance inclusivity**
- Ensure **decisions advance safety** for all
- **Outdoor learning** and nature
- **Retreat, recharge, reintegrate**
- **Cultural relevance and feeling seen**

What this *could* mean:

- "Homey" and safe feeling for space and furniture
- Intentional acoustic treatment and light control
- Spaces to regulate one's self and care for sensory needs
- Transition underutilized spaces into quiet zones for passion projects, independent work, quiet reflection
- Choice-based spaces and furniture to build student agency
- Increased versatility and variety of spaces, designed to support holistic needs of users throughout each part of the day
- Spaces that support active, free exploration at all learning levels
- Improving sightlines for more proactive passive supervision

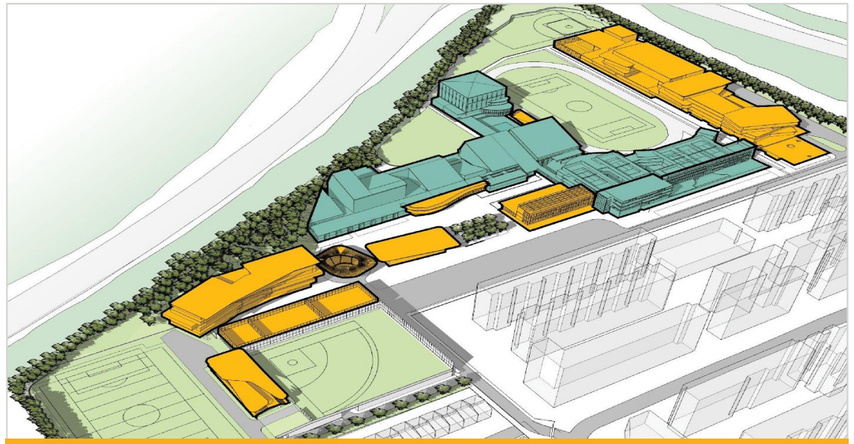


Guiding Principles | **Recalibrate Space**

- Predict and prepare for **enrollment trends**
- Adjust for the **evolution and expansion of student support services**
- Align physical environments with **modern, research-based methods** of teaching and learning
- Discern and pursue **efficiency of space**

What this *could* mean:

- Adjusting amount of square footage used for instruction to align with current and coming enrollment numbers
- Balancing space allocation across all schools
- Adjusting attendance boundaries over time
- Taking a building off line or repurposing it
- Rethinking how specific content or subject areas are delivered
- Shifting where student support is delivered
- Hallway renovations that include breakout spaces



Facilities Roadmap for the future of CVS

Guiding Principles | **Expand Learning**

- **Expand opportunities and possibilities** for all students
- Focus on **meaningful, authentic learning**
- Increase **active, experiential, creative learning**
- Foster **partnerships, trips, clubs, athletics**
- **Think holistically** about academic success

What this *could* mean:

- Spaces to host presentations, partnerships, and other events that include community involvement
- Explore active learning uses of farm and other open land
- Spaces designed to normalize and integrate support services
- Spaces for active, experiential learning
- Investments in career, tech, internships, farm to table opportunities
- Furniture that provides a variety of experiences and movement
- Breakout spaces for projects and independent work with passive supervision
- Elements of a lab integrated in more rooms: sink, flexible power, mobile resources, relevant tools

Guiding Principles | **Recalibrate Resources**

- **Equal opportunities and resources** for all
- See each facility and ground as a **part of a cohesive whole**
- Establish and consistently support **district-wide standards of excellence**
- Discern and pursue **efficiency of resources**

What this *could* mean:

- Design solutions that are relevant, realistic, learner-centered
- Common branding / welcoming entrance across schools
- Intentional rebalancing of resource distribution across schools
- Prioritizing safety as resources are distributed
- Establishing base expectations for programs and investing in the renovations needed to implement them across all buildings
- Ensuring that the Guiding Principles for Design are visible with integrity across all buildings, offering access to all students

Guiding Principles | **Build Durable Life Skills**

+ **Conditions for collaboration and relationship building** amongst staff, students, and community
+ **Discourse and conflict resolution**
+ **Space to develop essential skills** such as problem solving, critical thinking, adaptability, and a growth mindset

What this *could* mean:

- Flexible seating in classrooms for various group sizes and learning modes
- Breakout zones with passive supervision
- Commons spaces for gathering between groups
- Adjacent learning spaces with visual connections
- Collaborative spaces for adult staff members
- Cafeterias that reflect social needs and the style of students
- Walls, displays, and decor that are owned by the students
- Large flexible group spaces for clubs, councils, leadership groups
- Small spaces for small groups
- Use transparency to create visual connectivity and activate spaces for independent student groups to use