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Strategic planning to resume at D65

By [Charles Bartling](#) on August 19, 2014 - 2:44pm

A strategic plan that would chart the direction of Evanston/Skokie District 65 schools for the next three years would normally have been developed a year ago, but now that a new superintendent and his administrative team are in place, the planning process is under way.

The new chief of strategy for the district, Dr. Maria Allison, presented the plan for developing the plan at Monday night's regular board meeting.

The new plan, she said, "needs to be concise, simple, focused on real work, and be a living document that guides work and can change if needed."

The entire process, she said, should take about six months and result in a plan that will cover a three-year period.

She outlined a five-step process that has already started with a "listening tour" on the part of Superintendent Paul Goren, that has involved formal and informal interviews with about 80 "stakeholders," including parents, teachers, principals, board members, and community partners, including the City of Evanston, Northwestern University, and non-profit groups such as Family Focus, Youth Organizations Umbrella, the Evanston Community Foundation, the YMCA, and YWCA.

Board and staff committees, involving parents, teachers, external partners, and even thought leaders at Evanston Township High

School, will be formed in October, Allison said, to develop specific goals and strategies, aided by focus groups, surveys, and research that identifies “best practices” elsewhere.

Next, action steps and metrics will be identified for each goal that will constitute the written plan. These will be shared with stakeholders at town hall meetings, with PTAs, and made available on the district website.

Input from these sources will then be incorporated into a plan that will be submitted for final approval by the board, sometime before the end of February.

Board member Richard Rykhus questioned whether mid-February was “too aggressive” a deadline, to which Allison replied that she felt it was important to get the job done in midyear so as not to interfere with plans by teachers and principals for the next school year.

Goren added that, in his early conversations with stakeholders, he has noted “a real hunger” in the community for knowing how the direction of the school system might be changing.

Rykhus then acknowledged that the proposed timing would be useful in the budget planning for the next fiscal year.

Allison noted that the plan, once approved, would be subject to modification as conditions change and as the strategies are implemented. She promised that regular updates would be given to the board as the process advanced.