

Evanston Township High School officials, community members workshop new school goals

Members of the Evanston community met Saturday at Evanston Township High School to workshop the District 202 Board of Education's proposed new goals, which were presented at a public meeting in October.

The workshop primarily focused on the language and intention of the goals. Once established, the goals are planned to be implemented in the fall and guide the district for the next five years — the school's current six goals were implemented in 2012. The board is revising three of the goals, while phasing out the sixth. Two of the goals are not up for revision, but were discussed at the meeting.

The workshop began with attendees breaking into small groups to discuss their values, as well as evaluate the school's current mission statement and equity and excellence statement. Though these statements were not up for review, Barbara Toney, field services director at the Illinois Association of School Boards, said the point of the practice was to evaluate the district's established priorities prior to reviewing the proposed goals, which were discussed in sessions throughout the morning and afternoon.

"We've identified what our roots are, and what we want to do in this journey," said Toney, who facilitated the workshop.

Group members summarized their discussions in written notes and statements that were presented at the end of the workshop.

A major point of discussion was the language of the first goal, which currently reads "increase each student's academic trajectory as demonstrated through multiple measures." The board proposed that a clause be added to directly addresses "eliminating" the school's racial achievement [gap](#).

Both the morning and afternoon brainstorm groups for the first goal said they felt the addition was important — the morning group wrote in its discussion recap that the community has a "racial history that needs to be addressed." Some participants, however, said the inclusion of race, while important, ignores other factors of academic predictability, such as gender, socioeconomic status and ability.

The fifth goal — which, along with goal three, is not undergoing any revision — was also subject to considerable discussion. The goal addresses District 202's relationships with Evanston/Skokie School District 65 and the community as a whole, and both the morning and afternoon brainstorm groups said it was worth considering creating two separate goals, one to address District 65 relations and the other focused on community engagement.

Marybeth Schroeder, Evanston Community Foundation's vice president for programs and parent of three ETHS grads, said she attended a brainstorm meeting for goal five because the goal aligns with her work at Evanston Cradle to Career, an ECF initiative that focuses on the future stability and productivity of Evanston youth.

"For too long, the community was too (segmented)," Schroeder said. "The way young people get to adulthood is through this (education) system that serves them and their families."

The proposed update for goal two, as with the current structure of the goal, focuses on what the district will provide

students to help with their academic, social and emotional growth. Goal six, which focused on maximizing the reputation of ETHS, was eliminated completely following the recent implementation of a joint literacy goal with District 65 to ensure students are reading at or above grade level. The fourth goal focuses on school finances, which is [complicated](#) by the state's current financial stalemate, District 202 Superintendent Eric Witherspoon said.

"This board has made it clear to me: We're going to do everything we can and must do to stay on a sound (economic) footing," Witherspoon said.

All of the information from the workshop will be posted on the board's website, board president Pat Savage-Williams said. Community input from the event will be presented to ETHS' Board of Education, which will address that feedback at an upcoming meeting tentatively scheduled for April 11, she said.

Toney said the IASB encourages all districts to get community feedback when creating their goals.

"A board can sit in their little board room and write goals for the district, and that's fine," she told The Daily. "They have the right to do that. But we would prefer that goes out to its community and its staff and says, 'What do you want?'"

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